Kind Girls, Evil Sisters, And Wise Women: Coded Gender Discourse In Literary Fairy Tales By German Women In The 19th Century

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KIND GIRLS, EVIL SISTERS, AND WISE WOMEN: CODED GENDER DISCOURSE
IN LITERARY FAIRY TALES BY GERMAN WOMEN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

by

JULIE KOEHLER

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School
of Wayne State University,
Detroit, Michigan,
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for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

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Approved By:

_____________________________________
Advisor Date

_____________________________________
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Wynn Koehler, for his unwavering love and support during this entire process.
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by demonstrating how dedicated one must be in the pursuit of research, and letting me know that I could do it.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Scholarship Review

In Ludwig Tieck’s *Kunstmärchen* “Der blonde Eckbert” (The Blond Eckbert), the eponymous knight asks his wife Bertha to tell the story of her youth to their friend Walther.¹ As his wife begins her tale, she insists that it is “kein Märchen [no fairy tale],” (4) an ironic and ultimately false claim.² Walther listens coolly to Bertha’s story. As a young girl she was taken in by an old woman in the woods who was in possession of a magical singing bird that laid eggs full of precious stones. One day the old woman went away for a trip, leaving the bird and her little dog in Bertha’s care. Betraying her caregiver’s trust, Bertha stole the magical bird and ran away to town, leaving the dog to die. Ultimately, she killed the bird as well, when its constant singing made her guilt unbearable. Using the riches from the bird, she and Eckbert, a poor knight, made their life together deep in the woods, never telling anyone about the origins of their wealth until now. At the end of her tale, Walther casually lets drop the name of the little dog, Strohmian, which Bertha had forgotten. This name brings a wave of guilt over Bertha, one which so overtakes her that she falls ill and dies. Meanwhile, fearful that Walther will try to steal his riches, Eckbert murders his only friend. At the end of the tale, a mad Eckbert encounters an old woman in the woods. The old woman tells Eckbert that she is the one from whom Bertha stole their riches. Using magic, she had played the part of Walther in order to exact her revenge, and finally the old woman reveals that Bertha was Eckbert’s biological sister all along. Eckbert falls to his knees and dies.

The power of Bertha’s *Märchen* turned out to be very great indeed, leading to the death of herself and her husband. Like most of the tales in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s *Kinder- und

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¹ *Kunstmärchen*, literally artificial fairy tale, is the term used in German for fairy tales written and published by authors, as opposed to *Volksmärchen*, fairy tales which come from the oral tradition. It can be used as either a singular or a plural noun.
² All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
Hausmärchen (Children’s and Household Tales, 1812-1857), also known by the acronym KHM, the source of this powerful story is a woman enticed to tell her story by a man. The man vastly underestimates the power of such a story to change his world. The old woman who seeks her revenge, however, is well aware of the story’s transformative power and uses it to her advantage. With one word, Strohmian, she brings about the total destruction of her enemies and their way of life.

Here, even in the depths of the most canonical of male Kunstmärchen, we see a desire to represent women’s stories, a desire that is almost fetishized in the German states of the nineteenth century, as men like the Grimms collected tales from female friends and relatives for dozens of collections beginning in 1812 and spanning the whole of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, today, too often we only see these tales through the filter of the men who carefully selected which tales would be published and then edited and embellished them according to a male value system. Yet women were writing and publishing their own fairy tales throughout the nineteenth century in Germany, and some of the very women the Grimms relied on as sources had published literary collections of their own years beforehand, such as those by Benedikte Naubert and Karoline Stahl. Although these stories are now being brought back into the light due to recent collections like Jeannine Blackwell and Shawn Jarvis’s 2001 The Queen’s Mirror and Jarvis’ more recent 2012 Im Reich der Wünsche (In the Realm of Wishes), these stories have yet to receive adequate critical attention.

This dissertation seeks to investigate a selection from this world of women’s stories in

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3 Thanks to the work of editorial analysis from scholars such as Heinz Rölleke, we now know the majority of the Grimms’ sources were not peasants, but educated middle- and upper-class women. In addition, works such as Ruth Bottigheimer’s Grimms’ Bad Girls and Bold Boys (1987) have demonstrated that the edits the Grimms applied to these women’s stories resulted in weaker and quieter heroines.
order to demonstrate their unique contributions. Like the old woman in “Der blonde Eckbert,” I use the stories of women to upend the male-dominated canon and assumptions about nineteenth century gender norms and the role of fairy tales. These women’s stories take the form of the tale type the Kind and the Unkind Girls. The Kind and the Unkind Girls lends itself well to this endeavor, because it was popular with both the Grimms and a variety of women writers, and because it features an inherent description and an overt judgment of proper and improper women. In Kind and Unkind Girls tales, there are a definitive good girl and bad girl, each of whom encounters a magical being and undergoes a similar test. The good girl succeeds and is rewarded; the bad girl fails and is punished. The Grimms included three variants of this story in KHM, the majority of which came from female sources. In addition, of the six female authors of the variants to be examined here, four were sources or references for other tales in the Grimms’ collection. In addition, three of the women writers’ Kind and Unkind Girls stories, though not included in the collection, are mentioned by the Grimms in their notes on “Frau Holle,” the most famous of the three Grimm variants. So although I examine different authors than the female sources of the Grimms’ Kind and Unkind Girls’ variants, these women writers are similar to those sources in their relationship with the Grimms’ collection. This allows for a before and after picture of women’s stories which were edited and embellished by the Grimm Märchen machine and

4 In Folklore Studies, a tale type is a term used to describe the basic structure of a tale that has many different versions. These individual versions of a tale type are referred to as variants. For instance, Basile’s “Cenerentola,” Perrault’s “Cendrillon,” and the Grimms’ “Ashenputtel” are all what the lay person might refer to as Cinderella stories. Folklorists would describe them as variants of the tale type The Persecuted Heroine, ATU 510a. ATU stands for Aarne, Thompson and Uther. Finnish scholars Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson developed the Aarne-Thompson tale type index in the early part of the 20th century and Hans-Jörg Uther updated and expanded the index in 2004. There are many issues with the system, especially the Western and male biases of Aarne and Thompson, (see Torborg Lundell’s article “Folklore Heroines and the Type and Motif Indexes”), but it is a useful tool for folklorists. As I will discuss in more detail later on, the three variants, “Frau Holle,” “Die drei Männlein im Walde, and “Der heilige Josef im Walde” came from three female sources (Dortchen Wild, Dorothea Viehmann, and Amalie Hassenpflug), and one male source who claimed to have heard the story from his nanny (Bolte and Polivka 1: 207, Bolte and Polivka 2:227, Bolte and Polivka 3: 101, 457).
women’s stories which were published in their original form by their authors. By comparing Kind and Unkind Girls stories by women writers to variants in the Grimm collection, we can see how the canon-creators, the Grimms, and their female sources and inspirations differed in their understanding of women’s roles in the nineteenth century.

The women writers I examine go beyond the Grimms’ Buchmärchen, not only by giving different and more detailed characterizations of the traits of a good and bad girl, but also by providing a (sometimes critical) gloss on how those traits developed. In this dissertation, I analyze how nineteenth-century authors Benedikte Naubert, Karoline Stahl, Gisela and Bettina von Arnim, Elisabeth Ebeling and the anonymous writer of Feen-Märchen (Tales of Fairies) used elements of the Kind and Unkind Girl tale to engage in discourses on gender in the nineteenth century. Using the Grimms’ tales and other traditional variants of the tale as a comparison, I demonstrate how these women writers combined their knowledge of the fairy-tale and folklore tradition with nineteenth-century gender discourses to create complex, coded critiques of the structures and values of patriarchal society.

Scholarship Review: Kunstmärchen

One could hardly call the German Kunstmärchen unexamined. There are volumes dating back to the turn of the twentieth century analyzing its history and structure and continuing steadily in German, English, and French through to present day, as we will see below. In fact the study of Kunstmärchen is only a few decades younger than German Philology itself, which the Grimm Brothers and others developed in the mid-nineteenth century. The Kunstmärchen has been analyzed and reanalyzed, categorized, defined, fragmented, and redefined. The genre’s earliest

6 A word used to describe the tales that appear in collections like those from the Grimms and Ludwig Bechstein. These tales were oral tales that were collected, edited, and printed by scholars to suit a reading audience.
critic, Ricarda Huch, analyzed *Kunstmärchen* as a part of her 1899 work *Die Blütezeit der Romantik* (The Blooming of the Romantic), before the term was even coined (Wührl 4). In later volumes, however, the term itself served as title: Jens Tismar’s *Das deutsche Kunstmärchen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (The German *Kunstmärchen* of the Twentieth Century, 1981), Wolfgang Wührl’s *Das deutsche Kunstmärchen* (The German *Kunstmärchen*, 1984), and Volker Klotz’s *Das europäische Kunstmärchen* (The European *Kunstmärchen*, 1985). Wührl’s and Tismar’s works especially have become standards in the field; Tismar’s work was updated in 1997 by Mathias Meier. These more recent analyses of the genre all feature a similar format. After a short introduction and overview, they move into the core of their work, which is organized by author in Tismar and Klotz, and by subject in Wührl, and in each chapter they systematically analyze individual *Kunstmärchen*. Over 100 different *Kunstmärchen* are discussed amongst the three books. They pull from a wide pool, spanning all of Europe from the Renaissance to Modernism in Klotz and Würhl; and although Tismar limits himself to the twentieth century, he still offers up a large selection of tales. Despite this broad scope, however, only one woman is given a chapter or sub-chapter heading among the three works: Isolde Kurz. The seventeenth-century French women authors of fairy-tales—the *conteuses*—receive mention in chapters about Charles Perrault’s stories. Other women writers, such as Fanny Lewald, are mentioned briefly in comparison to works by male authors, but that is the extent of their presence—a footnote to the great work by male authors of *Kunstmärchen*.

This male bias is nowhere more obvious than in Wührl’s description of the typical protagonist of the *Kunstmärchen*: “Der Held im deutschen *Kunstmärchen* ist meist . . . ein Jüngling . . . ein junger Ritter oder ein Prinz. Mal fasziniert ihn das weibliche Prinzip als kaprizier Elementargeist, mal als dämonisch-medusenhafte Schönheit, mal als gewaltige Magna Mater oder
als Frau Venus. Mal berät ihn eine weise Frau [The hero in German Kunstmärchen is usually . . . a youth . . . a young knight or a prince. The feminine fascinates him, sometimes as a capricious elemental spirit, sometimes as a demonic, medusa-like beauty, sometimes as a powerful goddess or as Venus. Sometimes a wise woman advises him]” (21). Though Wührl later references Königinnen, Kaiserinnen, and Prinzessinnen (queens, empresses, and princesses) in his description of the major players of the Kunstmärchen, it is clear here that the main character is usually a male who is fascinated by some otherworldly female. The male incarnates the normative while the female embodies the other, a model that holds up relatively well when the Kunstmärchen is limited to those produced by male German authors. The list of stories that fit into this structure is quite long: from the earliest collections, such as August Jacob Liebeskind’s “Lulu oder die Zauberflöte” in Christoph Martin Wieland’s Dschinnistan, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Das Märchen” and many works by the Romantics: Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué’s Undine, Novalis’ “Hyazinth und Rosenblüté,” and Ludwig Tieck’s “Der Runenberg.” Late Romantic works, such as E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Der goldene Topf, maintain the pattern, as do Biedermeier works, like Jeremias Gotthelf’s Die schwarze Spinne, and Eduard Mörike’s “Historie von der schönen Lau.” Even Poetic Realism has examples, such as Theodor Storm’s “Die Regentrude.” Würhl’s theory falls apart completely, however, when read side-by-side with the Kunstmärchen penned by women writers. Looking at just the small sample of German women writers from the eighteenth and nineteenth century collected in Blackwell and Jarvis’ The Queen’s Mirror, we find that a majority of women’s tales feature a female protagonist, and one who is not always all that interested in men.

Of course, to consider the differences between the sexes and to begin to create a theory of Kunstmärchen that includes women writers, we must first acknowledge, or at the very least name, some Kunstmärchen by women, an endeavor not undertaken by Tismar, Würhl, or Klotz. Although
they claim to provide an analysis and typology of the entire genre, they fail to recognize *Kunstmärchen* by women as a part of their study and, therefore, fail to draw accurate conclusions about *Kunstmärchen* in general; their studies necessarily only characterize *Kunstmärchen* by men.

The study of *Kunstmärchen* by German women is an endeavor with a much shorter history beginning only in the 1980s, though the history of women writing *Kunstmärchen* is as old as the tradition of men’s writing. In 1789, the same year in which Christoph Martin Wieland was publishing one of the first German collections of *Kunstmärchen, Dschinnistan*, Benedikte Naubert published her own collection, *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (New Folktales of the Germans), though she published anonymously. Catherine the Great of Russia wrote fairy tales years before Naubert, and her 1784 “Märchen vom Fiewi” is considered the first *Kunstmärchen* written by a German woman (Blackwell and Jarvis 15), although it was written after Catherine had left Prussia and married into Russian royalty. In the nineteenth century, the *Kunstmärchen* took off, and nearly every German author tried his or her hand at one at some point in his or her career (Zipes, “German Obsession” 108). There are hundreds of examples from women writers, many of which became quite popular. The newly developing genre of children’s literature was one in which women were allowed to write and publish more freely, and stories from famous governesses, like Karoline Stahl, were popular in the instruction of children. Many important women writers wrote *Kunstmärchen*, among them Bettina von Arnim, whose fairy tales and better-known epistolary novels were more of adult fare.

Blackwell and Jarvis have done much to bring attention to these works by nineteenth-century German women. Blackwell’s 1987 article, “Fractured Fairy Tales: German Women Authors and the Grimm,” cited female sources of the Grimms, but instead of writing only about oral contributors, Blackwell discussed the many literary contributions of women, such as Naubert
and Arnim. Blackwell and Jarvis went on to examine numerous Kunstmärchen by German women, mainly in the nineteenth century, eventually leading to their collection The Queen’s Mirror and later Jarvis’ Im Reich der Wünsche.

Scholarship Review: Feminist Fairy Tale and Folklore Theory

In spite of these collections, German women’s Kunstmärchen remain little discussed in feminist fairy-tale scholarship. Much more has been written on gender roles of female characters in the Grimms’ stories, the stories of the French conteuses, and modern and postmodern English-language stories, such as those by Angela Carter. Feminist fairy-tale scholars have given much attention to contemporary writers like Carter (rightfully so) and to reframing the Grimms’ collection in light of their corruption of female sources, but very little is written on nineteenth-century German women writers. It is often too easy to simply blame male collectors and editors for passive female characters and to praise the powerful, thoughtful, and more complex female characters of twentieth- and twenty-first century writers. The female characters of nineteenth-century German women are, however, murkier.

These authors are women, but no less a part of patriarchal society that has told them that they ought to be passive and voiceless. The type of characters they create could not help but reflect this conflict. As Ruth-Ellen Joeres discusses in Respectability and Deviance (1998), German women writers of the nineteenth century struggled against societal views and the public opinions of male writers, many of whom were their heroes and mentors but also believed that women had no place writing (139). Of course women were identified with the Volksmärchen for centuries (Rowe 307), but these contributions were represented as repetitive—carrying on and maintaining tradition—rather than creative. At this intersection of oral female storytelling and the male world of print, of the passive heroines of male-appropriated collections and active heroines of the stories
that were appropriated, we find the Kunstmärchen of nineteenth-century women. Produced in a complicated world where the oral was being subsumed by the written, they are the children of a hybrid legacy of conflicting attitudes towards women, the word, and storytelling. These stories provide a window, not into the minds of male writers as they adjusted tales to fit nineteenth-century patriarchal values, but into the minds of women writers, the rightful heirs of female storytelling, sometimes expressing the same patriarchal values we see in the work of male writers, on one level, yet engaging in a subversive rebellion against patriarchal traditions, on another.

Oral female storytelling and the female sources of the Grimms have dominated feminist folklore and fairy-tale criticism. In particular, Karen E. Rowe’s theory of a “twofold legacy” in her 1986 article “To Spin a Yarn: the Female Voice in Folklore and Fairy Tale” makes the case that the Grimms and even male Kunstmärchen writers, such as Giovanni Straparola and Perrault, were dependent on the oral storytelling of women. This is something they take pains to note, referencing young girls and nursemaids as their sources (306). Rowe’s theory discusses women’s oral storytelling, in which she finds two layers of messages, one for the general public or, in the case of Grimms and others, one propagated by male collectors that conforms to societal norms, and another subversive message for other women (301). The notion that tales by women can communicate subversive ideas is evident in Ruth Bottigheimer’s earlier work, such as “The Transformed Queen,” in which she makes the case that the Grimms suppressed female power in tales related to matriarchal myths. This is a theme that Heide Göttner-Abendroth also examines in her work Die Göttin und ihr Heros (The Goddess and her Heroes, 1980). Although Bottigheimer later refuted these claims in her own works, most recently in Fairy Tales Framed (2012), the references speak to a culture and tradition of female oral storytelling. We also see a long tradition of depictions of women storytellers in Europe, as well as storytelling by and about women, in
Marina Warner’s extensive *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1996).

Beyond an oral legacy, however, proper *Kunstmärchen* from women in Europe appear in the late seventeenth-century French tradition. Although stories by Charles Perrault became the canonical standard in the twentieth century, the majority of the *contes de fées* were written by salon women, many of which remained popular until the late nineteenth century. Much is owed to Raymonde Robert, Jacques Barchilon, and Jack Zipes for bringing the stories of these women back to the forefront in the 1980s and ‘90s (Haase, “Feminist” 18). No longer a footnote to Perrault’s stories, they began to be studied more in depth on their own. *Twice-Told Tales* (2001) by Elizabeth Wanning Harries takes up the study of the *conteuses* and more recent *Kunstmärchen* from English speaking women. She, like Rowe, makes the case for a subversive voice in the tales, claiming that women have used fairy tales for centuries to both criticize social norms and practices they disagreed with, such as arranged marriage, and to present alternate options, such as basing marriage on love between peers.

These theories from Rowe and Harries have much in common with the framework used in the collection *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women’s Folk Culture* edited by Joan Newlon Radner (1993). In the opening chapter of the work, Radner and Susan S. Lanser apply theories of coding to women’s folklore. Radner and Lanser describe three types of coding: complicit, explicit, and implicit. Complicit coding is agreed upon within a community, but its use is undetectable to those outside the community. Using an everyday word as a code name to talk about an authority figure undetected would be an example of complicit coding. Explicit coding, on the other hand, is code that is clearly a code, though its message is not decipherable to those without the key. A computer encryption would be an example of this type of code. These first two types of codes are deliberate codes. The people involved in their creation and reception are aware of the code-making and
deciphering. However, Radner and Lanser make the case for a third type of coding, implicit coding, in which the author may not even be aware of the code she is creating. Nonetheless, the coded behavior may be revealed by those who belong to the same community, in this case women. Radner and Lanser use the example of Susan Glaspell’s 1917 story “A Jury of Her Peers,” in which the sheriff’s wife and her neighbor solve a murder that has stumped the men of law enforcement. The two women “read” the disorder displayed in the house- and needlework of a woman suspected to have killed her husband. The implicit code of sudden disorder in a once meticulously kept home is read as evidence of abuse and eventual revolt by the two women. The sheriff and his men, however, never find any evidence nor do they determine a motive for the murder. Radner and Lanser suggest:

a context for implicit coding exists when there is a situation of oppression, dominance, or risk for a particular individual or identifiable group; when there is some kind of opposition to this situation that cannot safely be made explicit; and when there is a community of potential listeners from which one would want to protect oneself. Sometimes, some context of danger or taboo is recognized first and coding is inferred on this basis. (9)

Although Harries’ and Rowe’s theories make the case for a much more explicit kind of coding, I believe the messages that these women storytellers and writers were sending were not always deliberate. The messages in these stories went unnoticed by the men who collected, edited, and sometimes rewrote them, but they were decipherable to other women. The code does not seem to have been agreed on beforehand, nor is it clear that the women were actively attempting to send a specific coded message. For this reason, I find implicit coding to be a useful term for understanding the messages communicated through the works of nineteenth-century German women writers.

Drawing on many landmark feminist theories (Barbara Babcock’s “inversion,” Maya Angelou’s “Principle of Reverse,” Luce Irigaray’s “mimicry,” Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “palimpsest,” and Marie Maclean’s “oppositional practices”), Radner and Lanser set up a typology
for implicit coding consisting of: appropriation, juxtaposition, distraction, indirection, trivialization, and incompetence. Many of these terms work well for Kunstmärchen written by women in the nineteenth century. Let’s take the example of Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeisuns (The Life of the High Countess Gritta von Ratsathomewithus) by Bettina and Gisela von Arnim. The first term, appropriation, describes women adapting traditionally male forms for feminist messages. The Arnims’ fairy-tale novel uses similar motifs found in Gockel, Hinkel, Gackeleia, a Kunstmärchen written by Bettina’s brother and Gisela’s uncle Clemens Brentano. Gritta, however, comes to very different conclusions regarding the nature of little girls, and whereas Brentano’s story ends by returning all the mixed-up elements to a proper reality, Gritta ends in a utopia.

This ironic use of motifs from a male writer’s Kunstmärchen about the silliness of little girls to present a proto-feminist story is also an example of the next term, juxtaposition. Indirection, or distancing, also occurs in the story as the subversive feminist messages are told under the guise of a wildly fantastical tale. The novel is often described as a work of children’s literature, an example of the trivialization of its message. This example demonstrates how the theory of implicit coding and the typology used to describe it offer a useful framework for the analysis of German women’s Kunstmärchen. Similarly, the Kunstmärchen would work to further support some of Rowe’s and Harries’s assertions, but sadly Rowe sticks mostly to oral sources and Harries does not touch on German-language tales. However, these terms and theories do offer a place to begin the conversation about German women’s Kunstmärchen and what they have to offer feminist fairy-tale criticism.

Although German women’s Kunstmärchen have received little critical attention thus far, feminist criticism of the Grimms’ tales that can be particularly useful in approaching their works,
in particular, the analysis of heroines and female villains. Kind and the Unkind Girls tales feature an inherent depiction of a positive female character and a negative female character, according to the values of each story. Fairy-tale heroines and villains have been a focus of feminist fairy-tale scholarship since its beginnings in the 1970s by a diverse group of scholars. Although many of the Grimms’ lesser known tales feature stronger heroines and more complex villains, as argued by Alison Lurie in her 1970 article “Fairy Tale Liberation,” writers like Marcia Lieberman, and later Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, argued that only the tales still popular with our own culture are worth analyzing, because they continue to have an effect on present day women and girls (Haase, “Feminist” 1-2). A more complete analysis came in Bottigheimer’s Bad Girls and Bold Boys, which showed that throughout the tales in KHM Wilhelm Grimm gave more direct speech to female villains and silenced female heroines. Jack Zipes’ Marxist theories took up a similar observation, but with a different conclusion. In Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion (1991), he cited the bourgeois corruption of the folk’s matriarchal prototypes in the Grimms’ collection. All of these studies, however, have found that the Grimms’ female villains are generally more active, vocal, knowledgeable, and uglier than their heroic counterparts. Wilhelm Grimm’s edits, the bourgeois corruption of the folktale, nineteenth-century values, and prescriptive gender roles of the proletariat have all contributed to the stark contrast between female villains and heroines in the Grimms’ tales. The work feminists have done regarding the Grimms’ depictions of heroines and female villains can provide context for understanding the characters of the Kind and Unkind Girls in these women’s Kunstmärchen. Similar work has been done, for instance, in Jarvis’s reading of Gisela von Arnim’s “Die Rosenwolke.” Jarvis situates the development of a curious and very active heroine in stark contrast with the many passive heroines of the Grimms, with which Arnim
would have been familiar.

Another aspect of Grimm criticism that lends itself to this discussion is the framework of queer reading that was developed in Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill’s recent work *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms* (2012). Taking a feminist reader-response and German reception position, they find in the KHM a bounty of female characters and relationships that lend themselves to queer readings. They describe queer theory’s “defining principles [which] problematize sex, gender, and sexuality” and include “non-normative expressions of gender. . . . [and] marginalization, oddity, and not fitting into society generally” (11). This understanding not only includes Frau Holle and the three little men of “Die Drei Männlein im Walde” (The Three Little Men in the Wood) as queer figures, but also hits on the issue of proper and improper women which the dichotomy of the Kind and Unkind Girls depicts. In addition, they describe trans theory, which expresses “individual and collective identities that reverse, transcend, complicate, or deny sex/gender binaries of male or female or species binaries of human or animal” (11). As we examine women who respond to genetic theories in the latter half of the nineteenth century, there are indeed women writers who are playing with these binaries. “Frau Holle” tales are mentioned specifically in the introduction and it’s not difficult to see why. There is a relationship both between the two peers and the female mentor that is unusual and complex. Frau Holle is sometimes described as strange, with large teeth or hair full of large lice, and she also could be described as closeted, often refusing to reveal her true self to the majority of humanity. The women writers discussed in this dissertation expand upon these two points greatly, describing close, even marriage-like, female relationships between mentor and mentee and between sisters, and sometimes describing Frau Holle as taking the guise of a man. Although my analysis does not focus on queer and trans readings of this tale, I would remiss to not mention these important moments when they occur and
how they color the characters’ positions as women (or something other than women or men) in a patriarchal society. Moreover, these queer readings of the KHM point to openings and fissures in the representation of gender in the fairy-tale tradition, which is the focus of this study.

Although the German *Kunstmärchen* have been studied for well over a hundred years, literary fairy tales by German women have not. There are no broad genre-based theories that include women to the extent that they helped shape the tale tradition. As such, the conclusions of scholars such as Tismar and Wührl are incomplete at best and false at worst. Although scholarship of the last thirty years has begun to bring fairy tales by women to the forefront, it has barely scratched the surface. Works on feminism in folklore, such as Radner’s *Feminist Messages*, offer a framework for beginning the discussion, but touch on neither *Kunstmärchen* nor German women’s tales in general. Initial studies by Rowe and Bottigheimer work with an anonymous oral female storyteller and struggle to wrench her voice from the male appropriation of the Grimms and others. Feminist criticism of depictions of women in the Grimms’ tales has begun a discussion of the role of women in fairy tales, but without the contrast of what women wrote, it is in an incomplete picture of female characters in nineteenth-century fairy tales. Turner and Greenhill’s *Transgressive Tales* contributes much to feminist fairy-tale scholarship, but also remains focused on the Grimms alone, not touching on women writers at all. Much is owed to the hard work of Blackwell and Jarvis, who brought to light these German women’s tales that were once quite popular but have been long forgotten and out of print. Still many of these tales and the corpus from which they come have yet to be analyzed. We are in many ways still in the recovery phase of German women’s fairy tales and have yet to make sense of our discoveries. As Blackwell has said, “A question still to be answered is how women collected, authored, and appropriated fairy tales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries beyond their collaboration with the Brothers Grimm”
(“Laying the Rod” 24). As opposed to focusing primarily on the Grimms’ appropriation of female storytelling, examining these Kunstmärchen by women authors allows us to go to the source of the women’s voices and learn just how they worked and what they thought.

Dissertation Overview

In twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism, as in “Der blonde Eckbert,” men are depicted as the directors of women’s voices in fairy tales in the nineteenth century. Much time has been spent in fairy-tale studies focusing on the editorial and artistic choices of the Grimms and their depictions of women. Many authors have theorized about the positive, strong female characters that the Grimms may have corrupted and some have written on the strong heroines that remain in tales that never became “classics” with nineteenth- and twentieth-century audiences. Still the focus remains on the decisions of men, editors such as Wilhelm Grimm and publishers across Europe and North America, to remove power or voice from female characters or to simply remove their stories altogether. We have spent enough time considering what men have had to say about women in fairy tales, and it is time to begin examining what the women said. The six authors I examine, Benedikte Naubert, the anonymous author of the Feen-Märchen, Karoline Stahl, Bettina and Gisela von Arnim, and Elisabeth Ebeling, are all women who took part in fairy-story writing, collecting, and telling. Their stories exhibit intertextual references and metafictional elements which indicate a deep knowledge of the fairy-tale and folklore tradition. The authors manipulated these stories from oral tradition in order to participate in a public discourse on gender, while keeping their contribution coded within a harmless fairy-tale façade.

Approaches

Although a tale type will be used to focus this discussion, I am not writing a tale type analysis. As I discussed above, since so little analysis has been done on German women’s
Kunstmärchen, the theoretical approach in this dissertation must be built on the traditions of Fairy-Tale Studies, Literary Criticism, and Feminism. In this way, the approach of the dissertation will be three-pronged. Within the perspective of folklore, I take a socio-historical folklore approach. In the history of Folklore Studies, tale type analyses have focused on finding a universal story that is at the heart of all variants and, often, claimed this story as the Urtext, or first variant ever told. The socio-historical approach, on the other hand, focuses on examining the context of each individual variant, attempting to understand what that variant meant in its own culture and time. Primarily, I will be reading the texts within the framework of nineteenth century gender discourse from 1789 to 1869.

Within the perspective of Literary Criticism, I examine these works in relationship to the gender discourses in which they engaged. I am looking at how women writers used fairy tales as a vehicle for covertly entering in public discourses on gender. Recent works on German women writers of the nineteenth century have examined ways in which women writers participated in public discourse through covert methods and inspired this focus. Daniela Richter’s Domesticating the Public (2012) argues that many women actively worked to shape gender identity from the inside out. Leveraging the powers that were at their disposal within the private sphere, they were able to affect change in the public sphere. Richter explores works of Trivialliteratur or trivial literature, such as women’s novels and conduct books, and describes how women used them to participate in gender discourses. Karin Baumgartner takes a similar approach in her 2009 work Public Voices: Political Discourse in the Writings of Caroline de La Motte Fouqué. Baumgartner argues that Fouqué’s position as a conservative gave her the freedom to write what she liked, as long as it related to the private sphere. In this way, Baumgartner demonstrates that Fouqué could express controversial opinions about the role of women in society without drawing attention to
herself. Neither of these analyses focuses on fairy-tale writing, though Fouqué also penned some Kunstmärchen, but both do examine how women could take part in public discourse from the position of the private sphere.

Finally, since this socio-historical analysis focuses primarily on gender, I will draw significantly from Feminist Theory, especially fairy-tale feminist theory. The theories of Rowe, Bottigheimer, and Harries, the typology set out by Radner and Lanser of Implicit Coding, the queer fairy-tale theories and readings of Turner and Greenhill, and the primary works recovered by Blackwell and Jarvis constitute a feminist framework in which to understand these stories and their criticism. Radner and Lanser’s implicit coding, however, serves as the primary lens through which I will be viewing German women fairy-tale writers. I have found that each of the tales not only feature implicitly coded messages, but that there is a pattern to decoding them. Each tale includes what I call an indicator. The indicator is an element of the text that indicates there is coded material therein. Sometimes the indicator is a metafictional reference and other times simply an element that does not seem logical within the fictional world the author has created. In each case, by taking a closer look at the indicator element, I find the direction my analysis needs to take in order to decode the material. Once the coded message is revealed, it then becomes clear in what way the author was participating in a larger public discourse on gender and what position she was taking. I then work to place her position within the context of others writing more overtly on the same topic in the period. For this reason, I have included many other works from the period such as essays, newspaper articles, novels, pedagogical and conduct books, and scientific writing in order to demonstrate that the women writers had knowledge of public discourses about women and
gender, among other issues, and situated their position within it.

**The Kind and the Unkind Girls**

As I discuss above, this dissertation does not aim to carry out a tale-type analysis nor does it describe a search for an Urtext. Instead, the tale type of the Kind and the Unkind Girls (ATU 480) acts as a lens that focuses my analysis of variants in the Grimms’ collection and the similarly structured tales by women writers. The choice of this tale type for a *Kunstmärchen* presents an explicit depiction of a positive female gender role and a negative female gender role. To some extent, the German name for this tale type, “das gute and das schlechte Mädchen” ("The Good and the Bad Girls"), is more accurate to my interpretation of it. Kindness is not the sole determining factor in these girls’ fates, but more often selflessness. My definition of the type is broader than the ATU description or the overview found in Warren Roberts’ landmark 1958 *The Tale of the Kind and the Unkind Girls: Aa-Th 480 and Related Titles*, both of which spend pages describing possible motifs in various variants. My very general conception of the tale type goes as follows: Two girls, peers, are given a similar test. The one girl, who is a positive or good character passes this test through her selflessness and is rewarded. The other girl, a negative or bad character, fails the test due to her own selfishness and is punished. In most analyses of this tale type, the location of the test—often in a forest or deep in a well—is just as important as the magical being with which they interact. That magical being ranges from a saint to a goddess to a dwarf, but is both the figure who gives the test and who doles out the reward or punishment. The majority of the *Kunstmärchen* I will discuss also feature these motifs, but I choose to focus on the test itself, rather than the location or proctor of the test. The Kind girl is sometimes placed in the category of the Persecuted Heroine, for she is often abused by her peer and/or a maternal figure. For this reason, the tale type is related to Cinderella stories (ATU 510a), which also feature a negative character, a stepsister,
who is eventually punished for her unkindness.

In addition, another tale type, the White Bride and the Black Bride (ATU 403), contains a short Kind and Unkind Girls motif at the beginning of the tale. In the encounter, the Christian God, in disguise as a poor old man, tests a Kind and Unkind sister by asking for directions. The sister who tells him the way is given three wishes. She asks to be beautiful, to have a money purse that never empties (also known as a lucky purse), and to go to heaven when she dies. A number of the women writers reference the wishes granted to this Kind Girl in their stories. Roberts also mentions the connection and writes that in Central Europe the two tale types “are often found joined together” (9), referencing the scene mentioned above. For this reason, I will refer to the Grimms variant, also titled “The White Bride and the Black Bride” in the chapters where appropriate.

Although I do not aim to write a tale type analysis, it is worthwhile to briefly explore the history of the tale type to provide some context for its use by the Grimms and these six women writers. For an in-depth history and complete lists of variants, see Roberts’ work mentioned above. The oldest known written variant of the tale is found in the English playwright George Peele’s The Old Wives’ Tale in 1595. In one scene, two sisters, one polite and one rude, encounter a creature in a well who asks them to comb him. Only the polite girl does so and she combs corn and gold into her lap. A motif of the tale is also mentioned in William Shakespeare’s 1598 Merchant of Venice. The next appearance of the tale is Giambattista Basile’s Neapolitan Pentamerone of the

7 In Willem de Blécourt’s Tales of Magic, Tales in Print, he makes the case that Straparola’s “Biancabella” is the first variant, predating Peele by 40 years (200). This variant, however, is not traditionally considered a Kind and Unkind Girls tale, but rather a Girl without Hands tale (ATU 706). It contains a pair of sisters, who are not enemies. One has the benefit of magic, which she shares with the other. There is no test, tasks, or Frau Holle-like figure. The rest of the plot has more in common with the Grimms “Das Mädchen ohne Hände” (The Maiden without Hands) KHM 31. In the German tradition, de Blécourt points to Naubert’s 1789 “Der kurze Mantel” as the first written variant which is not a translation, followed by Anonymous’ 1801 “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit, oder das Glück der schönen Klara.” He fails to mention Montanus’ 1560 “Das Erdkühlein” which is discussed below.
1630s where it is titled “Le Tre Fate” or “The Three Fairies.” Next it appears in the French tradition of 1690s. Charles Perrault’s 1697 “Les Fées” or “The Fairies” is often seen as the classic version of the tale, and Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont’s “Aurore and Aimée” presents not only good and evil sisters, but also a pair of brothers. The Grimms’ 1812 “Frau Holle” is also a classic variant, and for a long time these tales were called Frau Holle Tales (Roberts 3), even though the Grimms’ variant was the only one to feature Frau Holle. Later in the nineteenth century, Ludwig Bechstein’s 1847 collection *Deustche Märchenbuch* included a variant as well, “Die Goldmarie und die Pechmarie” (Gold-Maria and the Pitch-Maria). These are the classic, literary variants of the tale, but the tale is extremely widespread. It is especially popular in the Baltics. The 1929 collection from P. Smīts features over one hundred variants in Latvian alone. The most exhaustive tale type analysis was performed by Roberts, who was given the very first doctorate in Folklore in the United States for his dissertation and later book on this tale type. Roberts’ collection references over 900 variants of the tale around the world, including rich traditions of the tale type in Africa and Asia.

From Roberts’ lists of variants, it would appear that the Grimms’ variants are the first to be published in German. Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel” predates the Grimms, however, by over 20 years and the anonymous “Die belohnte Freiegebigkeit oder das Glück der schönen Klara” by over a decade. Of course, Naubert’s work is neither folklore nor a straight literary re-telling, but its use of the character Frau Holle and direct reference to the tale offer evidence of an older tradition in Germany. In addition, I would argue that Martin Montanus’ 1560 “Ein schöne History von einer Frawen mit zweyen Kindlin” (“A Good Story of a Woman with Two Daughters”), which is more traditionally called “Das Erdkühlein” (“The Little Earth-Cow”), contains many motifs of the Kind and the Unkind Girls, although it is generally categorized as a Cinderella variant. In the
story a persecuted young girl named Gretlin discovers a magical cow in the woods, the Erdkühlein. When she is kind and milks the cow at its request, she is rewarded with beautiful cloth for clothes. She is instructed to never tell anyone about the Erdkühlein. When Gretlin’s mean sister discovers the same house in the woods, she tricks her into telling about the Erdkühlein. The mean sister, together with their stepmother, has the Earth-Cow slaughtered. The rest of the tale is connected more clearly to Cinderella. Gretlin buries the Erdkühlein’s horns and feet and a magical tree grows on the grave. When a rich man needs the apples of the tree to save his sick son, the tree will only allow Gretlin to pick its apples. The man takes the apples and Gretlin away in his carriage.

The tale is not a straight variant of the Kind and the Unkind Girls, as it lacks a punishment for the Unkind Girl, but it does feature a Kind Girl and Unkind Girl, both of whom go out into the forest and encounter a magical being, the Erdkühlein. Roberts does not reference this story as a Kind and Unkind Girls story, but he does note that many early variants, particularly in Scandinavia, feature a cow who asks to be milked as the magical being (6). The Kind Girl is rewarded for her service to the magical being. The Unkind Girl does fail to serve the magical being, but she does not suffer for it, except, perhaps, in that she is not chosen to be the rich man’s bride. If we borrow from Alan Dundes’ terminology of motifemes, or functions in a fairy tale, and allomotifs, or manifestations of that function, we can see that a number of the major motifemes from the Kind and the Unkind Girls here: a Kind and Unkind Girl (Gretlin and her mean sister), going out to a magical location (deep in the forest), interacting with a magical being (Erdkühlein), and, for the Kind Girl, receiving riches in reward for selfless behavior (beautiful cloth, magical apples, a rich husband). This could indicate a tradition in Germany that predates the English, Italian, and French variants. This particular story was mentioned two hundred years later by Goethe in a letter in the late eighteenth century (Lüthi 75), showing that it remained relevant over the years. Certainly, we
can recognize that motifemes from the Kind and the Unkind Girls existed for hundreds of years in Germany, and the “Frau Holle” variant was at least known at the time when Naubert was writing at the end of the eighteenth century, twenty years before the Grimms’ first edition.

The Grimms’ Variants

This dissertation features the writing of German women and moves away from the over-emphasis on the Grimms. The Grimms’ variants do, however, offer a worthwhile point of comparison. As shown by Bottigheimer’s *Bad Girls and Bold Boys*, the Grimms’ edits led to more passive and quieter positive female characters and more active and vocal negative female characters, in general, which corresponded to nineteenth-century German society’s expectations of and fears about women. In this way the Grimms’ stories can represent the values of the patriarchal culture of nineteenth-century Germany, which can be compared to demonstrate the more subversive women’s tales. The Grimms made many changes to the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* over the course of seven editions of their *Grosse Ausgabe* (large edition) between 1812 and 1857 and ten editions of their *Kleine Ausgabe* (small edition) meant for children between 1825 and 1858. Beginning with the groundbreaking work of Heinz Rölleke, scholars have performed editorial analyses of the Grimms’ tales by studying the progression of these additions, subtractions, edits, and embellishments throughout the editions. As I discuss each of the women’s stories, I will briefly compare their depictions of the characters of the Kind and Unkind Girls to those found in three Grimms’ variants in the edition(s) published most near to their period. I will examine these variants in the seven large editions from 1812, 1819, 1837, 1840, 1843, 1850, and
1857, and comment on the progression of their edits in comparison to the women’s stories.8

The three Grimms’ variants are “Frau Holle,” “Die drei Männlein im Walde” (The Three Little Men in the Woods), and “Der heilige Josef im Walde” (St. Joseph in the Woods). Most of the sources for these tales were women. “Frau Holle” was told to them by Dortchen Wild in 1811 (Bolte and Polivka 1: 207). “Die drei Männlein im Walde” originally also came from Wild, but later editions included contributions from Dorothea Viehmann and Amalie Hassenpflug (Bolte and Polivka 3: 101). “St. Joseph in the Woods” comes from the daughters of the Haxthausen family, but another variant the Grimms recorded comes from a student who claims to have heard the story from his nanny (Bolte and Polivka 3: 457). As I mentioned above, “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut” is also of interest. This story was also told to the Brothers Grimm by Dortchen Wild in 1811 (Bolte and Polivka 2: 227). The progression from oral stories by women to Buchmärchen edited and annotated by the Grimms would be an interesting enough analysis of gender roles in fairy tales in the nineteenth century, but when we can compare these edits with the stories written and published by women writers themselves, a broader and more complex picture can emerge of the tension of gender in fairy tales.

Women Writers and Works

Praised and practically sanctified as ideal oral storytellers by the Grimms and others, women were seen as the keepers of fairy tales, but women who chose to pursue writing and publishing were often vilified for stepping out of their place.9 For this reason, the women writers I investigate here occupy a unique position. They write fairy tales, and in the case of Stahl and

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8 Unfortunately, none of the variants of the Kind and Unkind Girls appears in the Grimms’ Ölenberg Manuscript from 1810, reprinted in Rölleke’s Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm (The Oldest Fairy Tale Collection of the Brothers Grimm).

