Once Upon an Author: A Children's Book on Gisela von Arnim

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I. Introduction: My Interest in Fairy Tales

When I read picture books as a child, a vivid line of the author's prose or the stroke of an illustrator's brush would transport me to another place and time, like magic. The journeys I undertook in my mind were as fantastical as the ones the heroes and heroines of these stories played out on the page. I felt empowered to make up my own tales, and I modeled my main characters after the protagonists who most mirrored my own identity. I knew that the cautions and inspirations I received from these stories stayed with me, but as I began to race through black-and-white chapter books and analyze academic texts for college courses, the sense of enchantment I received when I read these narratives faded away. However, in spring 2019, I enrolled in a course entitled "Back by Midnight and Broken Mirrors: The Fairy Tale in the European Tradition" at the University of Notre Dame. While reading John Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* or Maurice Sendak and Wilhelm Grimm's *Dear Mili* for class, the magic of illustrated fairy tales returned to me again.

I see magic in my own life as my inspiration to create, which I draw from the power of narrative. Stories allow me to take humble materials and make something wonderful. With pencil, paper, and imagination, I can construct whole new visual and textual worlds. For my final independent project in "The Fairy Tale in the European Tradition," I decided to engage my interest in illustration and reinterpret a traditional text. I shaded, inked, and painted three different pictures for the story of "Snow White," based on socio-historical, psychoanalytical, and feminist analyses of the Brothers Grimm's classic tale. I realized that this type of project could combine my majors in studio art and German and minor in history, while reading, researching, and reimagining the fairy tales that have always enthralled me.

Fulfilling both a graduation requirement and a childhood dream, I thus decided to write and illustrate a fairy-tale-style children's book for my senior thesis. As my protagonist, I chose Gisela von Arnim (1827-1889), a nineteenth century German author about whom I learned in my fairy tale course. Geared towards students in mid-to-late elementary school, I hope that my book will empower young people to share their narratives through their own creative process, fostering the same sense of personal and artistic agency that von Arnim and I demonstrate by telling tales.

II. Subject Matter: Gisela von Arnim and the Feminine Fairy-Tale Tradition

1. Nineteenth-Century Female Authorship

I decided to focus on Gisela von Arnim as a young female author due to her ability to highlight women's underappreciated contributions to the fairy-tale genre in the past and serve as a role model for writers of the future. Von Arnim's engagement with literature was not a typical pastime or vocation for nineteenth-century German women. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar detail in their seminal text, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* nineteenth-century gender theory dictated that women could act as characters in stories but never creators of their own narratives (9-10). This "myth of literary paternity" understood female authorship as unnatural, and Western theorists believed that "writing, reading, and thinking [were] not only alien but also inimical to 'female' characteristics" (8). Helen Fronius examines how this exclusionary theory of authorship as antithetical to womanhood was particularly pervasive in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Germany. Patriarchal society cast women as nonautonomous individuals with a primary duty to one's family (54). Because women's writing could allegedly cause neglect of one's husband and children, male authors and editors discouraged female authorship as a distraction from household duties or even a threat to women's health (57-58). The most prominent German

authors of the era, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, voiced their objections to female publishing (56). Even friends and intellectual collaborators of the von Arnim family, like Jacob Grimm, argued that women's entrance into the public sphere through literature was immodest and undignified (80-82). Therefore, social conditions did not create an ideal climate for nineteenth-century German women to put their thoughts to paper. Some wrote their way out of gender-based silence, nonetheless.

2. Women as Fairy-Tale Authors

While nineteenth-century German women read and wrote in a number of genres, they played an essential role in the fairy tale movement. Günter Häntzschel argues that women found freedom from the monotony of domesticity in writing, and the number of female authors actually increased as the prescribed male public sphere and female private sphere drifted further apart in the nineteenth century (119). He lays out how female authors published texts in growing genres, including advice books, anthologies, translations, magazines, and fiction (121-128). Patricia Heminghouse points out that some women wrote in more traditionally lauded literary styles, as well, such as poetry and drama. However, women found a special opportunity for creativity in fairy tales. A culture of folklore collectors, fairy-tale authors, and academics studying local legends flourished in Romantic-era Europe. While the Brothers Grimm constitute the most famous faces of this movement, middle-to-upper class young women provided them with many of their well-known fairy tales (Zipes, "Introduction," xxix). These women had inherited such stories from previous generations of tale tellers, who encoded feminine wisdom in legends recounted at the spinning wheel, well, and weaving loom (Warner 21-23; 34-35). In addition to passing on ancient narratives, women wrote their own original stories. As early as the 1690s, female intellectuals shared fairy tales in the thriving *salon* culture in France (Betts xiii-xiv). In

the 1800s, some German women participated in literary circles like the originally all-female *Kaffeterkreis,* which von Arnim co-founded in 1843. Jeannine Blackwell theorizes that these stories could serve as a creative outlet for female authors in the patriarchal society in which they lived. By writing literature for children, they did not stray far from a woman's traditional maternal role, but in stories set in make-believe realms, women conveyed their hopes, desires, and fears about their own world ("Introduction," 2). Therefore, when traditional legends became a fairy-tale-focused literary movement, women found ways to engage with a genre to which they had always contributed.

3. Women as Fairy-Tale Characters

While women provided source material for fairy tales and recorded their own stories, this genre still promoted traditional gender norms and contributed to the myth of literary paternity. Using the example of Snow White and the evil queen, Gilbert and Gubar highlight how fairy tales celebrate female silence and submission and discourage assertion and self-expression (36). These tropes thus deny women agency over their own stories (14). Traditional gender roles in fairy tales became even more pronounced during their nineteenth-century transition from an oral inheritance to a literary genre. Maria Tatar emphasizes how the Brothers Grimm consciously edited their *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (*Nursery and Household Tales*, abbreviated as *KHM*), in order to receive more money and critical approval (12-17). In subsequent edition, the authors stressed female obedience, humility, hard work, and domesticity, as the tales served the didactic purpose of fostering certain gendered values in children (29-30). Karen E. Rowe charges that fairy-tale feminine ideals continue to affect women into the modern era, and "these tales which glorify passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine's cardinal virtues suggest that culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to

motherhood and domesticity" (210). Illustrations to these texts have only exacerbated the problem. As Jack Zipes argues in his analysis of images of "Little Red Riding Hood," "All the most popular, classical fairy tales from *Cinderella* to *Snow White* have been illustrated basically in a sexist manner, whether the pictures have been drawn by a male or female hand" ("A Second Glance...," 233). Therefore, fairy tales depict a specific version of womanhood that reinforces societal norms and often provides an inaccurate representation of women's diverse personalities, experiences, and values, when they were written and until today.

4. Gisela von Arnim

Gisela von Arnim challenged gender conventions of her day with her own creative prowess. Von Arnim was born in 1827 to Bettina and Achim von Arnim, both of whom collected and composed fairy stories as active participants in the Romantic literary movement. She wrote several proto-feminist fairy tales of varying lengths as a teenager, including her *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns* (*The Life of High Countess Gritta von Ratsinourhouse*, which I will shorten to *Gritta*). Shawn Jarvis highlights how von Arnim reframed the tropes associated with women's gender roles in the Brothers Grimm's tales to emphasize feminine self-sufficiency and intellectual pursuits. She gave her heroines a voice when fairy-tale females must often stay silent ("Trivial Pursuit?," 106). Von Arnim promoted the voices of other women as well as her own through the *Kaffeterkreis,* active from 1843-1848, at which a select circle of Berlin female intellectuals came together to share their literary and artistic pursuits (103). Although particularly prolific as a young woman, von Arnim continued to write literary works from fairy-tale-style letters to her nephew to full-length plays, until she passed away in 1889.

Despite her accomplishments, scholarship on von Arnim is limited, in both German and in English. One can still find some of von Arnim's German-language stories in anthologies and libraries, and scholars have analyzed her tales in journal articles. However, there are no full-length biographies devoted to von Arnim in English, and only one exists in German: Eva Mey's *Ich gleiche einem Stern im Mitternacht: die Schriftstellerin Gisela von Arnim, Tochter Bettinas und Gattin Herman Grimms.* Mey's book itself is difficult to access and cumbersome to read. Furthermore, the text often focuses more on von Arnim's relationships with the other famous figures in her life than her own personal and literary development, as one can discern from the English translation of the subtitle: "the writer Gisela von Arnim, Bettina's daughter and Herman Grimm's wife." Other texts, like Ruth-Ellen Boettcher Joeres' *Töchter Berühmter Männer,* which translates to "daughters of famous men" further place von Arnim in her family's shadow. Feminists and Germanists even credited Bettina von Arnim instead her daughter with the *Gritta* novel, until Shawn Jarvis' discovery of the book's lost ending in the 1980s, and the issue still remains up for debate (Koehler 147-156). Jarvis admits that that Bettina von Arnim certainly would have assisted with the *Gritta* manuscript, but Gisela von Arnim played the main conceptual and creative role ("Nachwort," 215). I focus on Gisela von Arnim's writing of this fairy-tale novel in my story, in order to highlight her contribution to this unique and defiant work.

However, I believe that von Arnim's biography offers value to not only a scholarly community but also a wider, and younger, audience. Von Arnim wrote *Gritta* and co-founded the *Kaffeterkreis* as a teenager, so children can relate to and find inspiration in her creative efforts. Moreover, von Arnim's life and work demonstrate the values of both individual artistic vision and a collaborative production process. Hence, I have written and illustrated a children's book

instead of just an analytical essay, so that I can increase awareness of von Arnim's own story and the tales she told. This project could not only help von Arnim's story reach a wider audience but also encourage new authors and artists follow a similar creative path.

III. Children's Literature, Identity, and Agency

1. Inspiration

Children's literature provides empowerment not only to its author but also its audience. Stories give children an idea of what is possible, because they convey information about characters while also evoking empathy and even inspiring agency, as Janelle B. Mathis writes in her examination of twenty-seven children's books. Mathis notes that several studies support the claim that agency, or realization of one's ability to make decisions and make a difference, can stem from reading (207). Furthermore, she asserts that agency is linked to a child's sense of identity (208). Due to literature's engagement with a reader's sense of self, Louise Rosenblatt argues that reading is a transaction and a creative act, in which each person perceives a text in her own way, witnesses the writer's process, and puts the author's words into conversation with her own experiences to construct it anew (269). This event "feeds the growth of the individual, who can then bring a richer self to further transactions with life and literature" (274). Melanie Duckworth echoes Rosenblatt's sentiments when she tracks how stories of young women in historical contexts inspire their audience, in which "reading offers the characters of these novels a chance to understand and question their worlds, and writing offers them a chance to remake them" (28). Hence, Duckworth contends that when fictional heroes read, it invites children to reflect on their own literary experience (28). It follows that a representation of a character writing will inspire its audience to compose their own narratives. Therefore, a story about fairy-

tale author Gisela von Arnim could promote agency in young readers, because it will give them an example of how to shape their own narratives, on the page and in the real world.

2. Multilingualism

Not only will the character choice in my story attempt to serve an empowering purpose, but by incorporating the language von Arnim herself spoke, I hope my tale can fill a linguistic gap in children's literature. Jessica Whitelaw laments that even as a university educator and researcher, "it is difficult to find picturebooks originally published outside of the US and in languages other than English" (35). Yet stories told in just one language contain limitations, because María Paula Ghiso and Gerald Campano point out that promoting monolingualism does not respect students' "diverse cultural and linguistic lived experiences" and so perpetuates unequal power structures (54). Thus, although the majority of my text is in English, I have sprinkled German words throughout the narrative. This stylistic choice can teach my readers some of the words von Arnim would have used herself. It can also evoke the mixed speech often used in multilingual homes, supporting Ghiso's and Campano's call for linguistic representation in children's stories. As my book seeks to upend patriarchal modes of narration, a multilingual text will invite readers to further challenge their expectations for literature.

3. Illustration

However, texts in German or in English can only evoke so much meaning, and scholars note that the pictures in children's books make these works even more effective in inspiring youth to engage with both the literature and the world around them. Kelly K. Wissman describes:

> As I've observed students deeply engaged with picturebooks, I've witnessed this "heightened awareness," this "radiance of mind" as they become attuned to the text's aesthetic features: the poetics of the language, the beauty of a color, the movement of a line. Within transactions with picturebooks that are also activating the social imagination, the text radiates with insights and knowledge about and for the broader world. (15)

Whitelaw supports Wissman's reflections, as she claims that stories with images can foster critical inquiry into social issues, despite the positive tone often taken by children's literature (34). She names pictures books an "especially unique format for social sharing," and von Arnim herself modeled this interpersonal element of literature through her participation in the *Kaffeterkreis* and the tales and illustrations she sent to her nephew later in life (36). Furthermore, Wissman highlights how conversations about books can even inspire children to consider the choices the author and illustrator made in creating their work (18). These practices demonstrate Mathis' and Rosenblatt's characterization of literary engagement as a creative act of self-awareness. Therefore, illustrations do not merely serve as decoration but instead can empower readers, just as much or even more than the words of a story.

Nevertheless, much like texts, images have historically also aided in silencing women and children in fairy tales. In her examination of "Hansel and Gretel," Rachel Freudenburg shows how the way illustrators depict young heroes reflects and promotes societal norms about youth behavior (264). However, Freudenburg asserts that these images can serve as either examples of empowerment or supporters of subjugation, depending on the siblings' portrayal (308). Hence, I have sought to design images that inspire agency instead of inaction. By drawing and painting female characters in active poses and creative pursuits, I hope to challenge the historical subversion of women's voices in literature and especially inspire young girls. Thus, just as I reframe assumptions about fairy-tale literature by depicting a little-known female author, I also rework the traditional style of illustration in this genre.

IV. Process

After taking "The Fairy Tale in the European Tradition" course in spring 2019, I began my initial research on von Arnim and proto-feminist fairy-tale authorship in winter 2020. I received a Glynn Family Honors Program grant in summer 2020 to enroll in a course entitled "Children's Book Illustration," taught by Carol Schwartz at the Rhode Island School of Design, which took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schwartz instructed me in storyboarding, research, textual interpretation, character development, pacing, and continuity, as I illustrated the nursery rhyme "The Queen of Hearts." I thus had the incomparable opportunity to receive personalized feedback from a professional in the field, as I explored children's book illustration.

During summer 2020, I also completed the majority of the research portion of my thesis. I read Mey's and other biographies of von Arnim, as well as numerous articles of literary criticism on her work. I also explored von Arnim's own fairy tales, in English and German, from short stories like "Die Rosenwolke" ("The Rose Cloud") and "Mondkönigs Tochter" ("The Moon King's Daughter") to her novel, *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns.* In order to gain a sense of modern children's literature, I analyzed the text and illustrations of forty picture books, a list of which is included in section VIII of this thesis.

I finished the final stages of research in winter 2020, and by early 2021, I started writing my story. I compiled my research notes into categories like characters, images, and potential plot points, and then I began brainstorming by hand. Once I had finished a draft of my tale, I received feedback from my thesis advisor, Denise M. DellaRossa, teaching professor of German in the Department of German and Russian at Notre Dame. I also sent a draft to Shawn Jarvis, professor emeritus of German at St. Cloud State University and the foremost English-language scholar on

von Arnim. Additionally, I consulted with Notre Dame faculty Jodene Morell, teaching professor in the Department of Education, Schooling, and Society and Associate Director of the Notre Dame Center for Literacy Education, and Erin Moira Lemrow, assistant advising professor and faculty fellow with the Institute for Latino Studies and Education, Schooling, and Society. Elementary school teacher and librarian Margaret Kelberer, who has done research on gender and pedagogy, also provided me with invaluable advice on my manuscript.

In summer 2021, I began the visual research phase of my project. I found all the portraits I could of the characters in my stories, and I compiled images that von Arnim, her sisters, and Herman Grimm had created for their fairy tales and other artistic pursuits (see fig. 1). These images informed the initial character sketches in protagonists of my story (see fig. 2). I also investigated the settings where my book took place, Biedermeier interior decorating, and 1830s-1840s fashion. At the end of the summer, I sketched a storyboard, so that I could have a rough plan for my illustrations and the accompanying text (see fig. 3).

In fall 2021, I presented my work thus far at the virtual poster session of the forty-sixth annual Women in German conference, where I developed the analysis for my thesis and received encouragement from academics in the field. I also worked with Clinton Carlson, associate professor of visual communication design, to develop the graphic design for my project. Once I had finalized the book layout, I planned out the compositions for my illustrations. I then found reference material, assembled digital thumbnails, drew rough pencil renderings, and combined them with the text for each page of my book (see fig. 4-6). Finally, in winter 2022, I painted these illustrations in watercolor and received feedback from my advisor, Fr. Martin Lam Nguyen, C.S.C., associate professor of painting and drawing, to bring my text to life through image. I then printed my book through a self-publishing company and designed my portion of

the BFA/BA Honors Thesis Exhibition. Emily Beck, associate professor of the practice, foundations coordinator, and Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Department of Art, Art History, and Design assisted me in this printing and exhibition process. My final project was on display from April 4-May 15, 2022 in Riley Hall at the University of Notre Dame (see fig. 7-10).

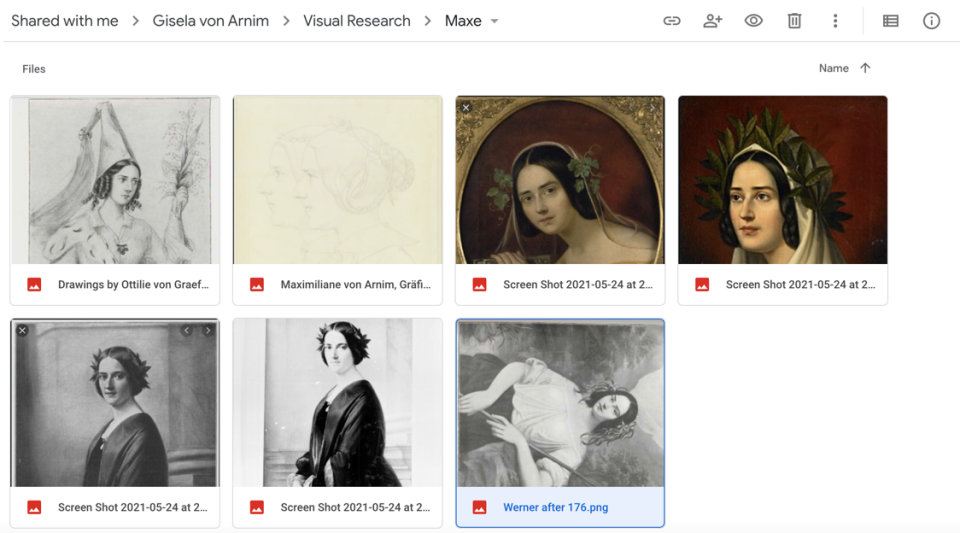

Fig. 1. An example of my visual research: my folder of portraits of Maxe von Arnim.

Fig. 2. My character sketches for Gisela von Arnim.

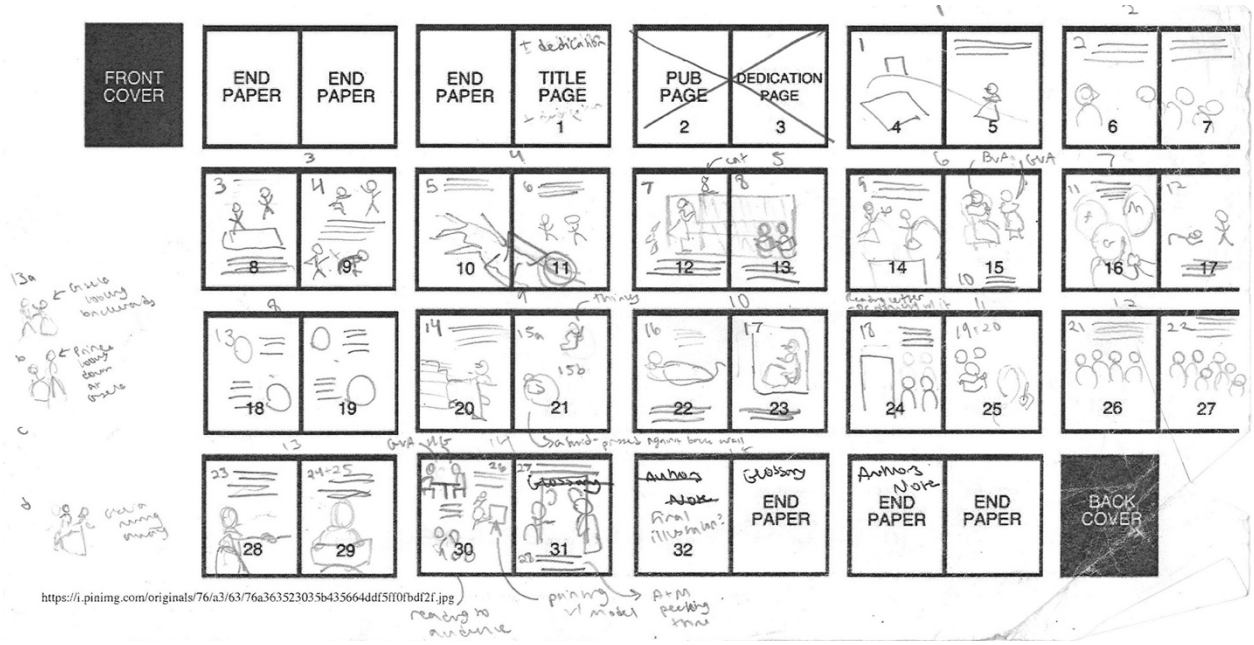

Fig. 3. My storyboard, with my plan for the text and illustrations.