9 See, for example, Ruth Ellen Joeres’ Respectability and Deviance (1998)
Ebeling, and possibly Gisela von Arnim, they write for children. In this way they have situated themselves within a genre where it is acceptable for women to publish. This “trivialization,” to use Radner and Lanser’s term, of their work as children’s and nursemaids’ stories allows for subversive ideas to hide in plain sight. In the case of Naubert and the anonymous author of *Feen-Märchen*, however, such a genre did not quite exist yet, so the guise of anonymity was the easiest way to publish stories with proto-feminist themes. This tension between *Märchen-Oma* (literally fairy-tale grandma) and deviant woman writer is one each of these authors balances in her own way and their stories reflect their differing identities and times. Of course, the women writers here represent more than simply a contradiction in stereotype. They represent some of the most influential and well-connected German writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While each author and tale will be explored in more detail within the coming chapters, here is a brief introduction to the women writers and their stories.

**Benedikte Naubert and “Der kurze Mantel”**

Benedikte Naubert was classically educated by her professor father and half-brother, and is perhaps the most influential writer of the group: “writers have traced her influence on writers from Walter Scott to Thomas Mann” (Jarvis, “Naubert” 672). Her novels influenced the development of the romantic, gothic, and historical novel, a genre she basically invented in Germany (Blackwell, “Fractured Fairy Tales” 165). Naubert collected and wrote fairy tales decades before the Grimms in the late eighteenth century. She was interviewed by the Grimms, and her 1786-1789 collection *Neue Märchen der Deutschen* (The New Fairy Tales of the Germans) was one of their sources (Jarvis and Blackwell 33). She, along with Wieland and Johann Karl August Musäus, began the investigation of German *Märchen* in the late eighteenth century.

Her fairy tale novella “Der kurze Mantel” (The Cloak) appeared in this collection in 1789.
The novella combines Arthurian legend with German fairy tales. The Arthurian material found in the story can be traced to Thomas Percy’s 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and Ulrich von Zatzikhoven’s twelfth-century *Lanzelet* and is also related to a ballad in Johann Gottfried Herder’s influential 1778 collection *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (Voices of the People in Songs) (Jarvis, “Naubert” 672). In the story, a young servant named Genelas flees Guinevere’s court and finds an old woman in the woods. The woman, Frau Rose, explains to Genelas that she was the Kind Girl in the story of Frau Hulla (Naubert’s spelling) and she tells Genelas the story of her experience. Afterward she helps Genelas learn to spin a material that turns into the cloak of truth, which Genelas brings back to court to redeem herself and find a husband. The role of the Kind Girl as a wise and magical mentor to a new young girl is an interesting one that indicates a sort of inheritance of female wisdom. This story offers three depictions of the Kind Girl: the old Frau Rose as the Kind Girl in adulthood, the Kind Girl in the story that Frau Rose relates, and Genelas, the new Kind Girl who benefits from the legacy of the wise woman. Virtue, kindness, and wisdom are traits these women are praised for. Through my analysis, I have found that Naubert utilized her position as an anonymous, but assumed male, writer to subtly critique the difficult position of working women in a patriarchal society. The Kind Girls in the story, and the Frau Holle figure, all struggle with the impossibility of producing work and living openly in society. Ultimately, none of them is able to do both successfully.

“Die belohnte Freigebigkeit, oder das Glück der schönen Klara”

Not much is known about the anonymous author of the 1801 collection *Feen-Märchen*, but she is often theorized to be a woman (Jarvis and Blackwell 89). Her collection shows the influences of a variety of French and German fairy tales and ghost stories, and her introduction highlights a life-long love of fairy tales (Marzolph 4). Her work was known to the Grimms, who
mention her in their notes. In addition, they made notes in their copy of *Feen-Märchen*, which Ulrich Marzolph includes in his 2000 publication of the collection. The Grimms’ notes demonstrate both their appreciation for the collection and their dismissal of it as unfocused and too influenced by French tales. In the fanciful introduction, the author attributes the stories to a maiden aunt and claimed to be continuing the tradition of these stories in her remembrance (3-5) in yet another layer of the imagined female folk legacy.

Her first tale, “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit, oder das Glück der schönen Klara” (The Bounty Rewarded or the Joy/Fortune of the Beautiful Klara) is so clearly connected to the Kind and the Unkind Girls that the Grimms themselves take note of a relationship to “Frau Holle,” though they see the story as “modernisiert [modernized]” (Marzolph 307). In the most extreme of endings, the kind, obedient, and beautiful Klara marries a handsome prince, but the mean, selfish, and ugly Sabine dies a violent death at the hands of a giant. Even though Sabine is cruel, beating Klara and threatening her life, one cannot help but feel her struggle as she is constantly compared to the beautiful Klara and reminded that she does not do anything as well as Klara. The main character Klara, described using the terms “Glück” and “glücklich” which can be related to joy or luck depending on their usage, finds that singing and cleaning come naturally to her, while Sabine struggles with simple tasks. The constant comparison to Klara fills Sabine with rage. When Klara’s goodness leads her to her prince, Sabine attempts to follow in her footsteps, but finds only a bloody death. Sabine’s bad character is not her fault, but her given fate, even when she makes extra efforts to overcome it, she always fails. The analysis of this tale shows a relationship to a discourse about the situation of unwed women in a society that only valued women for their ability

10 See the entry in the Grimms’ dictionary for “glücklich” for a more in depth look at the history of these multiple meanings (Grimm and Grimm *Deutsches Wörterbuch*).
to marry and produce children. Sabine’s innate character is ugly, stubborn, and naturally bad at household tasks. Although she follows the same path as Klara, she does not have the same tools at her disposal, in contrast to all traditional Kind and Unkind Girls tales. This demonstrates the deck that has been stacked against her and all unmarriageable girls in society. The story comes to a conclusion found in many essays in the period: unmarriageable women are quite simply better off dead.

Karoline Stahl and Kind and Unkind Girls Tales for Children

Karoline Stahl, born Karoline Dumpf, was a governess for several decades in Livonia (present day Estonia and Latvia), White Russia (present day Belarus), Russia, and the German states. Her collections were made up of Kunstmärchen she had written for her charges (Jarvis and Blackwell 133). These stories were clearly didactic and borrowed from French and German tales. When she decided to publish the stories she had created, she was admired by the Grimms, and one of her stories “Der undankbare Zwerg” (The ungrateful Dwarf) was included in their 1837 collection in an altered form (Jarvis and Blackwell 133). Renamed “Schneeweißchen und Rosenrot” (Snow White and Rose Red), it became one of the best loved tales in Germany. Stahl is the first of the authors discussed here not to publish anonymously. Stahl wrote a dozen books, but the stories examined here come from her first collection, Fabeln, Märchen und Erzählungen für Kinder (Fables, Fairy Tales, and Stories for Children), which was published in 1818, coming just before the Grimms’ second edition.

Three stories from Stahl’s collection fit the Kind and Unkind Girls mold: “Die Gevatterinnen” (The Godmothers), “Prinzessin Elmine” (Princess Elmine), and “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” (The Wicked Sisters and the Good One). As discussed above, many have shown that the Grimms’ negative female characters are more likely to be active, vocal, and ugly
than the ostensible heroine of the tale. Stahl’s 1818 “Die Gevatterinnen,” however, reverses the Grimm paradigm by depicting her heroine as the ugliest and most active of her three sisters. Three of the sisters in “Die Gevatterinnen” are given the gift of beauty, but the fourth is not. When they are tested, it is the least beautiful child, who is also the kindest, who passes. In another tale, “Prinzessin Elmine,” a princess is swapped with another child at birth. The princess is raised by a poor woman in the woods and becomes good, kind, and hardworking, while the little girl who was raised in her place at the palace becomes selfish, mean, and demanding. In the end, again, the kinder child wins out. In “Die bösen Schwestern und die Güte,” there are two evil sisters and one good who venture into a cave of riches. The good sister takes time to help a goat in the cave, whereas her sisters do not. The good child is rewarded with riches, but her sisters are humiliated while dressed in their finest at a ball, attempting to catch the eye of an admirer. They are threatened, but not harmed, but they die later from gall stones caused by their own anger and resentment.

Stahl’s Kunstmärchen not only praise kindness above all, but also blame an over-emphasis on beauty and wealth for the lack of morals and kindness in children. Stahl demonstrates a knowledge of contemporary discourses on gender and pedagogy and uses her tales to make her own case for how young women can be brought up to be kind and selfless individuals in the poisonous atmosphere of patriarchal society. Of course, her most common theme is that it is best to remove them from it all together.

Bettina and Gisela von Arnim and the Kunstmärchen of the Kaffeterkreis

Bettina von Arnim frequented the same circles as Goethe, Clemens Brentano (her brother), Achim von Arnim (her husband), and many other great writers and thinkers of her day. She took part in the Heidelberg circle of Romantics. Known mainly for her epistolary semi-autobiographical fiction, she also penned a number of fairy tales and was involved in the collecting of folk songs
for her brother Clemens Brentano and husband Achim von Arnim’s collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn, 1805-1808), and in the original collecting for the Grimms’ 1812 edition (Blackwell and Jarvis 111). The Grimms dedicated all seven of their large editions to her (Blackwell and Jarvis 111). Gisela von Arnim, the youngest of Bettina and Achim’s seven children, helped to found and participated in the Kaffeterkreis (Coffee Circle), a fairy-tale salon in Vormärz Berlin, which led to her own fairy-tale creations as a girl and into adulthood (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 103).

In this chapter, I examine two short Kunstmärchen, one by Gisela von Arnim, “Die Rosenwolke” (The Rose Cloud), and one by Bettina von Arnim, “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” (The Lucky Purse). Both were written in the 1840s, but not published until the twentieth century. The final section of the chapter examines *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeisuns*, which was also written, but not published, in the 1840s. For over a century, debate has raged about who authored this fairy-tale novel, but it is generally attributed to both Bettina and Gisela von Arnim. New evidence and an original analysis of the novel in comparison to the two Kunstmärchen mentioned above demonstrate that Gisela von Arnim was more than likely the sole author, with minor editorial assistance from her mother. All three stories engage with motifs from the Kind and Unkind Girls, and investigate how women can write and work in patriarchal society.

**Elisabeth Ebeling and “Die ungleichen Schwestern”**

Using the psuedonym Elisabeth Ebeling, Christa Ling wrote scores of novellas, stories, and plays for children in the mid to late nineteenth century. Her stories were written for children, often with a pointed moral. Many of her tales appear later in school readers. Yet in spite of her very productive career, only a handful of libraries still carry her books in Germany and only one book,
the collection *Fantaska*, is available in the U.S. as part of the microfiche collection *Bibliothek der deutschen Literatur*. Ebeling worked after the Grimms had become popular and attempted to make her own mark on the world of fairy tales. Although her books are no longer easily accessible today, her dramatized version “Dornröschen” (Sleeping Beauty), put to music in Engelbert Humperdinck’s 1902 opera, is still widely available with Ebeling listed as the writer of the Libretto. A new recording of the opera was released in a two-disc set in 2010.

Elisabeth Ebeling’s 1869 *Kunstmärchen* “Die ungleichen Schwestern” (The Dissimilar Sisters) is a strange origin story that tells the story of twin princesses who eventually become two related plants. The story begins with their father Don Rodrigo, who marries the selfish and shallow Estella purely for her beauty and comes to regret this decision. When the couple is blessed with twin girls, Tuberosa and Atropa, each parent chooses the fairy gifts for one of the children. Estella asks for gifts of beauty and wealth for Atropa, while Rodrigo asks for modesty, bravery, and peace for Tuberosa. Interestingly, the fairy gifts of Atropa mirror the wishes granted to the White Bride in “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut.” Atropa grows up to be stunningly beautiful, but selfish and vain. Tuberosa is no beauty and spends very little time on her appearance. At balls, while Atropa is surrounded by suitors, Tuberosa is surrounded by poor children, whom she entertains with a fairy tale. Atropa ends up leading an empty and unhappy life, for “Atropa’s Herz konnte keine wahre Liebe empfinden [Atropa’s heart could feel no real love]” (101). Tuberosa’s life is peaceful and joyful. She takes joy in her husband and children and is always serving the poor. In the end the fairies turn each girl into an appropriate plant, Tuberosa becomes the nourishing, but plain Potato, and Atropa the poisonous, but beautiful Deadly Nightshade.

Within Ebeling’s strange origin story, there is a participation in medical and scientific discourse on gender in the nineteenth century. Since she depicts twin girls developing quite
differently due to the circumstances of their upbringing, she comes down on the side of nurture over nature. Speaking to trends in scientific and philosophical writing that claim that education of women is pointless, she demonstrates what a difference it can make, not only for the individual, Tuberosa, but for society, since Tuberosa goes on to be a strong queen and kind ruler.

All of these writers use the vehicle of the Kind and the Unkind Girls tale to engage in discourses on gender in the period. By coding their contributions, they could protect their personal reputations, and keep their work in publication, while still adding their voice to the discussion. In general, other women were the ones who had the ability to decode their messages, and in this way women were both writing and receiving these sometimes controversial stances on gender and moving the conversation forward. That is not to say the authors all come to similar conclusions, or even use the same tactics. Some use anonymity to protect themselves. Others rely on the trivial position of children’s literature to hide subversive ideas. All use some amount of indirection to conceal complex, contemporary, and adult questions about gender within a fairy tale. By analyzing these tales, revealing their coded messages, and placing them within the context of nineteenth-century gender discourses, we can broaden our understanding of what fairy tales have meant to women and what messages women have tried to express, implicitly and explicitly.

Conclusion

Like the old woman in Tieck’s “Der blonde Eckbert,” I hope to decode these women’s stories to reveal the powerful messages these tales contain. Scholars like Jarvis, Blackwell, and Marzolph have brought these tales back to light, but without further analysis, their implicit messages may remain locked away. These women had to negotiate the oppressive roles assigned them in the nineteenth century and were not entirely free to speak their minds. It is up to scholars to provide socio-historical context for their stories in order to reveal both that oppression and,
hopefully, crack the code to their meaning. This dissertation makes an initial contribution to the much needed scholarship yet to be done on fairy tales by nineteenth-century German women. Although some of these women writers are well known and others are more obscure, all of them had direct influence on some of the most important contemporaries writing fairy tales (Goethe, Grimms, Brentano, Humperdinck, Wieland, to name a few). For too long these women writers have remained a footnote to the work of male authors and composers, but we need not draw conclusions based on annotations and shadowy references anymore. We can, thanks in part to the work of Blackwell and Jarvis, go directly to the source and analyze the Kunstmärchen by women writers to grasp their true merit. By taking up an analysis of the gender discourses in these women’s stories, we can broaden the discussion beyond Wilhelm Grimm’s edits and the appropriation of folk tradition, and investigate how women saw themselves and how they felt about gender in their society. When we compare their contributions to gender discourses in the nineteenth century, we can begin draw conclusions about how these women, and perhaps others like them, approached the question of gender in the period and how they conformed to and resisted prescriptive roles assigned to them, as well as how they imagined alternative possibilities.
CHAPTER 2: Anonymity, Independence, and Production

The Struggles of Turn-of-the-Century Kind and Unkind Girls

Introduction

“Schade ist’s freilich, daß die Feenzeiten nicht mehr sind [It’s certainly a shame that the fairy times are no more],” wrote fairy tale author Benedikte Naubert in a letter to Louise Brachmann in 1805 (Dorsch 35). This fondness for another time is something Naubert shares with the anonymous author of the 1801 Feen-Märchen: Zur Unterhaltung für Freunde und Freundinnen der Feenwelt (Tales of Fairies: For the Entertainment of Friends of the Fairy-World). In the introduction, the author describes how an elderly aunt’s stories could transport her listeners “in die Zeiten der Riesen, Feen, Hexen und Kobolte [into the times of the giants, fairies, witches, and kobolds]” (3). Naubert’s 1789 Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen (New Folktales of the Germans) and Feen-Märchen not only display a fondness for fairy times and fairy worlds, but also a definite familiarity with fairy stories of both German folklore and the elaborate collections of the French salonnières. Published around the end of the eighteenth century, both fairy-tale authors originally published anonymously. Naubert’s authorship of the Neue Volksmärchen was discovered and made public in 1817, and she has even been suggested as the author of Feen-Märchen, although the styles of the two collections are quite different (Marzolph xii).

Despite the differing styles and stories, each author wrote a variant of the Kind and Unkind Girls, and the Grimms make note of each in their first edition in 1812. Longer and more complex than the Grimms’ variants, these women’s tales at first appear to offer similar morals which encourage women to work hard, follow directives, and endure hardship. Coded within this eighteenth-century patriarchal morality, however, are critiques of polarized sexual stereotypes that gendered work and eliminated women’s options. Moreover, these women writers utilized
misogynistic folk structures and narratives to reflect similar inherently sexist systems within German societies and thereby took part in the late eighteenth-century discourse on Geschlechtscharaktere or gender characteristics.

**Anonymity and the Legacy of Female Storytelling**

Although their subversive critique of patriarchal values lies within coded language, both authors also published anonymously. The author of *Feen-Märchen* remains anonymous to this day, but as mentioned in Chapter One, she has long been theorized to be a woman (Jarvis and Blackwell 89). If so, she was in good company. She and Naubert were among many women writers in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who either took on the guise of anonymity or used a male pseudonym. Susanne Kord details hundreds of such cases in *Sich einen Namen machen: Anonymität und weibliche Autorschaft 1700-1900* (Making a Name for Oneself: Anonymity and Female Authorship 1700-1900). This anonymity was partially due to the overwhelmingly negative attitude towards women writers in the period, one with which great German writers, such as Goethe and Schiller, agreed. As Joeres discusses in *Respectability and Deviance*, German women writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only struggled against societal views, but also had to accept that most prominent authors of the time, including their idols and mentors, also believed that women had no place writing and publishing (139).

For Naubert, both her identity as a writer and her desire to be anonymous were crucial to her way life. She complained to her editor Friedrich Rochlitz in an 1805 letter, “Ach, der größere Teil unsrer Schreiberinnen! Ach unsere Publicität! Ach die viel glücklichere Verborgenheit, die sichere Hülle, die vestalische Schleyer vor Lob und Tadel! [Oh, the greater part of our women writers! Oh our publicity! Oh the much happier concealment, the safer sheath, the vestal veil from praise and reproach]” (Dorsch 22). Naubert did not look down on women writers for writing and

In her publications, Naubert was generally credited in relationship to one of her most famous works “Verfasser des Walter von Montebarry [author of Walter von Montebarry]” (Kord 191). Until 1806 she was always listed using the male *Verfasser*, and she was generally considered to be a male author in the period (Jarvis, “The Vanished Woman” 191). Naubert’s anonymity, however, may not have been as heavy a veil as she describes in her letters. The general public may have had no idea of her identity, and even those closer to her may have been unaware of her status—her future husband once gave her a copy of her own stories as a gift (Martin, *Strukturen des Wandels* 15)—but clearly in some intellectual circles she was known. Martin (2006) claims that for a particular section of the intellectual world, Naubert’s identity was relatively well known after 1812 (*Strukturen des Wandels* 15). The Grimms, her first biographer Carl von Schindel, and the man who eventually outed her, K. J. Schultz, were all aware of her identity. In 1806 for the first time she was credited as *Verfasserin*, the feminine form of *Verfasser*, for her latest book, *Eudocia*. She did not approve this change and was upset about the effect it might have on her anonymity (Martin, *Strukturen des Wandels* 15). One reason her publisher may have made this choice was the growing influence of female readership on the market, which further complicated the issue of women’s authorship and even led some male authors to use female pseudonyms in the period. Kord identifies over twenty examples of these near the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth (198-99).

Despite their decision to publish as genderless and anonymous, both Naubert and the author
of *Feen-Märchen* framed their stories in the long tradition of female storytelling as communications by women for women. In the fanciful introduction to *Feen-Märchen*, the anonymous author describes her childhood on an imaginary island called Dardesia, where she often listened at length to the fairy tales of her favorite aunt. Although she refers to herself only with the neuter noun *Kind* (child), she maintains the facade, at least, of the stories having a female source in her aunt. In addition, at the end of the introduction she identifies her expected reader’s gender as female as well, when she writes: “Gute, frohe Weiber und Mädchen, blättert sie immerhin durch! Vielleicht, daß manche kleinen Scenen Euren Beifall erhalten, und ich Euch auf eine angenehme Art um ein Stündchen betrüge, wenn Ihr vielleicht, von häuslichen Arbeiten ermüdet, gerade einer solchen Lektüre bedürft! [Good and cheerful women and girls, page through this book! Perhaps some small scene will win your approval, and perhaps I can steal an hour from you with my pleasantries, just when you need such reading, after you are tired from household duties]” (5).\(^1\) As for Naubert’s tale “Der kurze Mantel” (The Cloak), one third of the narrative is a first-person *Binnenerzählung* or story within a story told by an older woman to a younger woman.\(^2\) So, although the authors of both volumes wrote anonymously, one framed her entire collection as a communication between women, and the other interjected first-person female storytelling into her presumed male third-person narrative. These moments in which the female storytelling is presented and directed specifically at other women may have been just the indicator a female reader needed to begin to decode the underlying subversive messages of the anonymous

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\(^2\) This is what Blackwell calls her translation, although literally the title translates to “The Short Cloak.” An earlier translation by George Soane in 1826 was called “The Mantle,” but as this word has fallen out of favor in modern English, it seems cloak is a better translation.
Eighteenth-Century Gender Discourses

These coded messages were not simply about individual experience or generalized descriptions of women’s woes, but an actual participation in a wider discourse that was occurring in the German states of the eighteenth century about the role of women in society. From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period and into the nineteenth century, the conception of women’s place in society and women’s work changed significantly. In the Middle Ages, men and women existed in “the norm of an unequal partnership,” the destruction of which Marion W. Gray describes in her book, *Productive Men, Reproductive Women*. Although men had more power and influence over women, there was an understanding that they were partners in the maintenance of the household. Men and woman had certain gendered duties, but also shared duties, such as managing servants. Women also occasionally had more power than men in certain realms, such as weaving (Quataert 5). As a consequence of the Reformation, however, this medieval concept of partnership was replaced with a domestic hierarchy in which the man was the head of the household and controlled all activities within it, including the work of women. In Martin Luther’s new faith, the celibacy of priesthood, monasticism, and nunhood were considered unnatural; so marriage became the “the primary source of order in society and the model for godly rule” (Wunder 44). As marriage became central to early modern society, constructions of gender and the structure of the patriarchy shifted. For the first time in centuries, men were expected to take charge of child-rearing and even child-birth, something that is evident in a growing corpus of *Hausväter* literature (Ozment 20). Of course women still had their own tasks, but now that work was to be delegated and overseen by men.

It was not just Protestantism that questioned and changed this view of women’s work
(Quataert 7). The development of the new bourgeoisie also changed the concept of a woman’s work and activity, as Ute Frevert details in Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit (Women’s History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation). Proto-industrial developments, events like the German Peasant War (1524-26), and the migrations following the 30 Years War all led to more regulation of work in general (Wunder 40) and to the creation of public and private spheres (Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte 54). All of these events affected the development of the concept family, “the polarization of sexual stereotypes, the rigidification of separate spheres, and the emphasis on female domesticity” (Baumgartner 43). Within this new set of gender norms, women were relegated to the private sphere and became associated primarily with domesticity, while men dominated the public sphere and were associated with productivity (Gray 17).

Although this process took place over centuries, the period in which both Naubert and the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen were writing was a critical time for the development of strict Geschlechtscharaktere or gender characteristics. Ute Frevert’s Mann und Weib, und Weib und Mann (Man and Wife, and Woman and Man) looks specifically at this period between the 1780s and the 1820s and demonstrates how definitions of women developed from brief physiological descriptions or explanations of duties specific to certain situations (merchants’ wives, for instance) to long, complex analyses of women’s physical, mental, and spiritual traits and how they compared to and complimented those of men. Karin Hausen also analyzes this period in her article “Family and Role-Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century—an Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life” (1981).” Hausen highlights “the last third of the eighteenth century” as the period when polarized sexual character descriptions were solidified and describes the end of the eighteenth century as a transitory period of “profound change in the social
institution of the family” (57-58). Towards the end of this important period and into the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the character of women became associated primarily with domesticity and women’s work was relegated primarily to the home and that of wife and mother (Gokhale 211).

In the period in which the authors of this chapter were writing, however, the discussion of a woman’s natural character was ongoing. For this reason, debates about the nature of their gender were popular in eighteenth-century articles, essays, and books. A good third of the primary works collected in Andrea van Dülmen’s collection Frauenleben im 18. Jahrhundert (Women’s Lives in the Eighteenth Century) touch on issues of women’s work and independence (or lack thereof). And the topic certainly did not go unmentioned in the most popular treatises on womanhood, such as Joachim Heinrich Campe’s 1789 Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter (Fatherly Advice for My Daughter) and Sophie La Roche’s 1785 Briefe an Lina (Letters to Lina), both of which talk specifically about women’s domestic duties (Gokhale 212). Not all contributors fell in line with the new gender roles, however, and Ruth P. Dawson (1985) highlights four works in the period that resisted the new Geschlechtscharaktere, two of which were published anonymously, though the authors’ identities were later discovered after their deaths. The topic was a dangerous one to engage in publicly, and Naubert and the anonymous author of Feen-Mähren take pains to hide their contribution not only in anonymous writing, but within the fairy tale narrative. However, since they were writing during the period when Geschlechtscharaktere were being formed, their contributions still represent a participation in the larger discourse on gender, one which would determine the future of women in German societies for decades after. Both authors coded a critique within a patriarchal construct that reveals the problematic nature of strict Geschlechtscharaktere.
and demonstrates the authors’ understanding of other voices in this discourse.

**Benedikte Naubert**

Until her identity was revealed, Christiane Benedikte Eugenie Naubert (née Hebenstreit) appeared to embody the proper woman as dutiful daughter, wife, and surrogate mother, but via her anonymous public writing she was able to make enough money to live independently and even to serve as the primary breadwinner for her family. An unusually rigorous education was certainly key to her success as a writer. She was born in 1756 to an academic family of professors and doctors (Blackwell and Zantop 201) and the early death of her father and the frailty of her mother left her education in the hands of two older brothers. She learned many unusual subjects for women in the period, such as philosophy and Greek, and had a mismatched but systematic and essentially classical education (Blackwell, “Fractured Fairy Tales” 168). She learned Latin, Greek, Italian, English, and French, and also excelled at some more traditionally female subjects in the period, such as piano, harp, and embroidery (Dorsch 225). In her own words, “Keine gelehrte Schreiberinn bin ich nicht [An unlearned writer I am not]” (Dorsch 23).

Following the death of her brothers, she began writing prolifically in order to support her family. In the period between 1785 and 1797 she published at least a book a year (and four in 1788). She published historical novels, “a genre, she essentially invented in Germany” (Blackwell, “Fractured Fairy Tales” 165) and *Kunstmärchen*. Her four-volume collection *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (New Folk Tales of the Germans) first appeared in 1789 and was amongst the first collections of German *Kunstmärchen*. Her first volume was published three years after Johann Karl August Musäus’ *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (Folk Tales of the Germans) and Christoph

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3 Letter to Friedrich Rochlitz, March 1805.
Martin Wieland’s *Dschinnistan oder Auserlesene Feen- und Geistermärchen* (Jinnistan or Selected Tales of Fairies and Ghosts). Like Musäus and Wieland, she was inspired by the folksong collection of Johann Gottfried Herder’s 1778 *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (Voices of the People in Songs) and claimed in an 1805 letter to Friedrich Rochlitz, “O die schöne Idee die uns Herder zu dieser Dichtungsart giebt” [oh the beautiful idea, which Herder gave to us in this form of poetry.]” (Dorsch 24).

Also, like those of Musäus and Wieland, her stories were very popular and were an inspiration to others. Achim von Arnim, folklore collector in his own right in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Wonderhorn), wrote in the Romantic *Zeitung der Einsiedler* (Newspaper of the Recluses) that her tales “sehr traurige Nächte erhellte[n] [brought light to very sad nights]” (Dorsch 228).\(^4\) Naubert’s tales were an inspiration for Arnim’s *Die Kronenwächter* (The Crown Guard), Friedrich de la Motte’s *Undine*, and Adam Oehlenschläger’s “Ludlam’s Höhle” (Ludlam’s Hollow). Ludwig von Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffman both cite *Neue Volksmärchen des Deustchen* as a source for their own works (Jarvis, “The Vanished Woman” 193, 197). Naubert’s historical novels also served as inspiration for works by Friedrich Schiller, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Heinrich von Kleist, and even the Englishman Sir Walter Scott (Jarvis, “The Vanished Woman” 193). The Grimms learned of her true identity in 1808 and consulted her before publishing their first edition of KHM in 1812 (Dorsch 228). They found her tales too far removed from the folk to be included in their collection, but her collection is mentioned in their notes.

The Grimms kept her identity a secret, but unfortunately, K. J. Schultz, revealed her identity against her will in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* [Newspaper for the Elegant World] in

\(^4\) Achim von Arnim is also the husband and father respectively of the authors to be examined in the third chapter of this dissertation, Bettina and Gisela von Arnim.
1817. Her final novel, the 1818 *Rosalba*, was the only text published in her name. As Jarvis clearly lays out in “The Vanished Woman of Great Influence,” “the reception of Benedikte Naubert falls into two distinct periods which roughly coincide with the period of her anonymity and the unveiling of her identity” (191). For most of her life she enjoyed the admiration and respect of her contemporary writers, especially of men, but following the revelation of her female identity her work was relegated to that of *Trivialliteratur*, even as the texts of male authors whom she inspired, Schiller, Tieck, Fouqué, Kleist, and Hoffmann, began to take their place in the German canon (Jarvis, “The Vanished Woman” 192-93). Even in the genre of *Kunstmärchen*, she had been a footnote up until the 1980s.

Prior to recent feminist scholarship, very little had been written on Naubert. She was first discussed in Carl Wilhelm von Schindel’s 1823 *Die Deutschen Schriftstellerinnen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (The German Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century). Schindel interviewed Naubert while she remained anonymous and promised only to publish after her death. Schindel’s is the first biography of Naubert, but offers no analysis of her work. The first lengthy look at Naubert’s work appears in Christine Touaillon’s 1919 *Der deutsche Frauenroman des 18. Jahrhunderts* (The German Woman’s Novel of the Eighteenth Century), another collection of women writers, though a more discriminating one. Touaillon spends over a hundred pages on Naubert’s work, but focuses primarily on her contribution to historical fiction. The first book-length analysis of her work also took a historical-fiction focus, Kurt Schrienert’s 1941, *Benedikte Naubert: ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des historischen Romans in Deutschland* (Benedikte Naubert: a Report on the History of the Development of the Historical Novel in Germany). Schrienert finally brings Naubert back into a discussion of canon and rightfully recognizes her as the creator of the genre of historical fiction and as an influence on writers across
Europe, most notably Sir. Walter Scott. Schreinert does not analyze her fairy tale work, however. Only in the last few decades have scholars begun to analyze Naubert’s fairy tales in depth. The above mentioned articles by Blackwell and Jarvis brought Naubert’s *Kunstmärchen* back into scholarly discussion in the 1980s and 90s.¹ Anita Runge’s 1997 *Literarische Praxis von Frauen um 1800: Briefroman, Autobiographie, Märchen* (Literary Praxis by Women around 1800: Epistolary Novel, Autobiography, and Fairy Tale) and books by Laura Martin and Hilary Brown in the last decade have begun to process of broad and lengthy analysis which Naubert’s work deserves. Still much work remains to be done and more specific work needs to be written on individual tales and stories. “Der kurze Mantel” is one of the more frequently examined tales of the collection, but only a handful of writers have taken up the challenge of analyzing it. Even so, there is still no analysis which looks at the story as whole. All critical pieces on the tale focus only on a section of the larger work.

**Overview of “Der kurze Mantel”**

In its time, “Der kurze Mantel” was quite popular, and was published in a standalone edition in 1791. An opera based on the tale premiered in 1824 (Henn, Mayer, and Runge 4:274). Both Brentano and Arnim’s *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* reference the tale in their notes. It was first translated into English in 1826 by George Soane in *Specimens of German Romance* under the title “The Mantle.” Blackwell calls her translation from 1990 a “correction and expansion” of Soane’s translation (205).

Perhaps it was so popular because it covered many genres, from European history to Arthurian legend to German fairy tales. The tale features characters, plot, and themes that appear

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¹ The only other recognition of Naubert’s *Kunstmärchen* in this period is in Manfred Grätz’s *Das Märchen in der deutschen Aufklärung* (1988), but Grätz only provides a brief overview which criticizes Naubert’s aesthetic and downplays her influence.
twenty years later in the Grimms’ “Frau Holle,” including the characters of Frau Hulla (Naubert’s spelling) and the Kind and Unkind Girls, Rose and Magdalene. These recognizable German fairy-tale characters are woven into English history and legend. Naubert had a fascination with the English language and history, which Brown details in *Benedikte Naubert and Her English Relations* (2005). Naubert describes a journey of the Kind and the Unkind Girls of the “Frau Holle” story as they follow their husbands to England during the Saxon invasions. Brown corroborates this as historically accurate and references historical documents which mention Saxon men bringing their wives with them to battle. Naubert uses English legend as skillfully as English history. The titular cloak of Arthurian legend can be found in in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven’s 1194 *Lanzelet*, Thomas Percy’s 1756 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and Pierre J. Legrand d’Aussy’s 1779 *Fabliaux ou contes du XIIe et du XIIIe* (Fables or Stories of the 12th and 13th centuries). Considering Naubert’s mastery of French, English, and older German texts, it is possible she was familiar with several of these sources and, as will be discussed later, Martin makes the case that she exaggerates the misogyny of these sources in order to demonstrate the power struggles of women in a patriarchy (95-96).

I will briefly summarize “Der kurze Mantel” here. The story opens in King Arthur’s very corrupt court, in which the naïve orphan Genelas is a casualty of the rivalry between Guinevere and the sorceress Morgane. Exiled from the court, Genelas is taken in by a kind old woman, Frau Rose, who teaches her to spin. While they spin, Rose tells Genelas her life story, in which Rose describes herself as the Kind Girl of the “Frau Holle” story though her complicated first-person narrative. In Rose’s story, she first reaches Frau Hulla through the traditional leap into a well, but later returns via a magical lead ring. Eventually, Frau Hulla fulfills Rose’s wish to become the best spinner in the world with a golden spindle, and at this moment Rose tells Frau Hulla that she values
the lead ring more than any a future bridegroom may give her.

After this last meeting, Rose happens to receive a ring from her future bridegroom, Martin, and goes with him to England, where he takes part in the Saxon invasion. Unfortunately, the Unkind Girl, Rose’s cousin Magdalene, follows shortly after them and causes many problems for Rose, of whom she is quite jealous. First, Magdalene burns Rose’s home to the ground, forcing her to sell her magical spindle in order to bring Martin home from war, although she had built up more than enough wealth prior to the fire. Frau Hulla later returns the spindle to Rose, but Magdalene poisons Martin against it, until he believes it to be a form of witchcraft. Forced again to choose between her husband and the spindle, Rose discards the latter, but she loses both when Martin realizes his mistake and dies of despair. Frau Hulla visits Rose two more times—in the guise of a man—to give Rose the gifts of an endless ball of yarn and a never ending piece of linen, but both times Magdalene intervenes so Rose returns to poverty. This is where Rose ends her story, warning Genelas about Magdalene.

In the frame story Frau Hulla, in disguise as an old pilgrim, brings Genelas beautiful yarn with which Rose continues to teach Genelas to spin. Soon after, the king calls Genelas back to court. At a court banquet, a page (again Frau Hulla in disguise) brings a magical cloak that can reveal a woman’s faithfulness. As it shrinks and rises, the cloak reveals the bodies and infidelities of all the women of the court, except for Genelas, whom the cloak fits perfectly. Then the page produces a horn from which all the men must attempt to drink. Only the knight Karados can drink from the horn perfectly, without spilling a drop. Genelas asks the page if he is not the old man who helped her at Rose’s cottage, but he only informs her that the cloak is of her own making. Several people ask who sent the cloak, but the page does not reveal it. Karados and Genelas wed and move to his castle in the far-off wilds of Scotland. Genelas brings Rose with her, and Rose finally escapes
her evil cousin Magdalene for good.

**Scholarship on “Der kurze Mantel”**

“Der kurze Mantel” is one of the most examined stories in *Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen*, and its portrayal of women’s rivalries and mentors has drawn much commentary by feminist scholars in the last few decades. As the story is split between the bourgeois world of the German fairy tale and the noble world of King Arthur’s court, so too are the readings of the tale, which focus on either the cloak chastity test motif or the story of Rose. In “Fractured Fairy Tales: German Women Authors and the Grimm Tradition,” Blackwell champions the tale for demonstrating positive female role models and a passing of wisdom from woman to woman, a wisdom that shows that compassion and truth-telling win out over selfishness and corruption. Marie-Josephine Diamond also focuses on the fairy-tale characters in her article “Benedikte Naubert’s 'Der Kurze Mantel': The Spiders in the Web of the Romantic Fairy Tale.” The article takes a Freudian perspective in its argument that Rose fantasizes about a loving mother (i.e. Frau Hulla). For Diamond, Frau Hulla’s realm represents a magical place in which Rose not only has a loving mother, but also finds her hard work justly rewarded, a sort of utopia of the Protestant work ethic. In Rose’s real life, of course, her hard work does not always lead to her prosperity, but comes between her and her husband. In the end, Rose achieves a happy ending only through the next generation, in which she becomes a loving mother to Genelas and their joint work produces the cloak, which is their salvation for a final removal from the corrupt pagan world of King Arthur’s court. Another critic that looks at the tale through the fairy-tale lens is Anne Thiel in her piece “From Woman to Woman: Benedikte Naubert.” Thiel compares Naubert’s tale with the Grimms’ 1857 edition version of “Frau Holle” and claims that Naubert’s tale gives Rose more power as woman because it places her in the position of both storyteller and the subject of her own story.
“Frau Holle,” on the other hand, is told in the third-person by a presumed male narrator. Thiel’s argument is interesting, but seems to be more of a question of genre, as there are no first-person tales in the Grimms’ KHM. In addition, the Grimms’ insistence that their sources were older peasant women makes her claim for a clear male narrator problematic. In addition, the Grimms were not viewed as partial authors until the most recent republication of the Ölenberg Manuscript in 1975, when the extent of their editing was revealed.6

No scholarship offers a complete analysis of the two worlds presented in Naubert’s tale. The remaining critics focus on Naubert’s cloak scene and how she plays with this common Arthurian motif. Both Martin and Tatiana Korneeva, in her article “Cross-dressing Strategies in Benedikte Naubert’s Fairy Tale Novella Der kurze Mantel,” examine the use of the sexist chastity test. Naubert problematizes this common misogynistic motif in two ways. First she introduces a chastity test for the men with the magical horn, something found in no other Arthurian tale, demonstrating the failings of both sexes. Secondly, according to Korneeva and Martin, she uses the tropes of the chastity test to display the problems of patriarchy. Korneeva claims that Naubert performs a narrative cross-dress when she writes in the presumed male narrative of the misogynistic chastity test. Naubert uses this scene and her sexist descriptions of female rivalry to encourage the interpretation of a male narrator and author. The addition of male test and the extremity of her descriptions, however, demonstrate the structural dysfunction of the corrupt, unfaithful court, a proto-feminist critique of patriarchy. If control over women’s bodies displays a man’s power, than the complete lack of control here shows both the powerlessness of men and the

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6 Only a recent Master’s thesis offers an example of a complete analysis. Lena Heilmann’s paper “‘Entkleide mich.’ Underneath Naubert's Vestal Veil in ‘Der kurze Mantel’” compares Frau Hulla’s veils and the test of the cloak, examining the ways in which the female body is revealed and covered and how Naubert fights against binary characterizations of women.
arbitrary nature of such equations. Martin similarly describes how within a patriarchy women’s power comes from her connections to men. The women of the court, then, have no choice but to battle over seemingly frivolous pastimes, such as fashion, because it is only through these activities that they can attract men and therefore to gain power. There is also much to gain by pleasing more than one man and so infidelity runs rampant.

**Analysis of “Der kurze Mantel”**

The cross-dressing of the tale not only takes place at the meta-level, however, but Frau Hulla performs a number of cross-dresses throughout both Rose’s tale and the frame story. Every time Frau Hulla leaves her world to interact on the physical plane with Rose or Genelas she does so as a man. Interestingly, in the Grimms’ collection, two of the three variants of the Tale of Kind and Unkind Girls feature male helpers, St. Joseph and the three little men in the woods. So perhaps Naubert was weaving multiple variants together, as she played with the gender or supposed gender of her magical helper. Certainly, Rose’s statement that she holds her relationship with Frau Hulla higher than a relationship with a bridegroom, and the fact that she must constantly choose between her husband and Frau Hulla could lead to a very compelling queer reading of the tale. The way in which Frau Hulla originally hides her body from Rose behind veils and her resistance to appearing in her natural form on the earthly plain imply a level of closeting. Kay Turner’s recent article “At Home in the Realm of Enchantment: The Queer Enticements of the Grimms’ ‘Frau Holle’” in *Marvels and Tales* makes the convincing claim that the Grimms’ “Frau Holle” lends itself to a queer reading. Turner and Pauline Greenhill’s *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms* features Turner’s queer reading of the tale “Frau Trude,” which is also about an interaction between an old witch and a young, disruptive girl.

While a queer reading of Frau Hulla’s cross-dressing could lead to a convincing analysis,
I recognize this cross-dressing as more directly related to the narrative cross-dressing that Korneeva argues Naubert participates in. The two worlds of the story are divided in many ways, which the above critiques highlight: England vs. Germany; King Arthur legends vs. German folklore; Romance tale vs. *Märchen*; patriarchy vs. matriarchy; nobility vs. bourgeoisie; court vs. country; third person narrative vs. first person narrative and so on. Although the Welsh Genelas is the supposed protagonist, it is German bourgeois values that triumph over the corrupt court of King Arthur and lead to a happy ending in which Genelas is able to remove herself from that court forever. Inherent in Rose’s world of the German bourgeois fairy tale is the value of honest hard work. Frau Hulla is even first described as a spirit who rewards housewives. In her realm, “Fleiß, Ordnung und Reinlichkeit bleiben . . . nicht unbelohnt [industry, order and cleanliness do not remain unrewarded],” (90). And so her cross-dressing on the earthly plane is an action not so much related to queer themes, as much as it is connected to her role as a goddess of industry and work.

In addition to Naubert’s assumed male anonymous identity of the *Verfasser*, Korneeva recognizes that the misogynistic motif of the chastity cloak created a “*mise en scène* of the belief that women are inherently lustful, [which] serves for Naubert as the principal means of narrative cross-dressing and the creation of her assumed male persona” (287). So not only was her identity as an author assumed to be masculine, but also she employed misogynistic motifs in this tale, such as the sexual female rivalry and the chastity test, in order to lead the reader to believe in a male narrator as well, though the gender of the narrator is never revealed in the story. But again, Korneeva, does not take the cross-dressing theme as far as it can go, for even in the narration itself there is another level of cross-dressing. In a double cross-dress that only Shakespeare’s players could appreciate, Naubert, a women writing as an anonymous man, breaks into her supposed male narration with a first-person narration from a woman, Rose.
Naubert, much like Frau Hulla, uses the power of a male identity in order to not only show the flaws of patriarchy as Martin and Korneeva suggest, but also to give power to the work and product of a woman, Rose’s story. Although Thiel’s comparison of “Der kurze Mantel” and the Grimms’ “Frau Holle” is simplistic in its claims that the latter removes power from the female characters because it is told in the third person, what is compelling is that Rose does indeed have more power than the traditional Kind Girl, because she, not the male narrator, tells her own story. As Thiel points out, because Rose tells her story in the first person she can describe the motivations and thought-processes behind her actions and frame her story as one about personal as opposed to universal wisdom (130). Just as Rose works hard to earn her own keep and make her way in the world, she is able to tell her own story without the need of a mediator. Of course, Naubert makes this possible by framing Rose’s story within male narration.

The cross dressing of the narration and the characters is a vehicle for women to control their work and the products they create (Rose’s story, Genelas’ cloak). Rose’s bourgeois culture values work and industry, whereas the world of the court values, as Genelas describes it, “die Geschäfte des Müßiggangs und der Üppigkeit [the business of idleness and luxury]” (141). This is a meaningful play on words, as idleness is in its nature the opposite of a business. If we are to believe that King Arthur’s nobles are like many nobles across Europe in the Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, then they would be precluded, sometimes by law, from performing work for monetary profit, therefore idleness was their business. For noblewomen especially, towards the end of the Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, this restriction became more extreme (Earenfight 3). So Genelas is right to mourn the loss of her happy time at the spinning wheel with Frau Rose when she returns to court.

Of course, Rose’s life is hardly one in which her hard work led to prosperity. As Diamond
explains her article, only in the realm of Frau Hulla does Rose find that “The lack of correlation, in the real world, between hard work and wealth, self-sacrifice and love is corrected” (66), for Rose’s everyday life is a “picture of peasant life for a woman without protection or material resources, [consisting of] deprivation and suffering” (64). Working as a slave for her aunt and cousin, she earned no money for her hard work, not even from Frau Hulla, who is said to reward the hard-worker with silver pennies. Even in Frau Hulla’s realm, initially her hard work is rewarded with proper room and board, straightforward praise and companionship, but again not monetarily. This is something Rose herself corrects when Frau Hulla offers her a wish and she asks to become a great spinner “so bestellt Martin draußen das Feld, und ich arbeite daheim und habe großen Verdienst, und wir sind gediehene Leute [so then Martin will work out in the fields, and I will work at home and will make a great profit, and we will be well off]” (104). Note that Rose does not ask for money directly, nor does she ask that Martin earn a promotion or become a prince, she merely asks for the skills she needs in order to earn money for her work. Traditionally, the Kind Girl is rewarded with either gold or precious stones, but Rose receives neither. Rose’s dream is to contribute profitably to the life she wants to make with Martin, not, as many fairy-tale princesses, to be wealthy and taken care of. Of course, Rose gets her wish and is able to earn money for her work, albeit with the help of magic. Strangely, it is Martin himself who continues to thwart her efforts. When she first goes with him to England, she profits well by her magical spindle, but she must sell the spindle in order to save Martin from execution. Of course, Frau Hulla returns the spindle to her, but after listening to the lies of Magdalene, Martin demands that Rose part with the spindle again. Rose must choose between her work and her husband, and, again, she chooses her husband. Sadly, though, she ends up with neither, as Martin’s guilt about their subsequent poverty leads him to waste away and die.
Once Martin is gone, however, she has a few more chances at using her work to build a comfortable life. The first is the never-ending ball of yarn which Frau Hulla gives her when disguised as a shepherd who tells Rose: “Machts wie ich, seht, ich treibe singend meine Herde aus, und singend treibe ich sie ein, und Segen und Gedeihen ist bei meiner Nahrung. . . . Ich netze meine Spindel nicht mit Tränen, und darum habe ich gut Glück beim Vertrieb. [Do as I do, see, I drive my herd out singing and singing I drive them home and blessings and prosperity are my sustenance. . . . I do not wet my spindle with tears, and therefore I have good fortune in the market]” (127-128). This must be a difficult command to the poor widow who is growing older and her losing eyesight. Still, Rose takes the message to heart. Sadly, however, her loneliness leads her to destroy the ball as she searches for a golden spindle at the center and another connection to her old friend Frau Hulla. So work alone cannot sustain Rose.

Once more Frau Hulla visits Rose and gives her an opportunity to become a profitable worker again. As the old pilgrim, Frau Hulla changes a piece of Rose’s linen into a never-ending bolt of cloth; but when the pilgrim returns in a year and finds that Rose has told Magdalene of her generosity, the linen ends and Magdalene is enveloped in spider webs.

Rose is punished consistently for talking about her good fortune and her interactions with Frau Hulla. As in the Erdkühlein story, Frau Hulla warns Rose about leading others to her realm, and, in a motif that continues throughout the tale, it is Rose’s openness about her experience that leads to her downfall. When Magdalene overhears her telling Martin about Frau Hulla, she is determined to visit her herself. Rose must discard the beloved lead ring to keep her away. Similarly, Magdalene’s knowledge of the golden spindle allows her to convince Rose to part with it twice, once when she burns all of Rose’s belongings and suggests she sell the spindle to save Martin’s life, and again when she poisons Martin’s mind against the spindle as a tool of witchcraft.
Magdalene further uses her knowledge of the spindle to play on Rose’s emotions so she will seek the source of the never-ending yarn, hoping she will find the spindle at the center. Magdalene also learns about the pilgrim’s gift to Rose, not necessarily because Rose tells her about it, but because Rose is not cautious enough in hiding her wealth. Again, Magdalene ruins this for her by attempting to earn the blessing of the pilgrim herself. As the pilgrim leaves Magdalene’s house, he (Frau Hulla) encounters Rose who was about to thank him, but “sein finsterer Blick hat mir den Dank erstickt, der auf meiner Zunge schwebte. Geh, Schwätzerin! Schien sein Auge zu sagen, deine Torheit hat dich um den größten Teil deines Glücks, hat dich um meine Freundschaft gebracht, gehe nun hin, und lerne mit wenigem zufrieden sein [his dark look drowned my thanks which were upon my tongue. Go, chatterer! His eyes appeared to say, your foolishness has cost you the great part of your fortune and your friendship with me, go now and learn to be content with little]” (135). Frau Hulla is clearly fed up with Rose’s inability to keep her good fortune to herself.

Yet she comes one more time to Rose, not directly, but through Genelas. She brings Genelas material which she weaves and Rose tailors. Frau Hulla controls the situation much more than she previously did with Rose. She does not merely give Genelas unending material to work with, but instead brings her just enough to complete each week’s work and takes away the previous week’s work at the same time, always “in Rosens Abwesenheit [in Rose’s absence]” (139). Each time she proclaims, “spinne Mädchen den Stoff zu deinem Ehengewand; spinne Mädchen, spinne, spinne den Faden deines Glücks! [spin, maiden, the material of your cloak of honor; spin, maiden, spin the threads of your fortune]” (139). When the cloak is finished, Frau Hulla takes it away and does not return with more cloth, much to Genelas’s disappointment.

Of course, as Genelas soon learns, the product of her hard work will be her ultimate
salvation when Frau Hulla comes disguised as a page to deliver the cloak to the court and lay down the challenge for every woman to try it. Another way in which Naubert subverts this traditionally misogynistic motif is through the ownership of the cloak. Although the act of measuring, literally, the purity of women with the cloak takes place, the fact that the cloak is made by women’s hands, by righteous women’s hands, changes the framing of the test. Not merely a method to humiliate women, here the chastity cloak is a way for a woman, Genelas, to clear her honor amongst the corruption and gossip that reign at the court. And again, that honor is upheld through her own hard work, which Frau Hulla emphasizes when Genelas inquires after her identity: “Frage nicht so viel, erwiderte der Fremde mit Lachen. Kenne mich oder kenne mich nicht, das ist eins, nur vergiß nie, daß die Faden, aus welchen dein Ehrenkleid gewebt ward, von deiner eignen Hand zur Zeit des Kummers gesponnen [Ask not so many questions, responded the stranger with a smile. Know me or know me not, it does not matter to me, but never forget that the threads from which your cloak of honor was woven, were spun by your own hand in your time of suffering]” (160). Note that Frau Hulla emphasizes that Genelas has saved herself through her hard work and her ability to overcome her trials. What Frau Hulla finds unimportant is her own identity, which she chooses not to reveal to the people of the court, who assume she is a messenger of Morgane. She also does not reveal to anyone other than Genelas that the cloak is of her own making, giving Genelas the opportunity to be an anonymous creator, if she so chooses. Since Genelas is noble, and work was frowned upon, although she made no monetary profit by the cloak, it is useful to have the option of remaining anonymous (like our author).

Each of the hard-working spinners of the story, Frau Hulla, Rose, and Genelas, differs in the way she takes credit for her work. Frau Hulla only reveals her true identity in her world and even then, only to those she deems worthy. When she first encounters Rose, she is swathed in
scarves, because Rose is not yet worthy to see Frau Hulla’s body. When Frau Hulla walks the earth doing her work, she always does so in the guise of a man, once as a shepherd, once as a poor pilgrim, and finally as a young page at the court. Clearly, Frau Hulla prefers to keep her true identity private, and finds a man’s form useful as a way of getting work done on earth. Rose, on the other hand, is afforded no such opportunity since she cannot take on other forms as Frau Hulla can. Moreover, Rose is terrible at keeping her own secrets. Magdalene learns all of Rose’s secrets, either through Rose’s own idle chatter or by spying on Rose’s home. Rose lives more openly than Frau Hulla and is willing to bring both strangers and Magdalene into her home for extended periods. Although her openness is rewarded by the old pilgrim (i.e. Frau Hulla) and her eventual relationship with Genelas, it adversely affects her work. If she could have been more secretive, even with her husband, but especially with Magdalene, she would have led a much more prosperous life. The final hard-working spinner is Genelas. Although we cannot know whether she is able to continue to work, we do know that, unlike Rose, Genelas has the opportunity to keep her contribution anonymous. Frau Hulla emphasizes that she must never forget that she created the object that led to her own salvation, but she does not reveal that fact to the court, allowing Genelas to decide for herself. Within the tale she does not choose to tell the court that she made the cloak, but it is possible that someday she may reveal the truth to her husband.

Genelas, of course, created the cloak with the help of Rose, and Genelas’ happy ending turns out to also be Rose’s happy ending, as she is finally able to remove herself from the poisonous influence of her cousin. The only remaining question regards their work. Will they continue to spin in Karados’ Scotland? Perhaps Scotland is far enough removed from the court that they will be able to pursue their passions in peace, or perhaps the ultimate reward is a well-deserved rest from work. Although Genelas’s sorrow at leaving her work behind for a life of “Mußigangs und .
. . Üppigkeit [idleness and luxury]” (141) reveals that this may not be something she desires. Rose, too, when given the opportunity to ask for anything of Frau Hulla, asked to be a great spinner so she could earn her keep, not for a monetary reward to live off or a handsome knight to support her.

For a tale that represents the marriage of Rose and Martin, one based on love, as nearly impossible to maintain due to the stresses of a woman’s place as both wife and breadwinner, the happy ending represented by Genelas and Karados’s union seems strange and out of place. If one looks deeper, however, Genelas has much more in her favor, although she will most likely also face struggles regarding her work. Genelas has three advantages which Rose did not. One is her removal from the world of the court and society in general, which will allow her and her husband to settle their disputes as they see fit without influence from outsiders, such as Magdalene or Morgane. The next is the presence of her mentor Rose by her side, which Karados has clearly already agreed to. Both Rose and Genelas are orphans who come into a relationship with a loving female mentor, but Rose was never able to visit Frau Hulla in the flesh once she had thrown away the lead ring. Her husband slowly eliminated her remaining connection to Frau Hulla, the golden spindle, by requiring her to sell it in order to save him and then demanding she discard it because of Magdalene’s lies. Genelas, however, will have Rose’s advice, support, and love for as long as Rose lives. Finally, Genelas has the opportunity to remain anonymous, at least regarding her past work, which may be the only way she and Karados avoid the sorrows of Rose and Martin’s marriage. While Genelas is lucky to have these opportunities that Rose did not, she will still, most likely, have to choose between her work and her marriage as Rose did, making her happy ending ambiguous.

As Korneeva and others have shown, Naubert uses narrative cross-dressing to problematize misogynistic motifs and to “promote a suppressed and subversive message” (285). So while
Genelas’s happy ending may appear to be a triumph of women’s modesty and purity, coded within the test is also a call for men to hold themselves to the same standards of modesty and purity. More to the point, within the second level of cross-dressing of Rose’s story we see the representation of the true struggles of a woman who is genuinely modest, pure, and good, but exploited at every turn. Genelas’s happy ending is only possible because of her class, and with the help of magic; nonetheless, her story demonstrates the possibility of women creating their own destiny within patriarchy via hard work, strong female relationships, anonymity, and a distance from society. Even then, it is murky as to whether or not women will be able to pursue their passions outside of the home and still maintain a happy family life. Although Genelas and Rose will no longer need to work, it is clear that they both find much satisfaction and joy in their work, and so they may never be happy as only wives and mothers.

Reflection of Themes in Naubert’s Letters

The story does not resolve the conflict between women’s work and marriage, perhaps because it is entirely too large to resolve. It is a conflict Western society continues to grapple with today and one that Naubert struggled with in her own life. Although the story does not resolve the issue, it does make clear that certain elements can make women’s work easier: removal from societal influences, a closely guarded private life, the ability to work anonymously, especially in the guise of a man, and support from other women. These are themes that not only work in the world of the story, but also reflect Naubert’s own thinking in her personal letters. Perhaps by weaving these themes into her published work, she hoped to contribute the same thoughts to a more public discourse, albeit in an anonymous and fictional narrative.

Naubert was able to achieve the above elements in her own life. She did not live, like many women writers of the period, within a circle of writers and intellectuals, nor was she married or
related to a male writer. Consequently, she was able to write, for most of her life, truly anonymously and maintain her private life in peace, something she felt very strongly about. She wrote to one of her editors about her desire to be called the masculine Verfasser and to remain anonymous to protect her private life:

Der Verleger der Eudocia der nun schlechterdings auf den Titel setzen will von der Verfasserin deßen . . . . ihn gewarnt nicht dem Buche selbst durch einen Beysatz zu schaden, aber besonders auf keine Weise meinen Namen preis zu geben, dies würd mich auf immer zurücksehen und jeden, -- o so oft verdienten Tadel, der zwar nie meinen Willen nur mein Vermögen trift – wider mein Selbst gekehrt desto schmerzhafter machen

[The publisher of Eudocia who is always wanting to put ‘from the authoress’ . . . . [I] warned him not to do harm to the book through an apposition, but especially in no way to reveal my name. This would cause me out of fear to give up [writing] forever and every, oh so often, deserved criticism, that indeed never struck my volition but only my wealth, would now be turned against my self, making it all the more painful] (Dorsch 46)

Clearly for Naubert anonymity was key to producing work in the public sphere. She felt that revealing her gender would hurt her books, which it eventually did, as Jarvis maintains in “The Vanished Woman of Great Influence.”

Naubert also wrote about the complex nature of attempting to be a working woman. In a beautiful letter to writer Louise Brachmann in 1805, she described the situation of the woman author:

Wir Dienerinnen am Altar der Muse – (daß es ja niemand höre, daß ich dieses stolze Wir sagen) – tragen das Kleid unserer Weihe nicht wie ein Alltagskleid, sind in unserm Hause gute Mädchen, stillen häusliche Frauen, gefällige ergebene Ehegattinen, geduldige Mütter, Köchin, Nätterinnen, Spinnerinnen beiher. Es läßt sich recht gut mit uns umgehen, und eine höhere Stimmung beginnt nur im Allerheiligsten der Einsamkeit, oder dem Freude, der Freundin gegenüber, die uns versteht.

[We female servants at the altar of the muses (let no one hear that I say this proud we) do not wear the consecrate gown as an everyday dress, [we] are in our houses good girls, quiet domestic women, attentive, obedient wives, patient mothers, cooks, seamstresses, spinners in this place. For us it’s left to find a way around this and the higher voice begins only in the great holiness of being alone, or the joy of being with a female friend who understand us.] (Dorsch 35-36).
Naubert was able to follow this higher calling and remain true to her duties as a woman, as a dutiful wife twice over and a surrogate mother when she took in her young nephew. It is worth noting that Naubert names female companionship as something that can light the fire of inspiration, another element which is prized in the world of “Der kurze Mantel.” Clearly the elements she demonstrated as key to working women in “Der kurze Mantel,” were just as important to her in her own work, and the story was apparently a vehicle for expressing those views in the public sphere, albeit in a coded form.

“Die belohnte Freigebigkeit oder das Glück der schönen Klara”

While Naubert’s tale focuses on the Kind Girl’s hard work, the anonymous author of the 1801 Feen-Märchen tells a Kind and the Unkind Girls variant which places a greater emphasis on simply winning a husband. In fact, a loving and kind husband is something this author describes as “wie es in unseren Zeiten gar nicht mehr giebt [That which in our times exists no more]” (32). Like many Kunstmärchen of German Romanticism, “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit, oder das Glück der schönen Klara” (The Bounty Rewarded or the Luck of the Beautiful Klara) describes a long lost age, in which, in this case, justice is granted to the righteous and good husbands still walk the earth. Not everyone in the tale, however, finds a happy end. The kind, obedient, and beautiful Klara marries a handsome prince, but the mean, selfish, and ugly Sabine dies a violent death at the hands of a giant. A deeper examination of these two characters, however, reveals that Sabine has little agency and is actually doomed by her natural ugliness and ineptitude at housekeeping. With very few options available for women who could not find a husband, the author takes part in a discourse about a woman’s place in the private sphere, arguing that there is no place for an unmarried woman. In 1801, the narrator may feel that there are no good husbands left, but the
message of the tale warns that girls must still make good wives or suffer the consequences.

**Scholarship on “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit”**

We do not know much about the contemporary reception of *Feen-Märchen*, but we do know that the Grimms were quite interested in the work. *Feen-Märchen* was mentioned many times in the 1822 annotations to the KHM. In addition, the Grimms made copious notes in their own personal copy of *Feen-Märchen*, which are available to us today thanks to Ulrich Marzolph’s 2000 re-publication of the work in which the Grimms’ notes appear in the appendix. The Grimms’ notes demonstrate a real appreciation for the collection, which they felt was closely connected to the oral tradition. They mention it in a footnote in the introduction to their 1812 edition in the same line as Naubert’s and Musäus’ collections, calling *Feen-Märchen* “die reichste [the richest]” of the three collections, but with the caveat that it has a “verkehrtem Ton [inverted tone]” (xix). This together with the clear French influence of the tales, made the stories of *Feen-Märchen* unfit to be included in the Grimms’ collection outside *Die Anmerkungen* (Marzolph 289).

Because of the Grimm’s interest, later authors and scholars mention the work as well. Ludwig Bechstein mentions it in his 1855 work *Mythe, Sage, Märe, und Fabel im Leben und Bewußtsein des deutschen Volkes* (Myth, Saga, Tale, and Fable in the Life and Consciousness of the German Folk), and Richard Benz makes note of it in a 1908 work *Märchen-Dichtung der Romantiker* (Fairy Tale Literature of the Romantics) where he calls the stories “sehr modernisiert und meist geradezu schlecht [very modernized and most quite terrible]” (68). Arthur Wesselski writes about the collection and its history in the 1942 *Deutsche Märchen vor Grimm* (German Fairy Tales Before Grimm) and is perhaps the first to guess the author could have been a woman: “aber vielleicht war es gar kein Er, sondern eine Sie [but perhaps it [the author] was not a he, but rather a she” (xvi). Wesselski’s overview of the work and analysis of a few stories (unfortunately
“Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” is not one of them) show how the collection has been dismissed for its French influence for over a century. Each of its critics—the Grimms, Bechstein, and Benz—describe only a certain number of tales (between 6 and 9) as being true German fairy tales (xvii). The collection not only includes tales with French influences, something Benz supposes is a result of oral tradition and therefore not the author’s fault (68), but also stories that would be better categorized as ghost stories and legends, which also makes it difficult for its critics to describe it as a work of German fairy tales.

This French influence is apparent in the layered style of the first tale “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit,” but the story also features bawdy language and violent descriptions that have more in common with German oral tales and ballads. Although “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” predates the Grimms’ editions by over a decade, there are clear connections with the Grimm variants of “Frau Holle” and “Die drei Männlein im Walde” and with traditional French variants which appeared at the end of the 17th century, “Les Fées” (The Fairies) by Charles Perrault, and “Les Enchantements des l’éloquence” (The Enchantments of Eloquence) by Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier. As in Naubert’s tale, the Grimm variants emphasize the importance of being fleißig or industrious. The kind girl is associated with both working hard and demonstrating an aptitude for spinning and house-keeping, whereas the unkind girl is both lazy and inept. In the Grimms’ “Frau Holle,” from the 1812 edition until the 1857 edition, the simple description of the girls remains as follows: “war die eine schön und fleißig und die andere hässlich und faul [one was beautiful and industrious and the other ugly and lazy]” (150).

Since “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” has a layered French style, the characters take on multiple tests and receive multiple rewards and punishments. I will briefly summarize the tale here: Klara works at a convent deep in the woods, where she passes daily tests of housekeeping
skill and resistance to temptation by the nuns. As a reward the nuns allow her to wash in a magical fountain, which increases her beauty daily, and they teach her to sing like a bird. When Klara’s stepmother and stepsister Sabine learn of this from an old woman, Sabine cuts off Klara’s hair, and her stepmother sends Sabine to the convent in Klara’s place. Sabine is a terrible worker, routinely fails the nuns’ tests, and plays pranks on them. The nuns give her two chances, but she fails both times. Sabine physically attacks Klara after her failure. Fearing for her life, Klara runs away with small bundle of food and a magical scarf made of her own hair that makes her invisible. Along the way, Klara shares her food with some hungry chickens, narrowly escapes a witch (who turns out to be the old woman who visited her stepmother and sister) and a monstrous giant. When she comes to a beautiful castle, her chicken friends reappear and help her when she encounters a strange old man who requests she lie in bed with him. In the end, the old man turns into a young king and the chickens into his parents. She marries the king and reigns as queen. Meanwhile, back home, the old woman comes again to the home of Klara’s stepmother and sister and shows them with a magic mirror Klara’s good fortune. Sabine is enraged and decides to go into the forest to seek her fortune like Klara. Her mother begs her in vain not to leave. Along the way, Sabine encounters two cats, but she does not feed them. She also encounters the giant, but is unable to run away. Desperate, she asks the cats for help, but they refuse. The giant throws her from a cliff and kills her.

**Analysis of “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit”**

Over the course of the story, Sabine swears and yells at Klara, cuts Klara’s hair and tears up her clothes, and even beats her “mit geballter Faust auf die Brust und ins Gesicht [with clenched fist on her chest and in the face]” (23). And she is no kinder to her than anyone else. She mocks the nuns and plays tricks on them. Even her mother so fears her outbursts that she very rarely
chastises Sabine. When Sabine seems as if she will kill Klara, her mother doesn’t try to stop her but helps Klara run away. Even as the stepmother helps Klara, she refuses to give her any meat for fear of what Sabine will do when she finds out. So there’s no arguing that Sabine is a bad-tempered, impulsive, and cruel child, who would do anything to make her sister unhappy. In fact at one point, when the old woman warns that she had better change her ways or she will end up unhappy and Klara happy, Sabine actually begins to behave. She is motivated not by fear of her own unhappiness but by Klara’s happiness, for she “sie konnte sich nicht Schrecklicheres denken, als die gehaßte Klara glücklich zu wissen [could think of nothing more terrible, than to know that the hated Klara was happy]” (24). With this terrible thought in her mind, she manages to control her behavior for the only time in the story, and works on the same level as Klara, but she cannot pass the final test the nuns give her and she is ultimately kicked out.

This is the key to Sabine’s downfall. Although it would appear that she fails because she is not as kind or hard-working as Klara, a true examination of Sabine’s life and actions shows that she would never have succeeded, even if she had tried her hardest. When viewed from Sabine’s perspective, the story plays out like a Greek tragedy. Struggle though she might against her fate, Sabine was always destined to be unhappy and to die young. The narrative itself is a system as unfair as patriarchy, in which there is no route for Sabine to succeed.

From birth Sabine is set at a disadvantage. She is born hideously ugly, and everyone in the town calls her by the name “hässliche Sabine [ugly Sabine]” (9). The natural comparison that occurs between her ugliness and Klara’s beauty, which grows quantifiably over the course of the story until she is one-thousand-fold more beautiful by the end, certainly makes this situation no easier. In addition, Klara is born with a natural “Geschäftigkeit und Reinlichkeit [industry and cleanliness]” and completes tasks that are difficult for Sabine “ohne Erinnerung [without thought]”
(18). The two traits of the Kind Girl in Grimms’ tales, beauty and industry, are traits with which Klara is born. She is also born physically stronger than Sabine, and when Sabine attacks her, Klara pins her easily.

This disadvantage would be enough to make Sabine hate Klara, but in addition she is constantly compared to Klara by others. When the old woman comes to ask her mother about Klara’s beautiful singing, Sabine notes: “sie ist über dem ganzen Tag bei den alten Nonnen—und wen Ihr singen hört, setzte sie sehr selbstzufrieden hinzu: das bin ich! [she [Klara] is with the old nuns throughout the whole day, and if you hear someone singing, she added with self-satisfaction, it was I].” However, the old woman replies: “Schweig! . . . ich meine dich gar nicht; das ist ein Unterschied wie der Rabe und eine Nachtigall! [Silence! . . . I definitely didn’t mean you. There’s a difference, like the raven and a nightingale]” (11). And when, at the convent, Sabine fails to live up to the naturally more cleanly Klara, the nuns remind Sabine “täglich an ihre Vorgängerin [daily of her predecessor].” This only makes her more stubborn and dissatisfied that she sensed “weder Zuwachs ihrer Schönheit, noch ihrer Geschicklichkeit [neither an increase in her beauty nor her ability]” (19).

After Sabine runs into the woods to seek her fortune like Klara, she appears to fail the final tests because she is too selfish to share with the cats. Sabine actually fails, however, because she does not have the same tools at her disposal as Klara. Setting aside abstract tools such as self-control and empathy, Sabine lacks the physical objects that lead to Klara’s success. For instance, although Klara has very little, she shares her food with two hungry chickens in the forest. When she is put in a strange situation later in the castle, the chickens return the favor, ultimately leading to her marriage to the king. Sabine does not, however, feed the hungry cats that follow her in the forest, and when she is put in a strange situation at the castle, the cats say to her: “Hast du gegessen
allein dein Brot, so trage nun auch allein in die Noth [since you ate your bread alone, so will you in your need be alone]” (39). This motif and similar rhymes appear in several traditional variants, but what is quite different in this particular version is that Sabine never has any food. Her mother argues with her about her leaving, eventually gives in, and makes her a bundle of food. Sabine, however, runs away before her mother can give her the bundle. So she cannot feed the cats and goes to bed hungry. Their taunting rhyme is false, but does emphasize Sabine’s fate to end up alone. In addition, the giant whom Sabine faces after the cats refuse to give her advice, is the same giant that Klara encountered in the forest. Klara did not, however, defeat the giant with politeness or kindness. Instead, she threw on her invisible cloak and escaped. Sabine faces the giant without the aid of a magic cloak and so dies. Again, Sabine is put in a situation where she cannot win. This is very unlike traditional tales, in which the two sisters face identical challenges, and in which the Unkind Girl often has the advantage of even more food, or strength, or tools at her disposal.

Sabine’s punishments for her failures are also unequal in comparison to her sins. She receives three punishments. The first is for the harmless prank she plays on the nuns, in which she tears up their roses and spreads the petals and leaves all over their rooms. For this, she is beaten with a switch and put overnight into a darkened cell, where “man weder ihr Toben, noch Heulen, und zuletzt auch selbst ihr Wehklagen nicht vernahm [one could hear neither her yelling, nor her howling, or last of all her moaning]” (20). Humiliated, she vows never to return, but her mother and the old woman convince her to try again. Fueled by the thought that if she does not succeed Klara may be happy, she returns to the convent and works as hard as ever. The only time in the story when she successfully controls herself, this episode shows Sabine passing all of Klara’s difficult tests and keeping the rooms as clean as her sister, which must have taken double the effort considering she lacked Klara’s natural gift. Sabine cannot, however, pass the final test of the
forbidden room, which she enters. Klara nearly failed this test herself, so it seems quite impossible that Sabine, even on her absolute best behavior, would have had the self-control to resist. One might think the nuns would praise how far she had come or encourage her to try again, but instead they curse her with a cat’s face and a long nose and send her away forever. Sabine’s final punishment, her death, appears especially unfair. Punished by the cats for not sharing food she did not have, she is forced to open the door to the giant. Without Klara’s magic cloak to save her, she can only stand terrified as the giant berates her: “Du elendes Geschöpf, du armer Erdenwurm . . . du abschuliche Häßlichkeit [you miserable creature, you weak earthworm . . . you abhorrent ugliness]” (39). Instead of shouting back at him with her usual sass, she says nothing and stands frozen as the giant’s eyes turn red and flames come from his nose. Finally, he throws her off the cliff where “ihr Blut floß von dem Gebirge herab, und ihre zerstückten und zerquetschten Glieder hiengen noch zitternd an dem spitzen Felsen [her blood flowed down the boulders, and her dismembered and bloodied limbs hung twitching on the sharp rocks]” (39).

As in Naubert’s tale and many fairy tales by women, there are two messages expressed by the story. First there is the more obvious moral, one which many more traditional tellings of the Kind and the Unkind Girls share: kindness, hard work, and modesty will lead a young woman to happiness. When one takes a hard look at Sabine’s lack of options and the strangely extreme form of her punishment, however, she is quite different from traditional Unkind Girls, who generally have more tools at their disposal, but still fail. As Marzolph notes in his annotations in the 2000 edition, “ihr eigener Untergang ist unausweichlich [her own doom is inescapable]” (307). So this moral can hardly apply to her. Klara’s fate is perhaps also out of her hands. The second title of the story is “Das Glück der schönen Klara,” which could be translated as either the “The Happiness of Beautiful Klara,” or “The Good Fortune of the Beautiful Klara,” since Glück could carry either
meaning. Klara is also often described as *glücklich*, which could mean happy or fortunate. Within the context of the story, most of the time it would appear that joyful and happy would be the more obvious translations of *glücklich*, but perhaps the title itself should be translated as “The Good Fortune of the Beautiful Klara,” for while Klara’s fate is in some ways the result of her hard-work and selflessness, it also depends heavily on her beauty, her natural talent for housekeeping, and the tools at her disposal. Klara is fortunate enough to have food to share with the chickens and the magic cloak to hide herself from the giant. The author could have chosen many other suitable replacements for *glücklich* and *Glück* to describe Klara’s happiness. Perhaps it was a deliberate choice to display one sister’s good fortune against the other’s bad fortune, as the last line of the story reads: “Der Tod machte erst Klaren’s Glück ein Ende; sie war zur Belohnung ihrer Tugenden bis in ihr hohes Alter, in einer ununterbrochenen Gleichheit, glücklich [Only death brought Klara’s happiness/fortune to an end; as reward for her virtues, into old age she was continuously happy/fortunate]” (40).

The strange role that luck and fortune play in the story muddy the traditional moral. Moreover, marriage figures more prominently as a reward in a way not found in traditional variants. Only one of the four traditional German variants, “Die drei Männlein im Walde,” features a marriage at the end. In the case of “Die drei Männlein im Walde,” this is related to the tale’s combination of motifs from the Kind and the Unkind Girls and the tale type of The White and the Black Bride. Since the latter half of the tale follows the White and the Black Bride narrative, the marriage is probably unrelated to the Kind and Unkind Girls altogether. French variants sometimes do feature a wedding, but it is always an indirect result, as the Kind Girl’s sudden wealth attracts

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7 The Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* offers a deeper, though perhaps not clearer, look at the ambiguous meaning of “Glück” in the period, Meanings related to fortune, fate, luck, success, happiness and joy can all be found in this lengthy entry.
a suitor. However in this telling, it is clear that Klara’s marriage is her greatest reward. As her mother-in-law-to-be tells her after the enchantment is broken, Klara “solle nun an der Hand ihres Sohnes, das schönste Glück des Lebens genießen [will enjoy life’s most wonderful happiness/fortune by taking the hand of her son [in marriage]]” (35). Klara’s mother-in-law references marriage, not love, as the source of that wonderful happiness or fortune. In fact, the only reference to word love is in the description of the husband as liebenswürdig, which literally suggests “worthy of being loved” (35) but in practice means “kind.” Furthermore, Klara is not described as loving him, nor he her. Marriage to a good man is the reward here, not true love.

Sabine’s final failure is that she cannot find a husband. The cats tell her that she will face her need alone. Their strange taunt may be read as another indicator of Sabine’s failure to marry. Just before the giant kills her, he also emphasizes her ugliness and unworthiness, which could also signal that she is unfit to be a wife. In the eighteenth century, failing to find a husband was considered by some a fate worse than death. According to Frevert, at that time the alternative to living a married life was to “als ledige ‘alte Jungfer’ im Haushalt der Eltern oder unverheirateter Geschwister ein nur geduldetes, freudlos und unnützes Dasein zu fristen, nicht verlockend [to eke out a barely tolerated, joyless, and useless existence as a single ‘old maid’ in the household of one’s parents or unmarried siblings, not very alluring]” (Frauen-Geschichte 44). Interestingly, at that time, the most important thing for a future bride was to possess “vor allem hauswirtschaftliche Kenntnisse [above all a knowledge of housekeeping]” (Frauen-Geschichte 41). As women’s options became fewer, and as woman’s role in the private sphere of the home grew, it became increasingly important that a woman excel in the only remaining occupation left to her, that of housewife. This was not a simple task since a household in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries constituted “ein äußerst komplexer Wirtschaftsbetrieb [an extremely complex center of
economic activity].” Nonetheless, as Frevert observes, “von der Dame des Hauses erwartete man, daß sie ihre Wirtschaft fest im Griff hatte [one expected that the lady of the house keep a firm grip on her household]” (Frauen-Geschichte 43).

Of course, this shines a new light on Sabine’s constant failures in the arena of cleaning and housework. As noted above, Klara has a natural skill for these tasks, reflecting the norm for women in the growing literature of Geschlechtscharaktere (Gokhale 211). Sabine, however, lacks this gift, as well as the gift of beauty. Additionally, there is not even a mention of her having a dowry. Sabine also has trouble with every authority figure she encounters; this surely would not fit well with the expectation that “Männer schätzten an ihren Gattinnen besonders deren Anpassungsgabe [men valued their wives above all for their ability to conform],” (Frevert, Frauen-Geschichte 39). Unlike the cheerful moral that encourages girls to be hard-working and selfless as they await their reward of a good husband, the underlying structure of fortunate and unfortunate sisters offers no such hope. It merely highlights the sad reality that a young woman who cannot demonstrate her worth as a wife is destined to lead an unhappy life. Just as in the tests Sabine undergoes, the punishment for women who are not seen as fit brides is extreme and unfair. The crime of being born unattractive or poor or for failing to learn housekeeping skills is to face the cold world unprotected and ultimately to die alone.

Like Naubert, the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen uses the fairy tale to take part in discourses about women’s work and role in society. With the coming of the Reformation, options that were once available to single women, like convents, were increasingly less available, and there was much written on the role or lack thereof for unmarried women in a society that recognized marriage as essentially the only option available to them. In Frauenleben im 18. Jahrhundert, Dülmen explains that an unmarried woman lost “ihre wichtigste Bestimmung, den eigentlichen
Sinn ihres Daseins [her most important purpose, the actual reason for her existence]” (297). Interestingly, the convent plays a role in Klara and Sabine’s story, not as a possible home but as a magical helper deep in the fairy-tale woods, just like Frau Holle, the three little men, or St. Joseph. At no point is it considered an option to join the nuns, and their rejection of Sabine twice is based on her inability to keep house and conform, the same as skills she would need in order to win a husband.

The anonymous author of *Feen-Märchen* is not terribly subversive in her underlying moral. Her message is in agreement with many men who wrote in the eighteenth century about the importance of being marriageable and the failure of women who do not marry. Dülmen includes excerpts by such authors in her larger collection. The titles of pieces such as Daniel Hensel’s 1788 “Die Lächerlichkeit der Alten Jungfer” (The Ridiculousness of an Old Maid) and Christian August Fischer’s 1801 “Allgemeine Verachtung alter Jungfern” (General Contempt for Old Maids) show the hatred sometimes felt for women who failed to achieve the “Hauptzweck des Lebens [the main goal of life]” (Fischer 316). With motherhood and marriage now seen as the “Zweck ihres Daseyns [the purpose of her being],” as Hensel describes it, an unmarried woman is no longer simply different or an undesired dependent, but “ein überflüßiges Glied der menschlichen Gesellschaft [a disposable limb of human society]” (Hensel 313). Hensel wishes that this unnecessary sector of humanity could be eliminated and that it might lie severed and twitching, just like Sabine’s limbs at the end of “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit.” Fischer, on the other hand, actually speaks out against the unfounded hatred for unmarried women, even though he feels it “scheint auf ihre verfehlte Bestimmung gegründet zu sein [appears to be well grounded by her failed purpose]” (316). His advice for unmarried women is hardly uplifting, however, and echoes the vocabulary of the anonymous author of *Feen-Märchen*: 
Vereinigen sich Armuth und Elend, euch noch unglücklicher zu machen; auch Leiden haben ihr Ende; ein Augenblick weiht uns alle dem Tode. Ach ihr könnt ruhiger sterben, denn ihr laßt keinen weinenden Gatten, keine hülflosen Kinder nach euch. Ihr geht still und froh aus der Welt, denn ihr habt im Tode euren Bräutigam gefunden.

[Poverty and misery unite to make you even unhappier; sorrows also have their end; in a blink we are all committed to death. Oh, you can die more peacefully, for you leave no crying husband, no helpless children behind you. You leave the world quietly and happily, for in your death you have found your bridegroom]. (Fischer 316)

The vocabulary used here by Fischer appears in Sabine’s death scene as well. Elend (misery or miserable) is used to describe Sabine twice in her death scene, and Fischer also describes unmarried women as unglücklich (unhappy or unfortunate). Of course, most notably, both Fischer and the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen see death as the only escape for the sorrows of the unmarried woman.

Here is where the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen offers a slightly different point of view. Like Naubert, she uses the motifs and structures of traditional, patriarchal variants to reveal problems of patriarchy. Relying on the inherent magical justice that is usually featured in Kind and Unkind Girls tales, the author uses a meta-narrative structure to depict the fate of Sabine to be instead, unfair and undeserved. As mentioned above, the Unkind Girl traditionally faces the challenges of the forest with more tools and/or better tools at her disposal. For instance, while the Kind Girl of “Drei Männlein im Walde” must go out in the winter in a dress made of paper with only piece of hard bread to eat, her stepsister is sent in a heavy wool dress with buttered bread and cake. When the girls encounter the little men, the men asked them to share their breakfast. The Unkind Girl’s refusal to share is made all the more selfish, because she has more food than her sister. “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” begins to follow this pattern, as Sabine’s mother puts together a package of food for her that is much larger than the one she sent with Klara; however, Sabine runs off before her mother can give it to her. So in “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit,” the Kind Girl not
only has more food, she is the only one who has any food. In addition, she is the only one to have an invisible cloak, which saves her from the giant who eventually kills Sabine. In contrast to the traditional variants, Sabine does not fail due to her own selfishness, but because she does not have the same tools at her disposal. If one were familiar with the tale already, then this unusual reversal of the traditional motif would be quite noticeable. Perhaps the underlying message is meant for other women storytellers, as Rowe claims they often are (308). In light of this change, the Unkind Girl’s punishment and death are not only not her fault, but a result of a system that is structured unjustly. Here the system is the narrative itself. Since supernatural justice is generally quite central to tales of The Kind and Unkind Girls, Sabine’s situation is an even greater reversal. Although the tale, like the essays above by male authors, clearly warns that girls must make themselves marriageable or die alone, “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” takes the time to display within the very structure of the narrative how unfair this reality is.

**Naubert, Anonymous, and the Grimms**

Try as she might to succeed, Sabine appears to be fated for a terrible end from the beginning, just as Rose seems fated to continue the same cycle of reward and poverty. Sabine attempts to be as dutiful as Klara with the nuns and nearly succeeds, but she falls just short. When she rushes off into the woods, she hopes to achieve what only Klara could, and she fails again. Rose receives the lead ring, the golden spindle, the never-ending yarn ball, and the never-ending bolt of linen, and each time she is momentarily rich, until she reveals her treasure to her cousin Magdalene who eventually finds a way to remove Rose’s magical boon from her life and drive Rose back into poverty. Each time, however, Frau Hulla gives Rose another chance. In both tales there is a frustrating sense that struggle as one may, there is no fighting against fate or the patriarchal system, which is so often championed in traditional narratives. Although Genelas is
lucky enough to find an honest husband and Klara a kind one, the stories themselves emphasize how rare these treasures are in a patriarchal society. This theme of fate is something both stories have in common with the Grimms’ variants in the 1812 edition.