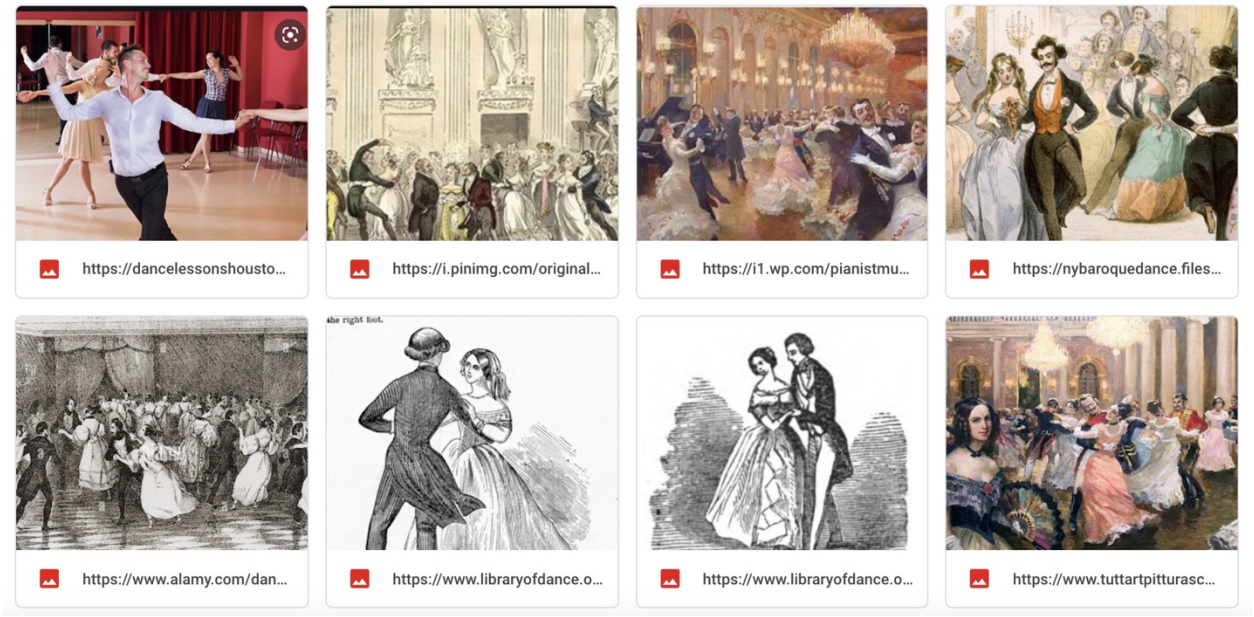

Fig. 4. Example reference material for pages 16-17.

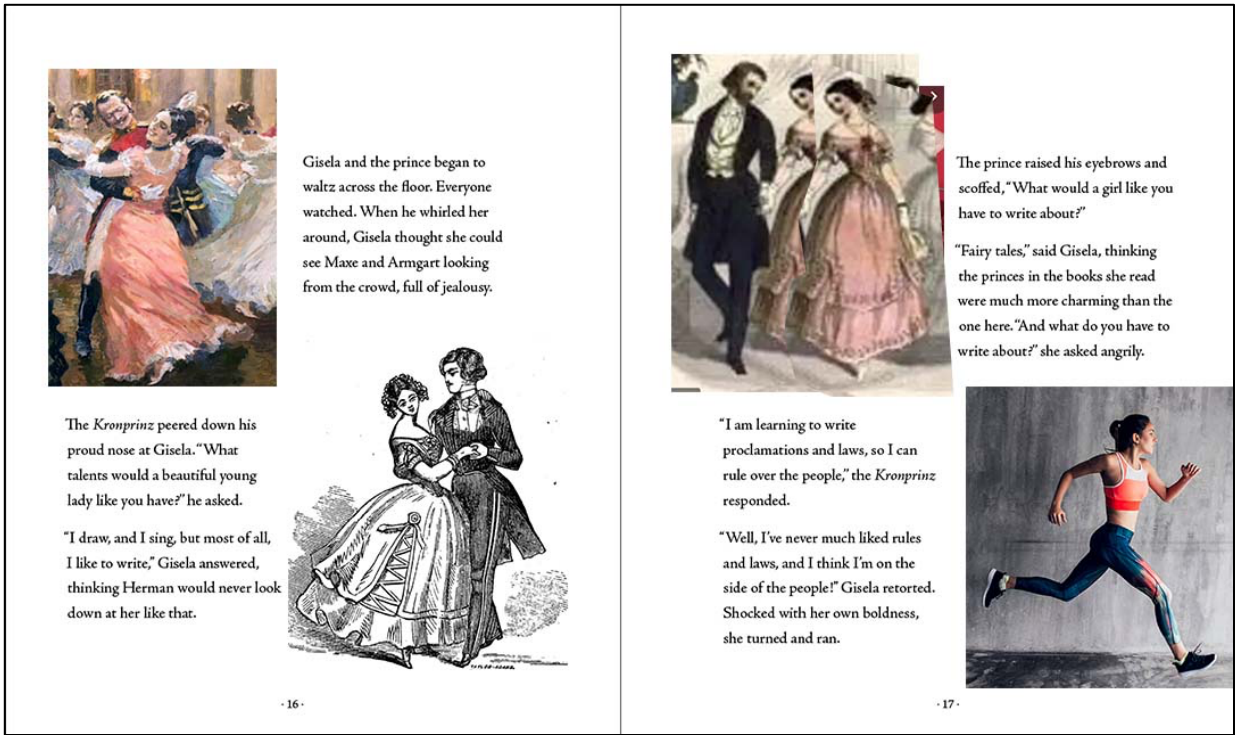

Fig. 5. An example of a composition thumbnail for pages 16-17.

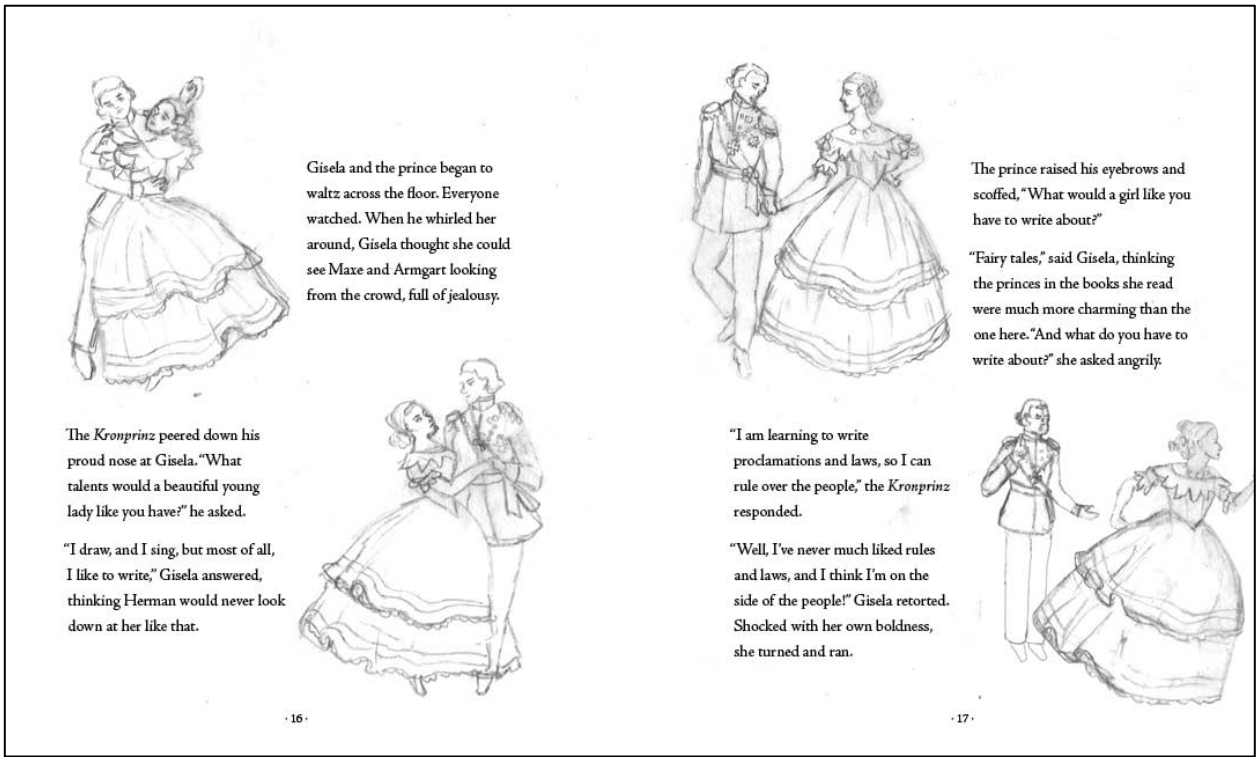

Fig. 6. An example of a rough sketch and text for pages 16-17.

Fig. 7. My exhibition wall in Riley Hall.

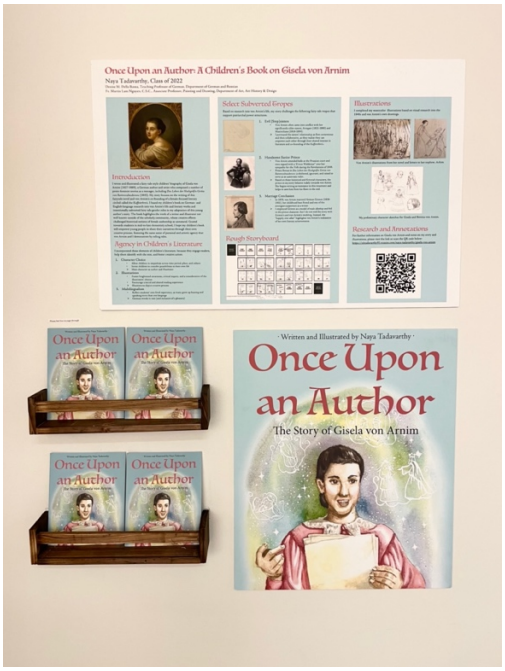

Fig. 8. My display included an informational research poster and copies of my book, which viewers could pick up and peruse.

Fig. 9. I hung the frames with my illustrations"salon style," which reflects how art enthusiasts displayed their painting collections during the nineteenth century.

Once Upon an Author: A Children's Book on Gisela von Arnim

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Introduction

I wrote and illustrated a fairy-tale-style children' biography of Gisela von Arnim (1827-1889), a German author and artist who composed a number of proto-feminist stories as a teenager, including *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns* (1845). My story focuses on the writing of this fairytale novel and von Arnim's co-founding of a female-focused literary circle called the *Kaffeterkreis*. I based my children's book on German- and English-language research into von Arnim's life and literary works and intentionally subverted fairy tale gender roles in my adaptation of this young author's story. The book highlights the work of a writer and illustrator not well known outside of the scholarly community, whose creative efforts challenged historical notions of female authorship as unnatural. Geared towards students in mid-to-late elementary school, I hope my children's book will empower young people to share their narratives through their own creative process, fostering the same sense of personal and artistic agency that von Arnim and I demonstrate by telling tales.

Agency in Children's Literature

I incorporated these elements of children's literature, because they engage readers, help them identify with the text, and foster creative action.

1. Character Choice
   - Allow children to empathize across time period, place, and culture
   - Invite children to consider possibilities in their own life
   - ➢ Main character as author and illustrator
2. Illustrations
   - Foster heightened awareness, critical inquiry, and a consideration of the illustrators' choices
   - Encourage a social and shared reading experience
   - ➢ Illustrations depict creative process
3. Multilingualism
   - Reflect students' own lived experience, as many grow up hearing and speaking more than one language
   - ➢ German words in text (and inclusion of a glossary)

Select Subverted Tropes

Based on research into von Arnim's life, my story challenges the following fairy-tale tropes that support patriarchal power structures.

1. Evil [Step]sisters
   - Von Arnim often came into conflict with her significantly older sisters, Armgart (1821-1880) and Maximiliane (1818-1894).
   - ➢ I portrayed the sisters' relationship as first contentious and then collaborative, as they realize they can empower each other through their shared interest in literature and co-founding of the *Kaffeterkreis*.

2. Handsome Savior Prince
   - Von Arnim attended balls at the Prussian court and even argued with a "Prince Waldemar" over her sympathy for the *Volk* during the Revolutions of 1848.
   - Prince Bonus in *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzubausbeiuns* is sheltered, ignorant, and raised to serve as an autocratic ruler.
   - ➢ Based on these historical and fictional characters, the prince in my story behaves rudely towards von Arnim. She begins writing as resistance to this treatment and helps to save him from his flaws in the end.

3. Marriage Conclusion
   - In 1859, von Arnim married Herman Grimm (1828-1901), her childhood best friend and one of the strongest supporters as a writer
   - ➢ I employed Grimm as a model of male allyship and foil to the prince character, but I do not end the story with Grimm's and von Arnim's wedding. Instead, the "happily ever after" highlights von Arnim's realization of her own literary achievements.

Rough Storyboard

Illustrations

I completed my watercolor illustrations based on visual research into the 1840s and von Arnim's own drawings.

Von Arnim's illustrations from her novel and letters to her nephew, Achim

My preliminary character sketches for Gisela and Bettina von Arnim.

Research and Annotations

For further information on Gisela von Arnim and notes on my story and illustrations, please visit the link or scan the QR code below:
https://nbtadavarthy93.wixsite.com/naya-tadavarthy/gisela-von-arnim

Fig. 10. The research poster on display at my thesis exhibition, adapted from my presentation at the forty-sixth annual Women in German conference. Viewers could scan the QR code to access the analysis and annotations to this project.

V. Style and Content

My fairy-tale-style biography of von Arnim is based on primary and secondary sources from her own life, but I fill in plenty of the plot points with my imagination. Particularly, the narrative subverts fairy-tale tropes based on traditional gender roles. I weave this stylistic choice throughout the text and note it in my annotations, but I want to highlight three specific examples that affect the overall plot of my story.

1. The Evil [Step]sisters]

In fairy tales like "Cinderella" (*KHM* #21), "One Eye, Two Eyes, Three Eyes" (*KHM* #130), and "Princess Mouseskin" (omitted in the Grimm's original publications but included in the Zipes edition as *KHM* #223), sisters compete to undercut one another's happiness, to each other's and their own detriment. In each of these three tales, the youngest, most beautiful, and most virtuous daughter faces mistreatment from her older siblings but prevails in the end. Marcia K. Lieberman asserts that this trope "probably acts to promote jealousy and divisiveness among girls," in her analysis of these sibling relationships (188). While they do not discuss sisters, Gilbert and Gubar examine the ubiquitous evil stepmother trope and agree that "female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in a patriarchy." In nineteenth-century literature, women internalize unrealistic gendered ideals of perfection that lead them to compete with each other, as well as promoting passive submission as the most virtuous response to such conflicts (38). Therefore, the amplification of female arguments silences women's voices in literature, which contributes to the misrepresentation of the female experience and the myth of literary paternity. Moreover, an emphasis on feminine rivalry stifles women's collaboration, a divide and conquer strategy to quell collective power and serve patriarchal interests.

In reality, Gisela von Arnim did often squabble with her much older sisters, Maximiliane (Maxe) and Armgart, seeming to adhere to the trope of female competition. Six and ten years her senior, the elder von Arnim women had received a formal education and introduction to society in Frankfurt, which their sister lacked (Mey 18). Maximiliane and Armgart von Arnim continued to engage more with the social world of the Berlin aristocracy than Gisela von Arnim, who lamented in an 1858 letter to her cousin that they often acted in a jealous, scolding manner towards her when they returned home from such events. She felt that she had grown up rather alone (146). The two elder sisters felt especially envious of the attention Gisela von Arnim received from their mother in 1844 when publishing her fairy tale "Mondkönig's Tochter" (Schultz 25). These differences in personality, priorities, and life experience caused some tension between the siblings, which would appear to cast Maximiliane and Armgart von Arnim in the evil older sister role.

Although Maximiliane, Armgart, and Gisela von Arnim did not always get along, the three sisters also collaborated for entertainment and intellectual stimulation. They would often come together to read, write, draw, and paint, and in 1843, the three siblings founded the *Kafffeterkreis* along with their friends (Dramaliewa 19-22). Mey reports that the age gap between the sisters became less of an issue during this *Kaffeter* period of collaboration (199). This group allowed women to engage with art and literature together and fostered their intellectual discussion skills (Wilhelmy 183-184). Moreover, Jarvis argues that the literary community helped its members combat the patriarchal tropes of traditional fairy tales, as "the *Kaffeter,* by its very existence, rejected the Grimmian model of the silent and passive female" (107). In order to emphasize the aspects of female collectivity in the *Kaffeterkreis*, I want to contrast this collaboration against the fairy-tale trope of female competition that readers expect. I initially

draw on the elder von Arnims' negative qualities to evoke the evil sister figure, so that my Gisela character and the reader could realize together that the sisters' similarities outweigh their differences. Then, their cooperative creation of the *Kaffeterkreis* shows that women need not compete for achievement, as contention only suppresses their potential.

In addition to her participation in the *Kaffeterkreis,* Gisela von Arnim's fairy tales demonstrate that she valued female collaboration over competition. In *Gritta,* Blackwell analyzes how the titular character reconciles with her stepmother, Countess Krautia, instead of forcing her out of the family ("Laying the Rod to Rest," 33). Gritta also forms a group of twelve female friends, who found an alternative cloister at the end of the tale. This community challenges the trope of feminine competition by showing how women can uplift each other in creative and productive pursuits. As Edith Waldstein describes, "each member of the group is able to maintain her individuality and simultaneously contribute to the well-being of the community" (95). Waldstein, who views Bettina von Arnim as the main author of the Gritta text, sees the senior von Arnim's *salon* as "the most successful of its kind" in manifesting the fictional cloister's style of creative collectivity (95). However, Gisela, Armgart, and Maximiliane von Arnim's *Kaffeterkreis* serves as another such example of female talent, intellect, and imagination, which subverts the silence and rivalry of traditional fairy tale heroines.

2. The Handsome Savior Prince

From "Snow White" (*KHM* #53) to "Rapunzel" (*KHM* #12) to "Brier Rose" (*KHM* #50), many female fairy-tale figures must wait for a noble, good-looking man to save them from their plight, cast into an eternal slumber, trapped in a tower, or both. These princesses act only as rewards for princes, rather than agents in their own fate (Liebermann 190). Gilbert and Gubar highlight how in Snow White, for instance, the prince says he will "honor and prize her as my

dearest possession," as he objectifies his "gift" of a wife into "an idealized image of herself" (41). Thus, Liebermann argues that these tales glorify silent female suffering and encourage uncomplaining martyrdom, as their passivity makes these women appealing to their saviors (192-194). Even if the story bears a woman as its title character, the male hero often plays the most active role in the tale.

However, von Arnim challenges this trope of a passive maiden and handsome savior prince in her writing, as Gritta becomes the heroine in her own story. In the kingdom of Sumbona, the young countess befriends Prince Bonus, who is far from the male fairy-tale ideal. Although good-hearted, Bonus has been raised only to rule. Moreover, von Arnim portrays the prince as so helpless, sheltered, and naïve that when the evil Governor Pecavus imprisons him in the royal palace, he writes to Gritta, "Oh, how gladly would I flee with you! But I don't even know how to pack my delicate neck collars so that they won't get ruined!" (von Arnim, trans. Ohm, 123). In her analysis of the fairy-tale novel, Julie Koehler highlights how Gritta rescues the prince from this peril, instead of playing a typical female victim. She refuses to stay silent in the face of injustice and saves the royal family, the kingdom, and her own kin from the machinations of the evil advisor (165). As Jarvis asserts, "the passive and active [gender] roles are reversed" ("Spare the Rod?," 83). Hence, von Arnim's prince lacks the qualities of a traditional fairy tale hero, while her main character possesses more assertive virtues than most female figures.

Moreover, von Arnim's portrayal of Prince Bonus reflects not only her rejection of fairy-tale gender roles but also her and her mother's political views and personal experience. Bettina von Arnim did not approve of the power of the Prussian monarchy and published her *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (*This Book Belongs to the King*) in 1843, criticizing the royal advisors' effect on policy (Koehler 120). Waldstein sees the themes in *Gritta* as an indirect castigation of this

corruption of the court, in line with Bettina von Arnim's other publications (92). John Griffith Urang also characterizes *Gritta* as a political critique, which proposes an alternate model of government that does not completely do away with the monarchy but incorporates common people into a broader hierarchical political structure (174). Both Waldstein and Urang stress that Gisela and Bettina von Arnim did not want to abolish the king's power completely (Walstein 96; Urang 174). However, the von Arnim women also did not approve of the contemporary political system and incorporated these opinions into their literature. Gisela von Arnim also voiced these views in person, as she encountered members of the Prussian royal family during her forays into Berlin society. She did not hesitate to express her democratic tendencies to princes during parties and times of political turmoil, specific instances of which I address in my annotations to my book (see annotations 15.2, 17.2, and 18.2). Just as Gritta speaks up when she encounters unfairness, von Arnim also expressed her political stance in person and on the page.