Of the three Grimm variants, “Frau Holle” and “Die drei Männlein im Walde” undergo significant changes over the course of the seven major editions. In both tales, the 1812 versions display a similar approach to fate as “Der kurze Mantel” and “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit.” Changes made to the tales in the 1819 edition show the Grimms’ attempts to display reward and punishment based on a character’s actions or inaction, whereas the 1812 versions show reward and punishment based on inner worth and a character’s good or bad intentions. In the 1812 “Frau Holle,” for instance, the spinning scene next to the well does not occur. The Kind Girl simply falls in accidentally while going for water. This is quite different from the 1819 edition, in which she drops a spindle into the well and her stepmother (who was her mother in the 1812 edition) tells her she has to go in and get it. In desperation and fear, she jumps into the well. A desperate act, but a deliberate one. In the 1812 edition of “Drei Männlein” the kind sister is sent out to look for strawberries in the winter. The three men reward her for simply giving a kind greeting and tell her she will find strawberries under the snow behind their house. The unkind sister, however, is punished without the opportunity to act. The text does not even say whether or not she greeted the men, but only that they could see her “böses Herz [evil heart]” (46) and wished bad things upon her. In the 1819 edition, however, the three little men ask each of the girls to share her breakfast with them and then give her a broom and ask her to sweep their back porch. When the kind sister

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8 “Der heilige Joseph im Walde” remains nearly identical throughout all the editions and features only one note: “Der hl. Joseph im Walde ist eigentlich das Märchen von den drei Männlein im Walde (Nr. 13) [Saint Joseph in the Woods is actually the fairy tale of the Three Little Men in the Woods (No. 13)]” (275). The implication in the notes preceding the Children’s Legends claims that these religious stories are really Christian retellings of old pagan folktales (275).
complies, she finds the strawberries. The unkind sister rudely refuses to do either, which leads to her punishment. In the 1812 edition, the girls seem to be rewarded or punished based on their inner worth, but in the 1819 edition, it is their outward actions or lack thereof that lead to their reward or punishment.

Naubert’s tale and the tale from *Feen-Märchen* demonstrate a value system more closely associated with the 1812 stories, one in which fate plays an often unfair role in the life and death of young women and in which inner goodness matters much more than outward actions. Naubert’s Rose makes many mistakes that she expects will damn her, but Frau Hulla always recognizes her inner goodness and forgives her. However, her cousin Magdalene, even when she follows Rose’s actions to the letter, is not rewarded, because it is always clear that she doing so only for her own gain or to punish Rose. Naubert’s Frau Hulla rewards based on intention, rather than action, just as in the 1812 “Drei Männlein.”

Similarly, Klara’s and Sabine’s adventures in the woods appear to have much more to do with the goods they happen to have with them, than their own actions. Sabine is in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong tools at her disposal, and Klara the opposite. Such a situation is similar to the Kind Girl in the 1812 “Frau Holle” who simply happens to fall in a well and discover a magical world, instead of the 1819 Kind Girl who works so hard she drops her spindle and is figuratively pushed into the well by the cruelty of her stepmother. Unrewarded hard work does not lead the 1812 Kind Girl to the well, but something closer to blind luck, a theme “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” examines heavily.

**Conclusion**

As detailed in the previous chapter, the Grimms’ sources for the 1812 versions of the Kind and the Unkind Girls were mostly women (Dortchen Wild, Dorothea Viehmann, Amalie
Hassenpflug, and the Haxthausen daughters) (Bolte and Polivka 1: 207, 3: 101, 457). When the Grimms adjusted the tales to demonstrate more clearly that the girls are judged on their actions, they lose something that existed in the oral tradition: a recognition that in an unfair society certain people, and women especially, are not able to succeed by their actions alone. In the Grimms’ variants, supernatural intervention is needed to save the innocent from the abuse of her mother and reveal the evil heart of the favored sister. Both Naubert’s tale and “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” problematize that supernatural intervention. Even with the magical beneficence of Frau Hulla, Rose still struggles with poverty and Sabine’s unfair supernatural judgment demonstrates the problematic nature of a misogynistic tale that places women into categories of good and bad. By problematizing the very structure of the tale’s supernatural justice, both authors question the structures of a society that can imagine supernatural intervention as the only possibility for women to achieve justice. Both tales demonstrate the inherent inequalities of patriarchy that restricted women’s work and offered them no role in society outside of wife and mother. These themes are not merely interests of the authors, but questions that were being debated in eighteenth-century Germany. In a society in which women writers were seen as unnatural, these women used the guise of anonymity and the vehicle of the fairy tale in order to take part in that discussion and critique the status quo from a safe distance. Naubert’s letters demonstrate that the themes of her story were similar to her personal opinions on the topic and therefore her tale could be a way of anonymously injecting those opinions into the public discourse. “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” uses vocabulary and imagery similar to other writers in the period discussing unmarried women and therefore demonstrates a knowledge of the ongoing discourse and perhaps a desire to contribute to it via a

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9 As mentioned earlier, the only male source claimed to have heard the story from his nanny (Bolte and Polivka 3: 457).
fairy tale that is directed specifically to female readers. Both authors code their critiques in a metafiction, which draws the reader’s attention to the structure of traditional tales and motifs, such as the Arthurian chastity test and the supernatural judgments of Kind and Unkind Girls tales, in order to recognize the unfair patriarchal society which they represent, a society which offers women few or no options to earn her own livelihood or live independently.
CHAPTER 3: Respectable Subversion

The Dual Audience of Karoline Stahl’s Kind-and-Unkind-Girls Tales

Introduction

One of the first written variants of a Kind and Unkind Girls tale is Basile’s “Le tre fate” (The Three Fairies) from 1634. It begins with detailed descriptions of two stepsisters. One girl is described as “the most marvelous and beauteous creature in the world: her twinkling eyes cast a spell on you, her little mouth made for kissing put you in a state of ecstasy, and her cream-colored throat sent you into spasms. She was, in short, so charming, savory, gay, and mouth-watering, and she possessed so many little graces, lovely airs, dainty little mannerisms, and so much allure and appeal that she stole hearts from their breasts” (Canepa 281). Her stepsister, however, is described as quite the opposite: “the quintessence of all cankers, the prime cut of all sea orcas, and the cream of all cracked barrels. Her head was full of nits, her hair a ratty mess, her temples plucked, her forehead like a hammer, her eyes like a hernia, her nose a knotty bump, her teeth full of tartar, and her mouth like a grouper’s; she had the beard of a goat, the throat of a magpie, tits like saddlebags, shoulders like cellar vaults, arms like a reel, hooked legs, and heels like cabbages. In short, she was from head to toe a lovely hag, a fine spot of plague, and unsightly bit of rot and above all she was a midget, an ugly goose, and a snot nose” (Canepa 281). Although Basile’s descriptions are extreme, the characteristics of each of these girls are not, and nearly every variant prior to the nineteenth century describes the Kind Girl as incredibly beautiful and the Unkind Girl as hideously ugly. Karoline Stahl’s “Die Gevatterinnen” (The Godmothers, 1818) is the first variant of the Kind and Unkind Girl tale to feature an ugly Kind Girl and her beautiful unkind sisters.  

1 This statement is based on the variants listed in Warren Roberts’ The Kind and the Unkind Girls. Of those listed prior to 1819 none features a reversal such as this.
of many inversions of traditional motifs in Stahl’s Kind and Unkind Girl tales, through which Stahl demonstrates how patriarchal values corrupt young women.

**Karoline Stahl**

Karoline Stahl, maiden name Dumpf, was born in Gut Ohlenhof, in the historic Baltic region Livonia in 1776, and grew up in the German upper class of this Russian province. She worked as a governess for several decades in Livonia, Russia, White Russia (present day Belarus), and the German states. In the early nineteenth century, she began to publish stories in newspapers, such as the *Deutsche Unterhaltungsblatt* and soon published her first collection of children’s stories, *Fabeln, Mährchen und Erzählungen für Kinder* (Fables, Fairy Tales, and Stories for Children) in 1818. In addition to collections of *Kunstmärchen*, she also published several instructive readers, such as *Scherz und Ernst: Ein Lesebuch für die Jugend* (Jest and Seriousness: A Reader for Youth) (1822).

All of Stahl’s tales for children both entertained and taught important lessons, perhaps a result of her time as a governess. Her works are generally described as didactic, and she is often known for her associated with a list of sins that upper class children should avoid. One such list in *Lexikon der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Lexicon of Children’s and Young Adult Literature) reads: “Neid, Tadelsucht, Eitelkeit, Plaudersucht und Naschhaftigkeit [envy, name-calling, vanity, tattling, and snacking]” (Pech 450); and in *Die Enzyklopaedie des Marchens* (The Encyclopedia of Fairy Tales), she is said to have warned against: “Aberglauben, Eitelkeit. Spottsucht, Schmeichelei, Geschwätzigkeit, Streit, Übermut, Lügenvhaftigkeit und Naschhaftigkeit” [supersitition, vanity, making fun, flattery, chattiness, quarreling, arrogance, lying, and snacking].

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2 She is sometimes called Caroline Stahl.
In this respect, Stahl anticipated the Grimms’ own movement towards a children’s audience for KHM later in the nineteenth century, as well as development of didactic children’s literature with works such as Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter* (1845).

Stahl’s stories are also known for their mediation of French tales for a German audience (Jarvis, “The Wicked Sisters” 159), and she experimented with motifs from French and German tales. She was admired by the Grimms who believed they saw “großenteils echte, aus mündlicher Überlieferung gesammelte Märchen [for the most part fairy tales gathered from true oral tradition]” in her work, although they found her writing “nicht ausgezeichnet, aber doch einfach und ohne Überladung [not very good, but nice and simple and without embellishment]” (345). This treatment of women’s writing is somewhat typical of the Grimms, who praised women’s tales such as Dorothea Viehmann’s, when they represented true oral tradition, but were quick to criticize a woman writer’s style and talent, as seen in their descriptions of Naubert’s work in the previous chapter. Although they found Stahl’s style to be uninspiring, the Grimms found one of her tales, “Der undankbare Zwerg” (The Ungrateful Dwarf), worthy of including in their 1837 collection. Stahl herself had published the story in two editions of her *Fabeln, Märchen, und Erzählungen* in 1818 and 1822, but she is only referenced as a source in the KHM notes. The Grimms renamed the tale “Schneeweßchen und Rosenrot” (Snow White and Rose Red), and it became one of the best loved tales in Germany (Scherf 1042), all the while with little recognition for its original author Stahl.

“Schneeweßchen und Rosenrot” was not the only of Stahl’s works that was beloved. The 1855 *Deutsche Dichter in Russland* (German Writers in Russia) described her work as “viel gelesen [much read]” (Sivers 358) and the 1837 *Damen-Conversations-Lexikon* (Ladies Conversation Lexicon) described her as a “sehr fruchtbare und gern gelesene [very productive and
enjoyably read)” (389) author. While nineteenth-century lexicons describe her popularity and twentieth-century encyclopedias outline her many morals, neither take the time to analyze or critically consider her work beyond its popularity or pedagogical intent. Perhaps her position as a writer of children’s stories placed her outside the sphere of scholarly interest, or, as the Grimms describe, she is seen as only a connection to an oral community and not as an author herself. Shawn Jarvis has translated several of her stories and featured her in new collections of women’s Kunstmärchen, but in spite of these translations, we still have no critical commentary on her work.³ In an entry in Lexikon der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur, Pech notes that her tales preach against inequality and arrogance towards lower classes, “ohne jedoch die Notwendigkeit der bestehenden gesellschaftlichen Hierarchie anzuzweifeln [without, however, the need to doubt the established social hierarchy],” (450). This is perhaps the problem with her work, she is herself viewed by critics as popular and didactic, but not critical enough to be worthy of analysis. I have found, however, that coded in her normative nineteenth-century lessons for children, are messages for adult women of her time. These coded morals critique her society’s social and gender hierarchies and instruct parents and teachers on how to raise good children.

**Tales of the Kind and Unkind Girls in Fabeln, Märchen, und Erzählungen**

In three variants of the Kind and Unkind Girls in Fabeln, Märchen und Erzählungen für Kinder, Stahl examines how circumstances and upbringing determine whether girls develop into moral or immoral women. Unlike Naubert or the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen, Stahl’s characters are not born with traits of the Kind or Unkind Girls, but their caregivers’ choices and the values of their society shape them into these roles. However, once the character and morals of

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³ Jarvis’ translation of “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” appeared in Marvels and Tales in 2000. Her translation of “Die Gevatterinnen” was a part of the 2001 The Queen’s Mirror collection. Jarvis also included “Die Gevatterinnen” in the 2012 German collection Im Reich der Wünsche.
the girls have been shaped, and they have passed into puberty, their traits are solidified and they are unable to change again. Interestingly, Stahl describes Unkind Girls who have been spoiled with wealth, power, or beauty and Kind Girls who develop empathy, a strong work ethic, and modesty because they lack wealth, power, or beauty. At the end of each tale, the Kind Girl is rewarded with the very gift whose original lack developed her kindness, but she does not become selfish or vain as the Unkind Girl, because her character is already formed. Similarly, the Unkind Girl is punished with the removal of her beauty or wealth or power, but she does not become kind or modest, because her character has already developed.

The tale where this is most clear cut is “Die Gevatterinnen,” in which Stahl completely reverses the traditional paradigms of French and German tales, including “Frau Holle,” Perrault’s “Les Fées” (The Fairies), and Lhéritier’s “Les Enchantements de l'éloquence” (The Enchantments of Eloquence). These traditional variants consistently describe the Kind Girl as stunningly beautiful and the Unkind Girl as hideously ugly. The Kind Girl’s reward relates to her physical body. In the case of Perrault’s and Lheritier’s variants flowers, diamonds, and pearls fall from her mouth whenever she speaks and in the Grimms’ she is physically covered in gold. The Unkind Girl’s punishment is also associated with her physical form. In “The Fairies” and “The Effects of Eloquence” vermin such as frogs, snakes, spiders and mice fall from her mouth. In “Frau Holle” she is covered in pitch. The punishment and reward of the tale are so important that Perrault’s tale is sometimes translated into English as “Diamonds and Toads;” and another popular German variant by Ludwig Bechstein is called “Die Goldmarie und die Pechmarie” (The Golden Maria and the Pitch Maria). In “Die Gevatterinnen,” there are three Unkind Girls. They are, however, not at all ugly, as most Unkind Girls, but instead incredibly beautiful and carry traits of a traditional Kind Girl’s reward. Their bodies literally produce wealth. The oldest sister’s locks “glänzten wie
Gold. Fiel ein Härchen aus, so ward es wirkliches Gold [shone like spun gold. If a strand fell out, it turned into real gold],” diamonds fall out of the next eldest sister’s mouth whenever she speaks, and the second youngest sister’s eyes produce pearls instead of tears. Their names are “Goldenköpfchen, Perlenäuglein und Brillante [Golden Hair, Pearly eyes, and Brillicinta]” respectively. The youngest sister and the heroine of this story, however, is terribly ugly and has no gift of wealth. She is called “Lustig [Merry].”

The unusual appearance of Lustig’s sisters is no accident of fate, but the result of their fairy godmothers, who visited their mother in the shape of a frog, an owl, and a mouse. When the queen became pregnant with Lustig, she was visited by another magical animal, a fish, but this was simply too much for the king who asked, “Und nun noch einen Fisch dazu? Am Ende würden Schlangen und Molche und anderes Ungeziefer sich zu unsern Kindern drängen [And now a fish on top of it? If this keeps up, all sorts of snakes and salamanders and other monstrous creatures will slither their way to our children].” The form of the fairy godmothers and those that the father mentions include frogs, mice, and snakes, the same creatures that fall out of the mouth of the Unkind Girl in French variants. Since the father refuses Lustig’s fish godmother, Lustig is cursed to be ugly. He loves her all the same, though, if not more: “Das Kind ist mir darum doch recht lieb, sprach der König, wenns auch nicht schön und nicht reich ist [‘That’s precisely why I will love this child so dearly,’ said the king. ‘Because she’s not beautiful and rich’].”

As the sisters grow up, Goldenköpfchen, Perlenäuglein, and Brillante are always surrounded by admirers and their flattery makes the princesses “eitel, stolz, und gefallsüchtig [vain, proud, and coquettish].” Lustig, however, has no suitors and spends many royal balls in her

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4 All translations of “Die Gevatterinnen” are from Jarvis’ translation in The Queen’s Mirror.
5 Quotes from Fabeln, Mährchen, und Erzählungen have no page numbers, since, except for a handful of copies in German libraries, this book is only accessible as an unpaginated Kindle book.
room, practicing useful pastimes. She becomes “gutmüthig, wohltätig, fleißig, und geschickt [good-natured, charitable, industrious, and clever].” Their character traits are not a result of biology, nor are they simply a result of their appearance alone, but they develop as a result of how other people react towards their appearance. The princesses are spoiled “Durch die vielen Schmeichelein die man ihnen täglich vorsagte [from the many flatteries they heard every day].” The lack thereof allows Lustig to focus on being useful and clever. In addition, since she knows what is like to be less than others, so “ward sie nicht übermüthig [she didn’t become haughty].” Essentially, in the world of the story, it is society’s treatment of beautiful girls that turns them into selfish people.

One day, while all the princesses are out for a walk, they encounter a boy about to skewer a frog. Lustig begs her sisters for a golden strand of hair, or a diamond, or a pearly tear to save the frog’s life, but they all refuse. Consequently, Lustig ransoms the frog’s life with her own handkerchief. After this they encounter a group of boys about to nail an owl to a wall, then a mouse on a string that a boy plans to feed to a cat, and finally a goldfish that will be smashed. Each time Lustig pleads with her sisters to use some of their infinite wealth to save the animals, and each time they laugh and refuse. Lustig gives up her earrings, necklace, rings, hat, shoes and socks for the lives of these animals and returns home barefoot and unadorned, with a goldfish in a bag. She is scolded by her father for her appearance, but she simply shows him the goldfish she saved, which turns into a beautiful fairy. The fairy turns Lustig into a beautiful girl and tells her, “Siehe . . . , ich wollte diene Taufpathe seyn, ward aber abgewiesen und strafte dich dafür. Du rettetest mir das Leben, denn als Maus, und Eule, und Frosch, war ich die Pathin und Wohlthäterin deiner Schwestern, die so hartherzig und eitel sind. Sie sollen aber ihre Strafe bekommen und so häßlich werden, als du es warst. [You see, . . . I wanted to be your godmother, but because I was turned
away, I punished you. You saved my life. As a mouse, an owl, and a frog I was the godmother and benefactress of your sisters, who are hardhearted and vain. But they shall reap their reward and become as ugly as you once were.” The sisters become terribly ugly and, in spite of their remaining wealth, are not happy because they have to look at their hideous appearance in all the palace mirrors. However, “Prinzessin Lustig, blieb aber gut und bescheiden bei ihrer Schönheit, wie sie es vorher war [Princess Lustig remained as good and modest in her beauty as she had always been].”

Lustig is very unusual Kind Girl who is in some ways similar to a traditional Unkind Girl: ugly, vocal, and active; and in others, a quintessential Kind girl: modest, giving, and self-sacrificing. Moreover, her hard-hearted sisters are not only beautiful and selfish but selfish because they are beautiful. By granting them the reward of the Kind Girl at birth, Stahl plays with both the tale’s motifs and characters, as well as the reader’s expectations and demonstrates how a society that values women only for their appearance and wealth produces vain and selfish women. As I will demonstrate later on, these are the very traits that some writers in the period claimed that women were naturally born with, and that women, without proper guidance, would go to this extreme of vanity and selfishness. Stahl not only makes the case in this story that women are not naturally born with any particular trait, but also that the values of society itself were to blame for the vanity of women.

“Die Gevatterinnen” is not the only tale that Stahl uses to make such a claim. Another of her Kind and Unkind Girl tales, “Prinzessin Elmine” (Princess Elmine), comes to a similar conclusion regarding the wealth and power associated with nobility. Princess Elmine’s wet nurse abandons her in the woods as a baby and places her own baby daughter in Elmine’s place. Discovered and raised by an old hermit woman, Elmine grows up completely isolated from society.
When her adoptive mother dies, Elmine goes into town for the first time and is overwhelmed by the size of the houses and the amount of people. A family takes her in and gives her work caring for their geese. Although Elmine is “flink und gelehrig [nimble and teachable]” and can “spinnen und stricken [spin and sew],” nothing is good enough for her new mistress who often scolds her and leaves her to cry. One day a noblewoman stops in a carriage and asks Elmine why she is crying. When Elmine tells her, the noblewoman attempts to intercede on her behalf, but instead Elmine is cast out by the family. Feeling responsible, she takes Elmine back with her to court, where she has her cleaned up and presents her to the queen, Elmine’s true mother, as a possible servant to the false princess.

Elmine earns the position, but is wholly disliked by the false princess who is jealous of Elmine’s beauty. It is particularly bothersome to the false princess that Elmine can be more beautiful than her simply by washing with water, while the false princess washes daily with a special tonic “das die Gesichtsfarbe und Schönheit der Haut verbessern sollte [which was supposed to improve the color of one’s face and the beauty of one’s skin].” The kind and modest Elmine is unaware of this difference, but when the false princess offers her a bottle of her own beauty tonic, she “nahm es dankbar an, und ihrer Eitelkeit war es schmeichelhaft, sich verschönern zu können [accepted it gratefully, and it flattered her vanity, to be able to beautify herself].” This tonic was not, however, a beauty tonic but nitric acid meant to destroy Elmine’s beauty, a plan concocted by the old wet nurse. It is not clear if the false princess knows that she is her true mother, but she does go to her for advice and help. Coincidentally on the same day Elmine receives the bottle, a chamber

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6 Although it’s not clear if Stahl was familiar with Feen-Märchen or not, this is an interesting reversal of the role of beautifying water as a reward for the Kind Girl. Here it is a boon of the Unkind Girl’s class, although it appears to not work very well. There is, actually, no magic whatsoever in this tale, although Stahl clearly labels it as a “Märchen.”
maid accidentally spills one of the false princess’s beauty tonics and replaces it with Elmine’s nitric acid. When the false princess burns herself, Elmine is accused of conspiring against her and brought before the queen. Elmine’s belongings are searched for stolen goods, but instead the garments worn by Elmine at the time she was abandoned are found. The wet nurse is forced to confess, and the queen recognizes her true daughter. The false princess is exiled; “Elmine aber war und blieb immer so gut wie sie im niedern Stande gewesen [Elmine, however, was and always remained as good as she had been in her lower station]. “Prinzessin Elmine” is most closely related to the Grimms’ “Die Drei Männlein im Walde,” which also contains a White and Black Bride narrative in which the Unkind Girl is swapped for the Kind Girl’s proper place by her mother. In “Die Drei Männlein im Walde” and in the Grimms’ eponymous variant of the White and the Black Bride, the mother is executed for her sin.

The factor that leads to Elmine’s success and the false princess’ failure is not as clear cut in this tale, for the two girls are not relations, nor are they from the same class. A case could perhaps be made that Elmine is beautiful and kind due to her noble blood, and that the false princess, the wet nurse, and the abusive mistress all reflect more base traits of the lower class. Stahl, however, points beyond social class to another reason for the disparity between Elmine and the false princess. In fact, for Stahl, as in “Die Gefatterinnen” the environment in which each child grows up is the most important element in her development. This is evident when Elmine is given the beauty tonic by the false princess. Elmine has shown no particular interest in her appearance leading up to this moment and appears unaware that she is more beautiful than the false princess, as evident in the line following the receipt of the tonic: “ihrer Eitelkeit war es schmeichelhaft [it flattered her vanity].” This is the only time Elmine’s vanity is mentioned, and it seems that the effect was fleeting, since at the end of the tale we are assured that, she “blieb immer so gut wie sie
im niedern Stande gewesen [remained always as good as she was in lower class].” Though she may be flattered by the gesture, Elmine does not fall prey to vanity, because her character was already shaped by her upbringing and, in Stahl’s world, is now static. As beauty and wealth spoiled Lustig’s sisters in a world full of suitors, so too do the values and opportunities of court life spoil the false princess in a world where beauty is the highest priority and expensive tonics easily accessible. Elmine, however, is taught to value hard work, kindness, and loyalty in her life in the woods with only one loving and dedicated parent to make up the influences of her society.

The third of Stahl’s three Kind and Unkind Girls tales, titled “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” (The Wicked Sisters and the Good One), we find no princesses but only three country girls, as in the traditional variants by the Grimms.7 This tale is the most closely related to traditional tales, and in their notes the Grimms themselves called it “Frau Holle (Nr. 24) nach unvollkommener Überlieferung [Frau Holle (Nr. 24) by imperfect transmission]” (345). This tale focuses on the power of the family dynamic. A weak old woman lives with her three daughters at the edge of the forest. The two older daughters, Setti and Netti, take advantage of their mother and much younger sister Rose’s vulnerability and rule the family dynamic.8 They discover a cave full of valuables in the woods, but a sign warns that any who enters will die within three days. So, Setti and Netti convince their little sister to go in and bring them jewels. Rose does so, unaware of the curse, and finds a garden and house in the cave reminiscent of Frau Holle’s realm. Rose not only brings back jewels and silks, but also a sickly goat which she finds at the edge of the cave. This takes longer than expected and her sisters return home, assuming she had died. When Rose returns the following day, her sisters decide to wait until she’s definitely dead to claim her things. Rose

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7 This is the title Jarvis gave her translation of the tale in Marvels and Tales in 2000. “Bösen” could also be translated as “evil” or simply “bad” here.
8 Jarvis calls them Nettie and Bettie in her translation.
does not die, however, so the sisters go back to the cave themselves and retrieve more wealth. The sisters also encounter a sickly goat, but they kick him out of their way as they exit the cave and threaten Rose not to bring him back. She does so anyway, in secret.

Using their newfound riches, Setti and Netti abandon their mother, bring Rose along as a servant, and establish themselves in town as visiting nobles. They attend several balls, where they are assumed to be foreign princesses. Rose also attends, though in more modest clothes, and does not draw the same attention. At one of the balls, an old and shabby woman appears, and Setti and Netti begin to ridicule her appearance. The old woman does not respond but simply taps each of them with a branch. Setti’s and Netti’s finery turns to rags and the old woman turns into a fairy. She tells them she is the owner of the cave of riches and would gladly have let them keep their riches if they only were “gutmüthige Geschöpfe [good natured creatures].” She appeared in the form of the goat in order to test them and again as the shabby woman at the ball, but they failed both times. Citing their treatment of the mother specifically, the fairy then warns them that if they continue their bad behavior, they will be further punished. When they return home, all their riches are gone, but Rose’s remain. Rose sells her belongings and uses the money to buy her mother a comfortable home where she and Rose live happily until her mother dies of old age. Her sisters, however, “konnten die Beschimpfung auf den Ball nicht verschmerzen, und den Verlust so vieler Herrlichkeiten; dazu waren sie voll Wuth und Misgunst über Rosens Glück. Das zog Beiden das Gallenfieber zu, und sie starben nach einem Jahre [could not overcome the humiliation at the ball and the desire for more splendor; they were therefore full of anger and resentment about Rose’s luck. This led both of them to develop bilious fever, and they died within the year].”

As in the previous two tales, the Unkind Girls are ultimately punished by their own egos. Unable to appreciate anything beyond power and wealth, Setti and Netti cannot overcome their
humiliation in town, partially because the humiliation has closed forever the route to rising in society. Completely confident in their place at the ball, they were anxious to stand out and appear the wealthiest of all the women in attendance. Their sister, Rose, however, was more modest and cautious, taking care to blend in and not draw attention. In addition, once the girls were put in their place by the fairy, they lost control of the family dynamic as well. Afraid of what the fairy might do if they harmed their mother or Rose, they could only passively envy Rose’s wealth, but had no route to take advantage of her or their mother as before. In this case, the sisters were spoiled by the power they had asserted over their family members, which not only kept them from earning their keep in the household, but also inflated their sense of self-importance. Rose, on the other hand, develops a deep empathy as the underdog in the family and the constant defender of her weakened mother. Even in town, Rose begs Setti and Netti to allow her to return and check in on their mother, and for this “schlugen die beiden bösen Drachen sie unbarmherzig [the two evil dragons beat her without mercy].” Because of her position as victim and defender, Rose develops a deep empathy for others, which she demonstrates to the fairy by saving the goat, even when her sisters tell her not to on their second visit to the cave.

**Similarities amongst Stahl’s Tales**

Rose’s sisters and Lustig’s sisters of “Die Gevatterinnen” both make the mistake of ignoring animals in need who happen to be fairies in disguise. Although the false princess in “Prinzessin Elmine” does not face a test with an animal, she also fails to show empathy for someone lesser than herself when she actively schemes against the innocent and twice-abandoned Elmine. All of Stahl’s Unkind Girls are so completely selfish that they fail to recognize anyone’s needs but their own, even when those needs are clearly expressed or, in the case of Lustig, begged for. Stahl’s Unkind Girls are also vain and obsessed with material things. When they lose these
physical treasures, they are completely unable to cope. Lustig’s sisters are despondent for the rest of their lives because they must see their ugly faces every day in all the mirrors of the palace. Rose’s sisters die over the loss of the beautiful possessions they will never again attain. When faced with a commoner who somehow manages to be beautiful without wealth, Elmine goes to her nursemaid for advice and does not hesitate to physically maim her competitor, ultimately leading to her exile.

All of the Unkind Girls value their appearance and their material goods above all other things, but as Stahl depicts the Unkind Girls, their misguided values are not necessarily caused by their inherent flaws, but instead by the society in which they are raised. For instance, in “Die Gevatterinnen” emphasis is placed on the development of vanity vis-à-vis the praise of others. Perlenäuglein, Brillante, and Goldenköpfchen “wurden . . . durch die vielen Schmeicheleien die man ihnen täglich vorsagte, eitel, stolz, und gefallsüchtig [became . . . through the many flatteries they heard daily, vain, proud, and coquettish].” In “Prinzessin Elmine” and “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute,” the reason for the Unkind Girls’ development is not as clearly defined, but as in “Die Gevatterinnen” all of them are spoiled by some advantage or excess that is not held in check, whether it be beauty, wealth, or power. Moreover, each Unkind Girl is responding to what is valued in the world around them. The court of “Prinzessin Elmine” places high value on appearances, evident when Elmine must be cleaned and dressed up before being presented to the queen. The false princess has also clearly learned that her appearance is her most important asset, since she appears to devote all her money and energy to maintaining that appearance. Setti and Netti do not grow up in court, but they certainly have learned that appearing to be rich is the only way to rise in society. Once they have found wealth, their first instinct is to attend a ball so that everyone can see their finery; and they begin to succeed in fooling everyone that they are princesses until the
fairy ruins them. They can never overcome this humiliation because it has destroyed the path to higher society. This is the other element that nearly all the Unkind Girls have in common: they are unable to cope with their changed circumstances. One might think that, like the Kind Girls, they could develop into kinder beings through their lack, but although Stahl demonstrates the development of children, she does not make room for their development as adults. Over the course of their childhood and maturation into adults, the Unkind Girls have been socialized to value appearances and material things above all, and as adults they are lost without them.

The Kind Girls are equally incapable of growing further as adults and adopting new values, however, because they value more than their physical traits and material things, they are able to remain contented without them. In addition, when the Kind Girls do come into wealth or beauty, since these things matter little to them, they are not corrupted in the same way. Stahl displays how each heroine develops her strong character through a combination of lack and the environment in which she is raised. Our three heroines, Lustig, Elmine, and Rose, are all at an unfair deficit at the beginning of the tales. Lustig loses her beauty due to her father’s dislike of fairies, Elmine falls to poverty because of her evil wet nurse, and Rose is tormented and beaten by her older sisters simply because she is younger and therefore weaker. Each child’s disadvantage becomes an advantage. Lustig grows up selfless and brave because she has no suitors to skew her ego. Elmine is hardworking and modest because she grows up away from money and power. Rose is empathetic because she is an underdog and the defender of her dear mother. Each of the heroines passes her test, precisely because of lessons she learned from her specific hardship. Lustig has no love of vanity or material things and happily gives away her riches to save the animals; Elmine is hardworking, polite, and honest, which earns her a place at the palace; and Rose’s empathy for the hungry goat eventually makes her rich and frees her from her sisters’ cruelty. Each of the heroines
is then rewarded by being granted the very item whose lack helped her develop into a good person. Lustig is made beautiful, Elmine is given her wealth and nobility back, and Rose becomes rich and essentially the ruler of her family. Most importantly, however, pains are taken in each story to point out that although each of the heroines now has the very thing whose lack made her a better person, she does not become like the Unkind Girls. Instead, she remains her kind, modest, hard-working, loving, empathetic self.

Although each of the Kind Girls is rewarded and happy at the end of the tale, none of Stahl’s Kind Girls marries. This is in stark contrast to Naubert’s tale and the tale from *Feen-Märchen*, which not only feature marriage, but meditate throughout on its role in women’s lives. Stahl’s Kind Girls do not end up alone, however; they each spend their happy lives with a loving parent. Lustig has her father who loves her in spite of her ugliness and is the only one described as present at the moment the fairy praises and rewards her. As a result of her journey, Elmine is able to reunite with her biological mother, who “sie zärtlich liebte [loved her [Elmine] dearly].” Rose is finally able to live in peace and comfort with her much abused mother. In fact, the last sentence of “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” reads, “Rose aber war so glücklich, ihre gute Mutter bis in das höchste Alter bei sich zu sehen und sie pflegen zu können [Rose, however, was ever so happy to see her mother live into her old age and to be able to care for her].” In some ways the parents are also rewarded for raising a kind child. Of course, Elmine’s mother is not able to raise her, but she is rewarded for loving her and for giving her the opportunity at the palace. Lustig and Rose also have siblings who are not kind, but their parents are not punished for raising them poorly. The only punished mother is that of the false princess, who is executed for switching the babies.

Stahl reverses yet another traditional motif of Kind and Unkind Girls tales here: the
moth[e]r’s punishment. Since in many variants the Unkind Girl is the mother’s favorite and only biological child, her special attentions are often blamed for the Unkind Girl’s behavior, for which she is punished. At the end of “Drei Männlein im Walde,” the mother and the Unkind Girl are executed for the same trick Elmine’s nursemaid attempted: they try to put the Unkind Girl in the Kind Girl’s place at the palace. They are put in a barrel of nails and rolled down a hill. The Unkind Girl also dies at the end of “Der Heilige Joseph im Walde,” in this case vipers bite her and she dies. The mother suffers the same fate as punishment for her bad parenting: “der Mutter stachen sie in den Fuss, weil sie es nicht besser erzogen hatte [they [the vipers] stung the mother in the foot, because she had not raised her better]” (432). These traditional stories focus on parenting failures. On the one hand, the children should not be treated differently, a parent, even a stepparent, should not treat one child better than the other. The death or punishment of the favored child at the end demonstrates that, though the parent may have done so out of love, her favoritism actually spoiled her child and led to that child’s punishment and/or death. In the case of “Die Drei Männlein im Walde” and “Der Heilige Joseph im Walde,” in addition to losing her child, the mother herself is punished. Stahl does not, however, emphasize the results of bad parenting, but focuses instead on the effect of a good parent. Instead of depicting punishments for poor parents, she depicts rewards for good ones. Also, although Stahl depicts how her Unkind Girls are spoiled, she puts the greatest emphasis on the Kind Girls and how they develop strong characters. Unlike the traditional variants above, the Unkind Girls are not as severely punished, but in some cases their inability to adjust to their lowered circumstances leads to despair and death, further emphasizing the importance of strong character and the danger of vanity.

Coded Messages for an Adult Audience

As refreshing as it is see that none of the girls was rewarded with a rich, handsome husband,
the ending may be unrelated to demonstrating their worth outside a life of marriage. Instead this may be a signal to the implied reader of these stories. Although Stahl’s work only marks the beginning of the development of children’s literature in Germany, and it was identified as such when published. Her publishers, at least, expected her readers to be children. I would argue, however, that Stahl did not necessarily see it that way. When we examine these stories, there is textual evidence that Stahl had two implied readers (to use Wolfgang Iser’s term). While on the one hand, the stories and morals seem to be constructed with a child reader in mind, on the other hand, there are coded morals that are intended for the caretakers and teachers of those children, who would have been mostly women. For centuries in upper-class Europe, nannies and mothers were the first to instruct children in reading. In *A History of Reading*, Alberto Manguel finds references to this as far back as the fifteenth century and claims “the image of the teaching mother-figure was as common in Christian iconography as the female student was rare” (72). While young men would go on to have male teachers, girls would continue to be instructed in reading and writing by a mother or a governess would be brought in (72). Although these women would have focused their teaching on the bible alone in earlier centuries (Manguel 73), as children’s literature developed in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, other texts were also seen as suitable for instruction. In order to teach with such texts, the women would have to themselves be familiar with the works. As a governess herself, Stahl would have had first-hand experience as an adult woman who read literature meant for children. This fits into modern theories of children’s literature, such as the concept of the dual audience coined by Barbara Wall in *The Narrator’s Voice*.

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9 Iser used the term “implied reader” to refer to the author’s envisioned reader. However, unlike Erwin Wolff’s “intended reader,” the implied reader can only be determined by textual evidence, not by the author’s own description of his or her work (Holub 50). In line with implied coding, analysis of the text itself reveals the implied reader and there is no need for the author to explicitly state a reader.
(1991). According to Wall every work of children’s literature speaks to both a child and an adult audience, due to the nature of its being written by an adult, and generally purchased by adults. Just as there are jokes aimed at the parental audience in children’s television and film today, there are messages for an adult audience of caretakers coded in Stahl’s stories. Perry Nodelman examines this further in *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (2008) and argues that the adult writer may try to repress the adult perspective, but ultimately all children’s literature by adults will carry markers of the adult experience. In the case of Stahl, she reveals her adult bias in her stories and even more actively attempts to communicate to the implied adult reader.

Although children may benefit from Stahl’s depiction of the dangers of vanity and selfishness, the structure of her tales undermines the nature of these morals, critiques German social values, and provides an adult, mostly female, audience with a blueprint for raising good children in a problematic environment. As in “Der kurze Mantel” and “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit,” although there is a moral that appears to encourage girls to be kind, modest, brave, honest, and hard-working, the structure of the tale reveals that it is quite out of the power of the individual characters to make these choices. Stahl’s characters are in some ways fated, not by their birth or class, but their upbringing and environment. If Lustig is empathetic and willing to sacrifice material goods because she is ugly and poor, then it is hard to use the story to show a rich child why she should choose to emulate Lustig. Stahl’s tales do include characters who make life-altering choices, however, and these are the parents and caretakers who raise the children. Even when social circumstances reduce a young girl’s worth to her wealth or appearance, Stahl demonstrates tactics to develop good character.

In Stahl’s world, society is dangerous because of the importance it places on a girl’s appearance. This leads each of Stahl’s Unkind Girls to see her appearance as her greatest asset,
which not only leads to her despair when she loses it, but also keeps her from developing other traits. Through her depiction of the Kind Girls, Stahl demonstrates some methods for avoiding this corruption. In the case of Elmine, removal from such society until the child has come of age works out well enough. In contrast, it is not possible for Lustig be sent away to live apart from her family. In this story, the role of the parent is emphasized. Lustig’s father made an effort to love her specifically because she was not beautiful, so Lustig knew that her father loved her for more than appearance or wealth. Her sisters’ suitors praised only beauty, and so the princesses understood beauty to be the only trait worth having. Had Lustig’s father spurned her in the same way potential suitors did, then she may not have believed herself to be worthy of love. His dedication to loving her gave her the opportunity to find self-worth in other facets of life.

Stahl’s Unkind Girls fall prey to the evils not only of flattery but also of wealth and power. Although Stahl does not denounce either entirely, she depicts giving a child unchecked access to them as dangerous. Since characters such as Perlenäuglein, Brillante, Goldenköpchen, and the false princess have access to more wealth than they could ever have use for, they freely spend their money on adornments, trinkets, and foolish beauty elixirs, but are unwilling to use their money to help anyone lesser than them. Because they have never been without money, they are unable to empathize with those in need and therefore are selfish and cruel. Setti, Netti, and the false princess also have a level of power which allows them to get whatever they want. Although Elmine’s mother the queen may have been a good parent, it is clear that the false princess is used to going to her nursemaid whenever she needs something. Since they never have to share or take into account the needs of others, they also develop into selfish women who make poor choices with money. Setti and Netti immediately want to use their wealth to grow in popularity and renown in the high society of town, whereas Rose wisely sells her things in order to secure a comfortable
home and life for her and their mother.

Finally, although Stahl’s ideal young girl is modest and kind, she is not obedient or subservient. Lustig does not hesitate to speak up for the animals being tortured, although this means arguing with older boys. Furthermore, she does not apologize when her father scolds her for returning home without shoes, gloves, or a hat. Nor does Elmine hesitate to explain to the lady in the coach exactly what her employer has done to her or to say that it is wrong. These are no Cinderella tales, and loyalty to unkind masters is not praised. Rose, the most Cinderella-like of all, still argues with her sisters about their treatment of their mother until they beat her. She also rescues the goat the second time in secret against their specific command. Rose is more than willing to disobey her cruel sisters for the sake of others.

Even Stahl’s fairies do not seem to mind disobedience, as long as the disobedient are kind. The fairy of “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” did post a sign which claimed one would die within three days of entering the cave, but in actuality she only punished Setti and Netti for refusing to take pity on the hungry goat. Even then, they died only because of their own inability to live with humiliation. Rose, on the other hand, entered the cave twice and was allowed to keep all that she took. In this way the fairy is reminiscent of the Frau Hulla character in “Der kurze Mantel,” who gives many chances to another Kind Girl called Rose.10 The fairy draws her conclusions quite differently from Frau Hulla, however, since she is testing the actions of the sisters and rewarding and punishing them accordingly, in the way of the Grimms’ variants in the 1819 and 1837 editions. Frau Hulla, on the other hand, was less interested in the results of her tests and rewarded and

10 It is possible that this is a reference to Naubert’s tale, which was published thirty years before Stahl’s collection. Stahl’s stories show the influence of German and French traditions, both written and oral. This influence exists even in her stories published before the Grimms’ first edition of 1812. Naubert’s Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen could have been one of those German influences.
punished according to the intentions of Rose and Magdalene, as in the Grimms’ 1812 variants.

In this way Stahl predicts the Grimms own turn towards a child audience and a didactic framework for their tales in later editions. The Grimms changed their variants from a model that rewarded inner goodness in 1812 to one that rewarded a character’s actions in 1819 and 1837. A year before the second edition was published, however, Stahl’s collection appeared with Kind and Unkind Girls tales that already emphasized action. Stahl’s Kind Girls, however, do develop a bit more than the Grimms ever allow their corresponding characters to develop. The limits set by the girls’ caretakers or by their situation force them to develop strong a moral will that allows them to flourish mentally and spiritually regardless of their physical situation and that makes them brave for the sake of their own and others’ well-being. However, once they are grown, their development stops. This is Stahl’s coded warning for her adult readers: childhood is short and the window can close. Appearances are easily changed, but character is not. Society will praise the beautiful child and ignore the ugly, but parents and teachers must work to counteract that destructive attitude towards a young girl’s worth, for the sake of both the beautiful children and the ugly. A child brought up to value more than her appearance and wealth will survive whether poor or rich, pretty or ugly, but a child brought up only to value money and beauty will find herself poorly equipped come poverty and old age.

Changing the Public Sphere via the Private

Unlike Naubert or the anonymous author of Feen-Märchen, Stahl does not code her messages within misogynistic stories. Her Kind Girls are brave and disobedient, and her Unkind Girls have unusual traits of beauty, wealth, fashion, and power. Stahl’s guise is instead that of children’s literature which was considered trivial. Radner and Lanser identify trivialization as one method of implicit coding. That is, women write in genres that “men already consider nonliterary
or inferior—the letter, the diary, children’s literature and the ‘women’s’ novel—to express ideas those same women might never express in an essay or poem” (20). Daniela Richter talks about Trivialliteratur in a similar way, claiming that though some have tried to liberate nineteenth-century women writers from this denotation, it is actually a quite helpful category, which speaks to a type of literature that is very much in relationship with society. Richter describes Trivialliteratur as a space where unstable entities in society sought to define themselves and to establish order and a new moral authority. Though Richter notes other scholars who have explored this theory through class (Jochen Schulte-Sasse, George L. Mosse), she finds it equally useful for women attempting to define the role of gender. In the case of children’s literature from this period, Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepflmacher make the case that, women writers “had surprising freedom of expression” because “the literary marketplace . . . rewarded women for adhering to stereotyped roles. Once women conformed outwardly, an age still free of psychoanalytic suspicions exempted their emotions from close inspection” (1). For a well-respected governess such as Stahl, a collection of stories with which she educated and entertained her students was hardly unexpected. This allowed her the freedom to take controversial stances within the content of those stories.

Stahl was not the only woman in the period to use prescribed roles in order to participate in discourse and effect change. Richter argues that many women were not pigeon-holed into gender roles in the nineteenth century, but actively worked to shape gender identity from the inside out. Leveraging the powers that were at their disposal within the private sphere, they were able to effect change in the public sphere. Richter explores other works of Trivialliteratur, such as women’s novels and conduct books, and describes how women used them to participate in discourses on women in society, from how little girls should be raised to the role of unmarried women. Although
fairy tales and children’s literature are not included in Richter’s collection, Stahl’s and other fairy-tale collections by German women would fit in nicely with her conclusions. In fact, Karin Baumgartner makes such a case for another early nineteenth-century fairy-tale writer, Caroline de la Motte Fouqué. Baumgartner claims that Fouqué’s position as a conservative allowed her the freedom to write as long as it was relegated to the private sphere; “the close association of the family and the state in conservative ideologies allowed women to situate their political concerns in the domestic sphere” (21). She treats “women’s texts” as “political testimonies that addressed current issues in the early nineteenth century” (21). Again Baumgartner does not include fairy tales in her “women’s texts,” which include “novels, poetry, education tracts, and pamphlets,” but nonetheless fairy-tale writers such as Fouqué and Stahl were taking similar actions and using tales of domesticity to make political statements.

**Discourses on Gender**

Stahl’s coded messages do not exist in a vacuum, and her depictions demonstrate knowledge of and participation in period discourses on gender and pedagogy. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth, ideas of gender difference were still being formed and negotiated following the Enlightenment (Fronius 7). Towards the turn of the century and into the greater part of the nineteenth century, theories regarding a natural or biological difference between the sexes began to take hold. Works, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt’s essay in *Die Horen*, “Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur” (About the Difference of the Sexes and the Influence of Organic Nature, 1795) made an argument that women were biologically weaker than men, in the physical, intellectual, and moral sense, which was why it was best for them to remain in the home. This claim for women as the scientifically weaker sex, unable to handle the pressures of the outside world, would continue to
be “proven” by philosophers, such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, and scientists, such as Paul Julius Möbius, throughout the nineteenth century. In Stahl’s time, however, the discourse of gender was still being formed and passionately discussed (Baumgartner 45). Some men and women were speaking up for nurture over nature, such as Wilhelm Traugott Krug, in the 1800 work *Philosophie der Ehe* (Philosophy of Marriage), which argued that women, when treated as such, could be men’s intellectual equals. When Stahl depicts immoral women as a result of environmental factors, she is jumping into this debate and arguing that women can be morally superior or inferior based on their upbringing.

Men hardly take the moral high ground in her stories. With the exception of Lustig’s father, the majority of male characters spend their time torturing animals and viewing women as beautiful and expensive objects. Stahl’s male characters are not only merely immoral, they are also a part of patriarchy, which itself contributes to an immoral women’s development. Since within patriarchy women are valued only in their relationship to men, beautiful, wealthy, and well-connected women succeed over the simply moral. Stahl’s Unkind Girls are admired by suitors and envied by other women, but this leads them to value only beauty, wealth, and power, distorting their self-worth. They become unable to feel empathy and ultimately unable to survive without physical beauty and wealth, since these make up the entirety of their being.

This position is not unique to Stahl and represents other voices in discourses about gender of the period. A similar stance is taken in an anonymous 1788 article in *Hannoverisches Magazin* (Hannoverian Magazine), “Etwas über die heutige Mode-Misogynie” (About the Present Day Misogyny Trend). In this piece a dialogue plays out between a defender and a critic of women. The critic cites some of their many faults in a list not dissimilar to Stahl’s: “Leichtsinn, Luxus, Sucht überrall zu glänzen und zu gefallen, unbegränzte Eitelkeit, Koketterie, [frivolity, luxury,
desire for everything to shine and to please, unending vanity, coquetterie]” (1092). The defender of women, however, counters that these ills are the product of society’s desires, specifically of men’s desires, which are at fault for the development of immoral women:


[And finally, you enemies of women! Who always break out accusations and complaints against this sex, and jeer in proclamations and aphorisms about feminine foolishness and aberration, when who else but yourselves is the most guilty for this, who so simply gather up the seed of frivolity, of coquetry, vanity, and narcissism, and then spread it with full hands and seek to give it nourishment. . . . Your own pleasure is your only goal and women are your toys . . . [You use] caressing words and luxurious presentations, to undermine her already weak education and upbringing and to stir up her already pumping blood, and so by and by you crowd the inherent innocence and modesty out of her bosom, because these stand in your way as an obstacle.] (1095-1096)

Just as Stahl uses her stories to call for better education and stricter upbringing of upper class young women, so the author invokes the poor upbringing and education of young women, which men then use to their advantage. In addition the anonymous writer of this dialogue also sees the patriarchal affections of men, “Schmeicheleien und Lobeserhebungen [flattery and praise that inflates one’s ego],” (1095), as the cause of the same faults about which these men complain.

This is not to say that Stahl had read this dialogue and was speaking to it, necessarily, but that she was participating in a larger dialogue happening in German societies about the supposed faults of women and their causes. For Stahl, primarily, the solution was to remove women from the company and flattery of men, and to provide harsh limits on their access to wealth, until they
were old enough to understand its worth.

**Discourses on Pedagogy**

As a governess, Stahl’s stories point to a solution in educating young women properly with limits, and she was not the only one to find gender and pedagogy as intrinsically linked. In this period the debate on the nature of gender and femininity manifested itself in “a pathological interest” in women’s education, behavior, and upbringing (Baumgartner 45). Since education and rearing of children fell partially into the private sphere and purview of women, “the subject of women’s education gave women early on the opportunity to enter the public sphere with their voices” (Baumgartner 46). This allowed women the ability to discuss more than just education, however, since “education became the battleground where ideas about gender and class were put forth most prominently” (Baumgartner 46). In this way, Stahl also works to define constructs of gender and class by responding to aspects of this pedagogical discourse.

For instance, nobility and wealth are obstacles to overcome in development of moral children in Stahl’s stories. In “Prinzessin Elmine,” the expectations of court women are partially to blame for the false princess’s obsession with being the most beautiful and her failure to feel empathy. Even middle-class characters in this story can be unkind, as Elmine’s middle-class employer in town seems determined to berate her regardless of her ability and performance. Only the poor old woman in the woods who raises Elmine can offer a positive role model. Elmine learns from her about hard work, self-reliance, and unconditional love. In addition “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” demonstrates that the emphasis placed on appearance in middle- and upper-class society leads to the downfall of young women with otherwise good parenting. The evil sisters in this story spend their stolen wealth on adorning themselves for the ball, because that is the only path they see to rise in society and possibly catch the eye of a wealthy suitor. When they
are humiliated by the fairy, the opportunity for social advancement disappears and they are unable to live without envy, from which they essentially die. Stahl’s depictions of the problems of middle- and upper-class values is in contrast to educational movements in the period, which favored the values of these classes, since middle- and upper-class women were more likely to have the ability to run educational initiatives for girls in need (Richter 23). This gave some programs “a condescending and authoritarian tone,” as some middle-class efforts “conveyed their values as absolute, disregarding those needs of the lower classes which contradicted middle-class preconceived notions” (Richter 23). Stahl herself was upper middle class and she served upper-class children. Her morals are depicted by modern critics as specifically directed at children of this class (Uther 1147). And yet in her coded material she ultimately denigrates the value systems of these classes. Again, perhaps by situating these messages in a “trivial” children’s fairy tale, she can make such controversial arguments.

Stahl’s explanation that women do not have inherent gendered flaws, but that they can develop flaws because of patriarchy is also related to another pedagogical writing. Betty Gleim, educational writer of Erziehung und Unterricht des weiblichen Geschlechts: Ein Buch für Eltern und Erzieher (Upbringing and Instruction of the Female Sex: A Book for Parents and Educators, 1810), also saw no biological difference between women and men, beyond capacity for motherhood. Gleim felt that “gender attributes were secondary to women’s humanity” (Baumgartner 47) and that gender was, like a profession, developed, and that both should take second place behind the development of a woman’s humanity: “Die Geschlechts- und Berufsbildung soll daher der Menschenbildung untergeordnet, untergeordnet! [The development of gender and profession should be subordinate, subordinate! to the development of humanity” (Gleim 56). Gleim’s point here is in line with Stahl, who clearly feels girls develop into more
moral and adjusted human beings without extra emphasis on what they should be wearing or how they should appear from a patriarchal perspective.

Stahl does not, however, always agree with women writing on education. Another popular treatise on women’s upbringing and education comes from Caroline Rudolphi, *Gemälde weiblicher Erziehung* (Portrait of Feminine Education, 1807). In contrast to Stahl, Rudolphi calls for more freedoms for her young female pupil, as opposed to limitations. Stahl depicts unlimited wealth and power as very dangerous, and Rudolphi advises giving students plenty of time for free play and to allow them to pursue intellectual endeavors only as long as they are interested. Rudolphi’s pedagogical framework “generally advocates an empirical view of child-rearing using observations of the child’s preferences to determine her educational approach” (Richter 27). Rudolphi does, however, depict a world similar to Stahl’s in that it consists mainly of women. In the narrative of her work, a grandmother talks about the upbringing of her granddaughter. The mother’s influence is discussed, but the father’s is completely secondary and mostly absent. When the grandmother and mother feel that the child needs a companion, they even make the decision to expand the family through the adoption of a young girl, which Richter explains as “the heterosexual act of procreation . . . substituted by a pedagogical decision made by two women” (29). In this way, both Stahl and Rudolphi advocate for a separation of young women from the society of men, not necessarily to protect her honor so much as to promote the development of her character, since neither speak to nor imply issues related to sexuality.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, Stahl not only participates in the discourses discussed above, but she also takes stances more controversial than practically any non-anonymous contemporary voice in the public sphere. Stahl calls for better education of women and girls, but through tales like “Prinzessin
Elmine” she also criticizes the values of the upper and middle classes that were being imposed on lower-class children. In contrast to the majority of educational movements in the period, in “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute,” Stahl criticizes the values of the middle and upper classes, which allow a woman to rise in society only through wealth and beauty, skewing their own sense of self-worth. This is decades before similar discussions would develop in essays and books in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Richter 23). Furthermore, Stahl even criticizes the way in which upper-class children themselves are educated. These children and their education are hardly mentioned by nineteenth-century movements such as the Kindergarten movement, which focused instead entirely on civilizing lower-class children. In all of her stories, Stahl argues that strict limitations on wealth and power can bring about an empathetic and economical aristocracy, who will not waste money on frivolous items, such as beauty tonics, but also will not hesitate to part with valuables for the sake of the needy, here depicted as tortured animals.

Moreover, Stahl critiques the very structures of patriarchy itself, which forces women to rely on men to survive. In both “Die bösen Schwestern und die Gute” and “Prinzessin Elmine,” an independently wealthy mother and daughter live happily ever after, eliminating the need for men entirely. Although none of her Kind Girls marry, neither do any of her Unkind Girls, whose struggle to be the most beautiful only results in their unhappiness. Like Rudophi, Stahl demonstrates how a separation from patriarchy and its value system can lead to well-adjusted and happy young women, who in the case of Stahl’s stories will have no need to marry. Moreover, Stahl argues that immoral women develop not as a result of inherent biological flaws, but due to the influences of patriarchal society. Although her point of view may have been in the minority, her opinion is echoed in more obvious commentaries, such as Krug’s Der Philosophie der Ehe and
the anonymous dialogue in the *Hannoversches Magazin*.

Of course Stahl enters these discourses in a much less overt manner, through the guise of children’s literature. In this way she uses trivialization to hide her message in a genre men and censors will find unimportant, but women, especially mothers and teachers, were very likely to read. Stahl signals to this audience, by focusing her endings on a child living with an aging parent in happiness and wealth. Inverting the usual punishment for parents in traditional variants, Stahl indicates that parents will be rewarded for raising good children. Stahl inverts many of the traditional motifs, in fact, often depicting beautiful Unkind Girls instead of ugly, and granting gifts of wealth at the beginning of stories to demonstrate their corruptive quality. In this way, Stahl appropriates some of the more misogynistic motifs from the Grimms and Perrault and uses them to demonstrate the harmful nature of such structures which equate goodness with beauty, and wealth with success.
CHAPTER 4: Decoded and Uncoded

The Unpublishable Works of Bettina and Gisela von Arnim in the Vormärz Period

Part I: The Kunstmärchen of Bettina and Gisela von Arnim

Introduction

In the late 1830s and through the 1840s, Bettina von Arnim and her three daughters Gisela, Maximiliane (Maxe), and Armgart spent their summers at the secluded estate of Bärwalde. Maxe von Arnim would fondly remember her mother writing late into the night here, and the place would go on to inspire the utopias of Gisela von Arnim’s writing, safe places removed from the problems of Prussian patriarchal society. Maxe von Arnim described it in her memoirs:


[In the summer and fall, until the winter, we stayed every year at Bärwalde, most times together with mother. . . . Here we lived within the old romantic walls of the little knight’s castle from the Middle Ages. . . . And still I cannot remember an hour in which I could say I was bored. Quite the opposite, many a time we had wished ourselves back from the troubles of the big world to the peace of our little Bärwalde-World.] (64-65)

In this chapter I demonstrate how the works of Bettina and Gisela von Arnim reflect this feeling of safety by leaving controversial critiques of patriarchal society uncoded and decoded. This willingness to meet issues head on without encoding in order to disguise was inspired not only by this unique family home, but also by the change that seemed imminent in the Vormärz period. Bettina and Gisela von Arnim both produced works in which positions on gender, religion, and
monarchy are easily discernible.¹ In the case of Bettina von Arnim’s “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” (The Tale of the Lucky Purse) she even attempted to decode a poor woman’s story for a male royal audience, laying bare the sins of the past and the forgotten responsibilities of the current rulers. Gisela von Arnim, on the other hand, coded in her tales personal themes related to her experience as a young woman writer, but appeared to feel no need to hide her disdain for organized religion, the corrupt monarchy, and the confined role of women in German society.

None of the works discussed in this chapter were published in the period in which they were written, though two of the three were planned for publication. In these two cases, we have evidence that censors and outside pressures contributed to a failure to appear on the market, demonstrating how important coding was for women to reach a public audience. That being said, all three works did reach a private audience of other writers, family, and friends, and as such played a small part in shaping the broader discourses on gender. As in Chapter Two, themes related to women’s work, writing, and overall attempts to live an independent existence also dominate the coded portions of the texts discussed here. Bettina von Arnim’s “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” demonstrates the unfortunate position of generations of poor women. The Prussian war machine robbed women for decades of their fathers, husbands, and sons. Left without male support in a patriarchal society, these women had to step outside of traditional female roles and work in the public sphere to support their families. Unfortunately, the very government that put them in this position also created backward and complex laws which prevented them from creating financially stable lives for themselves and their children. In the works of Gisela von Arnim, we see a personal

¹ A note on the spelling of these author’s names: Bettina von Arnim’s name is spelled a variety of ways both in works from her time and in current scholarship. The variations include Bettine von Arnim, and Bettina or Bettine von Brentano-Arnim. I use Bettina von Arnim. Additionally, Gisela von Arnim is very occasionally referred to as Gisela Grimm, indicating her married name. Her family called her Gisel. I use Gisela von Arnim.
struggle with the sexist depictions of women in the works of her male writer role models, conflicted feelings towards the positive female model of her mother, and worries about how to reject patriarchal structures and still take part in society. Unfortunately, none of these works was published until long after the authors’ deaths, suggesting how dangerous uncoded and decoded messages could be. Although one could escape to places like Bärwalde, if a female writer wanted to take part in the “großer Welt [big world]” (65) of the patriarchal Prussian state, then she had to hide her voice within a coded rhetoric.

**Vormärz**

All of the works in this chapter were written during the period of the *Vormärz*. This is the term used to describe both the political and literary period leading up to the 1848 revolutions in Europe. The revolution in the German states was called the *Märzenrevolution* (March Revolution), and so the period just before it is called *Vormärz* or “before March.” There is discussion as to when the period begins, but perhaps the most agreed upon would be from the French July Revolution of 1830 up until the March Revolution of 1848. Helen Morris-Keitel describes the period as marked by the rise of industrialization and the transition of German states from a feudal system to a capitalist one (48). *Vormärz* literature demonstrated realistic problems and abuses in the German states and suggested social and political reform (Morris-Keitel 48). The period was characterized by great optimism for change. Writers not only discussed these problems openly, but also imagined solutions. Rudolph Stadelmann describes the relationship between the two as an experiment. In this experiment, “die ökonomischgesellschaftliche Lage ist vergleichweise die Konstante, die geistigen Strömungen, Ideale, und Utopien sind die Variable in der Rechnung der Historie [the socio-economic conditions could be described as the constant, [while] the intellectual currents,
ideals and utopias are the variables in the equation of the history)” (5).

None of the works in this chapter could be called pure Vormärz literature. Bettina von Arnim’s “Die Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” probably comes the closest, but its use of fairy tale motifs and the magical lucky purse situate it in a category of its own, since Vormärz literature veered away from the fantastical. Morris-Keitel calls it a “hybrid narrative,” which combines Vormärz and literary fairy tale (51). While the works discussed in this chapter are not Vormärz literature, they are very much in the spirit of the Vormärz period. That is to say, they are optimistic about possible change which could better the lives of Germans, especially German women. All of the works not only demonstrate the problems facing women under German patriarchy, but also suggest progressive solutions for women’s financial and social independence. Each of the three stories makes the argument that German society itself will be better if women can have more agency and independence. These themes exist in these stories because of the period’s optimism and hope that change was just around the corner. Unfortunately, the failure of the 1848 revolutions led to “eine Phase, die durch starres Festhalten an überholten politischen und gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen geprägt ist [a phase, which was shaped by rigid adherence to outdated political and social conditions]” (Müller 162). The optimism of the Vormärz was replaced with strict censorship. The Vormärz period may have led these stories to be progressive, but the direct lead-up to and aftermath of the revolution may also be the reason why these works were never published.

Unpublished Works

As mentioned above, none of the works covered in this chapter was published until long after the authors’ deaths. Found in their literary estates, these Kunstmärchen were published by twentieth-century scholars who took it upon themselves to share the stories with the public. Two of the three works, however, were nearly published in their own time. Das Leben der Hochgräfin
Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns (The Life of the High Countess Gritta of Ratsathomewithus), also known as simply Gritta, even had proofs, but something stopped publication. To varying degrees the reason they went unpublished had to do with changing attitudes in the period. While the Vormärz had censorship, political works were nonetheless published, such as Bettina von Arnim’s Dies Buch gehört dem König (This Book Belongs to the King) (1843), set in the early 1800s but referenced events of the 1840s. Lisabeth Hock explains how the book “hoped to draw his [the king’s] attention away from the voices of his advisors and towards her [Arnim’s] own suggestions for change” (90). As tensions built in the mid-to-late 1840s and events like the Silesian Weavers’ Uprising of 1844 took place, Arnim was discouraged from continuing to publish such works. The story analyzed here, “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” was a part of a larger work called Das Armenbuch (The Book of the Poor). Following the uprising in 1844, Arnim received a communication from Alexander von Humboldt, warning her against publishing Das Armenbuch and implying that some in Berlin saw her as an instigator (Morris-Keitel 52). After this the project was put on hold. Arnim wrote “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” however, in 1845, indicating that she was still working on the project. In 1846-47 Arnim was “arrested for publication activities and sentenced to two months in jail” (Blackwell, “Fractured Fairy Tales” 168), but her brother-in-law, Prussian Minister of Justice Karl von Savigny, kept her from serving time. After this Arnim began to lose faith in the king’s willingness to listen (Morris-Keitel 58); and following the revolutions of 1848, more severe censorship made the publishing of such a piece less likely. As Morris-Keitel explains: “Censorship - official, unofficial, and self-imposed - was the only means of protecting royalty from the dangers of listening to the teller(s) of such tales” (58). Das Armenbuch was first published in 1962 by Werner Vordtriede, who found the fragments of the project in Bettina von
Arnim’s estate.

In contrast, we have no evidence that Gisela von Arnim’s “Die Rosenwolke” (The Rose Cloud) was ever meant for publication. “Die Rosenwolke” was written in the Berlin salon of young girls of the Kaffeterkreis (coffee circle), which fell apart following the 1848 revolutions (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 106). The Kaffeterkreis was a weekly gathering of young women (and a few young men) during the winters of 1843-1848 in Berlin. Gisela von Arnim and her sisters Armgart and Maxe were members, as was Wilhelm Grimm’s son and Gisela’s future husband, Herman Grimm. Members took on pseudonyms and submitted stories, poems, compositions, and art to be reviewed at their meetings (Mey 33). The members of the Kaffeterkreis also occasionally put on plays and generally were a society of young friends (Mey 34). All of the stories of the Kaffeterkreis were gathered in the Kaffeterzeitung (coffee paper). Sadly, the revolutions also brought an end to the Kaffeterkreis, which one of the members described as “ein Wesen aus vormärzlichen Zeiten [a creature of the Vormärz times] ” (Werner 188). A scholar of Maxe von Arnim, Johannes Werner, had plans to publish the Kaffeterzeitung, but the volumes went missing between World War I and World War II and have never been recovered (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 106). Still, although “Die Rosenwolke” never reached a public audience, as a story written for the Kaffeterkreis it was meant for a specific, private audience and published in the club’s Kaffeterzeitung.² It was also more than likely read aloud to the group, as were all submissions (Jarvis, “The Rose Cloud” 134). Other works from the Kaffeterkreis went on to be published in the period, including Gisela’s Mondkönigs Tochter (Moonking’s Daughter). The period of the Kaffeterkreis played an important role in Gisela’s development as a writer. Biographer Eva Mey describes it in Ich gleiche einem Stern um

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² We know the story was from the Kaffeterkreis because it was written on long white paper as was in the protocol of the Kafflerkreis and transcribed in the handwriting of the Kafferter secretaries, the Bardua sisters (Jarvis “The Rose Cloud,” 134).
Mitternacht (I am Like a Star at Midnight) as “hier wurden sie vorgelesen, kritisiert, und auf ihre Fortsetzung gedrängt [here she was read, criticized, and urged to continue]” (37). It was a critical moment when young German women came together and not only produced that which actively reflected on and critiqued male-narratives by the Grimms and others, but also had “the possibility of playing out roles that seemed or were impossible in real life” (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 105). So although “Die Rosenwolke” itself may never have been published, it was a product of the Kaffeterkreis, which was brought to an end as an indirect result of the change in climate following the revolutions. In this way it represents the optimism of the pre-revolutionary era and would have been more than likely unsuitable for publication following the revolutions.

Gritta was also probably shelved due to the political landscape. It was scheduled to be published in 1845, but never was. The shorter Mondkönigs Tochter was published in 1844. A note from Gisela von Arnim to Herman Grimm in December of 1844 describes a scene in which a censor who had read Mondkönigs Tochter said, “[er] habe schon einmal früher bis zum 8ten Bogen ein Märchen [von Arnim] zu censieren gehabt, das hätte keinen so guten Stiel gehabt [als Mondkönigs Tochter], [had already had to censor a fairy tale [by Arnim] up to the eighth proof page earlier, which did not have as good a style [as Moonking’s Daughter]]” (qtd. in Mey 37). Later in the note, Arnim tells Grimm “ich habe bis über die Ohren zu tun in Rattenzuhaus [I am up to my ears in work to do on Rattenzuhaus]” (qtd. in Mey 37). Clearly, the novel wasn’t quite finished in 1844, but part of it had already been seen by a censor. Still, the novel was finished sometime in 1845 and typeset, but it was never published. The typeset pages were rediscovered first in the estate of the Grimms in 1906 by their executor Reinhold Steig and again in 1925 by Otto Mallon. Mallon found the majority of the typeset pages, some with notations in Bettina’s hand, and assumed she was the author. Mallon published the work for the first time in 1926,
although he was missing the last twenty or so pages (Blackwell, “Laying the Rod” 25). Shawn C. Jarvis found the remaining pages and some additional drawings by Gisela von Arnim and Herman Grimm, as well as early manuscript pages of Gritta entirely in Gisela’s hand. She published the first complete version of Gritta in 1986. In her afterword, she theorizes that Gritta’s “satirisch-politischen Tendenzen und Bezüge [satirical-political tendencies and references]” would have been “der Zensur suspekt [suspect to the censure]” (221). Although the authors tried to hide these references “im harmlosen Kleide des sonst eindimensionalen Märchens [in the harmless clothes of an otherwise one-dimensional fairy tale]” Jarvis feels that “im politisch nervösen Vormärz konnten solche aufrührerischen Gedanken nicht sehr willkommen sein und kollidierten sicherlich mit der Zensur [such inflammatory thoughts couldn’t have been very welcome in the politically nervous Vormärz and surely clashed with the censure]” (223). New evidence to be discussed in more detail later on comes in a letter from Gisela’s eldest brother Friedmund to their mother Bettina in 1846. Friedmund encourages Gisela to publish Gritta in spite of her reservations, indicating that she may have put off publication originally herself. So, as in “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” the story of Gritta may be one of official, unofficial, and self-imposed censorship.

Each of these works was in a sense unpublishable and therefore failed to enter into public discourse. In the case of “Die Rosenwolke,” however, we know that it at least reached the other members of the Kaffeterkreis, and in that way a wider, albeit private, venue. In addition, Arnim’s Armenbuch was well known as a potential publication, and Gritta had been read by several members of the Kaffeterkreis and the Arnim family, as well as editors, publishers, and even a censor in the process of its being prepared for publication. Although none of these works were published, they were not hidden works, only ever seen by the eyes of their authors. They had a presence in a small part of society and garnered a reaction from said society. As I will argue below,
however, they failed to participate in a larger, public discourse because their messages were either decoded or uncoded. In the case of “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” one character essentially decodes the voice of an oppressed working class woman for a royal male audience, and the result is quite critical. “Die Rosenwolke” does contain implicitly coded guidance for other young women writers, which some of the male members of the group may not have understood; but there are many uncoded elements of the story which belie any sense that its audience as a safe and private one, far from the censors. And finally, in a melding of styles and political viewpoints, *Gritta* also contains unusually blatant uncoded elements: transgressive and yet successful young girls, references to the ineffectual monarchy and possible revolution, and clear critiques of organized religion. Within *Gritta* we also find misogynistic narratives of Biblical stories, Robinsonades, and the fairy tales of the Grimms and Clemens Brentano deconstructed and reworked, essentially criticizing whole traditions of misogyny. The most pointed of the fairy-tale inspired critiques, however, would only have been understood by very well-versed readers, who themselves recognized the problematic structures of specific tales. In a sense *Gritta* contains coded, uncoded, and decoded proto-feminist discourse, of which the latter two probably prevented its being published. All of these stories represent the optimism of this brief period in the history of the German states, when women felt a little freer to speak openly, and in their unfortunate censure, the conservatism that followed it.

**Bettina von Arnim**

Born in 1785, Bettina von Arnim was a member of a multi-generational family of women writers. Her grandmother, Sophie La Roche, was one of the first German women novelists and her daughters Armgart, Maxe, and Gisela all were writers at some point in their lives. Born Bettina Brentano, her earliest forays into literature came through folklore. As a young woman she first
assisted her brother Clemens Brentano and her future husband Achim von Arnim when they collaborated on a collection of ballads in 1805, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Wonderhorn). Then she participated in the initial collection of the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Blackwell and Jarvis 111). All of its seven editions were dedicated to her. During this time, before her first child was born, Arnim wrote some of her own fairy tales. Her story “Königssohn” (King’s Son) was to be published in the Heidelberg Romantics’ newspaper, *Der Einsiedler* (The Hermit) in 1808 (Blackwell, “Fractured Fairy Tales” 167). The paper closed before her story could be published, however (Jarvis and Blackwell 113). Her early fairy tales were first published over a century later in 1913 in Reinhold Steig’s *Achim von Arnim und die ihm nahen standen* (Achim von Arnim and Those Close to Him). As this title reveals even a hundred years later, in the genre of fairy tales Bettina von Arnim was really only appreciated in her relationship to male writers. She was the sister of Clemens, the friend of Wilhelm and Jacob, and the wife Achim, and her contributions were characterized in that context.

Her fairy tales were republished in Gustav Konrad’s *Märchen der Bettine, Armhart, und Gisela von Arnim* (1965) and in recent collections and translations from Blackwell, Zantop, and Jarvis. Blackwell’s article “Fractured Fairy Tales: German Women Authors and the Fairy Tale Tradition” (1987) is a rare piece which discusses Arnim’s “Königssohn” and involvement in *Gritta*, albeit along with fairy tale work by other women writers. In general, there is little scholarly writing on her fairy tales, and collections of her work rarely include them. For instance, in the most recent collection of her work, the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag’s *Bettine von Arnim: Werke und Briefe* (Bettine von Arnim: Works and Letters) edited by Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von

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3 Fairy tales by Bettina von Arnim have appeared in the following collections: *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers: From 1700 to 1830: An Anthology* (1990), *The Queen’s Mirror* (2001), and *Im Reich der Wünsche* (2012).
Steinsdorff (1986-2004), a number of works unpublished in her time, including Armenbuch and some songs she wrote in her youth are included, but the fairy tales from her youth do not appear. Arnim was simply much better known in her time and still is in ours for her epistolary semi-autobiographical fiction, which she began publishing after her husband’s death.

Notably, many of these more well-known works are reflections back to the time when she was collecting and writing fairy tales, before she was married. Her first book Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kind (Goethes Correspondence with a Child) appeared in 1835 and was a fictionalization of her correspondence and relationship with Goethe in the early nineteenth century. Her second publication, Die Günderode (1840) was a reimagining of her correspondence with her friend Karoline Günderrode in the last months of her life before she committed suicide in 1804. In 1844 Arnim published an epistolary novel based on a collection of letters exchanged with her brother between 1801 and 1803, Clemens Brentanos Frühlingskranz (Clemens Brentano’s Spring Wreath). The work demonstrated her struggle to be seen by her brother as a complete person, and not simply as a muse or a representation of some ideal.

Throughout her life, Arnim was known as a child-like woman. Much has been written about Arnim’s child persona, but Ruth-Ellen Joeres describes the complicated nature of this persona well in Respectability and Deviance, when she writes:

As to whether such a manic move was a gimmick, a way to play a role of the wise (or foolish) being who could say and do as she pleased by virtue of some sort of eternal youth—to use her apparent craziness slyly, in other words—or whether it was based on a more socially critical, analytical belief that as a woman she would always be seen as a child, that is, a minor with limited rights, knowledge, and privileges, I do not know. Perhaps it was both. (102)

This focus on her early life in her later writing led many to discuss the child persona of Arnim in her work, but she reinvented herself in many of her works and inscribed several textual personae throughout them. In fact, Arnim appears as a character in most of her writing. Since even her
epistolary writing was at least partially fictionalized, these personae must be taken as a sort of fiction as well, as Hock argues in *Replicas of a Female Prometheus* (2001). Through her writings, Arnim continually re-imagined herself in these personae and re-established herself in relationship to others: Goethe, Günderrode, Brentano and so on.

As her career took off, Arnim became a very public figure. She hosted a literary salon in Berlin and became more politically active in Prussia the early 1840s. She began a correspondence with the then Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm IV in hopes of helping her friends Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Diers 151). The Grimms found themselves in some trouble as two of the Göttingen Seven, a group of professors who had protested the new king of Hanover’s constitutional changes and refused him allegiance.4 This resulted in their release from the University of Göttingen and Jacob Grimm’s exile from Hanover. Arnim’s correspondence paid off, however, and one of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s first actions as king was to grant positions at the Berlin University for the Grimms (Hock 89). Around the same time, Arnim began work on *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, which was set in the early nineteenth century but was meant to sway the king away from his conservative advisors (Hock 88). Following this book, she began work on the *Armenbuch* project, which will be discussed below, but it would not be published in her time because of growing political tensions. She did not publish again until after the 1848 revolution. She published two more works, including a sequel to *Dies Buch gehört dem König* called *Gespräche mit Dämonen: Des Königsbuchs zweiter Teil* (Discussions with Demons: The King’s Book’s Second Part) (1852), and saw the first collection of her writings, *Sämtliche Schriften*, published in 1853.

4 For a detailed look at the Göttingen Seven see Rudolf von Thadden’s *Die Göttinger Sieben, ihre Universität und der Verfassungskonflikt von 1837* (The Göttingen Seven, their University, and the Constitutional Conflict of 1837, 1987).
She died at the age of 73 in 1859.

“Erzählung vom Heckebeutel”

Although Arnim’s fairy-tale work appears to have been left behind after her marriage to Achim, one of her later works does reflect her appreciation for Kunstmärchen. A portion of the unpublished fragments that would have made up Arnim’s Armenbuch, “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” uses the motif of the Inexhaustible Purse within a short story on poverty. Arnim’s Armenbuch was a response to an 1842 Prussian essay contest for an answer to the following: “Ob die Klage über die zunehmende Armut begründet sei, was die Ursachen und Kennzeichen der Verarmung seien und durch welche Mittel einer zunehmenden Armut könne gestreut werden [if the complaint about increasing poverty was well founded, what the causes and signs of the impoverishment were, and through what methods the growing poverty could be quelled]” (Vordtriede 11). Following the Silesian Weaver’s Uprising in 1844, however, the work became too controversial to publish and she set aside the project (Morris-Keitel 51). It was first published in fragments by Werner Vordtriebe in 1969. As in other works, such as Dies Buch gehört dem König, Arnim uses the flow of female conversation to tell her stories, and as in most of her works, she too appears as a character. Of interest here is the relationship of the lucky purse to Kind and Unkind Girls tales and the strong relationship of Arnim’s persona in this work to Frau Holle. Perhaps to the many selves depicted in Hock’s Replicas of a Female Prometheus we could add this magical protector of poor housewives.

The story is short narrative written supposedly to explain the expenditure of two gold coins

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5 This title was given to the story by editor Werner Vordtriebe in 1969 when it was first published. Arnim did not give the tale a title. In addition, there are two versions of the tale and an additional ending which Vordtriebe published. Except where specifically noted, I will be referring to the second version and the fair copy of the ending.

6 Number D1450 in the Thompson Motif Index—“the inexhaustible purse furnishes money.” I will be referring to the purse as Morris-Keitel does in her translation, however, as “lucky purse.”
given to the Arnim children by the prince of Prussia. It was actually written in 1845, after the Armenbuch project had been set aside, and it is also the only narrative piece of the Armenbuch fragments (Morris-Keitel 52), so its existence may have represented plans to publish the work later in a different form. In the context of this analysis, its inclusion in the Armenbuch papers at least indicates that its purpose was not merely narrative, but also political and that Arnim meant the story to answer in part the questions posed by the Prussian government. The narrative, therefore, takes part in a quite official political discourse on poverty, specifically poor women in society, or it would have, had it been published in Arnim’s lifetime.

“Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” is the story of a poor old woman who comes to Arnim asking for loans over the course a six month period and who Arnim supports with funds from her Heckebeutel, which she describes as a lucky purse. In the end, however, the purse dries up and is replenished with a sum of money from the King of Prussia. Although there is the appearance of supernatural reward to make up for the lack of resources available to the poor as in many Kind and Unkind Girls tales, this supernatural reward is not enough to sustain the poor woman’s family and eventually runs out. Similarly to “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit” and Naubert’s “Das kurze Mantel,” this story shows that even with supernatural help, the poor woman fails to succeed in patriarchal society. Arnim praises the neatness, eloquence, and hard-work of this woman, who is “groß, wie jene auserlesnen Frauen Deutschlands, welche zu den preußischen Grenadier-Regimentern das ihre gethan haben [tall like those exquisite women of Germany, who have given their sons to the Prussian Grenadier-regiments]” (545).\(^7\) Indeed, the old woman has given three of her four sons up to Prussia’s armies and works only to raise her grandchildren and eke out an existence so they can

\(^7\) The Grenadiers were “a special regiment of exceptionally tall men” who protected the king in Potsdam (Wilson 23).
live on when she dies. Unfortunately, unfair social structures thwart her.

Since the story’s audience is clearly broader than just women and, as in Dies Buch gehört dem König, specifically addressed to a male monarch, one might not expect to find much coded material. There is such material within the old woman’s narrative, however and the Arnim persona in the frame narrative actually seeks to decode this message for the king and other powerful readers. The uncoded message and direct call on male, royal listeners may be a part of the reason why this story was not published for 120 years. The decoded voice of a poor woman may have been simply too dangerous.

The old wise woman and the beleaguered grandmother were not unusual figures in nineteenth-century literature. Arnim’s Dies Buch gehört dem König featured the voice and conversation of Frau Rath Goethe. Her brother Clemens Brentano’s 1817 “Geschichte vom braven Kasperl und dem schönen Annerl” also depicts an old woman fighting for her grandchild, and early critics considered “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” as “little more than an imitation” of Brentano’s novella (Ebert 206). Even Vordtriebe writes in his notes, “Wie brentanoish diese Erzählung ist [how Brentano-like this story is]” (122). There are definitely similarities in structure and language, but Arnim does much more here than simply imitate her brother (See Birgit Ebert’s in depth discussion of these in “Bettina Brentano-von Arnim’s ‘Tale of the Lucky Purse’ and Clemens Brentano’s ‘Story of Good Kasperl and Beautiful Annerl’”). Arnim relies on her readership’s familiarity with Brentano’s works and voice to draw attention to problematic misogyny in his writing and in society.

The young male poet who hears the grandmother’s tale in “Kasperl und Annerl” does what he can for the grandmother storyteller, but ultimately he changes nothing about her situation and exploits her story for his own purposes against her wishes (Ebert 195). Brentano’s poet narrator
depicts the grandmother and Annerl as the victims of men’s seductions, presumably earning his reader’s sympathy, but stops there. The words of the duke after the death of Annerl sum up these sentiments: “Schönes, unglückliches Annerl! Schändlicher Verführer, du kamst zu spät! – Arme alte Mutter, du bist ihr allein treu geblieben, bis in den Tod. [Beautiful, unlucky Annerl! Shameful seducer, you came too late! – Poor old mother, you alone remained true to her until death]” (44).

Arnim’s persona, on the other hand, describes her old woman as a mythological hero:

Die Steinalte hatte das Unmögliche versucht, um im 90sten Jahr noch mit eignen Kräften eine unabhängige Existenz zu erwerben, diese langten nicht aus, das war vorauszusehen. Wenn aber ein alter Krieger, der vielen Siegen voranstritt, endlich noch in eine letzte Fehde verwickelt, selbst die Waffen zu führen sich nicht enthalten kann; sollte er auch unterliegen; so ist er dennoch der größere Held!

[The stone-old woman had attempted the impossible, to earn an existence by her own power in her 90th year. It wouldn’t be enough; that was apparent from the beginning. If, however, an old warrior, who has led many victories, is embroiled finally in a last battle and cannot stop himself from wielding his own weapons, even if he should succumb, he is still the greater hero!] (Vordtriebe 118-119).

In addition, whereas Brentano’s tale is an insular one about the nature of honor, Arnim’s tale reveals the ills of society and demonstrates how particular policies (such as the merchant’s license and conscription laws) serve to push hardworking individuals deeper into poverty. So, while it is likely Arnim knew Brentano’s novella and is referencing it throughout her story, she relies on the audience’s knowledge of the same story to draw attention to the issues of the poor, and the problems of patriarchy. And while Brentano’s young poet-narrator retells the story of the old woman, Arnim’s persona decodes the tale of the oppressed for a wealthy and powerful listener.