For the character of the *Kronprinz*, I combined Prince Bonus' naiveté with the von Arnims' negative impressions of authoritarian rule, in order to combat the virtuous male savior trope. Upon their first meeting, the *Kronprinz* does not treat my Gisela character very kindly, which I hope will cause readers to question their notion of the prince as a story's typical hero. Gisela counters his assumptions with a query about literary production, and the *Kronprinz* responds that he is "learning to write proclamations and laws, so [he] can rule over the people" (17). This limited and power-focused education mirrors the instructions given to Prince Bonus by Governor Pecavus, who yells "I'm trying to tell you that the world is round and that you must possess as much of it as possible!" at his royal pupil (von Arnim, trans. Ohm, 105). Gritta must rescue Bonus and later his father from this limited, authoritarian perspective. Then, she teaches the clueless prince how to live outside his ivory tower in the real world (Urang 178). Similarly,

my Gisela character saves the *Kronprinz* from his own closed-mindedness, as she invites him into a *Kaffeterkreis* meeting and promises to educate him on how to use his writing for creative pursuits, rather than oppressing his subjects.

3. The Marriage Conclusion

It would be almost meaningless to list stories from *Kinder und Hausmärchen* that end in a wedding, because as Lieberman asserts, "marriage is the fulcrum and major event of nearly every fairy tale" (189). Indeed, in all six Grimm stories mentioned in the previous two sections, the female protagonist finishes the narrative as a bride. However, Rowe criticizes tales that portray marriage as a woman's ultimate goal, because she argues that readers then see this institution as the only path to comfort and fulfillment in their own lives. She charges that this sole desire for a husband contributes to women's continued oppression, as "they transfer from fairy tales into real life those fantasies which exalt acquiescence to male power and make marriage not simply one ideal, but the only estate towards which women should aspire" (Rowe 211). Although Rowe writes from a modern perspective that reflects on traditional roles, these prescriptive conclusions affected nineteenth-century German women to a similar or even greater degree. The stipulation that a woman's primary duty was to her husband and their children meant that, as Fronius highlights, critics regarded autonomous female pursuits like writing as neglectful, sinful, and ruinous to family life (55-58). Lieberman shows that authors disparage fictional characters for similar reasons in the few tales in which they refuse to marry, portraying princesses' attempts to stay single and "preserve their freedom and their identity" as selfish (198). Therefore, the marriage conclusion undergirds the same nineteenth-century patriarchal structures that denied women opportunities for self-expression, because their relationship to their

husband and children, rather than their own achievements (literary or otherwise), defined their societal acceptance and perception of success.

While *Gritta* does number among the many fairy tales that end in a marriage conclusion, the main character's motivations demonstrate von Arnim's reservations about this patriarchal institution. Unlike the characters whom Rowe criticizes, who place marriage as their highest priority, Jarvis highlights how Gritta does not seek a husband and feels completely astonished when the king proposes she wed Prince Bonus. She agrees to marry the prince not because she sees life as a wife as her only option for fulfillment but rather because it will ensure safety and stability for her family and friends in the Kingdom of Sumbona ("Spare the Rod…," 80-81). Her proximity to authority especially protects her eleven friends' unconventional and potentially illegal or extralegal cloister, as she becomes its patron (Urang 182). This space serves as the venue for Gritta's and Bonus' nuptials. During the ceremony, Jarvis highlights how the future queen expresses some regret about her marriage, as it means she cannot join her sisters in their unorthodox and gratifying lifestyle. Gritta hesitates on the threshold and her father, as a "member of the patriarchal order," must push her forwards towards her groom (81). Her bridal crown falls off her head, and when she notices a twelfth room in the cloister for her, "she close[s] her eyes, not wishing to see it for she [is] sorry to not to be able to live in it, and yet she want[s] to marry to please the prince" (von Arnim, trans. Ohm, 145). Therefore, Gritta feels drawn to an alternative to marriage, in which she can live independently among friends and collectively develop creative skills. Despite this inauspicious beginning, Gritta and Bonus experience the "quiet cradle of a blissful life" together (151). They find even more success as benevolent monarchs of Sumbona, in which von Arnim specifically mentions "Gritta's rule," an acknowledgment of her autonomous female leadership role, even as a married woman (152). As

Urang notes, “this fairy-tale wedding represents a site of both agency and compromise, an accession to political power and a concession to patriarchal expectations” (183). Von Arnim does not completely reject the institution of marriage in *Gritta,* as the wedding at the end adheres to both the conventions of the fair-tale genre and social norms of the nineteenth century. However, the tale does offer other options for women, which cast doubt upon the idea of wedded life as one’s only desirable fate, and demonstrate how wives can retain their agency within this institution.

In addition to her literary works, von Arnim expressed her opinion on marriage and female fulfillment in her letters. She writes in an 1851 or 1852 correspondence with her cousin that she had assured her brothers Friedmund and Siegmund von Arnim that if she were to fall in love with Herman Grimm or anyone else, no one could convince her not to marry him. However, she also defends her freedom, explaining that even as a child, she could not bear when someone pulled the bedcovers too tightly over her. Then, von Arnim mentions her preference for internal rather than external motivation and the intense creative power she feels, which used to scare her but now inspires her like an artist (73). This prioritization of autonomy and artistry contrasts the passivity of fairy tale brides in many of the stories von Arnim would have read. Indeed, even von Arnim’s admission that she might wed reflects her sense of agency, as she clearly sees marriage as a choice based on her own personal desires, rather than the expectations of others.

Gisela von Arnim did in fact exchange vows Herman Grimm in 1859, but based on feminist critiques of the fairy-tale marriage conclusion and von Arnim’s own attitude towards the institution, I decided not to end my biographical book with this wedding. I actually did not include Grimm as a character at all in my first drafts of the story. However, when I shared a copy with elementary school librarian Margaret Kelberer, who has also engaged in research on gender

and children's pedagogy, she pointed out a critical flaw: there were no positive male characters in my entire book. Although my Gisela character helps to redeem the *Kronprinz* in the end, he acts in a vain and disrespectful manner towards female figures for the majority of the narrative. Kelberer helped me think about how I would want all children to learn from my story, not just young girls, and male readers should have a character with whom they could identify. This suggestion led me to add Grimm into the tale as a foil to the *Kronprinz* and model of male allyship. Von Arnim and Grimm were best friends with similar interests as adolescents, who spent almost every day together, so my original omission was actually not particularly accurate to von Arnim's biography (Mey 25-26). Moreover, Grimm viewed von Arnim as his intellectual equal and supported her writing throughout their lives together (Dramaliewa 89). Thus, his role as a unique nineteenth-century proponent of at least his own future wife's literary endeavors is not merely fabricated for the sake of positive male representation but rather reflects Grimm's historical role in von Arnim's creative process.

While I did feel tempted to finish my story with von Arnim's wedding to her childhood best friend, I ended it instead with my main character's literary rescue of the *Kronprinz.* In fact, I now realize that my desire to use Grimm's and von Arnim's nuptials as the tale's "happily ever after" reflects how fairy tales have conditioned me to value traditional institutions and gender roles. In contrast, my ending with the *Kronprinz* focuses on von Arnim's personal fulfillment in literary endeavors and willingness to help others, rather than promoting the gendered conventions typical in fairy tales. This conclusion also emphasizes the power of both individual authorship and collaborative creativity in the context of the *Kaffeterkreis.* However, I do believe that Grimm plays an important role in my story, and his addition to the plot demonstrated to me the value in seeking outside opinions during my project. While my writing and illustrations drew

on my own artistic vision, I learned that I can produce the best work when I also consult others for feedback, from my professors to my peers. Hence, I experienced a similar collective creative process to the women of the *Kaffterkreis,* whose trumpet blasts of praise and rattles of dissatisfaction encouraged each other's artistic and literary development. As these nineteenth-century German authors and illustrators inspired me, I hope my thesis can similarly pass on von Arnim's passion for pictures and prose to a new generation of creators.

VI. Annotations

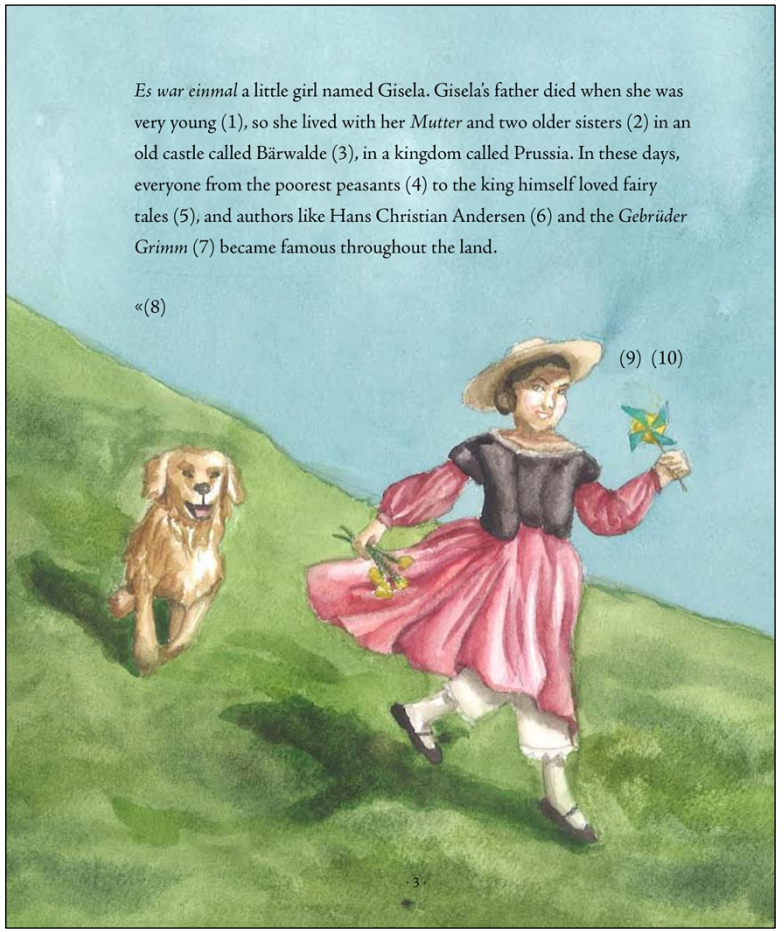
A Note on the Annotations Feminist theory holds that scholars should refer to female authors and other historical actors by their last names, as their surname grants them a level of professionalism often denied them at the time they produced their work. However, the fact that the four most-mentioned characters in my story all come from the same family and thus all have the same last name complicates this practice. Thus, I have decided to refer to Gisela, Bettina, Maximiliane (Maxe), and Armgart von Arnim, as well as Herman, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm, among other characters, on a first-name basis in these annotations. These labels will also align with the way I refer to the characters in the story. I hope that this compromise for the sake of clarity does not belie the respect I feel that these figures deserve.

(3.1) Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) passed away unexpectedly when his youngest daughter, Gisela, was only four years old (Mey 17). A dead, negligent, or missing father is also a common trope in fairy tales with female heroines. As Maria Tatar notes, "fathers in the Grimms' tales either absent themselves from home or are so passive as to be superfluous" (151-152). For instance, in "Snow White" (*KHM* #53*)* and "Cinderella" (*KHM* #21), the Grimm Brothers never explicitly mention the father's demise, but he never appears again after the first few paragraphs. In "Little Red Cap" (*KHM* #26), the authors do not include a father at all.

(3.2) In addition to her two older sisters, Gisela also had four older brothers, who had mostly moved out of the house or passed away by the time she was a teenager (Mey 196-201). I chose to focus on only the three sisters in this tale to simplify the number of characters, reflect Gisela's own experience in a mostly female home, and emulate the three sisters model common in fairy tales. For more information on my subversion of this literary trope, please see section V.1 of my analysis, "The Evil [Step]sisters."

(3.3) Gisela's grandfather, Joachim Erdman von Arnim, purchased the property of Bärwalde and the "palatial" manor house on it in 1780 (Schloss Wiepersdorf Cultural Foundation). It is in the small village of Wiepersdorf in Brandenburg, south of Berlin (Stich).

(3.4) Popular belief holds that the Brothers Grimm collected most of their famous fairy tales from peasants they interviewed in the countryside. However, middle- to upper-class women served as most of their sources, who reported stories they had heard from caretakers and servants (Zipes, "Introduction," xxix).



(3.5) King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia (r. 1740-1861) enjoyed Romantic literature, including fairy tales, and helped revive Berlin's *salon* culture (Dramaliewa 14-15).

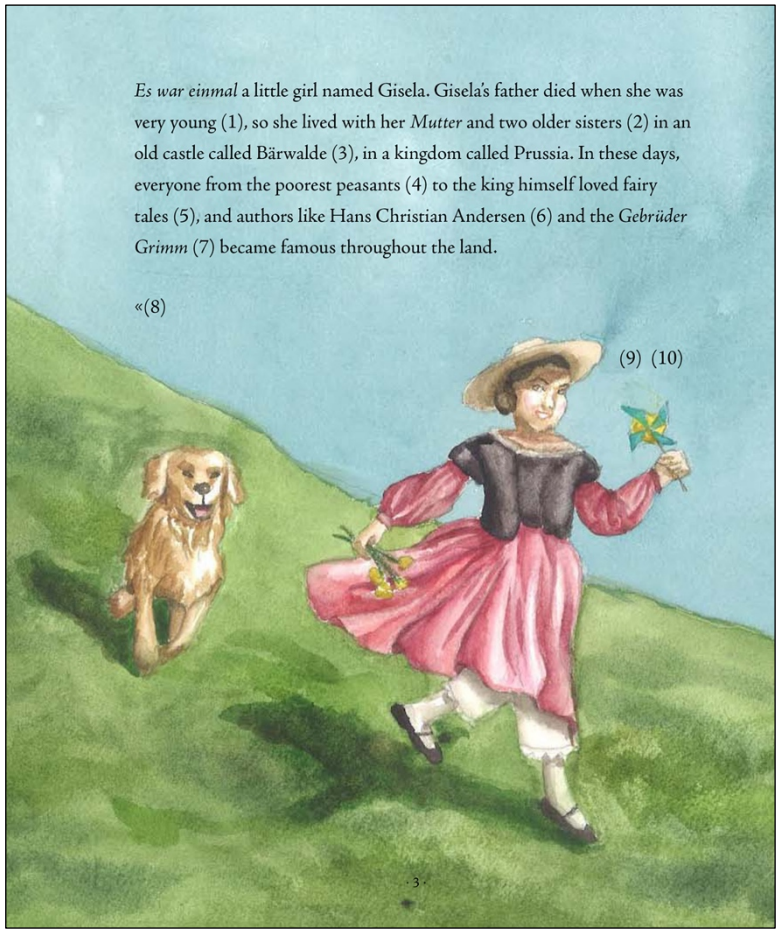
(3.6) The von Arnim family much admired Hans Christian Andersen. As a joke, Herman Grimm once convinced the attendees at a *Kaffeterkreis* meeting that a fairy tale he wrote was actually by the Danish author (Werner 184). Andersen himself also attended a gathering of the *Kaffeterkreis* (Schultz 22).

(3.7) The von Arnim and Grimm families shared a close relationship. Bettina von Arnim secured teaching positions for Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in Berlin after they were fired from the University of Göttingen for protesting the Hanoverian king's constitutional amendments (Koehler 120). Although political disagreements sometimes caused strife, the families provided each other with creative inspiration and intellectual friendship (Mey 30). The famous brothers even dedicated seven editions of their famous *Kinder und Hausmärchen* to Bettina (Koehler 29-30).

(3.8) The image of Bärwalde (on the facing page) is based on an 1831 drawing by Wilhelm Stier (Hahn and Stich).

(3.9) An anonymous 1836 poem describes Gisela at nine years old, wearing a pink skirt and a black velvet bodice, scampering through nature and looking like she came from a fairy castle (Mey 19-20).

(3.10) Maxe von Arnim reported that Gisela once went alone over the mountains in the morning with her "Windspiel" and came back red at sunset, with her skirt gathered up, a straw hat filled with wildflowers, and a jumping golden dog in front of her (Mey 22).

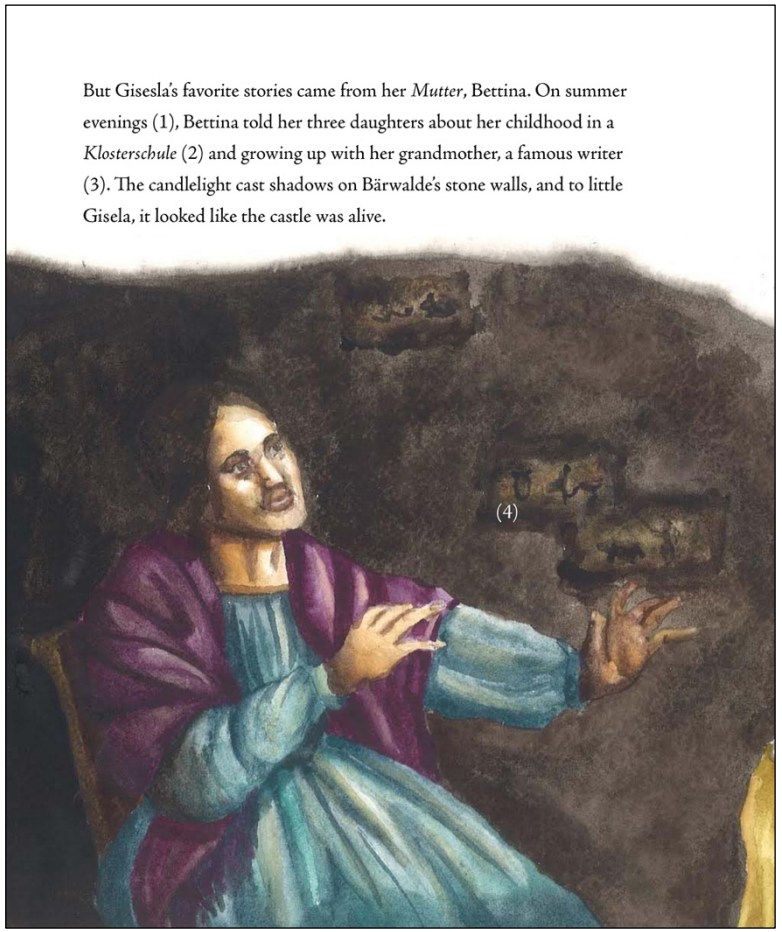


(4.1) On summer evenings at Bärwalde, Bettina would read aloud to her children and tell them stories about her own life (Koehler 132). As Maxe described, the evenings belonged to the four of them (Mey 22).

(4.2) Scholars have noticed elements from Bettina's own life story in Gisela's most famous novel, *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns*. For instance, Bettina attended a convent school, or *Klosterschule*, for some time as a child, just like the main character, Gritta (Konrad 223). Some researchers like Gustav Konrad even use this biographical information to claim that Bettina is "zweifellos" (doubtlessly) the main author of the text (225).

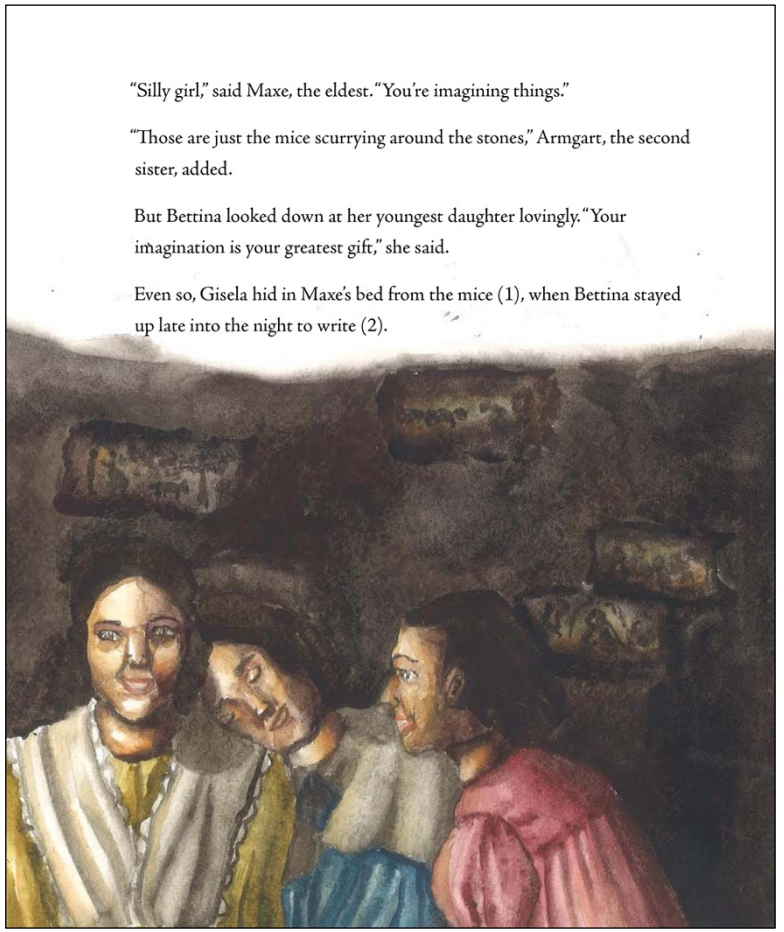
(4.3) Bettina's grandmother was Sophie von la Roche, whom Jeannine Blackwell characterizes as "the first and most renowned woman novelist of the Age of Goethe" ("Laying the Rod to Rest," 25).

(4.4) Hidden in the castle stones are illustrations from Gisela's *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns* and *Märchenbriefe von Achim,* a series of illustrated fairy tale letters she sent to her nephew in the 1850s.



(5.1) In crediting main authorship of *Gritta* to Gisela instead of Bettina, Shawn Jarvis cites the mice in the walls of Bärwalde as an element of Gisela's own life experience in the text. Gisela hid from these vermin in her sisters' bed every night (Jarvis, "Nachwort," 214).