Critics have generally focused on the character of the old woman, both in comparison to Brentano’s and in general as a figure of the working poor. Morris-Keitel describes her as a combination of “the typical young female heroine of a woman's tale and her helper” (53), drawing attention to both her need and her wisdom. She also draws connections between the depiction of
the old woman and Frau Rath in *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, pointing out how these old women literally embody love, honor, honesty, and heroism, “those virtues that . . . Arnim argues the State has lost” (53). Similarly, in her analysis of “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” and “Die Geschichte von dem braven Kasperl und der schönen Annerl,” Ebert rightfully points out the agency granted to the old woman in Arnim’s tale but denied to the old woman of Brentano’s story. Ebert argues, “Arnim combines her socially critical accusation against the inhuman circumstances of the time with the portrayal of a matriarch who transcends this historical situation in her contradictions and in her strength” (206). While these critiques are important, especially in the face of a tradition of critiques that have written the tale off as an imitation, the focus on the old woman diminishes the role that Arnim’s persona in the tale takes on. Arnim’s persona makes clear attempts to interpret and contextualize the old woman’s tale for a noble audience. In addition, she takes on the role of supernatural helper, Frau Holle. In this role, Arnim’s persona exhibits traits of traditional beliefs about Frau Holle and utilizes motifs of the tale types of The Kind and Unkind Girls and The White and the Black Bride. Arnim is thereby able to demonstrate more fully the injustice that has been done to the poor women of Prussia and the desperation of the situation of the poor, when even an inexhaustible purse does not have enough funds to rescue them.

In the first part of Arnim’s tale, the old woman relates the history of her family, whose members have sacrificed their young men to Prussia over generations. Her father died in the Seven Years War, and with exception of one who became a gardener in Holland, her brothers “sind alle Soldaten gewesen [und] . . . sind alle im Feld geblieben anno 1793, bei Valenciennes und Mons, da blieb auch mein Mann. . . . Ich blieb allein mit 4 Sohnen und einer Tochter; die Sohne sind alle im Krieg geblieben. [were all soldiers and all died in the field in the year of 1793, by Valenciennes and Mons; there also rests my husband. I was left alone with four sons and a daughter; the sons all
died in war]” (113). One of her sons was unable to fight in the war due to a physical impairment, but “müßte doch auch im Krieg sein Leben lassen [also had to lose his life in war]” (113) when she was forced to take in troops at her home, one of the soldiers stabbed and killed her son with his bayonet when he tried to tell him there was no more room in their home. There was justice for the loss of her son, but not the justice she wanted. When she was asked to point out the man who killed her son, she refused, but the man stepped forward and begged her forgiveness and “ich hab ihm auch von Herzen verziehen, aber eine Stunde drauf haben sie ihm doch erschossen [I forgave him with all my heart, but an hour later they shot him anyway]” (114). The old woman lists these deaths as if they were fated, with no blame for anyone, not even for the man who stabbed her son. In addition, she describes the strength and size of these men. Her father was “baumstark . . . und so groß daß er an die Decke reichte [strong like a tree . . . and so tall the his head touched the ceiling]” and her husband “der war ein so großer Grenadier, ich ging ihm unter dem Arm durch, und ich hatte doch 7ben Zoll [he was such a tall Grenadier, that I could walk under his arm, and I was nearly six feet tall]” (113). The strong, tall young men of the old woman’s family died in battle, generation after generation, leaving their wives to raise children on their own, who would eventually go to war and die in battle, but the old woman does not comment on how unfair this is, because for her, this was the way of life since she was a small child.

It was the way of life for much of Prussia from the time of King Frederick Wilhelm I in the early eighteenth century, until the Napoleonic wars forced a change from “an old Frederician army that relied almost entirely on long-term conscripts” (130), as Robert Citino explains in *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich*. This long term conscription was called the canton system. It dictated that all men in Prussia, excepting the wealthy and certain industrial workers, were kept on a conscription list from the time of their religious confirmation.
They were called at random for a year of training and then released back to their civilian lives. After this, at any point in their lives, they could be called up to serve in Prussian army for any length of time. This arguably led to “the total subordination of all civil life to military requirements, creating . . . a slavish mentality on the part of the population and suffocating the freedom and patriotism” (24), explains Peter Wilson in his article “The Origins of Prussian Militarism.” Note that the only one of the old woman’s brothers to survive left Prussia and made a life in Holland. The rest of her brothers, her father, her husband, and three of her sons all died in service of Prussia. In addition, her one son who could not serve died as result of the reliance on civilians to house and feed the army (Kunisch 105). Although the failures of 1806 and 1807 (when the old woman’s sons died) did lead to some reforms of the army’s structure and a shorter-term conscription (Citino 130), Prussia returned to a mostly militarized state following the victories of the Napoleonic Wars (Wilson 25).

While the old woman merely named the dates and locations where her loved ones died, treating war almost as an act of God, Arnim is not only completely aware of the information above but willing to name the royals responsible for each conflict and therefore for the death of each member of the old woman’s family. In this way she decodes a list of deaths into a list of sins, and, in some cases, even murders. Arnim’s persona interprets this family history for a noble audience, emphasizing the sacrifice and loss that has built a nation but not been repaid. Following her description of the old woman as a glorious hero at the end of her life, Arnim explains the courage of the old woman:

deren Vater unter Friedrich dem zweiten sein Leben drangab, um Preußen groß zu machen, deren Mann und sieben Brüder in den mörderischen Scharmützeln von Mons und Valenciennes anno dreihunderteinzig mit ihrem Blute des französische Feld tränkten, deren drei Sohne bei den ersten kriegerischen Wallungen Anno 1806 und 7ben gegen das fremde Joch, wie Gold in einem Feuer zusammenschmolz mit der Begeistrung des Prinzen Louis Ferdinand, dessen Wunden zusammen mit den ihren gen Himmel rauchten, Ja, eben so
At first glance this paragraph may seem like a simple recap of the woman’s history given a few pages earlier, but Arnim is decoding that history and laying blame on the royal family. Although Friedrich II’s war was fought “um Preußen groß zu machen [in order to make Prussia great],” other battles, such as Mons and Valenciennes, are called “mörderisch [murderous],” emphasizing perhaps that the men who died there were murdered, not by an enemy but by the country that sent them there to die (119). When she mentions the battles that killed the old woman’s sons, she describes Prince Louis Ferdinand’s “Begeistrung [enthusiasm]” and the battles as Wallungen, a word often associated with the flow of blood (119). For instance “in Wallung bringen” means to make one’s blood boil, and medically the term is used to mean engorgement. In this way, Arnim emphasizes the inexperience of the prince (and possibly his father) and draws attention to the swift and devastating results of King Friedrich Wilhelm III’s attempt to go up against Napoleon’s forces alone in 1806 and 1807.

In addition to placing responsibility for these battles on the Prussian royalty, Arnim also draws attention to the unfair nature of what has happened to the old woman’s family for generations. Living in a patriarchy, young healthy men are a necessity for survival, but the Prussian government has robbed the old woman’s family of them for generations, forcing her mother,
herself, and her daughter to try to raise children on their own. The old woman takes pains to
describe the size and strength of the men who were sacrificed for Prussia’s greatness, but Arnim
draws attention to the courage of the old woman, forced to carry on alone, and declares her as
courageous as the men who died in battle. Claiming that she struggles in a world that is unfaithful
to the poor, Arnim not only points out the existence of the poor to her king but also his failure to
honor the sacrifices they have made on his behalf (119). Arnim claims the courageous blood of
the old woman’s family “verläßt sich auf die eigne Energie [relies on its own energy]” (119), but
what other choice does she have?

This is where Arnim’s *Heckebeutel* is useful. She aims to set things right where the Prussian
royalty has failed and forces the prince to repay the woman for her sacrifices by giving their gold
coin to her for the merchant’s license: “Diese zwei Friedrichsd’or des Prinzen von Preußen, die
jetzt im Heckebeutel liegen, sollten sie nicht der übermenschlichen ungebrochenen Zuversicht
dieser Frau zur Beute werden? [These two gold coins from the Prince of Prussia, which now lie in
the lucky purse, should they not become the prize for this woman’s superhuman, unbroken
confidence in herself?]” (119). In this way, Arnim’s persona in the story serves as a sort of Frau
Holle figure who rewards the hardworking (and in this case smooth-talking) woman. Not only do
tales of *The Kind and Unkind Girls* generally feature a monetary reward, but Frau Holle herself
was seen as a folk goddess who rewarded hardworking spinning women with golden spindles
(Grimm, “Mythologie” 264) or the ability to spin thread into gold (Timm 98). The old woman’s
mother is a gold embroiderer, perhaps a nod to this tradition. Like Frau Holle and the other magical
beings of *Kind and Unkind Girls* stories, Arnim monetarily rewards the poor and abused, but hard-
working, woman, thus creating supernatural justice in an unjust natural world. Similar to Naubert’s
Frau Hulla, Arnim’s persona is happy to forgive the woman’s consistent failure to keep her word
and pay her back, as long as the old woman still works hard. As in the anonymous “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit,” however, her own powers “langten nicht aus [would not be enough]” (Arnim, “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” 118) to make any real change in the world. Eventually the inexhaustible purse is exhausted and must be refilled with the money of the king, implying who must take action in order to finally enact a greater change.

The old woman is in many ways like a traditional Kind Girl. She works hard and does not question the injustice of her situation. She is also polite and eloquent with Arnim. Like any Kind Girl, when she interacts with her supernatural benefactor, the woman is open, honest, kind, and grateful; and for this she is rewarded with gold. Even the purse has a relationship to Kind and Unkind Girls tales. Grimms’ “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut” opens with a motif also found in tales of the Kind and Unkind Girls. An old man, God in disguise, asks two girls for directions. One is rude to him and tells him to find it himself; the other kindly shows him the way. The Unkind Girl is turned black for the rest of her life (similar to the pitch punishment doled out in “Frau Holle” and Bechstein’s “Die Goldmarie und die Pechmarie”), and the Kind Girl is given three wishes. The second wish she makes is for “einen Geldbeutel . . . der nie leer würde [a money purse which will never be empty]” (2: 229). Elisabeth Ebeling will also experiment with this motif in her variant of The Kind and Unkind Girls, which I discuss in the next chapter. So although we cannot truly call “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” a variant of The Kind and Unkind Girls, Arnim does play with motifs of supernatural justice and monetary reward for the hardworking poor women. By using these motifs, she draws attention to the dire situation, in which not even an inexhaustible purse suffices to address the many needs of the poor, who ultimately require the monetary help of the king and Prussia.

Arnim’s persona not only takes on the role of supernatural benefactor, but also decodes the
woman’s straightforward story, even when the woman herself refuses to blame the monarchial system for her pains. The old woman simply insists, “den König will ich nicht betrügen, der muß das Seinige haben, nein, ich will mit Ehren in die Gruft. Wollte ich nicht den Gewerbschein lösen, wo doch alle die Meinigen Königsleute waren und sind unter der preußischen Fahne geblieben!-Nein, ich werd meine Schuldigkeit tun [I do not want to betray the king, he must have his due. No, I want go to my grave with honor. How could I not want to buy the merchant’s license, when my family has always been true to the king and died under the Prussian flag! No, I will do my part]” (120). Arnim is, however, more than willing to point out that the old woman wants only “ohne Vorbehalt die Wahrheit aussprechen, den Sieg davontragen bei jenen Herren der Welt, deren endliches Verderben allein ihrer Heuchelei zuzuschreiben ist [to speak the truth without reservation, and to be victorious over those lords of the world whose eventual ruin can be attributed only to their own hypocrisy]” (122). A line like this, which signals the demise of “lords,” may have been a predictor of the revolutions of 1848 still to come and a threat, in which Arnim goes beyond pointing out the woman’s struggles, sacrifices, and what is due her, and explains what can happen if the problem continues to be ignored. Ultimately, Arnim points out where desperation can truly lead and who will be targeted if changes are not made.

**Gisela von Arnim**

In Bettina von Arnim’s own life, she also experienced raising children without a father. Her youngest child, Gisela von Arnim, was born in 1827, when Bettina was 41, and would ultimately have no memories of her father Achim, who died when she was only three (Mey 17). In the summers, she and her mother stayed at a summer residence in Bärwalde with her nearest siblings in age, older sisters Armgart and Maxe (seven and nine years older respectively). In her unpublished memoirs mentioned in the introduction, Maxe described her mother as working busily
on her writing, but remembered “die Abende gehörten uns. Da las sie uns vor und erzählte aus
ihrer Jugend, aus dem Kloster in Fritzlar, der Zeit in Marburg und Landshut und ihren Erlebnissen
in München [the evenings belonged to us. Then she read aloud to us and told us about her youth,
about the convent school in Fritzlar, the time in Marburg and Landshut and her experiences in
Munich]” (72). In this time, Maxe created a series of fictionalized writings about her youth which
she never published. In these writings she used code names for her mother and sisters. Gisela was
“Gritta” (Mey 22), the same name Gisela would give to the main character of her novel. Calling
herself Märchenkind (fairy-tale child), Gisela von Arnim grew up “in a milieu that was strongly
influenced by the Arnim-Brentano family tradition of Romanticism and the fairy tale” (Jarvis,
“Trivial Pursuit” 106). Writing was a pastime of all the Arnim girls during this time. Bettina even
started a weekly paper for them to help pass the time at the isolated Bärwalde, but it was shut down
by the censors due to “so viel nörgelnde Majestätsbeleidigungen [so much insulting harping on his
majesty]” (Maxe von Arnim 68). Another paper with a lighter tone took its place. Maxe, Armgart,
and Gisela von Arnim all had the chance to produce writing on a regular basis with the founding
of the Kaffeterkreis. Gisela and her friend Herman Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm’s son, were the
youngest members when the group formed in 1843. This section will focus on the stories she
produced during this time. Although she was the youngest member, Arnim’s talent was apparent
early on, and her stories, drawings, and performances were well received. Arnim’s first
publications came out in this period, and she went on, together with Marie von Olfers, to be the
most successful writer of the group. Another member of the Kaffeterkreis, Wilhelmine Bardua,

8 These were gathered together with letters and other biographical documents about Maxe von Arnim in Johannes
Werner’s Maxe von Arnim, Tochter Bettinas, Gräfin von Oriola, 1818 - 1894: ein Lebens- und Zeitbild aus alten
Quellen geschöpft (1937). The work has been a source for Jarvis, Mey, and Diers and many others interested in the
lives of the Arnim family. Detailed accounts of Maxe von Arnim’s youth and the Kaffeterkreis are particularly
helpful.
described Arnim in this period as “ein Chamäleon. Die Grundfarbe ist gutmütig, natürlich, kindlich; aber bald merkt man die anmaßliche junge Schriftstellerin, bald das geniale, emanzipierte Mädchen, das Zigarren raucht und sich als Student geriert; bald ist sie weiter nicht als ein junges Mädchen, das die Welt verachtet [a chameleon. The main color is good-natured, natural, child-like; but soon one notices the conspicuous young author, soon the brilliant, emancipated girl, who smokes cigars and calls herself student; soon she is again nothing but a young girl who scoffs at the world]” (qtd. in Mey 35). Gisela von Arnim continued to publish fairy tale plays and stories long after this young girl grew up and the Kaffeterkreis collapsed. She eventually married Herman Grimm in 1859, the year of both her mother’s and Herman’s father Wilhelm Grimm’s death.

**Die Rosenwolke**

One of the stories Arnim wrote for the *Kaffeterkreis* was “Die Rosenwolke.” Like “Erzählung vom Heckbeutel,” “Die Rosenwolke” calls attention to the difficulty of becoming a financially independent woman, and as in “Die Erzählung vom Heckbeutel,” there is an element of the fantastic. The magical elements of the story are somewhat ambiguous and could be attributed to the fanciful imagination of the main character, Catharine, and the confusing metaphorical language of her mentor, Colette. “Die Rosenwolke,” however, comes to a very different conclusion than the “Erzählung vom Heckbeutel.” While Bettina von Arnim’s persona attempted to affect change within the parameters of patriarchal society by pleading her case and decoding the oppressed woman’s narrative for a royal male audience, “Die Rosenwolke,” in similar fashion to

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9 It must be noted that we do not know definitively that Gisela von Arnim is the author of “Die Rosenwolke,” due to the code of anonymity in the *Kaffeterkreis*. However, Shawn C. Jarvis makes a very good case for Arnim as the author in her 1997 translation in *Marvels and Tales* based on the manuscript’s location in Arnim’s estate and numerous notes in Arnim’s handwriting in the margins.
Naubert and Stahl, comes to the conclusion that women are best served by removing themselves from patriarchal society altogether.

Of course, Gisela von Arnim was writing for a very different audience in the Kaffeterkreis, a group of young women writers. There is no evidence that this story was ever meant for a public audience. As was the tradition of the Kaffeterkreis, it was probably read aloud at meetings, which is demonstrated in its conversational style; and it was written out by the group’s secretaries, the Bardua sisters, for inclusion in the private publication the Kaffeterzeitung (Jarvis, “Rose Cloud” 135). In this way “Die Rosenwolke” was published and presented, but to a very specific audience. Since only young women and some of their like-minded male friends would ever have heard it or read it, the story does not need to contain coded language; however, the story does contain a coded metaphor of spinning to explore ways in which women writers can still thrive in a patriarchal society full of unfair depictions of deviant women writers and problematic male writer role models. Using spinning, an accepted form of women’s work, Arnim examines how women writers can become productive and independent without falling prey to society’s silencing and degradation of young imaginative women.

The story of “Die Rosenwolke” follows one such imaginative girl, Catharine, as she grows up. The first five chapters of the story are about Catharine as a little girl, when she is too young to go to school. Catharine helps care for her family’s farm and is in charge of taking the sheep to pasture. One day she accidentally leaves one of her sheep, a tiny crippled lamb, out in the pasture overnight. She finds the lamb, which is very thin and light. Catharine puts it in her apron to take home, but along the way runs into a neighbor boy who says he found the lamb the night before and brought it home with his flock. Catharine is suddenly terrified to find out what she is carrying in her apron. When she returns home, she finds that it is a tiny pink cloud. As soon as she opens
her apron, it begins to float away up into the sky. She curses it as it goes and hears it sing in a strange language. Intrigued, she asks her mother, “Was die Wolken sagen, wenn sie singen [What the clouds say when they sing]” (7). Her mother Sylvia does not take kindly to her fancy, however, and replies “Schweig still . . . du weißt daß ich es nicht leiden kann, wenn man so im Tag hinein schwatzt, um Dummheiten zu sagen, die gar kein Sinn und Verstand haben [Be quiet . . . you know that I can’t take it when one chatters all day and says dumb things, which have absolutely no reason or sense]” (7). Later on she fantasizes about being up in the sky with her rose cloud, walking amongst the heavens, but then she “erinnerte sich, daß man keine Dummheiten sagen müsse, und deshalb auch nicht an törichte Dinge denken. Sie nahm ihren Rocken, spann so gut sie nur irgend könnte, und gab sich die größte Mühe, an gar nichts zu denken [remembered, that one shouldn’t say dumb things, and therefore also shouldn’t think about foolish things. She took her distaff, spun as well as she could, and tried as hard as she could to think about nothing]” (8). The rose cloud goes on to become a thunder cloud and brings a terrible storm to her village. Afterwards she begins to give up on her fantasies and many little pets and begs her mother to send her to school. Overtime she “gewann . . . ihren Rocken lieb, und als sie heranwuchs, wurde sie ein sehr liebenswürdiges, kleines Mädchen und eine sehr geschickte Spinnerin [grew to love her distaff, and as she grew up, she became a very amiable little girl and a very skilled spinner]” (11).

The next half of the story takes place some years later when Catharine is twelve. Her mother takes her to visit her Aunt Colette, who lives far away in the mountains, which Catharine calls “die blauen Länder [the blue lands]” (12). Although her mother Sylvia believes that Colette has written out of need, it turns out that she is a very wealthy and well-respected woman. Colette is known for spinning very fine wool and is called “die große Wolkenspinnerin [the great spinner of clouds]” (18). Sylvia is intimidated by Colette’s wealth, and Catharine is intimidated by her
knowledge. Later when Colette offers to apprentice Catharine, her mother suggests she take the position because of the money it would bring the family, while Catharine decides to take it because she is curious to learn her aunt’s secret of spinning. Catharine is frustrated by the apprenticeship, however, because her aunt simply allows her to spin what she wants, when she wants and does not give her any specific instruction. Catharine is certain that her aunt has a secret, since she works alone in a special room and won’t let anyone watch her work, but her aunt insists that there is no secret. Catharine begins to see what she thinks is her old rose cloud and it calls her to climb up to a dangerous mountaintop. Later she thinks that she sees her aunt at the top of the mountain speaking with the cloud. As her aunt grows closer, she goes to talk with her and ask her her secrets. Colette assures that there is no secret to what she does other than patience and hard work, and that she does not actually spin clouds, but that cloud is a term people in the area use for the flax she works with. Catharine feels very silly and, not entirely convinced, tells her aunt about what her rose clouds said to her. Colette describes her own rose cloud, which confuses Catharine until she explains that the rose cloud is a sort of metaphor for “meine Laune, mein Phantasiebild, mein böses Schicksal [my fancy, my fantasy, my evil fortune]” (37). Soon after, Catharine and Colette both fall asleep while they’re working, and Catharine has dream in which Colette resembles a Grimmian stepmother-character demanding that she work hard at meaningless tasks, and scolding her for not working fast enough. When they both awake, Catharine tells her aunt about the dream; and Colette tells her that she must learn to put her fantasies behind her. She tells Catharine that she took her rose cloud and “ich habe sie auf meinen guten Rocken getan, und die Arbeit, die schöne Arbeit, hat der Feindin einen so schönen Faden gesponnen, daß ich ihn gar nicht mehr gefühlt habe [I set it [the cloud] on my good distaff, and the work, the wonderful work, spun the enemy into such a beautiful fine thread, that I did not feel it [the thread] anymore]” (37). Catharine never sees the
rose cloud again and becomes a great spinner and her aunt’s heiress.

The story has a strong relationship to “Frau Holle” and to Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel.” Colette plays the role of magical benefactress, assisting Catharine in becoming a great spinner and a wealthy woman. Catharine is the Kind Girl, very open to new places and things. The Kind Girl, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, is often non-judgmental and open to different people who seem otherwise threatening, while the Unkind Girl is put off by appearances and reacts negatively to figures who fall outside of society (Tatar, Off with Their Heads 56). In this way Sylvia plays the role of the Unkind Girl. She does not care for the journey to Colette’s home and says the road is “ein sonderbarer Weg [a strange path]” and the mountains “die umgekehrte Welt [the topsy-turvy world]” (13). Frau Holle’s realm is often described as a topsy-turvy world (Nauwald 29-30). Once they arrive, Sylvia is put off by Colette’s wealth and her willingness to listen to Catharine’s chattering. Except for the character that appears in Catharine’s dream, there is no evil stepmother in this story. There are also similarities here to Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel,” and we know that Arnim was familiar with Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 107). Like Rose and Genelas, Colette and Catharine are only able to be productive workers in seclusion, far away from patriarchal society. Missing here is a truly magical benefactor, for Colette appears to only use magical metaphors for her work. Catharine’s experiences with the rose cloud are more ambiguous. These could represent an evil magic in the world to which she susceptible, her overactive imagination, or even schizophrenia. Regardless, there are motifs of spinning, a topsy-turvy land, female mentorship, and openness to strange places which all demonstrate connections to “Frau Holle,” “Der kurze Mantel,” and other Kind and Unkind Girls tales.

In “Trivial Pursuit? Women Deconstructing the Grimmian Model in the Kaffeterkreis,”
Jarvis describes the young women of the *Kaffeterkreis* as being very familiar with the Grimms’ collection. In fact, most of them had a personal connection to the Grimm family. Consequently, these young women comprise “one of the first generations to be socialized with the values they [KHM] expounded” (107). Examining “Die Rosenwolke” with this in mind, Jarvis shows how Arnim’s tale deconstructs the Grimmian model. Spinning and silence are two elements that Arnim deconstructs. Jarvis describes a tension in the concept of spinning in KHM. While hardworking spinners are generally rewarded with riches, scholars such as Ruth Bottigheimer in *Bad Girls and Bold Boys* and Maria Tatar in *Hard Facts of the Grimms Fairy Tales* (1987) have pointed out that some tales—such as “Frau Holle”—feature women who are injured and deformed precisely because of their hard work at spinning, which is grueling work. Bottigheimer attributes this to a clash between the values of the editor, Wilhelm Grimm, and his sources, who were mostly female storytellers and writers (122).

In “Die Rosenwolke,” working hard at spinning appears initially to be what brings Catharine back into the societal norm, and it pleases her mother that she is good at it. In fact the first mention of spinning appears at the same moment Catharine demonstrates that she has internalized her mother’s silencing: “Sie nahm ihren Rocken, spann so gut sie nur irgend konnte, und gab sich die größte Mühe, an gar nichts zu denken [She took up her spindle, spun as well as she could, and tried as hard as she could to think about nothing]” (Arnim, “Die Rosenwolke” 8). Now she not only tries not to worry her mother by saying silly things, but also uses spinning as a way to prevent herself from even thinking about them. Her mother’s constant silencing of Catharine’s chattering references the silenced heroines of numerous Grimms’ tales (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 110-111). However in Aunt Colette’s topsy-turvy world, Catharine is begged to speak, for, as Colette says, otherwise “erfahre ich nicht was sie sagen wollte [I don’t learn what she wants
to say]” (18). In addition, Colette does not make Catharine slave over her spinning, and Catharine is quite confused by her freedom to spin whenever she likes or even to not spin at all. Only in Catharine’s dreams does she experience a Grimmian mistress who scolds her as she struggles to work hard or fast enough to please Colette (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 117).

Jarvis sees Colette’s attitude towards spinning as related to the passing on of wisdom from generation to generation, as occurred in the storytelling that took place in spinning chambers for centuries (114). In the end, Catharine learns to spin for herself and not in order to achieve great wealth or to win a husband. This leads her to become “socially and financially independent, a true fantasy for most women in the nineteenth century. Catharine has achieved riches and independence, she has been educated while educating herself, and—most importantly—she has learned to harness inner forces to her advantage because she was allowed to explore and exploit their potential” (118). No longer is spinning associated with the silencing of thoughts as it was with her mother, now spinning allows her to take control of her fantasies instead of being controlled by them.

Jarvis claims that Sylvia represents “the world view of Grimmian tales,” whereas her daughter Catharine embodies “the utopian vision” (115) of women writers. In order to achieve her goal, “a state of knowledge,” Catharine “must reject her mother’s interdicts. She is enabled by her aunt, who banishes the specter of the silenced female” (115). In this way “Die Rosenwolke” contains a meta-level of the Kind and Unkind Girls narrative, in which Sylvia represents the misogynistic patriarchal tradition that women writers were contesting, and Catharine the new narrative product that they developed (a dynamic that will reappear in the second part of this

10 This relationship between spinning and a woman’s rite of passage is something she also sees in Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel.”
chapter on *Gritta*). Up until the moment when Sylvia and Catharine head for the mountains, the patriarchal norm overrules Catharine’s imagination and voice; but in the topsy-turvy world of Colette’s mountain residence, Catharine’s mentor begs her to speak and follow her passions.

As discussed in earlier chapters, inherent in the narrative of *The Kind and Unkind Girls* is a sense of injustice in the everyday world must be corrected in the magical realm with a supernatural justice. In the case of “Die Rosenwolke,” this injustice includes the silencing of women’s voices, which Jarvis says “anticipates modern feminist critics who view speech as a vehicle to power,” (“Trivial Pursuit” 110). The nature of Colette’s work anticipates other themes in modern feminism. She was lucky enough to come into a little bit of money as a young woman; her employer left her all “sie zum Leben brauchte [she needed to live]” (16). With her basic needs taken care of, Colette was able to focus on her work and work how she liked. She works, for instance, alone in a workshop on the top floor of her house, because “ich kann nicht arbeiten, wenn man mir zusieht [I cannot work, if others are watching me]” (25). Here she demonstrates not only that she worked how she liked, but also that she was able to work well, better than all others in her region, and to produce a comfortable life for herself through “die Früchte meiner Arbeit und meines Fleißes [the fruit of my labor and my effort]” (16). In this way, Arnim anticipates Virginia Woolf’s famous claim in 1929: “Give her a room of her own and five hundred a year, let her speak her mind and leave out half that she now puts in, and she will write a better book one of these days” (94).

Although Colette is a spinner and not a writer, there is actually much about her world which works as a metaphor for writing. Arnim codes this information with reference to her own life which only close family and friends would pick up on. It comes in the form of a nickname which Catharine gives to Colette’s mountains. When asked if she would like to visit her aunt in the
mountains, Catharine replies “ich habe immer Lust gehabt, die blauen Länder zu sehen [I have always wanted to see the blue lands]” (12). Although her mother chastises her for talking nonsense again, Sylvia uses the term herself as they get closer: “Da hast du nun dein blaues Land, Catharine. Findest du es nach deinem Geschmack? [There you now have your blue land, Catharine. Is it to your liking?]” but Sylvia herself finds the landscape unforgiving, even though her daughter feels it is quite beautiful (13). This reference is interesting because “das blaue Ländchen [the little blue land]” (Mey 36) was the nickname the Arnim girls gave Bärwalde, the small residence where they stayed with their mother in the summers. Bärwalde is the same place in which Maxe von Arnim described Bettina von Arnim working alone in her room long hours to produce her first publications as she entered the literary world again, following her husband’s death. This coded reference would have signaled to Gisela von Arnim’s sisters and friends in the Kaffeterkreis that her story was a message especially meant for women writers.11

Of course spinning and storytelling are already linked in the history of fairy tales, which Jarvis examines in more depth in “Trivial Pursuit,” so the metaphor is not so difficult to decode. Nonetheless, Arnim makes it very personal when she names her feminist utopia after Bärwalde. Both Colette’s mountain residence and Bärwalde were extremely secluded, and both were places of great inspiration, mentorship, and work. Maxe von Arnim described not only the stories her mother wrote while at Bärwalde but also those she told to her children in the evenings. In addition, Maxe, Armgard, and Gisela all began writing in Bärwalde, and through the paper Bettina began, they experienced their first censorship from the outside world. One could describe their time in Bärwalde as the workshop where they began to learn their trade and developed a spirited love for

11 To my knowledge, I am the first to write on this connection between the Arnim women’s nickname for Bärwalde and Catharine’s name for the mountains.
writing that led to the development of the *Kaffeterkreis*.

In Gisela von Arnim’s depiction of Aunt Colette and *den blauen Ländern*, she demonstrates some important lessons for young writers. As described above, she shows how important it is for women writers, and workers in general, to have their own space and to have enough money to cover basic necessities. This facilitates Colette’s main lesson for Catharine: work “wie es dir Vergnügen macht [however it please you]” (25). Confused as Catharine is by this freedom to work how and when she likes, she is still haunted in her dream by a more traditional fairy-tale mistress, who demands “spinne sie nun, aber schnell, schnell! Ich befehle es! [spin it [the rose cloud] now, but quick, quick! I command it!]” (36). This is something else she must overcome. In addition to “rejecting her mother’s interdicts” (“Trivial Pursuit,” 110), as Jarvis explains, Catharine must reject the patriarchal model of women’s work, which must be unpaid, fast, and tedious. By using a Grimmian archetype to display Catharine’s fears, fears which are then put at ease by the very different perspective of Colette, Arnim shows a rejection of the Grimms as her role models for fairy-tale writing and encourages other women to seek out female mentors instead. This is yet another feminist issue she anticipates, one which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar investigated in nineteenth-century English women writers in their landmark work *The Madwoman in the Attic*. In this work, Gilbert and Gubar describe how women writers had few or no female role models to follow and had to struggle instead with the misogynistic depictions of women that were handed down to them by male writers. Similarly, Ruth-Elle Joeres examined representations of deviant women writers in the nineteenth century, demonstrating the conflicted relationship women writers had to their male writer idols, many of whom, such as Schiller and Nietzsche, felt women had no place as writers. Gisela von Arnim was lucky to have a female role model in *das blaue Ländchen*. 
Aunt Colette’s advice and the command of her persona in Catharine’s dream are the same, however: Catharine must spin her rose cloud until it can longer control her. Colette describes her own rose cloud as “meine Laune, mein Phantasiebild, mein böses Schicksal [my fancy, my fantasy, my evil fortune]” (37), which she mastered through “schöne Arbeit [wonderful work]” (37). This is the last lesson for young women writers: master your fantasies and fancies and do not let them control you. As Colette made clear early in the story, she wants Catharine to speak openly. While she does not chastise her, as Sylvia did, for her story of the rose cloud, Colette does recognize the danger of giving too much power to such a fantasy. We begin to witness this power as the rose cloud begs Catharine:


[Won’t you come soon up to the peak of the glacier? It is not nearly as bad as you have been told. It is actually quite easy, you only have to want it. Anyway, I will be nearby, and if you fall, you will land on me, and I will hold you in my arms, so you will not be hurt. Come first thing in the morning, Catharine. Come right after sunrise] (28).

Right after this encounter, Catharine speaks with someone who explains to her that the peak of the glacier is nearly impossible to reach, and that it is currently the most dangerous season for hiking in the area. When her aunt comes, she tells Catharine, “Traue nicht Wolken, Catharine, die an dir vorüberziehen, vorzüglich nicht den Rosenwolken. Sie verheißen Sonnenschein und tragen doch das Unwetter in sich [Don’t trust clouds, Catharine, that pass by you, especially rose clouds. They promise sunshine and bring storms instead]” (33). There is a danger to getting lost in fantasies and losing sight of reality. As Colette describes it, however, fantasy can be very useful if put to work. Her rose cloud went into her work and became the catalyst for her early success. Arnim suggests
young writers spin their fancies into their writing. Instead of languishing in a fantasy world, unable to function in the real one, she suggests putting them to good use.

Through Catharine’s trials and Colette’s example, “Die Rosenwolke” offers plenty of advice to anyone attempting to be successful in den blauen Ländern of writing. As in Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel,” spinning serves as a metaphor for women’s work and especially for women writers. “Die Rosenwolke” depicts a spot secluded from patriarchal society as the best place to attempt an independent lifestyle. Like Colette, one needs a room with privacy, enough money to cover the basics, and the ability to work how and when she wants. As in Colette’s world, women must speak their minds and not allow others to silence them. Catharine represents the openness of the traditional Kind Girl and the hope of young women writers, and her mother the close-minded Unkind Girl and the problematic example of male writers and collectors of fairy tales. Catharine’s trials with the dangerous rose cloud show, however, that is dangerous to be completely open without any caution. One should always remain in control of fantasies and never fall prey to forgetting reality. Sylvia’s representation as the Grimmian silencer of women and Catharine’s nightmare of the stereotypical fairy tale mistress show that in addition to physically removing themselves from patriarchal society, women writers would do well to reject patriarchal representations of deviant women writers and seek out female role models over male writers, who do not appreciate or understand them.

Part II: Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausebiuns

Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausebiuns features a more fully realized positive female character in Gritta, who is both rebellious and good, subverting the binary of Kind and Unkind. The young impoverished countess of a noble family, Gritta is cursed by the actions of her ancestor, Bärwalda. Bärwalda ran away with her lover to war and was cursed to haunt the
family until “ein Mädchen aus ihrem Geschlecht so gut sei, daß es nie eine Rute verdiene [a girl from her family were so good, that she would never deserve the rod]” (35). Gritta’s actions are not so different from her ancestors. She also runs away, in her case from a convent school, and she brings all of her classmates with her. A series of adventures accidentally land them on a boat headed for the Americas, but the boat shipwrecks and they must make their own life on a tropical island. They decide to create their own convent, one where they can each pursue their passions from painting to herbal medicine. They call it the cloister of “den zwölf Landstreicherinnen [the Twelve Girl Hoboes]” (186). On the island, Gritta befriends a young prince, whom she eventually saves, together with his kingdom, from a tyrannical governor. This redeems her family and her sex, and Bärwalda’s curse is lifted. Gritta uses a wish from Bärwalda to cure the blindness of her half-brother and finally marries the young prince.

The novel is full of references, deconstructions, and reworkings of other texts, oral stories, and traditions. The heavy intertextual nature of the work allows for Bärwalda, the Unkind Girl, to be seen on a meta-level as more of a victim of a misogynistic narrative, rather than a true villain. Gritta, the Kind Girl, is the first to decode this narrative and create a new world (and narrative) where women are valued for their contributions to society and not their dowries. The intertextual nature of the text reflects many traditions of written and oral storytelling, including biblical stories and Robinsonades. Intertextual inversions and deconstructions of the fairy-tale traditions of the Grimms and Clemens Brentano (Gisela von Arnim’s uncle) make up, however, the centerpiece of an implicitly coded reflection on role of women writers in society, much like in “Die Rosenwolke.”

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12 All pages for Gritta refer to Jarvis’ 1986 edition, unless otherwise noted.
13 See Blackwell’s article on the tradition of female Robinsonades: "An Island of Her Own: Heroines of the German Robinsonades from 1720 to 1800" (1985), as well as her treatment of the Robinsonade narrative in Gritta in her 1997 article “Laying the Rod to Rest.”
For many years, striking elements which appeared to reference the life and works of Bettina von Arnim were seen as proof that she was a co-writer with Gisela on the novel, but the overwhelming evidence now points to Gisela as sole author with some minor editorial assistance from her mother. These references, like the other traditions mentioned above, are not proof of authorship, but rather a symptom of the complex intertextual structure of the novel. A closer look at references to Bettina’s life when combined with the coded material in the fairy tale deconstructions reveals a depiction of the struggle of women writers to either enact change by attempting to work within patriarchal society or to live a creative and free existence by removing oneself from society altogether.

This is reflective of a conflict between Bettina von Arnim’s and Gisela von Arnim’s proto-feminist perspectives. Gisela only sees hope outside of society, apart in a feminist utopia (Jarvis, “Trivial Pursuit” 124), while Bettina still struggles to make change within the system. In the conclusion of Gritta, both perspectives are represented. The cloister is a place where women can pursue their own interests without judgment or punishment and live in harmony, but Gritta cannot stay with her friends. Instead she persuades the king to come to his senses regarding his evil governor, marries his son the prince at his request, and eventually rules so well she is presented as “ein Muster der Königinnen [an example for all queens]” (201). While the cloister sounds like a place that any of Gisela’s heroines might end up happily ever after, Gritta, as royal adviser, resembles Bettina’s persona in “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” and Dies Buch gehört dem König. This tension throughout Gritta has clouded interpretations of the work with the ongoing question of its authorship. As discussed below, today it seems quite clear that Gisela was the lead writer on the project with very minor assistance from her mother, but that does not mean that one cannot see Bettina’s influence throughout the work. Gisela appears to struggle with two conflicting ideas of
how a woman can succeed as a writer: either by creating her own world, something like the *Kaffeterkreis*, apart from the surveillance and strict censorship of the patriarchal public, or by actually attempting to work within the system and utilizing one’s abilities as a writer and speaker to persuade men, therefore gaining power by proxy. In the end, for Gritta at least, the latter wins out, but she mourns the loss of her withdrawn community of women in the convent, as we see in this passage: “für sie war ein Zellchen bestimmt. Sie machte die Augen zu, um es nicht zu sehen, denn es tat ihr leid, nicht darin wohnen zu können [there was a little cell reserved for her. She averted her eyes in order to not look at it, for it made her feel sorry that she would never be able to live in it]” (189).

**Scholarship on Gritta**

In order to understand this tension, we must first examine both the location and publication history of the text and how previous scholars have determined the text’s authorship. Naturally, the authorship question has dominated the majority of analysis written on the novel, as well, since most interpretations of the piece place it within the context of other works by Bettina and/or Gisela von Arnim. Although more and more evidence has come to light over the last century pointing to Gisela von Arnim as at least lead and probably sole author, articles published as recently as 2013 analyze *Gritta* as a product of Bettina von Arnim. By first examining the history of the authorship debate, and reviewing the scholarship of *Gritta*, I will demonstrate how this confusion is related to the intertextual complexity of the work rather than a case of dual-authorship. The very elements that point to Bettina von Arnim’s influence are the same which display the struggle of its author, Gisela von Arnim, to find a resolution to the tension, ultimately delaying publication for decades.

The authorship of *Gritta* has been debated over the last century. The first to take on the issue was the arbiter of the Grimms’ estate, Reinhold Steig, who rediscovered the manuscript in
the 1906. According to his records, after finding the manuscript, he interviewed Auguste Grimm, the younger sister of Herman Grimm. She told Steig that Gisela was the author, but that she “hat es aber nicht fertig gemacht [did not however finish it]” (qtd. in Mey 38). When pressed about the notes in Bettina’s hand, Grimm reportedly said “ja dann hat Gisela zu Bettinen gesagt ‘Schrieb du nur weiter’ und so ist es dann gekommen [yes, then Gisela said to Bettina ‘just continue writing’ and so it happened]” (qtd. in Mey 38). Auguste Grimm would have been 13 years old around the time the manuscript was being completed, and she was 73 when Steig interviewed her. It’s not clear whether she would have had access to such information as a thirteen-year-old acquaintance of the Arnim family, or whether she was remembering the situation correctly over 60 years later when she spoke to Steig.

In 1926, Otto Mallon published the first edition of *Gritta*, though he did not have the complete ending. Finding notes in Bettina’s hand on the proofs, Mallon attributed the larger part of the authorship to her. Mallon’s overview of Bettina’s biography for the first publication also showed evidence of a preference for Bettina’s life experiences over Gisela’s. Early reviewers in the 1920s pick up on these biographical references. Max Koch, for example, writes in his 1926 review in *Literarische Wochenschrift*, “das Klosterleben und die Flucht aus dem Kloster entnimmt Bettina’s klösterlichen Erziehungsjahren [the cloister life and the flight from the cloister are taken from the years of Bettina’s cloistered upbringing]” (698). Not all, however, were convinced even then of Bettina’s authorship. Josef Körner also acknowledges the connection, but is the first to note that the style and format are quite different from her other works. Körner mentions how the work is organized very differently from Bettina’s epistolary novels and claims: “Vor allem finde ich in dem ganzen Buche nirgends die Spur von Bettinas so ausgeprägtem, so unverwechselbar originellem Irrlichter-Stil, [Above all, in the entire book I find not even a trace of Bettina’s so
distinct, so unmistakably original fanciful style]” (100).