(5.2) As a mother and author, Bettina would spend time with her children during the day and finish writing books like *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kind* at night (Mey 18).



(6.1) Edith Waldstein lauds Bettina as "one of the most important women in the early nineteenth century to whom the beginning of a female literary tradition can be traced" (91).

(6.2) For a discussion of the obstacles facing female writers in nineteenth-century Germany, please see section II.1 of my analysis.

(6.3) Bettina led a *salon* during the revival of these intellectual social gatherings in 1840s Berlin (Wilhelmy 152). Her liberal, political discussion circle abandoned many of the conventions of other salons, such as regular meeting times, and made a special effort to bring young people into the group (154-157).

(6.4) Bettina enjoyed bringing together *salon* participants who held vastly different opinions for discussion and debate (Wilhelmy 159).

(6.5) Bettina's unique personality combined her intellectual prowess, fantastical tendencies, and maternal practicality. Her own children sometimes shook their heads at her in wonder (Wilhelmy 154). Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres argues that Bettina's eccentricity in fact served as a mask for her radicality, and the childlike nature she assumed gave her more freedom to act outside the bounds of society (*Respectability…*, 100-102).

(6.6) Bettina's unconventional behavior included "hiding under tables, leaping onto furniture, carrying on long after middle age in startlingly spontaneous ways, indeed serving as 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" (Joeres, *Respectability…*, 102).

Gisela's *Mutter* was not like other mothers. (1) Most women were not allowed to speak their minds in the kingdom where she lived, out loud or on the page (2). But Bettina wrote, and wrote, and wrote when the moon soared through the sky, and during the day, she hosted discussion groups called *salons* in her home (3). Famous thinkers from far and wide would come together to talk about important topics, like politics, or books, or art. All the guests could say what they believed, and Bettina liked when they shared strange, new ideas about the world (4). Gisela's *Mutter* was the strangest of all. She stood out in a room full of stuffy adults (5). Sometimes, she even hid under tables or jumped on the sofa like a merry marionette. Gisela did, too. She wanted to be just like her *Mutter* (6).

· 6 ·

(6.7) The decor combines multiple rooms described in the von Arnims' various homes. The study in their Berlin house included a portrait of Achim von Arnim (based here on an 1803 painting by Peter Edward Stroehling) and a plaster cast of Jupiter's head (Mey 26). In the front hall of their Wiepersdorf home, the von Arnims also had green and white striped divans (Mey 56).

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(7.1) Bettina did not believe in forcing schooling on her children (Joeres, "Gisela von Arnim," 214-215). This philosophy combined with financial limitations after Achim's death and nineteenth-century gender expectations, so that Gisela did not attend a traditional educational institution (Mey 17). She had no formal education until Maxe and Armgart von Arnim returned from Frankfurt in 1834, where they had been attending school (18). Bettina directed Armgart to teach her younger sister how to write, but the stubborn Gisela resisted learning anything in which she had no interest. Her sisters only convinced her to learn when they told her that if she ever wanted to be an author, an early childhood dream, she had to write properly (18-19). Like many home-taught women of her era, Gisela never really employed proper spelling or grammar throughout her writing career (Joeres, "Gisela von Arnim," 215).

(7.2) Maxe reported in 1839 that she had had trouble teaching arithmetic, geography, and French to her younger sister, though she had started to produce little stories and fairy tales as soon as she had learned to write (Mey 20).

(7.3) I have attempted here and at other points in my text to emulate the descriptive, Romantic writing style Gisela employs in her tales.

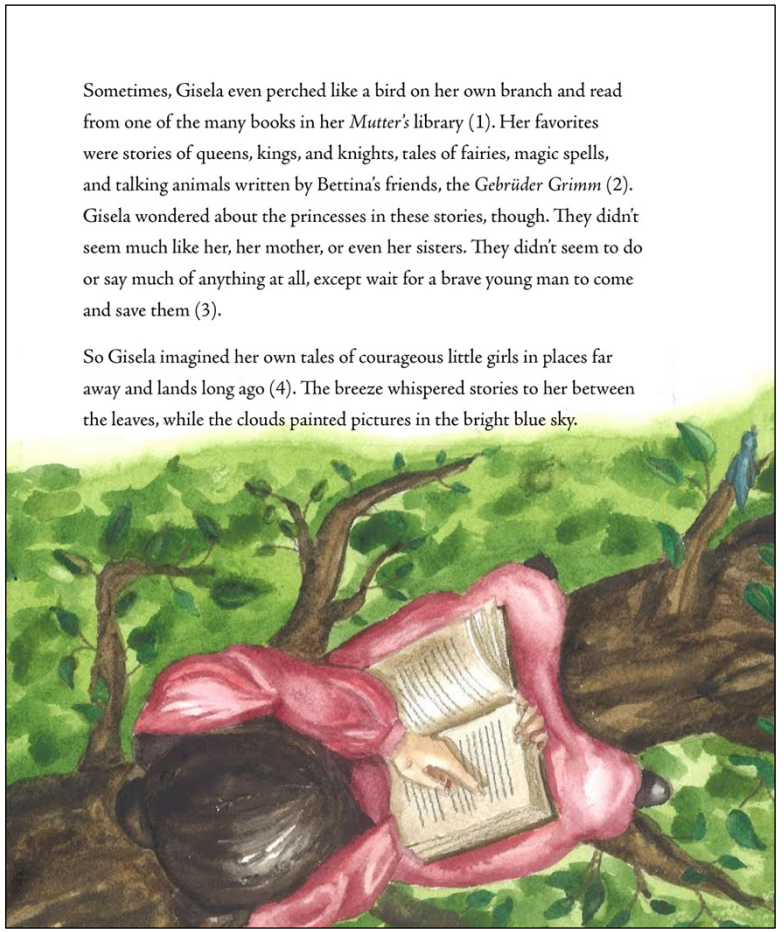
More than anything, Gisela dreamed of writing. Armgart tried to teach her younger sister about grammar, spelling, and punctuation. But Gisela didn't care about all of the endless rules (1). Maxe had even less luck with math, geography, and French (2). Gisela was smart, but she could hardly sit still. Instead, she ran out of the high stone walls of Bärwalde to the forest, where she built little villages out of stone and moss, as the birds sang from the treetops and the sun shone down from above (3).

(8.1) Gisela read sitting in a tree at Bärwalde as a child (Mey 20)

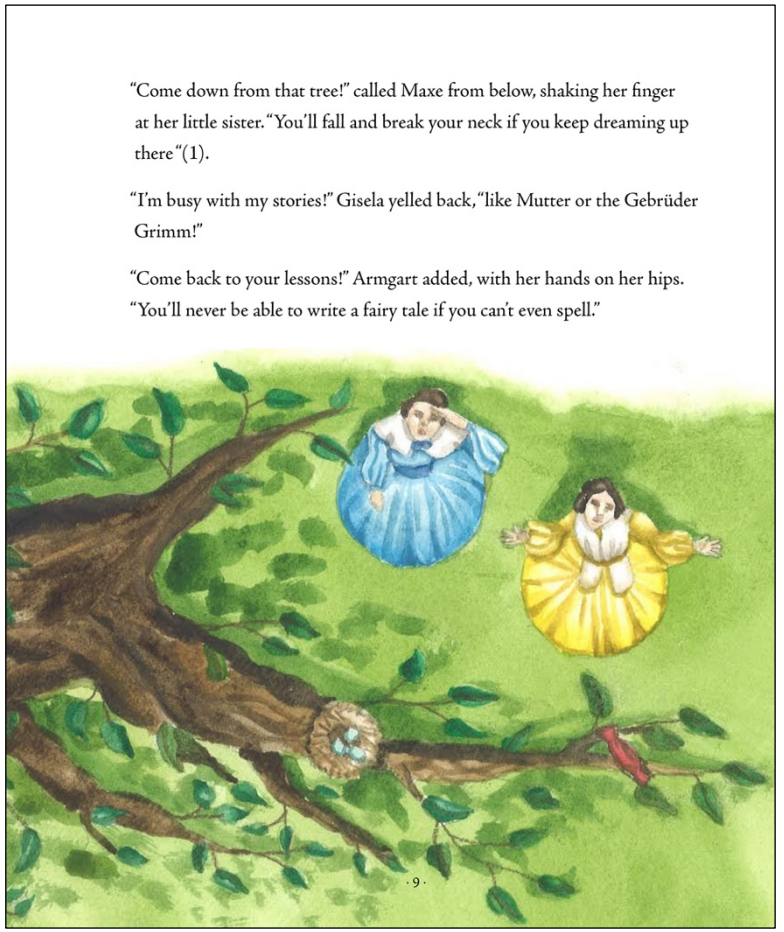
(8.2) Some of the first books Gisela read were the Brothers' Grimm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (Mey 20).

(8.3) For more information on female representation and suppression in fairy tales, please see section II.2 of my analysis.

(8.4) Some of Gisela's works with proto-feminist heroines include "The Rose Cloud" (as analyzed by Shawn Jarvis), "The Nasty Little Pea" (as analyzed by Bernadette Hyner) and *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns* (as analyzed by Shawn Jarvis, John Griffith Urang, Edith Waldstein, Jeannine Blackwell, and Julie Koehler, among others).



(9.1) Maxe described that Gisela once climbed to the top of a tall oak tree in front of their door like a squirrel. Maxe said she would die if Gisela fell, and Gisela would not come down until her older sister promised she would stay alive, because she did not want to live without her (Mey 22).



"Come down from that tree!" called Maxe from below, shaking her finger at her little sister. "You'll fall and break your neck if you keep dreaming up there"(1).

"I'm busy with my stories!" Gisela yelled back, "like Mutter or the Gebrüder Grimm!"

"Come back to your lessons!" Armgart added, with her hands on her hips. "You'll never be able to write a fairy tale if you can't even spell."

(10.1) Although Gisela was especially close to her mother, Bettina was often busy writing. Since she had no playmates her own age, she learned to entertain herself (Mey 18). She wrote in an 1858 letter that she felt she had grown up mostly alone (146).

(10.2) Maxe described her younger sister's close connection with animals. Six grey cats followed her around in the rain, and she adopted a small white orphaned chick, which she named Molli (Mey 23).

(10.3) Eva Mey contends that Bettina may have exaggerated a story of a crane that her daughter tamed, which injured itself when scared by some quartered soldiers' trumpets. Gisela nursed the bird back to health, and they went walking daily. The sometimes fantastical Bettina even described that the bird ate the bookworms out of the tomes in the library and the fleas out of the skirts of the farm women (Mey 36).

(10.4) The orange and white cat here may not look like the ones that followed Gisela, but he does resemble my own cat, Oliver.