Forty years later, Gustav Konrad published the work again as a part of a collection entitled *Märchen der Bettine, Armgart und Gisela von Arnim* (Fairy Tales by Bettine, Armgart, and Gisela von Arnim) (1963). Konrad continues to privilege Bettina’s authorship over Gisela’s. Konrad claims “Bettinens Aufenthalt in der Klosterrschule in Fritzlar (1794 bis 1801) ist ebenso in die *Gritta* eingegangen wie manche ihrer Beziehungen zu verschiedenen Örtlichkeiten der Arnimischen Familiengüter. Man denke an die Episode von der Gräfin Bärwalde! [Bettina’s residence in the convent school in Fritzlar (1794 till 1801) went into *Gritta* as well, like many connections to various places of the Arnim family’s properties. Think of the episode with the Countess Bärwalde!] ” (223). Bettina’s time in a convent school and the family residence and title of Bärwalde are here elements that Konrad sees as evidence of her contribution. Bärwalde was, however, also very important to Gisela. It was the location where she and her sisters first started writing and laid the groundwork for the *Kaffeterkreis*. Its coded appearance in “Die Rosenwolke” demonstrates its importance to Gisela’s own history. In addition, the stories of Bettina’s experiences in the convent school were Gisela von Arnim’s childhood entertainments. As Maxe von Arnim described in her memoirs, their mother used to tell them stories of her past in the evenings at Bärwalde, stories “aus ihrer Jugend, aus dem Kloster in Fritzlar [from her youth, from the convent in Fritzlar]” (72).

Other editions appeared throughout the twentieth century. An abridged version for children was published in Berlin in 1968 by Anne Gabrisch. In the 1980s, an edition was published in the GDR (1987 by Georg Hoffmann), and a very popular film version was created by DEFA (1985). The versions directed to children did not go into the authorship debate, but simply listed both names. Hoffmann’s edition features an afterword, but he also spoke mainly about Bettina von
Arnim and her life and work. Interestingly, Hoffmann’s text claimed to rely on Mallon’s edition, but included the complete ending which Jarvis had first published a year earlier in 1986 without crediting her (Lemm 347).

In 1986, Shawn C. Jarvis discovered the remaining pages and title page of Gritta in Gisela von Arnim’s estate. The title page gives only one name as the author, Marilla Fitchersvogel (Jarvis 204), which was a pseudonym of Gisela von Arnim. In addition Jarvis found drafted manuscript pages of the story in Gisela’s hand and drawings she had done to accompany the story. Jarvis was the first to describe how Gisela was more likely the main author. The only evidence of Bettina’s work that Jarvis finds is in the Robinsonade sections. She writes that this was perhaps the reason for Auguste Grimm’s memory (220).

And yet, even editions published after Jarvis’ discoveries continue to treat Bettina von Arnim as the main author. Lisa Ohm is also preoccupied by Bettina von Arnim’s past in her 1986 dissertation “Bettine von Arnim’s Child Persona and Female Development in her Fairy Tale Novel” and in the forward to her translation, The Life of High Countess Gritta Von Ratsinourhouse (1999). In her dissertation, Ohm diminishes Gisela von Arnim’s role by claiming that Bettina von Arnim was forced to “conceal herself partially behind a joint authorship with her daughter Gisela,” and claiming that it was necessary “in a patriarchal society to employ subterfuge in the development of any seriously critical adult work” (120). Ohm uses Arnim’s documented “child persona” as evidence of her authorship, ignoring both that Gisela von Arnim was an actual child at the time it was written, and that Bettina von Arnim was publishing openly political literature for adults in the same period. Even in the translation, which acknowledges Shawn Jarvis’ findings in detail, Ohm concludes: “It is difficult to determine the exact extent of Bettine’s and Gisela’s
contribution to *Gritta*” (xvi).

More recently, an edition was published in 2008 with an afterword by Rolf Vollmann. Vollmann, like Hoffmann, publishes the ending Jarvis discovered, but without giving her any recognition. In the afterword, he describes the appearance of the additional pages as if it were an act of God, without naming any scholar to the discovery and simply stating that they were found. He details their location in Gritta’s estate, the manuscript pages in her handwriting, and title page with her pseudonym, but goes on to claim “Wenn Bettina ihre Hand mit im Spiel hatte, . . . fiel es wohl wirklich nicht ganz leicht, die Töchter für die Verfasserin zu halten, [If Bettina had her hand in the game, it would be truly difficult to consider the daughter author” (278-279).

In critical texts, even those that come after Jarvis’ discovery, Bettina is still considered the lead author. It is hard to deny that references to Bettina’s life and works are used throughout *Gritta*, clouding the issue of authorship further. Edith Waldstein’s article “Romantic Revolution and Female Collectivity” (1987) draws compelling comparisons between *Dies Buch gehört dem König* and *Gritta*. Gritta makes demands directly on the king and ultimately forces him to remove his corrupt governor, who was misleading him. Bettina von Arnim succeeded in using her influence with the king to find the Grimms safe haven in Berlin, which is similar to Gritta’s successfully using her influence over the king to secure her family and the girls of the convent’s safety in Sumbona. Bettina von Arnim also attempted to persuade the king via letters and political works like *Dies Buch gehört dem König*; and, “as is the case in the *Königsbuch*, King Sumbona is harshly criticized and pleas are made for a more democratic system; and yet the authors cannot entirely reject the concept of a monarchy” (96).

John Urang’s 2013 article also treats Bettina von Arnim as the main author and only occasionally makes tangential references to Gisela von Arnim. Although Urang demonstrates
knowledge of Mey’s biography (183), he does not mention Herman Grimm’s note to Gisela von Arnim about writing *Gritta*. Instead he revisits the same evidence that was presented by Konrad in the 60s and Waldstein in the 80s, Bettina von Arnim’s time in the convent, references throughout the work to the mouse-ridden Bärwalde, and the similarities of her relationship with the king. At the beginning of the novel, Gritta’s father is working on a *Thronrettungsmaschine* (throne-rescue-machine), which is a kind of ejector-seat throne meant to propel the king to safety, except he can’t seem to keep it from propelling the king at random. Urang explains that “the terrified king can’t leave his throne for want of a rescue-machine, but such a machine can never be occupied” and he therefore concludes “It seems the very space of sovereignty has become impossible” (168). Just as Gritta’s father tries to rescue the king and Gritta later persuades the king of Sumbona, Urang recognizes that, “likewise, Bettine von Arnim ventured to offer Friedrich Wilhelm IV an aesthetic education, hoping to moderate the disciplinary machinery of absolutist power” (181). Indeed these similarities are real and not accidental, but they do not reflect Bettina’s authorship or critique, but rather Gisela’s interpretation thereof.

Several of the above critics note how different *Gritta* is from Bettina’s other works, both in its structure (Konrad 223) and in its focus on women’s issues (Waldstein 193, Goldschen 78). Nonetheless, the focus remains on Bettina, in spite of structural and thematic similarities to other works by Gisela von Arnim, such as “Die Rosenwolke” and *Mondkönigs Tochter*.\(^\text{14}\)

The only scholars to consider Gisela von Arnim’s contribution are Shawn Jarvis and Jeannine Blackwell. Surprisingly, Blackwell is the only scholar after Jarvis’ 1986 edition to acknowledge that Bettina’s role was “apparently editorial” (25) and to treat Gisela as the lead

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\(^{14}\) *Mondkönigs Tochter* also features a female group apart from society, though in this case it is a supernatural realm.
author in her analysis of the many narrative layers of *Gritta*. Jarvis’ 1987 article, “Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child? Bettine's Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns,” was written before her discovery of the additional pages. In it, she treats the two authors as equals, in spite of the title of the article. Examining the ambivalence of the marriage at the end of the tale, Jarvis claims that the authors did not finish the tale because of “reservations about the Märchen genre,” which meant that “the marriage scene in Gritta can never be consummated . . . because Gritta seeks a different level of power and autonomy than is possible in the bourgeois fairy tale: a woman's power to decide herself” (84). After discovering the ending of the story, in which Gritta eventually rules peacefully as a beloved queen, Jarvis acknowledges some problems with this interpretation in a postscript claiming that “the actual conclusion does more to intensify the break with the bourgeois fairy tale tradition by emphasizing the supremacy of the female community and Gritta's role as queen” (84).

Bettina von Arnim’s influence and/or presence is quite clear in *Gritta*. References to Bettina von Arnim’s life and oeuvre do appear throughout *Gritta*. As Jarvis is quick to point out, however, so do references to Gisela von Arnim’s life. For example, Gritta was known to be terrified of the mice that overran Bärwalde and often hid in her sisters’ beds (Jarvis, *Gritta* 214). Of course, to be fair Gisela and Bettina’s lives also intersected quite a lot. Still these traces of Bettina von Arnim, together with her limited role in the German canon, have led scholars to focus more on her contribution to the work than Gisela’s, even after Jarvis published the complete edition in 1986. As I will show below, however, these references are a symptom of the intertextual nature of the text, and not proof of Bettina’s authorship.

Although there’s been no mention of them in recent scholarship on *Gritta*, there are two elements in Mey’s 2004 biography that further bolster Jarvis’ claim that Gisela was the lead author.
Together with a new find in Friedmund von Arnim’s letters, we may be able to go so far as to consider the work wholly Gisela von Arnim’s. The major piece of evidence in Mey’s biography is the note mentioned above from 1844, in which Gisela von Arnim described herself to Herman Grimm as having “bis über die Ohren zu tun in Rattenzuhaus [up to my ears in work to do on Rattenzuhaus]” (qtd. in Mey 37). Another element is in her sister Maxe von Arnim’s juvenilia, in which Gisela was nicknamed “Gritta” (Mey 22). Finally, a piece of evidence that to my knowledge has not yet been mentioned in any Gisela von Arnim scholarship before is found in a letter from Gisela’s eldest brother Friedmund von Arnim to their mother Bettina von Arnim in November 1846. Friedmund informs his mother that he is returning some fairy tales that she had sent him via his sister Gisela. He then asks that his mother relay a message to Gisela about which he had already spoken to her once before. He writes: “Der Gisel hätte ich bei ihrem Mährchen ‘RattenzuHaus bei Uns’ auch noch gerathen; es so herauszugeben wie es ist. Sie hätte bei späteren Auflagen ihre Verbesserungen als neue Lesarten anbringen können; so würde das für manche ein Grund gewesen sein es noch einmal zu lesen [To Gisel I would again have to advise her about her fairy tale “RattenzuHaus bei Uns’ to publish it as it is. She could put her corrections into later editions as a new version. That would give some a reason to read it again] (his emphasis)” (74). Friedmund continues on about how Gisela should accept that there will always be errors, but she should move forward and publish. This is the first evidence that she was still working on the piece after it was typeset. Perhaps she delayed too long, and then the revolutions destroyed her chances of printing it. Certainly her brother felt it was good enough that it would see multiple editions, which it would, but not until the twentieth century. It is worth noting that in this letter to Bettina, Friedmund does not give his mother any credit for Gritta whatsoever and refers to it as Gisela’s alone. Bettina does not correct him in subsequent letters. Gritta also did not appear in the collection of Bettina’s works
which appeared during her lifetime. The overwhelming evidence is that Gisela was at least the lead author on *Gritta*. Had it been published in the 1840s as planned, under Gisela von Arnim’s pseudonym, than we would surely refer to the work as Gisela’s today.\footnote{A single volume containing *Mondkönig’s Tochter*, and *Gritta* exists in Gisela von Arnim’s archive. The title page for *Mondkönigs Tochter* in this volume reads simply “by the author of Gritta” (Ohm xv), indicating that perhaps the two would have been published together at a later date. Of course there is no question of authorship regarding “Mondkönigs Tochter.”}

Perhaps publication was delayed due to Gisela’s own issues with the very ending that was missing for so long. The found ending does indeed intensify the break from the fairy tale tradition, but *Gritta* only achieves this status and the security of her friends’ convent by participating in the patriarchy, albeit with reservations, and marrying Prince Bonus at his father’s request. And there is evidence that Gisela von Arnim was still ambivalent about this ending. Auguste Grimm’s claim that she did not finish the work but gave it to Bettina von Arnim and “ja dann hat Gisela zu Bettinen gesagt ‘Schrieb du nur weiter’ und so ist es dann gekommen [yes, then Gisela said to Bettina ‘just continue writing’ and so it happened]” (38) demonstrates that Gisela von Arnim was possibly frustrated with the ending of the novel. Friedmund von Arnim’s 1846 letter also indicates that Gisela von Arnim was not happy with the work as it was and had been putting off publication. This evidence, when combined with the separation of the text between two estates, the ending residing in Gisela von Arnim’s estate (Blackwell, “Laying the Rod” 26), may indicate that Gisela von Arnim was still very unsure about Gritta’s marriage and her public life as queen.

This is key to understanding references to Bettina von Arnim’s life and work in the novel. For in many ways the work is similar to “Die Rosenwolke,” in which Gisela von Arnim rejects the Grimms as her model for fairy-tale writing, deconstructs Grimmian motifs, and depicts instead a female mentor who resembles her mother. The complicated intertext of *Gritta*, which prompted
early reviewer Koch to claim “die Überlieferung des vorliegenden Märchens zwingt doch zu etwas Zergleiderung [the transmission of the fairy tale before us compels us to undertake some analysis]” (698). Gritta includes references to many antecedents, from “Cinderella” to Robinson Crusoe to the biblical tale of “Adam and Eve.” However, stories by the Grimms and her uncle Clemens Brentano are featured very prominently; and, as in “Die Rosenwolke,” their misogynistic narratives are ultimately reworked into proto-feminist messages. The references to Bettina von Arnim’s life and works in Gritta are not a result of Bettina von Arnim’s extensive work on the project, but of this same intertextual nature. Gritta, like “Die Rosenwolke,” does not follow the same model as male-authored fairy tales, and references to the life and works of Bettina von Arnim represent a possible female role model for young women writers. There is, however, a tension that develops in Gritta between Bettina’s active work within the patriarchal system and Gisela’s female utopia. Ultimately, Gritta cannot become the great leader she has been destined to be by remaining with her friends at the convent, no matter how much she wishes that she could. In the end, there is ambivalence about participating in patriarchy in order to enact change, which may be the reason why Gisela von Arnim was hesitant to publish, or possibly to finish, Gritta. This ambivalence may have led her either to never publish the work or to wait so long that censorship became too strict.

**Metafiction of Misogyny and The Kind and Unkind Girls in Gritta**

This ambivalence, together with the references to Bettina von Arnim’s life and work fit into the larger intertextual framework of the fairy-tale world of Gritta. Old fairy-tale and folktale narratives and motifs are made anew, allowing for proto-feminist reinterpretation of these stories. Through these recastings and deconstructions a new fairy-tale tradition is built in Gritta, just as Gritta builds a new world for her friends, where girls can determine their own fates. Consider, for instance, that the island, called Sumbona, is revealed to have been the location where Eve first ate
from the apple. Gritta’s actions, however, literally undo original sin and make Sumbona such a happy place that it is rejoined to heaven and becomes paradise once more. So, too, does the novel break down older misogynistic traditions and create alternative possibilities for women writers. In some ways, *Gritta* attempts to solve the issue raised in “Die Rosenwolke,” that of the problematic patriarchal literary tradition for women writers. *Gritta* remakes the literary tradition and encourages other writers to do the same. However, as mentioned above, the attempt to depict a female role model ultimately fails as the fantasy of a female world free from patriarchy butts up against a reality in which women can only truly participate in the public sphere by working to some degree within the patriarchy. These are the coded moments of *Gritta*. As studies by Waldstein and Urang have shown, the political references to the *Vormärz* period and critique of the king are not disguised but clearly evident. Blackwell describes the extent of the critique, claiming Arnim “here reassigns the roles of evil in the fairy-tale formula and gives them specific historical meaning. The author redistributes other roles as well: the princess saves the prince, and the real rats are not the rodents, but the clergy. Poverty, unfairness toward peasants, and greed are motivating plot factors and teach charming little Gritta how power and evil work in the world” (“Fractured Fairy Tales” 170). However, only readers intimately familiar with Brentano’s and the Grimms’ stories would discern all the references and recastings of their misogynistic elements, and even then only readers with a female perspective or a sympathy for women’s issues might pick up on these intertextual connections. In this sense *Gritta* is a coded message meant for readers very similar to the members of the *Kaffeterkreis*, who may have been the only ones able to understand Arnim’s struggle with her mother’s example.

As in “Die Rosenwolke” the Kind and Unkind Girls motif in *Gritta* displays a metafiction that critiques the history of misogyny, fairy tales, and folklore. The two girls are relatives, not
sisters, but ancestor and descendant. Gritta’s ancestor, Bärwalda (as mentioned above, another reference to the beloved summer home of the Arnims), is called “die wilde Gräfin, [the wild countess]” (35). When she ran away with her betrothed, her father cursed her to haunt the family until “ein Mädchen aus ihrem Geschlecht so gut sei, daß es nie eine Rute verdiene [a girl of her sex were so good, that she would never need the rod]” (35). That girl is Gritta, but, as Blackwell points out, Gritta’s actions are not that different from her ancestor’s:

The good daughter Gritta atones for her foremother’s original sin. But she counteracts it by doing precisely the same thing her foremother did: running away from her fathers - biological (the Count), religious (the Pater), and political (the King). And by a linguistic sleight of hand, the double historical meaning of "brav" (which signifies both "polite and well-behaved" as well as the older meaning of "brave"), Gritta is able to revoke the curse, in spite - or because of - her disobedience. (“Laying the Rod” 33)

Gritta and Bärwalde are tested in the same way, as in all Kind and Unkind Girls tales; but unlike in other narratives they actually react identically, by disobeying their fathers and the rules of patriarchy and following their own wishes. Gritta is only truly able to do so without consequence because she finds her way to Sumbona, where she essentially builds a new society, one where girls are free to make their own lives and choose their own path. Bärwalda is released from her curse, not because Gritta enacts the patriarchal ideal of a woman who does not need to be beaten in order to conform, but because Gritta nullifies the absolute patriarchy by starting a new world and writing her own rules. Although Gritta’s actions do not eliminate all elements of masculine rule, as discussed above, she nonetheless frees Bärwalda from her curse and, therefore, the sin of Bärwalda’s father. Accordingly, Bärwalda, the Unkind Girl, is not a villain but a victim who represents the misogynistic narratives of the past; and Gritta, the Kind Girl, embodies the new narrative being written by women, a narrative that problematizes the misogynistic themes of the past and works towards building a new world.

While *Gritta* has many intertextual moments, I will now examine how Gisela von Arnim
worked with and against three very personal literary narratives. First, I will discuss the popular misogynistic and anti-Semitic “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel” written by her uncle Clemens Brentano and the fairy tales of the Grimms’ KHM that feature peri- and post-pubescent heroines. I will then demonstrate how the references to Bettina von Arnim and her work are not in fact evidence of her authorship, but merely another layer of this intertextual matrix in *Gritta*.

**Brentano’s Fairy Tales**

*Gritta’s* references to Clemen’s Brentano’s “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel” (The Fairy Tale of Gockel and Hinkel) and “Rheinmärchen” (Fairy Tale of the Rhine) both reveal the problematic prejudices of these pieces and respond to them in a proto-feminist manner. Brentano wrote these tales in the early part of the century, and they were known to have circulated in manuscript form among his family and friends (Blamires 263). He continued to work on them throughout his life, and they were first published by his friend Guido Görres in 1844, two years after his death. It is likely that Gisela von Arnim first read them in manuscript form, but she would also have been familiar with an expanded version of “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel” which was published in 1838 under the title *Gockel, Hinkel, und Gäckeleia*. “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel” was preferred by later generations to its longer counterpart (Blamires 263). Since this was probably Gisela von Arnim’s first experience with the story, I will be referring here to “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel” or simply “Gockel und Hinkel.” In 1927, Körner took note of this in his review of Mallon’s edition: “[*Gritta*] ist eine Märchennovelle, in Art und Umfang Brentanos berühmten ‘Gockel’ genau nachgebildet, [*[Gritta]*] is a fairy tale novel that precisely emulates Bretano’s famous ‘Gockel’ in form and scope]” (Körner 99).

A retelling and expansion of Giambattista Basile’s 1634 “The Rooster’s Stone,” “Gockel und Hinkel” has many striking similarities to *Gritta*, the majority of which reference motifs only
found in Brentano’s version. *Gritta*’s references to “Gockel und Hinkel” are an inversion of traditional fairy tale structures. Like *Gritta*, “Gockel und Hinkel” also tells the story of a poor noble family living in the ruins of a once great castle with magical animals, in this case birds. Chickens grace the family crest (220), just as rats do Gritta’s family crest (191). Both tales feature strikingly similar descriptions of the ruined castle, overtaken by nature and overrun by the family’s animals. Gockel’s castle is described as place where “Gras und Kraut wuchs überall, aus allem Winkeln [grass and weeds grew everywhere, out of every crevis]” (218) while in *Gritta* “aus den Gotischen Rosen und Linien der Verzierung wuchs Gras und Moos [out of the gothic roses and lines grew grass and moss” (2). Birds make their homes in the tumbling towers of both castles (Arnim 2; Brentano 218). Both families are at best living as equals with the animals and at worst at the mercy of the animal’s desires.

Although the plots of the two stories differ from these early descriptions and structures, just as in *Gritta*, most of the action of the story is determined by the family’s only daughter, Gäckeleia. The silly Gäckeleia is far from Gritta’s equal, however. She sets the action in motion when she shows a family of cats the newborn chicks of the magical speaking head chicken and cock. When the cats devour the chicks, she murders the cock to keep him from telling her father and discovers a magical ring that had been lodged in his throat. Her father uses the ring to return his family to their former glory, which they only enjoy for short while, until Gäckeleia trades the ring to a group of scheming Jews for a new doll.¹⁶ Recognizing her mistake, Gäckeleia, in her only moment of ingenuity, uses a relationship with a mouse princess to steal the ring, bring the cock

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¹⁶ Although Brentano was retelling Basile’s story, most of the elements which Gisela von Arnim references are Brentano’s own: the family being associated with chickens and living in a rundown castle, Gäckeleia’s silly choices (only the doll choice occurs in Basile), and the scheming Jews (who in Basile’s tale are not described as Jews, but as necromancers).
back to life, and return her family to their past position. She grows up, marries a prince, and becomes a queen, but upon seeing the ring on her wedding day, childishly wishes that everyone, including her parents, could be little children again listening to an old man’s story.

The premise of Brentano’s tale is similar to the premise of *Gritta*, which appears to have simply swapped out chickens for rats. While the plots differ, some features of Brentano’s tale appear in *Gritta* in modified form. One is the role played by Jews of whom Bettina von Arnim was a known defender. Although Gisela von Arnim did not write on the rights of Jews in Prussian society, we know that she shared the political views of her mother, who advocated for those rights (Joeres 102). In “Gockel und Hinkel,” the evil necromancers of Basile’s tale have been transformed into greedy and scheming Jewish merchants from Frankfurt. There is a Jewish character in *Gritta* too, but he is a noble figure who tells the girls stories and teaches them to spin. So while Brentano’s Jewish merchants take advantage of the weakest member of Gockel’s family, using her greed and impulsive nature to steal the ring, the Jewish sailor in Gritta, Abraham, is a friend and teacher of the young girls suddenly in his care. He calms the girls on the boat with his stories and on Sumbona acts as a teacher at their convent and instructs them in spinning. This in and of itself is a reversal, as Blackwell comments: “Abraham, the Jew, is a wise, non-Christian father, who takes on absolutely non-patriarchal tasks - storytelling and spinning - as a trusted friend and teacher to the Girl Hoboes” (“Laying the Rod” 36). Arnim certainly offers a different perspective than Brentano on what can emerge from a relationship between young German girls

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17 Arnim had conflicting views about the place of Jews in society throughout her life. Although she made some anti-Semitic statements as a young woman, she was a champion for Jewish rights in her later life. For a more in depth look at her political position on Jewish rights in her later works see Claire Baldwin’s piece “Questioning the ‘Jewish Question’: Poetic Philosophy and Politics in *Conversations with Demons*."

and older Jewish men.

Arnim’s greatest critique of “Gockel und Hinkel,” however, comes in her examination of women and girls’ ability to make their own choices. Although in Basile’s original the little girl does trade the magical ring for a doll, Brentano has added the scene in the beginning of the story when she carelessly shows the cats the chicks and is shocked when the cats kill and eat them. Another bad choice quickly follows when she decides to murder the cock, which had been with the family for generations and is called the family’s *Stammhahn* (lead rooster), signifying the animals representation on the family crest. Although Gäckeleia redeems herself when she recovers the ring, her ridiculous wish on her wedding day shows that she hasn’t developed much sense with age. In some ways Gäckeleia is not that different from Bärwalda, who selfishly does what she wants to the detriment of her family’s honor and livelihood.

Gritta is the response to such depictions of women and girls with agency. Gritta makes her own choices, often acting selflessly for others, and brings about peace and well-being for her family, the girls of the convent, and eventually the people of Sumbona. She is a rebuttal to the notion that women and girls left to their own devices will make stupid, selfish, naïve, and ultimately harmful choices. One key difference between Gritta’s world and that of Gäckeleia, however, is that Bärwalda’s choice only brings her family dishonor whereas it is her father’s reaction to her decision that actually curses the family, not Bärwalda’s choice. According to Blackwell, both Bärwalda’s transgression and her father’s reaction to it are “merely reenactments of the violent family narrative, patriarchy, that is the center of Western culture” (“Laying the Rod” 38). Bärwalda is only a “bad” girl because of the way her choice is framed within the misogynistic narrative put forward by her father. As mentioned above, she and Gritta perform essentially the same rebellious act in the beginning of the story, which is running away from one’s father and pre-
determined role in society. Gritta is, however, lucky enough to run a little farther and find a place where she and the twelve girl hoboes can establish their own independent lifestyle. Even though she is ultimately a reluctant bride, the choice is still left up to her, while it was not for Bärwalda. Gäckeleia also is unable to choose her future, and so perhaps her decision on her wedding day to turn all the people of the story into children is the only way to escape her fate. If we are to read this choice in this way, and consider the story sympathetic to the lack of options available to young women, there still seems to be an overarching moral that women must take on the role as dutiful wife if society is not to crumble. Bärwalda’s story appears to be a similar narrative, but, as mentioned above, in truth it is her family and society’s inability to accept the agency of women that actually causes the curse. Bärwalda’s choice itself has essentially no consequence other than upsetting her father. By appropriating this story about the silly things girls will do when left to their own devices, Arnim depicts instead the wonders that can be wrought when young girls are given the freedom to pursue their own destinies. Not only can they survive on their own and create their own lives, but they can also save and protect the kingdom and even bring about the peace that returns humanity to paradise.

Grimms’ Fairy Tales and Gritta

In a similar fashion, Arnim demonstrates a familiarity with the Grimms KHM and reworks some of their problematic depictions of quiet and passive young heroines into the loud and active Gritta. Arnim, of course, included many fairy tale allusions in Gritta including “Die Bremen Stadtmusikanten” and Perrault’s “Cinderella” (Blackwell, “Laying the Rod” 26 and 40). I will focus, however, on the rescue of Prince Bonus and his kingdom because it also deals with the agency of young women and further illustrates Arnim’s use of her mother’s life and work.

When the corrupt governor of Sumbona’s abuse of the prince has grown to be too much
and Gritta’s own family is put in danger by his demands, she goes to the king to convince him of the governor’s abusive nature. At the castle she tricks the king into a closet, locks him in, and then makes several demands of him. She first demands: “Du mußt mir versprechen, freien Ausgang zu meinen Eltern zu lassen, und mir und ihnen erlauben, ruhig in der Stadt zu leben, sonst laß ich dich nicht heraus! [You must promise me, that you will let my parents free and allow us to live peacefully in the city, or I will not let you out!]” (168). She then demands he lower the governor’s unreasonable taxes. Finally, she shows him a damning letter from the governor outlining his treacherous schemes. Convinced, the king rids the kingdom of the governor as Gritta instructs him and asks her to wed Prince Bonus.

In this scene, Gritta plays out a common fairy tale motif, the rescue of a loved one, in a very uncommon way. First, Gritta is very proactive, dreaming up the scheme herself and taking initiative to visit the king. She is also extremely vocal. She speaks directly to the king and makes demands without hesitation. This is in stark contrast to most, though not all, of the Grimms’ heroines, who tend to be more passive and quiet. This has been shown to be not only the result of the stories they collected, but also of their own editing practices. In Bad Girls and Bold Boys, Ruth Bottigheimer demonstrated that over the course of the seven editions of the KHM, heroines became significantly quieter while female villains were given more direct speech. In his Marxist analyses, Jack Zipes makes similar observations, but comes to a different conclusion. In Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion, he cites the bourgeois corruption of the proletariat prototypes in the Grimms’ collection. Both of these studies have found that the Grimms’ negative female characters are generally more active, vocal, and knowledgeable than their heroic counterparts. As discussed above regarding “Die Rosenwolke,” this silencing is something that Arnim examined in other works. Arnim sought to make her heroines different from this quiet archetype with which she was
quite familiar. In the case of “Die Rosenwolke” she even depicted how those with good intentions, such as Catharine’s mother Sylvia, propagate the silencing of young women. In the convent Gritta experiences similar silencing, though from those without good intentions; however, she ultimately inverts the Grimmian stereotypes by demonstrating an ability to use her speech to take action.

Of course, that is not to say that there are no active heroines in the Grimms’ tales. Gretel, after all, is the one who tricks and ultimately kills the witch in order to save Hänsel. In fact the KHM includes many tales about sisters saving their brothers. However, the active heroines tend to be little girls, while young women of marrying age must save their brothers in a very different way. The most common of these tales are stories about lost brothers who have been transformed into birds: “Die Sechs Schwäne” (The Six Swans), “Die Zwölf Brüder” (The Twelve Brothers), and “Die Sieben Raben” (The Seven Ravens).” Typically, the sister is instructed to be silent for a series of years in order to free her brothers from the spell. During this time, the sister marries a king, whose mother uses the girl’s silence to convince him that she is evil. Unable to defend herself, she is eventually sentenced to death. However, just before her execution, the last of the silent years ends and her brothers return and rescue her.

Gritta is quite different from these long suffering sisters. She certainly does not obediently follow instructions, but rather she rebelliously stands up to the highest authority in the land. Moreover, her rescue is far from silent and even involves yelling. In the end she requires no rescue in return, but is rewarded with the prince’s hand in marriage and the breaking of her family’s curse. This even leads her to save her blind baby brother, whom she cures with a wish that Bärwalda grants her. Arnim depicts Gritta as a heroine who is indeed kind and selfless, but also active and vocal. In this rescue scenario, the heroine relies on more than simple endurance. Instead she uses an original plan, quick wit, and eloquent direct speech to save the prince and her family. It is
notable that Gritta asks at the end of the story for her little brother’s blindness to be cured. Arnim hoped that many, such as her mother’s brother Clemens Brentano and future-father-in-law, Wilhelm Grimm, could be cured of their blindness to both the plight and the potential of women in German patriarchal societies.

Arnim utilized her intimate knowledge of nineteenth century fairy tales to take issue with some of the misogyny that can be found in men’s tale collections. By appropriating motifs and structures from the Grimms and Brentano, she demonstrated the problematic nature of these common depictions of girls and women as passive and silly, and juxtaposed them with the proto-feminist figure of Gritta. The story revolves around Gritta’s eventual redemption of her family and her sex via breaking the curse of Bärwalda. Bärwalda is the Unkind Girl of the novel, a selfish and vain woman who brought shame to her family, but she also represents the old misogynistic narrative of what will happen when women are not kept in line. Gritta is just as rebellious as Bärwalda and her father has just as little control over her, but Gritta acts selflessly for others at all times. In this way, Gritta vanquishes the message of the Bärwalda story, demonstrating that women with freedom to pursue their own interests will not bring about the end of the world, but rather begin the building of new and better one.

Bettina von Arnim’s Life and Work in Gritta

In the period when Gritta was written, Gisela von Arnim would have witnessed her mother’s own narrative as Bettina became a public figure, willing to speak her mind to the king and using her written and spoken language to enact change in society. Through works like Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kind and Clemens Brentanos Frühlingskranz, Bettina von Arnim appropriated the power to retell her narrative with powerful men in her own way. In Dies Buch gehört dem König she began to use her words to shape the narrative of the future as well as the
past.

In “Die Rosenwalke,” Gisela von Arnim demonstrates the necessity for young women writers to seek out female mentors. This works well far-off in den blauen Ländern of “Die Rosenwalke,” but Sumbona is a different sort of place not entirely removed from patriarchal society. In an early draft version of Gritta found by Shawn Jarvis, the inhabitants of Sumbona are darker-skinned, and at the end Gritta marries a black prince (Gritta 218). Jarvis hypothesizes that this detail was changed to make the piece more publishable (218), which would seem quite likely. There may, however, be another reason why Sumbona was changed. Gisela admired her mother and evidence shows that their politics were extremely close. Bettina von Arnim also saw herself as a model for her youngest daughter. Joeres writes that Bettina von Arnim’s eccentric behavior served in part “as a model for her youngest child, Gisela, who was to emulate her mother by becoming a writer, supporting republican causes—and also jumping about like a merry puppet” (102). Interestingly, the truly coded materials in the story are not the political elements but the fairy-tale reflections about gender and agency, which can only be understood by those with a deep understanding of the problematic female characters of the Grimms and Brentano. Additionally, these references to Bettina von Arnim’s life depict a coded ambivalence towards the model her mother represented. Just as Gritta was unsure about her marriage to Prince Bonus, so too was Gisela von Arnim unsure that she would want to live a life like her mother’s. Her early publications were written under fairy-tale pseudonyms, Marilla Fitchersvogel and Allerleirauh. These pseudonyms do more than simply hide the writer’s name. They describe characters who are themselves hidden. “Fitchersvogel” (Fitcher’s Bird) features a young woman who dresses like a fantastical bird in order to escape a murderous husband, and “Allerliewau” (Fur of Many Kinds) a young woman who disguises herself in a cloak made of many types of fur and flees the incestuous
desires of her father. So while her mother developed a very public persona through her writing, Gisela von Arnim hid behind pseudonyms recalling female fairy-tale characters who also disguised themselves. In her later career, Gisela von Arnim did not publish political works and was more likely to use her skills to privately entertain, as in the privately printed “Das Pferrerkuchenhaus” and the lengthy series of fairy-tale letters written to her sickly nephew published by Jarvis as *Märchenbriefe an Achim* (1991).

So perhaps the racial makeup of Sumbona was changed for the same reason Arnim was hesitant to publish, because she could not truly imagine a happily-ever-after ending within an intact patriarchy. There are a number of pieces of evidence that show that Gisela von Arnim was unsure of the ending and of the story in general: Auguste Grimm’s claim that Bettina von Arnim “finished” the novel, the separation of the last twenty pages and their location in Gisela von Arnim’s estate, and the letter from her brother Friedmund which urged her to give up on her idea of perfection and move forward with publishing. All these items together suggest that Gisela von Arnim delayed publishing herself, though she may ultimately have tried to publish the work in the later 1840s and found the strict censorship prevented it, as Jarvis has hypothesized (*Gritta*, 222-223). Perhaps she was still struggling with her admiration and ambivalence towards her mother’s model and the direction Gritta would take, for ultimately Gisela von Arnim would have preferred the convent to the queenship.

**Relationship to Kind and Unkind Girls in the 1837 and 1840 editions of the Grimms’ KHM**

If there is a theme that connects Gisela’s and Bettina’s very different perspectives, however, it may be that each of their works discussed in this chapter feature heroines who are in control of their own narratives and not afraid to speak directly. Bettina von Arnim’s old woman tells her history and asks outright for the things she needs; Gisela von Arnim’s Catharine quickly
unlearns the silence her mother forced on her and tells her Aunt Colette her thoughts and memories, and asks for the things she wants to know; and Gritta not only speaks but makes demands on the king, the very head of the patriarchy. As Gisela von Arnim’s heroines became stronger and louder with each story, however, the Grimms’ heroines in KHM were becoming more passive and quieter over the course of the seven main editions, as Bottigheimer demonstrated in *Grimms Bad Girls and Bold Boys*. This is the case in Grimms’ tale of Kind and Unkind Girls, though to a lesser degree after the 1819 edition. The majority of changes that the Grimms' made to the tales occur in the 1819 edition, but the few changes made between 1819 and 1857 nearly all villainize and punish the Unkind Girl. For instance, when the Kind Girl comes home with her newly won wealth, the 1819 version of “Die drei Männlein im Walde” reads: “Die Stiefschwester wurde neidisch [the stepsister became jealous]” (57). However, the 1837 edition reads: “‘Nun sehe einer den Übermuth,’ sagte die Stiefschwester, ‘das Geld so hinzuzuwerfen,’ aber heimlich war sie neidisch darüber [‘Now one can see your arrogance,’ said the stepsister, ‘throwing money around like that,’ but secretly she was jealous about it]” (84). The stepsister’s direct speech now shows that she is not only jealous but also hypocritical. A similar change comes in the 1850 edition. While the 1843 edition describes the stepsister’s behavior saying that “es grüßte sie nicht, gieng geradezu in die Stube hinein [she did not greet them, and went directly into the room]” (84), the 1850 edition reads “aber sie grüßte sie nicht, stolperte, ohne sich nach ihnen einzusehen, und ohne sie zu grüßen, in die Stube [but she did not greet them, stumbled into the room without looking at them and without greeting them]” (82). Here the emphasis is placed on the Unkind Girl’s rudeness, as she not only fails to greet them (as is noted twice), but does not even look at them. While the Grimms were emphasizing Unkind Girl’s many errors, the Arnims were emphasizing the Kind Girl’s behavior. Bettina von Arnim’s
“Erzählung vom Heckebeutel” focuses on the magical benefactor and her relationship to the Kind Girl, with no mention of an Unkind Girl at all. And in both “Die Rosenwolke” and Gritta, the Unkind Girl is little more than a secondary character used as a foil to the Kind Girl.

That being said, the Unkind Girls who do appear are humanized and even redeemed in the Arnims’ writing. Catharine’s mother Sylvia is chastised for silencing her daughter and stunting her creative growth, but she always appears to be a loving mother who has her child’s best interest in mind. When she silences her silly thoughts, it is partially because she fears Catharine is going crazy, which is not unreasonable speculation, considering the sinister nature of the rose cloud later on. Catharine weeps when she thinks about leaving her mother and when Colette tells her she has gone the following morning. While Sylvia also hopes Catharine will become rich to help her family, she acknowledges that “deine Tante Colette liebt dich. Deine kleinen Fehler stören sie nicht, und ich sehe sogar, daß sie Neigung hat, dich zu verziehen. Der Ort hier gefällt dir [your Aunt Colette loves you. Your small faults don’t bother her, and I see now that she even likes to spoil you. You like this place]” (23). In the case of Gritta, the Unkind Girl is Bärwalda, and although she was originally punished by her father for her actions, in the main narrative she is released and redeemed by the actions of the Kind Girl, Gritta. Moreover, Gritta develops a world in which a girl such as Bärwalda would have been free to choose her life without shaming her family for generations to come. Although Sylvia represents the Grimmian voice of silence and patriarchal feminine duty, and Bärwalda the misogynistic tales of old, which are the ancestors of stories like Gritta’s, neither of them is vilified. There is a true sympathy in both stories. Sylvia’s desire that her child fit into society’s traditional role for girls is represented as the choice of a loving mother. And Bärwalda’s rash decision to run off and join her beloved at war is never spoken of with shame by Gritta or her family and friends. There is a sympathy for the victims of misogyny,
embodied in Bärwalda, and for those women who, like Sylvia, enable such traditions to continue in their own daughters.

Conclusion

As in “Die Rosenwolke,” Gritta displays a rejection of Grimmian ideas of what a heroine should be and do. Traditionally negative female characters, such as the Unkind Girl, are depicted as victims of misogyny and patriarchal values, which rob them of their agency. As her mother does in “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” Gisela von Arnim uses a popular story by Brentano, “Das Märchen von Gockel und Hinkel,” to problematize the depiction of Gäckeleia and little girls in general. While Brentano’s Gäckeleia acts foolishly and selfishly when left to make her own decisions, the message of Gritta is that allowing girls and women agency will lead to peace in all of society. The curing of her little brother’s blindness is a call for men to see the true worth and talent of women in public society. As in “Die Rosenwolke,” while rejecting these male fairy tale writers’ examples, Gisela von Arnim seeks out a better model, that of her mother. Clearly, depictions of the corrupt nature of the patriarchal convent school and the girls’ revolt, as well as Gritta’s courageous and direct speech to the king, demonstrate an admiration for Bettina von Arnim; however, Gritta’s ambivalence about marrying Prince Bonus and leaving her female collective and Gisela von Arnim’s hesitance to publish may go hand in hand. As in Stahl’s stories, Arnim’s Kind Girl is not an obedient one, and her rebellion leads to her success. Conversely, in Bettina von Arnim’s “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” the rebellious act comes from the magical mentor, Arnim’s Frau-Holle-like persona, who decodes the voice of the oppressed. Ultimately, although Gisela von Arnim codes her advice for women writers, the uncoded political and gender commentary of her stories, like the decoded material in “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” kept these stories from entering the larger public discourse via publication until the twentieth century.
CHAPTER 5: Towards a Conclusion

Elisabeth Ebeling, Scientific Discourse, and the Legacy of The Kind and Unkind Girls

Louise Otto, founder of the German women’s movement, once described the situation of German women this way: “bei uns schnürt man den Mädchen den Charakter zusammen, daß er so unentwickelt bleibt, daß bei ihm nie vom Selbststehen und Fortschreiten die Rede sein kann - was bei uns die Schönheit der Weiblichkeit heißt, ist meist eine solche Verkrüppelung geistiger freier Anlagen [We bind the characters of our girls, so that they remain so underdeveloped that one can never talk about them in terms of independence and advancement. In our society what counts as the beauty of femininity is usually just such a crippling of free intellectual ability]” (53 qtd. in Möhrmann 1980).¹ Elisabeth Ebeling depicts a similar phenomenon in her 1869 “Die ungleichen Schwestern” (The Dissimilar Sisters), in which the more beautiful of two sisters is never given the opportunity to have an education or develop her character. Though she is the epitome of physical feminine beauty, she is unable to experience love of any kind or achieve inner-happiness. Ebeling and Otto were living in a time, however, in which many would have argued that a woman’s character and intellect were predetermined not by education and societal influence, but instead by evolution and genetics. Medical and scientific gender discourse in the period focused on the concept of a natural woman and depicted education as unimportant at best and dangerous at worst. The coded materials of Ebeling’s tale, however, contradict this discourse, and argue that an emphasis on keeping women natural and pure actually cripples their development. In addition, her tale also has much in common with the other women writers discussed in this dissertation, and she appears to be modeling her work more on that of her female predecessors than Grimmian tradition.

¹ Translation from Chris Weedon’s Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany: 1840-1914.
She lived in a true post-Grimm era, both after the publication of the last edition in 1857 and the deaths of Jacob and Wilhelm in 1863 and 1859 respectively; and this may have given her the freedom to write in a new way and to use women writers as her models.

**Life and Works**

Elisabeth Ebeling is actually a pseudonym for Christa Ling (EbeLING). Ling was born to a merchant family in 1828, and due to the generosity of a great aunt she received a proper education (Jarvis, *Im Reich* 348). As a child she traveled with her family throughout Turkey, Egypt, and Tunisia, which may be the reason for her stories on racial politics. She began publishing while still in school but did not write in earnest until the 1860s. Over the course of the next five decades, she published over seventy works, about half of those together with her good friend Bertha Lehmann-Filhés. As one can see in the images here (Figs. 1-3), many of her books featured pictures, often by well-known illustrators such as Theodor Hosemann (Jarvis, *Im Reich* 348). In spite of her productivity, Ebeling remains an almost completely obscure author today, though she was quite popular in her time. Excepting the inclusion of her story “Schwarz und Weiß” (Black and White) in Blackwell and Jarvis’ *The Queen’s Mirror* and Jarvis’ *Im Reich der Wünsche* and

![Image](Figure 1: The Prince's Book: Stories from the Life of the Imperial Prince, by Elisabeth Ebeling; 1891.)
one article about it, none of her works have received critical attention.

She published a wide variety of works including picture books, poems, fairy tales, puppet shows, and plays. Many of her stories and plays are fairy tale-themed, but she also wrote about a variety historical figures, from saints to politicians to writers. One example is Das Prinzenbuch (The Prince’s Book, 1891) (Fig. 1), a series of short stories and poems from the life of the then nine-year-old Imperial Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. She also wrote a short novel on the life of Hans Sachs, called Das Geläute (The Ringing). Sachs was a sixteenth-century Nuremberg mastersinger, from whom the Grimms took several stories. Ebeling’s stories were popular in the period and her fairy-tale play Dornröschen (Sleeping Beauty) was even adapted into an opera by Engelbert Humperdinck in 1902. Ebeling and her friend Lehmann-Filhés were listed as the writers of the libretto. Sadly, in spite of her very productive career, only a handful of libraries still carry her books in Germany, and only the book Fantaska is available in the U.S. as part of the microfiche collection Bibliothek der deutschen Literatur (Library of German Literature). Although most of her books are no longer very accessible today, her libretto for Humperdinck’s opera is still widely available. A new recording of the opera was released in a two-disc set in 2011. In the past five years, a handful of her books have also been digitized in German libraries, but still fewer than ten percent of her works are available to scholars outside of Germany.

Focus on Inner Worth

In one of Ebeling’s Kunstmärchen from the collection Fantaska, a young man named Antonio is hopelessly in love with a beautiful, but vain young woman named Isabella. Although he is warned of Isabella’s shallowness, Antonio continues to pursue her, because it seems impossible to him “dass ein so reizendes Äußere eine unschöne Seele umschließen könnte [that such a charming appearance could hide an ugly soul]” (181). He soon learns, however, that this is
not the case when Isabella refuses to marry him unless he disposes of an ugly old umbrella that his mentor left him. Antonio leaves her because of it, and as the title of the story—“Der Stein der Weisheit; oder der alte Regenshirm” (The Stone of Wisdom; Or the Old Umbrella)—may indicate, the umbrella turns out to be much more valuable than he thought.

The lesson Antonio learns, that beautiful appearances do not reflect pure souls, is one that Ebeling’s characters learn again and again. It plays an important role in “Die ungleichen Schwestern” and also in her more simple and light-hearted works. She depicts outer beauty, and any effort put in to it, as silly at best and purposefully misleading at worst. In these cartoons from her 1890 picture book *Reinecke*
Fuchs und seine Gefährten (Reynard Fox and His Friends), the animal characters who waste time on their appearance fail to serve their proper roles. In Figure 2, a snail is to stand up as godmother at a baptism, but she spends so much time grooming that she misses the ceremony. In Figure 3, Lieutenant Wasp, who strokes his mustache, is known not for his prowess in battle, but for his very small waist.

Although such a moral may not seem subversive, Ebeling is willing to take it to extremes that were quite unusual for the period. For instance, Ebeling’s focus on inner worth extends so far that she even looks past race. In “Schwarz und Weiß,” she judges a haughty princess who refuses to marry a Black suitor, ending the story with a surprising moral for the nineteenth century: “das nichts darauf ankommt, ob man weiß oder schwarz aussieht, wenn man nur weise ist [it does not matter if one is white or black, as long as one is wise]” (129).

Summary of “Die ungleichen Schwestern”

In the case of “Die ungleichen Schwestern,” this innocuous praise of inner beauty reveals, however, a topical and controversial position on gender. Here Ebeling depicts not only that a beautiful outside is not necessarily a sign of a beautiful inside, but also that beautiful women are vain and petty precisely because they are beautiful. This serves as both a critique of a society which has praised women only for their appearances and as an argument against scientific and philosophical theories in the period which depicted natural women as beautiful, modest, and unable to be educated.

Ebeling’s coded material related to this scientific discourse is at first apparent in the way in which she structures her tale. First of all, it is an origin myth about twin princesses who eventually become two related plants, Deadly Nightshade and the Potato. Although etiologic tales are related to mythology and religion genres, they nonetheless have what can be considered a
scientific purpose: to explain the structure of the natural world. Moreover, “Die ungleichen Schwestern” is essentially a story about a scientific experiment. The two girls are genetically identical and are raised in the same environment, but certain variables are changed. It is a longitudinal study, as Ebeling tracks the effects of these variables over the course of the girls’ entire lives from birth into the afterlife, something rarely found in fairy tales. All of these elements might indicate to an educated reader that coded material related to science and gender resides in the tale.

The story opens with a description of their father and mother’s meeting. Their mother, Estella, had used her “bezaubernde Schönheit [entrancing beauty]” to catch her husband, Don Rodrigo, but “nur zu schnell hatte er erkannt, wie trügerisch der Schein ist [he had quickly realized how deceptive appearances are]” (85). The unhappy pair is blessed with twin girls and they argue about how to bring them up properly. They reach a compromise in which each shall take one of the twins and raise her as he or she sees fit. They invite three fairies to the baptism: “Bella, die Fee der Schönheit, Doretta, die des Reichtums . . . [und] Viola, die Bescheidene [Bella, the fairy of beauty, Doretta, the one of wealth, [and] Viola, the humble]” (86). Estella asks the first two fairies to bless her daughter Atropa with “Schönheit, Reichtum, Glanz [beauty, wealth, glamor],” gifts that she considers necessary in order to be happy (86). The fairies grant these wishes and give Estella two items to keep safe for Atropa. The first is a lucky purse that will never empty, like that found in Bettina von Arnim’s eponymous tale. The second is an ivory chest full of jewelry and adornments that also refills as needed. The fairies warn that these items will only work for Atropa but that Estella should keep them from her until her tenth birthday. Rodrigo refuses the blessings of Bella and Doretta for Atropa’s twin sister Tuberosa. He only asks that he have the opportunity raise a “guten edlen Mensch . . . und sich bemühen, ihr Herz zu bilden [good, noble human being
... and endeavor to develop her heart]” (85). So the fairy of humility, Doretta, chants over his daughter Tuberosa, “Frohen Muth, bescheid’nen Sinn, Erdenkindchen nimm sie hin. Sei hienieden, stets zufrieden [joyful pluck, humble reason, Earth Child take these in. Be always content here below]” (90).

Spoiled by her beauty and wealth, Atropa grows up to be stunningly beautiful, but selfish and vain. Her only joy is adorning herself in a hall of mirrors and buying new things with her never-ending wealth. Tuberosa is no beauty and spends very little time on her appearance, wearing only a simple gown and a crown of violets. While Atropa is surrounded by suitors and admirers at balls, Tuberosa is surrounded instead by poor children, whom she entertains with fairy tales. When a handsome and rich suitor named Alfonso comes to a ball, he is mesmerized by Atropa. One day he goes to visit Atropa, and spies on her as she admires herself in the hall of mirrors. At first he watches, amazed at her beauty, but then he sees her abuse a blameless servant when her earring breaks. After leaving disappointed, he encounters Tuberosa in the garden. The two eventually fall in love and get married. Atropa does not marry for many more years; and, when she does, she is still unhappy because “Atropa’s Herz konnte keine wahre Liebe empfinden [Atropa’s heart could not feel real love]” (101). As she ages, she only feels happy when she hears someone call her “Bella Donna,” which occurs less and less as her beauty fades. Alone and unhappy, Atropa grows sick, but just before dying, she is visited by the fairies from her baptism, who explain that she will be turned into a plant that represents her life. Seeing now the folly of that life, Atropa begs, “O so gestattet wenigstens, dass ich dann von Nutzen bin, dass ich als Pflanze zur Narung oder zu Freude diene [O allow me at least, that I then can be of use, that as a plant I serve as nourishment or joy]” (103). Unwilling to grant her wish completely, the fairies turn her into the poisonous cosmetic
Deadly Nightshade, with the caveat that it can be used in some medicines as well.\textsuperscript{2} Unlike Atropa’s old age, Tuberosa’s “war ein schöner friedlicher Schluß ihres glücklichen Freude verbreitenden Lebens [was a beautiful, peaceful end to the fortunate joy of her expansive life]” (104). Since she never cared for her looks, the aging process did not grieve her, and she took continual joy in the youth of her children and grandchildren. So at a ripe old age, as she begins to peacefully die, a fairy visits her. The fairy transforms Tuberosa into the Potato, a hearty and nourishing food that will be a friend to the poor, just as she had been.\textsuperscript{3}

As a science experiment, the story ultimately favors nurture over nature, since the girls are identical genetically, but develop into very different people. Much like Karoline Stahl’s stories, “Die ungleichen Schwestern” demonstrates that young girls need to develop their minds and souls, and not waste time on their physical appearance. In conducting this narrative experiment, Ebeling invokes and engages popular theories of a natural, pure woman who was constructed and prized by nineteenth-century science and philosophy.

**Nineteenth-Century Philosophical and Socio-Biological Depictions of a Natural Woman**

Ebeling, like Stahl, was responding to rhetoric surrounding gender and pedagogy in the nineteenth century and coming to the conclusion that the environment and education of women were more important than any inherent qualities. But whereas Stahl responded to essays and conduct books, Ebeling’s work demonstrates an understanding of scientific and philosophical discourse about gender. The two girls turn out to be very different people and the conclusions of Ebeling’s “study” contradict popular theories of phrenology, socio-biology, and philosophy. In particular, Ebeling’s speaks to theories that associated beauty with naturalness and ugliness with

\textsuperscript{2} The Latin name for Deadly Nightshade is Atropa Belladona.
\textsuperscript{3} The Latin name for the potato is Solanum Tuberosum. A nominative feminine form would be Tuberosa.
abnormality and sickness. She also responds to pseudo-scientific claims that educating women is pointless or even dangerous for the species. Ebeling argues for more education not only for the betterment of women, but also for the benefit of society.

**The Natural Woman**

With the advent of natural anthropology in the nineteenth century, there was an increased desire to establish scientifically the differences between the sexes. Of course as scientists determined how to define a natural woman, they also determined what was unnatural for a woman. In *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood*, Cynthia Russet examines how men and women were defined in relationship to each other. Unnatural women were defined as masculine, and unnatural men as feminine. For example, since intelligence was seen as a masculine trait, and sensitivity as a feminine trait, smart women and sensitive men were considered unnatural. How men and women were defined scientifically became extremely important to way in which gender roles were established in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Russett 17).

In addition, there was an obsession with personal and social health in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, which Michael Hau describes in *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany*. Now that health could be scientifically measured in a number of new ways, traits such as beauty, intelligence, and personality were also being measured. In nineteenth-century medicine, beauty was largely associated with healthy, natural women and “stereotypical ugliness was an unmistakable sign of disease” (Hau 64). Phrenology, the study of intelligence and personality involving measurements of the brain, skull, and general physique, also played a role in this scientific or pseudoscientific discourse. Founded by Franz Joseph Gall towards the end of the eighteenth century, phrenology became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century, and was used ultimately to demonstrate the inferiority of ethnic and racial minorities and women (Russett
18). In this way, science and anthropology provided a rationale for limiting the education of females and classifying intelligent women as unnatural and abnormal.

**The Useless Education of Women**

While phrenology scientifically linked intelligence and reason to men, theories of phylogeny, or the study of organisms’ evolutionary relationships, took this one step further and placed women evolutionarily below men (Weedon 3). Women were described as a lower being, an underdeveloped form of humanity. This theory was also popular with philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. Schopenhauer sums up this underdevelopment in “Über die Weiber” (1851):


[Women are well suited to be caretakers and teachers of early childhood, for they are themselves childish, foolish, and short-sighted, in a word, they are big children their whole lives; a sort of intermediate stage between the child and the man, who is truly a human] (495).

These socio-biological theories, as Chris Weedon describes them in *Gender, Feminism, and Fiction in Germany*, could claim “absolute authority” based on “claims to scientificity and its modernity” (3). Socio-biological theories that placed women below men evolutionarily not only called intelligent women abnormal, like phrenology, but actually made the claim that women could not naturally reach the intelligence of men. It was simply outside their developmental possibility. Therefore, the education of women beyond the simplest skills was seen as not only impossible, but entirely pointless. In some cases, the education of women was even depicted as dangerous, since

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4 For a deeper discussion of this phenomenon see Russett’s chapter “Up and Down the Phyletic Ladder.”
it would lead to more manly, and therefore less fertile, women.

**Analysis of “Die ungleichen Schwestern”**

These issues regarding natural women and education are at the center of Ebeling’s “Die ungleichen Schwestern.” Contradicting scientific, philosophical, and social theories that emphasized nature over nurture and associated a woman’s purity with an absence of corruptive outside influences, Ebeling’s “Die ungleichen Schwestern” argues for education and opportunities for women. In this way Ebeling’s story, much like those by Stahl, features messages meant for an implied reader who is not a child but an adult. As in Stahl’s tales, the only characters with agency are the parents of the girls and it is their choices that determine how the girls’ lives turn out. The message at the end of the tale, “Was der Mensch säet, das muß er ernten [What the human sows, so must it harvest]” (103), clearly indicates that responsibility lies with the parents’ choices, and perhaps society at large. In this way, Ebeling sought to engage an adult reader, one with the power to sow lessons in the minds of young girls. Her response to gender discourse related to science and medicine discussed above demonstrates her own possible knowledge, but also the desire to give an educated adult reader an alternate point of view.

The message of this tale would appear to be simple. The modest, kind, and selfless Tuberosa lives happily ever after, while her twin sister, vain and selfish, leads an unhappy and short life. As in all the tales examined in this dissertation, however, there is more that remains coded in the tale. The sisters’ own choices cannot be blamed for their fate. Genetically identical at the outset, they each had an equal chance at a happy life, but their parents’ values colored the gifts they received at baptism and the way in which they were raised. Ebeling’s choice of an etiologic tale her genre and the experimental-structure of the story’s premise indicate to her reader that the
A coded message of the tale is related to science.

Unlike many fairy tales, this story follows the sisters long after their weddings, throughout the whole of their lives and even into the afterlife. This has to do with the origin myth ending, but Ebeling also wants to demonstrate how these women were affected over the course of their lives by the environment in which they were raised. It is a longitudinal study of genetically identical women who were given different opportunities and gifts from birth: one was granted an education, and the other beauty and wealth. Unlike a Christian afterlife, the question of their continued existence has less to do with reward and punishment (who would really want to be a potato, after all?) and more with their legacy. Atropa’s selfish existence leaves only poison in its wake, while Tuberosa leaves behind nourishment. Moreover, Atropa is able to negotiate her fate after her death. Her recognition of her failings and desire to have lived better grant her a little usefulness in her posthumous form. When Atropa realizes the meaninglessness of her life and tells the fairies she has long had “das öde Gefühl eines nutzlosen Daseins, eines verlornen Lebens [the barren feeling of a useless existence, a lost life]” (103), the fairies blame Atropa’s mother Estella, for she had chosen the gifts of beauty and wealth.

Atropa is awarded these gifts at birth by a fairy godmother without having to pass any tests, as would be required of a traditional Kind Girl. In the tale of “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut,” two sisters encounter someone looking for directions on a path. The old man turns out to be God himself and he grants the kind sister, who tells him the way, three gifts of her choosing. She says, “ich möchte gern so schön und rein werden wie die Sonne... Dann möchte ich einen Geldbeutel haben, der nie leer würde. . . ich wünsche mir zum dritten das ewige Himmelreich nach meinem Tode [I would like so much to become as beautiful and pure as the sun. . . . Then I would like to have a purse that would never empty. . . . For my third wish, I wish that I will live forever in heaven
after my death]” (237). This Kind Girl is also concerned with her immortal soul, as Atropa is at the end of the tale. In “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut” the Kind Girl is rewarded for a small act of kindness, giving directions, with the beauty, never-ending wealth, and ever-lasting life in heaven. In “Die ungleichen Schwestern,” however, Atropa is granted beauty and wealth without first earning them, and ultimately the effect of these things damn her in the afterlife.

Ebeling uses the guise of a fairy tale to take issue with scientific and medical theories regarding women, especially those that associate beauty with naturalness and claim education is futile. Consider the variables of this fairy tale experiment. Atropa is beautiful and enormously wealthy, while her sister is plain and poor. The description of Atropa’s upbringing focuses primarily on her appearance: “[Estella] erzog sie [Atropa] hier so, wie sie es für nöthig hielt, um des schönen und glanzvollen Loses werth zu sein [[Estella] raised her in the way that she took as necessary, in order to be worthy of her beautiful and glamorous fate]” (91). Atropa is given practically no education and in this way is the more “natural,” as she only acts on her own desires, with no formal instruction. She spends most of every day in her favorite room, “der Gesellschaftssaal des Schlosses, dessen Wände aus Spiegelscheiben bestanden. Dort übte sie sich dann in den verschiedenartigen Stellungen—lächelte ihrem Bilde zu, machte demselben anmuthige Verbeugungen, versuchte, welche Miene ihr am besten stand, und fand immer neues Vergnügen in dem Beäuglen ihrer kleinen Person [the palace ballroom, whose walls were lined with mirrors. There she practiced a variety of poses—smiled at her reflection, at the same time made a charming curtsy, attempted to find which expression looked best, and found ever more joy in the observation of her own small person]” (92). She is given unending wealth, but “da nun dem Kinde nicht gelehrt wurde, diese Reichthümer zum Segen für sich, zur Freude für Andere zu gebrauchen . . . so wurde jedes Gefühl für höhere Dinge in ihrem Herzen ertödtet [since the child was never be taught to use
this wealth as a blessing for herself, as a joy for other others . . . so was every feeling for loftier
things deadened in her heart)” (92). Note here that she did have feeling, but because it was never
nurtured, she became an adult whose “Herz konnte keine wahre Liebe empfinden [heart could not
feel real love]” (101).

Tuberosa, however, has a very strict moral and mental education. Her father “bildete ihren
Geist und ihr Gemüth [developed her spirit and mind]” (91). While Atropa admires herself in the
mirror, Tuberosa is far too busy to think about her appearance and only wears a simple gown and
a crown violets (92). Her mornings are full of lessons in a variety of subjects and she is educated
“auf jede Weise [in every way]” (92). In the afternoons, Tuberosa visits the poor and the sick and
she grows into a caring woman who is beloved throughout the kingdom (92). For these reasons,
Tuberosa leads a more fulfilling and happy life, but also is of more worth to her kingdom and
society in general. She produces more children than Atropa, but also serves the children, sick, and
poor of the kingdom while Atropa wastes away looking in the mirror.

The conclusions of Ebeling’s fairy-tale experiment fly in the face of popular theories of
gender in phrenology, socio-biology, and philosophy. These theories discussed above prized
naturalness and associated beauty with health and ugliness with sickness. In addition, they found
the education of women pointless at best, and damaging at worst. Ebeling’s sisters’ traits and
development disprove these conclusions. Ebeling not only takes issue with theories that fetishize
naturalness, but also demonstrates the effectiveness and importance of women’s education.
Though Tuberosa does not go on to have a profession, she does fulfill the duties of princess, and
later queen, exceptionally. She serves the people of her kingdom dutifully, provides an example
and education to younger children in the court, and cares for the poor and sick subjects in her
kingdom. She is a greater asset to her society, as well as a better wife and mother to her family
than the uneducated Atropa, who parts with her husband and child early on because she feels nothing for them.

Ebeling’s tale appears to lay the blame with each child’s parent, but really takes greater issue with the values of society and their effect on women, rather than the parent’s choices. In this story, modesty is neither naturally occurring in all women, nor is immodesty a simple corruption of their natural purity. In addition, Ebeling’s coded message indicates that women are naturally neither more generous nor more greedy than men, but without education wealth will corrupt them. Although Estella followed the fairies advice and kept the wealth from Atropa until she reached the appropriate age, she still did nothing to teach her how to utilize it responsibly. In Stahl’s stories, there is an assumption that if a child develops her character without wealth, once she reaches a certain age, she can come into money and not be spoiled by it. Ebeling, on the other hand, depicts this wait as occurring, but emphasizes the lack of education in comparison to Tuberosa. That which women are praised for and given the tools to develop, they will develop—whether this be their physical appearance or their minds and souls. Estella’s choices for her daughter are far from selfish, however, and it is the values and structures of society itself that are to blame. Estella chose gifts that she hoped would give her daughter the best chance at success in life. Estella clearly won her husband purely with “trügerische[n] Schein [deceptive appearance]” (85) and so, naturally, she believed appearance to be of the upmost worth. She chose wealth, so her daughter was independent and did not need not to marry for money; and she chose beauty, so her daughter had her pick of suitors. The blame lies with the values of her society, in which beauty and wealth are the most worthy. Rodrigo himself had no care for his wife’s soul when he married her, and even Alfonso would have probably married Atropa if he hadn’t accidentally seen her abuse a servant.

Estella’s and Atropa’s beauty is praised by the men around them, so naturally, they use this
trait, their only gift, to their advantage and it therefore becomes what they cherish most. Though Rodrigo and Alfonso are said to be good people, they fall “in love” with beautiful, evil women. Can it truly be love when its basis is only physical appearance? How can the thoughts of these men be pure, when their desire for the bodies of these women far outweighs any recognition of their ugly souls? In a world in which marriage was all a woman could strive for, Estella gave her daughter financial freedom and options. Unfortunately the very tools needed to succeed in this society created a woman who had no ability to love and therefore was terribly unhappy. In “Die ungleichen Schwestern” Ebeling calls on society to educate young women and to value their minds and souls above their appearances and dowries. By depicting a natural woman as a human being with a mind and soul waiting to be molded, Ebeling challenges scientific theories that fetishize the natural woman whose body and mind remained untouched until marriage. Of course, as in Stahl’s tales, this results in Kind and Unkind Girls who have little or no agency, but are merely the product of the influences of their environment.

The Legacy of Kind and Unkind Girls Tales by Women Writers

In this analysis, the connection between Ebeling and Stahl is difficult to ignore, but Ebeling’s story also has much in common with those by other authors covered in this dissertation. “Die ungleichen Schwestern” seems to have more in common with tales by other women writers than the Grimmian tradition, in fact. Unlike the other authors I have discussed, Ebeling was writing in a post-Grimmian world. She was not only writing after the publication of the final edition of KHM (1857), but also after the deaths of Wilhelm (1859) and Jacob Grimm (1863). Fairy tales and fairy-tale collections were still extremely popular, and with the development of children’s literature, many more avenues for fairy-tale writers and fairy-tale studies were opening up. Unlike in Stahl’s time, children’s literature was well established and growing quickly. Ebeling, like Gisela
von Arnim, was a part of a growing group of writers who grew up with the Grimms’ KHM and were beginning to retell their own versions based on the popularity of the collection. Many of Ebeling’s other works, such as her libretto for Dornröschen, demonstrate not only her familiarity with the Grimms’ story, but her desire to make the stories even more child-friendly and clearly didactic. In “Die ungleichen Schwestern,” Ebeling uses elements from Grimm stories such as “Dornröschen,” “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut,” and of course Kind and Unkind Girl tales like “Frau Holle” and “Drei Männlein im Walde;” but her story is more clearly didactic than these tales in the Grimm collection. On the other hand, Ebeling, like Gisela von Arnim, was also writing for an audience that was familiar with the Grimms’ tales, which meant she could speak more directly to her fairy-tale educated reader and could use modifications and reversals in her tale to code more controversial ideas.

In many ways Ebeling is the beneficiary not only of the Grimms entire fairy-tale legacy, but also of the work done by the other authors examined here. “Die ungleichen Schwestern” echoes and responds to themes, motifs, and structures found in all the other stories. It is unclear what familiarity Ebeling may have had with the other authors, but her story itself has an intertextual relationship to their tales. By exploring these similarities we can draw conclusions about how the tale type of the Kind and Unkind Girls served each of these writers.

For example, as in Naubert’s “Der kurze Mantel” and Bettina von Arnim’s “Erzählung vom Heckebeutel,” Ebeling makes the argument that magical help is not enough for a woman to survive and thrive in an unfair patriarchal society. Even with unending wealth and beauty, Atropa is truly lost because she was never given proper education, or praised for anything other than her physical appearance and wealth. In this way, Atropa’s wealth and beauty stifle her emotional and mental development in the same manner that Perlenäuglein’s, Brillante’s, and Goldenköpfchen’s
unending wealth and beauty prevent them from developing empathy in Stahl’s “Die Gevatterinnen.” In fact, each of the authors discussed the problematic nature of unending wealth. Stahl emphasized its damaging effects on upper-class children’s moral development, and Naubert and Arnim depicted the inadequacy of never-ending wealth to help a working poor woman survive in the patriarchy. Atropa’s experience is a combination of these elements, as it stifles her development and is still not enough to help her succeed as wife, mother, or ruler.

Atropa is also magically beautiful, as the result of a fairy gift at her birth. The emphasis placed on her beauty by her mother and her suitors leads her to prize it above all else. As she ages and loses her beauty, she loses all the joy she had in life and is bitterly lonely. The traditional Kind Girl is, of course, beautiful to begin with, or, in the case of “Die weiße und die schwarze Braut,” granted beauty as a reward for her actions. By making her Unkind Girl beautiful, Ebeling has instead demonstrated how beautiful women are put at a disadvantage by a society that objectifies them as prizes to be won by men. Stahl was, of course, the first author to ever represent this reversal in “Die Gevatterinnen,” and she came to a similar conclusion. Her beautiful characters were unable to be happy once their beauty was taken away by the fairy, because they attached all of their self-worth to their physical appearance, just as Atropa did. Both authors make a case for developing young girls’ minds and souls.

Beauty also plays a role in Anonymous’ “Die belohnte Freigebigkeit.” In this case, however, the author emphasizes how difficult it is for an ugly girl to find a husband, and how, when she is not successful, she is basically dead to society. The anonymous author makes the case that in a world where women can only be deemed successful via marriage, ugly, poor, and unskilled women have no real place in society. Ultimately Klara’s Glück is to be born beautiful and naturally skilled at housework and spinning. Ebeling depicts a world in which men might just
be willing to look at the beauty of a woman’s soul instead of her face, but as demonstrated by some of her other tales such as “Schwarz und Weiß” and “Der Stein der Weisheit,” she recognizes that a man’s first instinct will always be to fall in love with beauty first. Antonio explains this most directly in “Der Stein der Weisheit” when he claims that it seemed “unmöglich, dass ein so reizendes Äußere eine unschöne Seele umschließen könnte [it seemed impossible that such a charming appearance could hide an ugly soul]” (181). So Ebeling is well aware that beauty gives a woman capital in a patriarchal society. In the case of “Die ungleichen Schwestern,” there is only the matter of the timing of Alfonso’s visit which prevents him from marrying Atropa. Still Ebeling makes the case that it is better to be ugly than to become vain, selfish, and unhappy, as do the beautiful women she depicts.

Although “Die ungleichen Schwestern” focuses on discourse related to science, medicine, and gender, the story also references themes and discourses found in other tales. Naubert and Anonymous participated in a discourse on marriage and independence or a lack thereof for women. Since marriage and children became the only goal women could achieve in the post-Reformation era, Naubert and Anonymous were actually addressing what women must do to succeed in patriarchy. Ebeling demonstrates the ways in which patriarchy inherently develops immoral women. As mentioned above, Atropa’s mother, Estella, made her match and secured a very comfortable lifestyle for herself through her beautiful appearance. She wishes for her daughter to be beautiful and wealthy, because these are the skills needed to marry well and therefore to have a comfortable life. Atropa in the end succeeds in doing the same, but since her focus has always been on physical beauty and wealth, specifically her own, she cannot be content without either and she has no empathy or capacity to love, ultimately leaving her child without a mother. This theme is also similar to the discourse on child development and pedagogy in Stahl’s stories. Stahl depicts
the corrupting influence of having a pretty face in patriarchal society, and having unending wealth in a very economically unfair world. She, too, shows that these seeming advantages develop women into selfish, vain, and unhappy people. Finally, Ebeling does reflect some on a woman’s role in the public sphere, as did Bettina and Gisela von Arnim. Tuberosa’s empathy and structured work in service to her people stands not only as a sign of her future success as wife and mother but also as a ruler.

In this way, Ebeling’s story is a microcosm of the all the stories covered in this dissertation. She was the beneficiary at this time of eighty years of German women’s Kunstmärchen, in addition to the Grimms’ complete work and collections by others such as Bechstein. Although Ebeling was writing eighty years after Naubert, she still depicts struggles with women’s inability to work unrestricted, to live outside of marriage, to get a complete education, and to have a public voice.

The tale of the Kind and Unkind Girls served these different women throughout the nineteenth century as a vehicle for discussing gender. This tale type’s inherent good-woman/bad-woman dichotomy made it relevant throughout the nineteenth century to women who participated in gender discourse and debate. In addition, it is an ideal vehicle for both coding advice on raising kind girls in a corrupt patriarchal society, as well as for critiquing the ways in which such a society excludes women, promotes an ideology which encourages them to become vain, selfish, and superficial beings, and then on that basis ridicules and rebukes them. Ebeling’s “Die ungleichen Schwestern” is in this way a fitting example of The Kind and Unkind Girls tale type as a vehicle for discussing issues of gender, as its intertextual nature demonstrates how variants of the tale type, both by the Grimms and women writers, remained viable throughout this complex period when concepts of gender were constantly changing.
EPILOGUE

One of the goals of this dissertation was to contribute to filling in the gap in scholarship on nineteenth-century *Kunstmärchen* by examining the role of women writers played. Of course, to even call the absence of critical work on women writers a gap is in many ways problematic. These writers were not working in isolation and neither were their male counterparts who became a part of the canon. We know that these women writers were read and recognized by male authors in the period and that they in many instances inspired male canonical authors such as Goethe, Tieck, Hoffmann, and, of course, the Grimms. With the exception of Ebeling, all of the women writers in this dissertation were read by the Grimms and most were referenced in the KHM. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the women writers also had a deep knowledge of other *Kunstmärchen* in the period and sometimes used their texts to reflect critically on them or to emulate them. The history of *Kunstmärchen* scholarship is not simply a field full of holes waiting to be filled, for as we reintroduce these once popular, but long since neglected works into critical reception, we not only begin to understand the works themselves much better, but re-establish the relationship between these neglected works and the more canonical authors and *Kunstmärchen* of the period. In this way, bringing these works back into critical reception benefits Germanistik or German Studies, not only by highlighting forgotten, but important literature, but by changing our very understanding of what a *Kunstmärchen* is and what role it played throughout the nineteenth century.

Over the last several decades many scholars have already begun this work. The first step was to bring these texts back into publication. Many of them were inaccessible to scholars outside of Germany and others, such as *Gritta*, were only available in an incomplete form. Scholars such as Werner Vordtriebe (*Armenbuch*, 1969), Shawn Jarvis (*Gritta*, 1986; *The Queen’s Mirror*, 2001;
Im Reich der Wünsche, 2012), Marianne Henn and Anita Runge (Neue Volksmärchen der Deutschen, 2001), Ulrich Marzolph (Feen-Märchen, 2001), and Jeannine Blackwell (The Queen’s Mirror, 2001), have brought these Kunstmärchen back into publication and circulation, making way for critical work to begin. A much wider breadth of articles and book chapters on German women’s Kunstmärchen are now available and they cover so much more than those few women found in the canon. Much remains to be examined, however, before we can even begin to consider our understanding of the Kunstmärchen as complete.

This dissertation sought to complete a small section by examining Kind and Unkind Girls tales specifically. This offers a view of how women writers have worked differently with Märchen than their male counterparts. While both women and men used the tale to discuss issues related to gender and women’s issues, the women writers engaged in implicit coding across the century and their works engaged gender discourses in much more complex ways. The Grimms’ variants also engaged with the role of women in society. Over their seven large editions, however, their variants shifted from identifying a girl’s value via inner goodness towards recognizing only outward actions as evidence of morality. This change over the course of several editions is consistent with a general move in the period towards using the tales as socializing instruments rather than as objects of scholarly study, as Zipes has discussed in the Art of Subversion (1983). The women writers also often included morals or lessons which seemed to relate to this same purpose, but again and again further examination revealed that the girls themselves had little or no agency within the tale. So their actions rarely could be blamed for their fates. Instead influences such as class, parentage, wealth, and societal norms tended to determine far ahead of any test which girl would succeed and which would fail. From this point, one could begin to decode the message of the tales, which unlike the Grimms’ tales never called on the girls themselves to act differently,
but rather exhorted parents, teachers, and society to change their ways. Some of these messages were more hopeful than others. The tales of Benedikte Naubert, Karoline Stahl and Elisabeth Ebeling seemed to indicate a path which parents could take to protect their daughters from the ills of patriarchal society. Others, such as those by the Arnims and Anonymous claimed that that society itself was so broken that certain women, such as poor women, unmarriageable women, and creative women, had no chance for survival unless great and powerful change were to come to the German states. Overall, though, each writer engaged with some gender discourse from the greater society and sought to participate in these discussions on women, their rights, their development and education, and ultimately their place in society.

Each author used the motifs and elements of fairy tale structures to take part in public discourse through implied coding, but in many ways, the coding was essential to keeping their controversial commentary below the radar of publishers. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, women who were more overt in their critique of the patriarchy or in their proto-feminist theory were simply unable to get past censors. By coding their contributions, however, women writers could reach implied readers who, like them, struggled with patriarchal structures. The indicators in each tale directed these implied readers to the more complex commentaries underneath seemingly simple patriarchal morals, which praised hard-working, modest, and kind women. Readers who were also familiar with the gender discourses in the nineteenth century would have been able to decode these implied messages without the context I have provided here, as they were living that context. In this way, women’s voices could reach a larger public and avoid the issues of censorship and the public denigration of political female figures. The readers, who already had access to any number of male writer’s positions on these topics, could encounter opposing positions from educated authors, without drawing attention to themselves by reading outwardly controversial literature.
The vehicle for this communication was the fairy tale. As discussed in the introduction, this is certainly not the first time a fairy tale had been used for subversive purposes, but this particular tale was an ideal vehicle for gender discourse.

The tale type lends itself to such engagement with a description of a good woman and bad woman inherently built into its structure. The Kind and the Unkind Girls tale type was and is the perfect type of story for meditating on how society affects the development of girls, how girls interact with society in positive and negative ways, and what options they have once they are grown adults. Like many fairy tales, its simplicity is what makes it complex. Focusing our attention on the simple element of proper and improper women, it allows for writers and storytellers to demonstrate the complex nature of gender identity and gender politics in society.

Due to the specialized nature of the tale type, it is difficult to generalize from this study about all Kunstmärchen by women writers in the nineteenth century. Following other studies of women’s folklore and fairy tale writing, I can conclude that many women writers and storytellers engaged in coding across the genre. I cannot, however, claim that all these women would have engaged with a gender discourse in the way the writers of Kind and Unkind Girls did. It is far too simplistic to assume that because writers are women that their only interest would be women’s issues. In the case of the Kind and Unkind Girls, there was a vehicle perfectly made for entering into gender discourse, but I am certain we will find many different coded themes and messages as other tales and tale types are examined.

For this reason, bringing this dissertation to a conclusion is a challenge. Literally hundreds of women were publishing fairy tales in the period, and I have only examined six authors and nine tales. I took issue in my introduction with the broad claims of Kunstmärchen scholars such as Tismar, Klotz, and Wührl, who drew conclusions about the genre of the Kunstmärchen while
leaving so many authors and works unexamined. One may expect that I am now ready to explain not only why their conclusions are incomplete and incorrect, but also ready to depict my own ideas of what a *Kunstmärchen* is and what it meant to the nineteenth century. Before I or anyone else can begin make claims on the *Kunstmärchen*, much more must be discovered, read, and written. Tismar, Klotz, and Wührl had at their disposal nearly a century of critical analysis on male authors’ works. There is not yet a single critical book that focuses solely on German women’s *Kunstmärchen*. Many more pieces need to be put in place, before scholars can begin to determine what is truly depicted there. I hope to have filled in small corner with this dissertation, and am excited to work in an era in which we may begin to complete that picture.
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ABSTRACT

KIND GIRLS, EVIL SISTERS, AND WISE WOMEN: CODED GENDER DISCOURSE IN LITERARY FAIRY TALES BY GERMAN WOMEN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

by

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Major: Modern Languages (German)

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation is an analysis of fairy tales by German women in late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Although hundreds of women published fairy tales in Germany in the nineteenth century, they remain absent from current scholarship. Recent work by scholars Shawn Jarvis and Jeannine Blackwell have brought these fairy tales back into print, but there remains very little critical work on them. This dissertation takes the focus of retellings of the Kind and Unkind Girls tale type, also known as “Frau Holle.” At first glance, the women’s variants depict modest, passive, and hardworking Kind Girls who are very similar to those found in misogynistic traditional variants by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Charles Perrault. When one begins to look for a logic behind their patriarchal morals, however, they are strangely contradictory, a symptom of what Susan Lancer and Joan Radner call implicit coding in women’s folklore. In addition, these coded critiques fit into specific gendered discourses of the nineteenth century, such as pedagogy for women and girls, scientific theories of gender difference, and the role of women workers in society. These women writers utilized fairy tales as a vehicle for entering into these controversial discourses while still publishing under the respectable guise of fairy tale writing.
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Julie Koehler’s interest in German culture and the fairy tale go hand-in-hand. As a young girl, her parents Paul and Diana Jacokes encouraged her love of reading. She remembers spending hours poring over her father’s old collections of Grimms’ fairy tales. From an early age, she dreamed about reading these stories in their original language. While attending Mercy High School, Julie worked afternoons at a local used bookstore. One day a first edition of the Gustaf Tenggren’s illustrated Grimms’ fairy tales came into the shop. Because the text was in Fraktur, Julie could hardly discern the letters, let alone the words in the German text, but she was fascinated. She set the book on hold and saved up her paychecks in order to buy it.

When she began her freshman year at the University of Michigan, Julie began studying German in the Residential College with Janet Shier. As Junior, Julie studied with Wayne State’s Junior Year in Munich program, and in her senior year she received high honors for her thesis on variants of “Hänsel und Gretel” in German and English. After graduating in 2005, Julie began her studies at the University of Michigan’s School of Education, where she received her elementary teaching certificate and Masters of Education in the following year.

After teaching for a few years in Detroit Public Schools, Julie received a Graduate Teaching Assistantship at Wayne State University. As a Masters student, she fell in love with her research and with college-level teaching thanks to the dedication of her instructors and advisors: Alfred Cobbs, Mark Ferguson, Lisa Hock, Felecia Lucht, and Roslyn Schindler. In 2010, she completed her M.A. with an essay on magic in early German film under Dr. Ferguson’s excellent tutelage.

As a Ph.D. student, Julie received two fellowships, the Thomas C. Rumble and King-Chavez-Parks Fellowships which together with the Graduate Teaching Assistantship made her completion of this degree possible. In 2012, she was also honored to be a recipient of two teaching awards: the Garrett T. Heberlein Excellence in Teaching Award for Graduate Students and the Roslyn and Marvin Schindler Excellence in Teaching Award for Graduate Students.

She worked in directed study with fairy-tale scholars Anne Duggan and Donald Haase, leading to conference presentations with the American Folklore Society in 2011 and the International Society for Folk Narrative Research in 2013. In addition, her work on the undergraduate course Introduction to the Fairy Tale led her to be the first graduate student to teach it, and eventually to the development of a fully-online version, which she currently teaches.

In her research, Julie also pursued her passion for technology and language learning. This led to the development of Ethnic Layers of Detroit (ELD) together with Sangeetha Gopalakrishnan, Alina Klin, Laura Kline, Felecia Lucht, and Krysta Ryzewski. ELD is a GeoHumanities project about the complex layers of Detroit’s ethnic histories. In 2014, she presented on ELD at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Conference.

In 2015, she was greatly honored to be hired as a full-time lecturer and coordinator of the Basic German Language Sequence at Wayne State University and to continue her work with ELD and in teaching and facilitating the fully online fairy tale course. She currently lives in Pleasant Ridge, Michigan with her husband Wynn, and their two sons Desmond and Cameron.