So Gisela learned to write. The characters in her stories kept her company, because Maxe, Armgart, and Bettina were all very busy (1). The animals at Bärwalde also befriended her. Six grey cats followed her home one day, and she cared for a little white chick who was lonely like her (2). One day, she came across an injured crane, who had taken quite a fright at the trumpet blast of some soldiers nearby and flown right into a fence. Gisela nursed the crane back to health, and they became best friends. The bird and the girl went on daily walks together. He even followed her into the library to eat the worms out of the old books that lined the tall shelves, as Gisela wrote her own stories (3).

· 10 ·

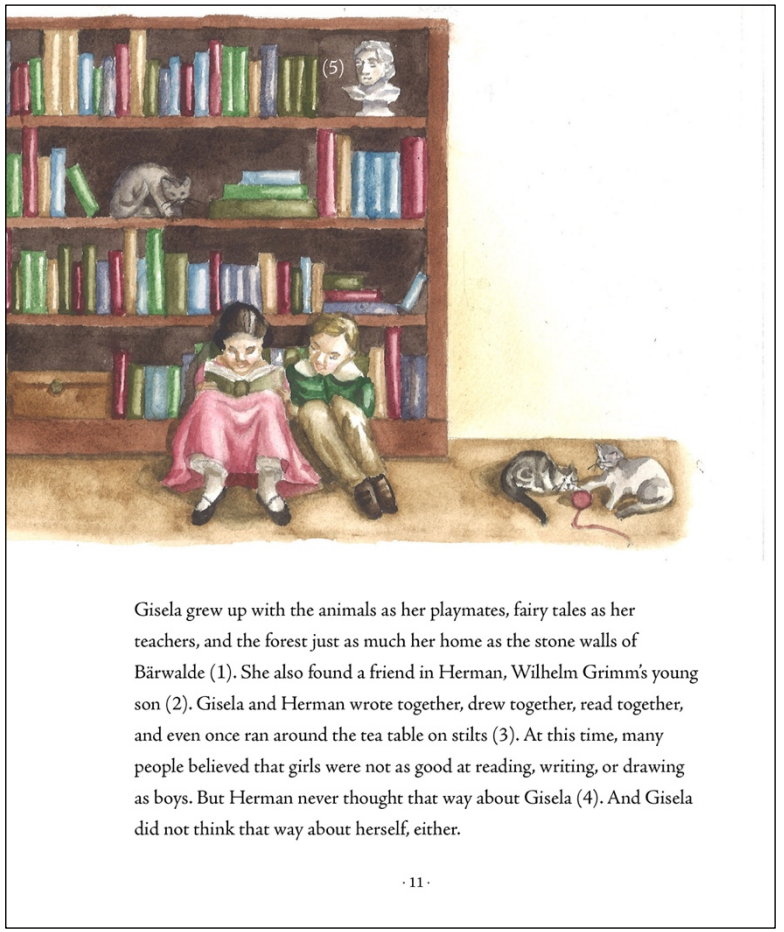
(11.1) Gisela described herself as a "Märchenkind" or "fairy tale child" (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit?," 106).

(11.2) Gisela met Herman Grimm at age thirteen, when his family moved to Berlin. Herman was Gisela's first same-age playmate, and he brought joy, humor, and companionship to her life (Mey 25-26). He came to the von Arnim house every day, where he found more opportunities for happiness, stimulation, and free thought than his own home (Mey 25-26). Herman soon became like part of the family (Dramaliewa 23).

(11.3) Herman enjoyed reading and painting with the von Arnim sisters (Mey 56). Although he spent most of his time at the von Arnim home, a visitor to the Grimm household did once describe in shock how Gisela appeared there on stilts and ran around the tea table (25).

(11.4) Herman regarded Gisela as his intellectual equal (Dramaliewa 89). Later in life, he would always seek her approval, before publishing any of his writing (Mey 212). For more insights on Herman's character as a model for male allyship, please see section V.3 of my analysis, "The Marriage Conclusion."

(11.5) Bettina was a friend and great admirer of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, about whom she wrote her *Goethes Briechwechsel mit einem Kinde*. She designed a memorial to him, which sat in the middle of the hall in the von Arnims' Berlin home (Dramaliewa 52-53, Mey 80). The bust on the bookshelf here features the famous author's visage.

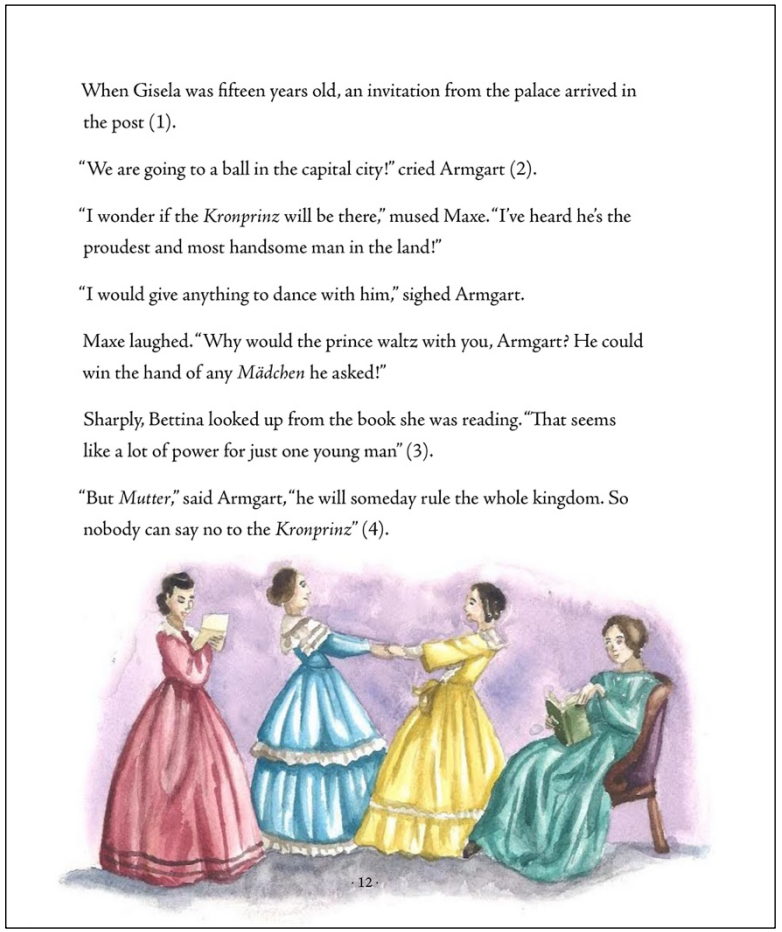


(12.1) Fifteen years is the age of many female characters in fairy stories, such as Sleeping Beauty in the tale of the same name (*KHM* #50). It was also Gisela's age when she co-founded the *Kaffeterkreis* with her sisters.

(12.2) Although Bettina and Gisela did not participate as much in Prussian court life, Maxe and Armgart received regular invitations to balls at the palace (Dramaliewa 14-15).

(12.3) Bettina was sharply critical of the Prussian political system. Her liberal salon gave people the opportunity to discuss controversial ideas that they could not write down in a climate of censorship (Wilhelmy 157). She herself kept a correspondence with Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm IV, beginning when she intervened on behalf of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's firing from the University of Göttingen. Based on this exchange but set in the early 1800s, Bettina published her critical *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (This Book Belongs to the King) in 1843, with suggestions for improvements upon the monarch (Koehler 120). Jonathan Urang notes, though, that Bettina and Gisela were liberal royalists rather than radical democrats, who wanted to incorporate the common people into a broader but still hierarchical political structure (174). For further details on the inclusion of the von Arnims' political views in *Gritta,* please see section V.2 of my analysis, "The Handsome Savior Prince."

(12.4) Armgart and Maxe held more conservative political views than Bettina, Gisela, and older brother Friedmund, who hoped for a more democratic outcome to the revolution of 1848. The liberal side of the family gathered their friends together in one room in their Berlin apartment to discuss these tumultuous political times, while the conventional elder sisters brought their more aristocratic friends together in another one (Mey 65).



When Gisela was fifteen years old, an invitation from the palace arrived in the post (1).

"We are going to a ball in the capital city!" cried Armgart (2).

"I wonder if the *Kronprinz* will be there," mused Maxe. "I've heard he's the proudest and most handsome man in the land!"

"I would give anything to dance with him," sighed Armgart.

Maxe laughed. "Why would the prince waltz with you, Armgart? He could win the hand of any *Mädchen* he asked!"

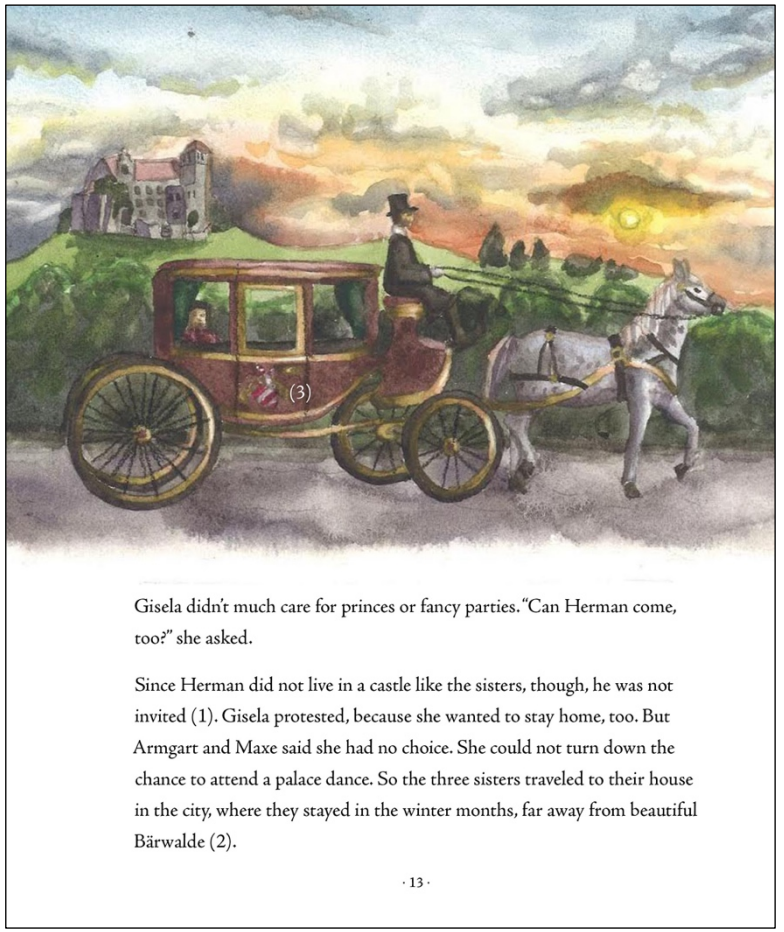
Sharply, Bettina looked up from the book she was reading. "That seems like a lot of power for just one young man" (3).

"But *Mutter*," said Armgart, "he will someday rule the whole kingdom. So nobody can say no to the *Kronprinz*" (4).

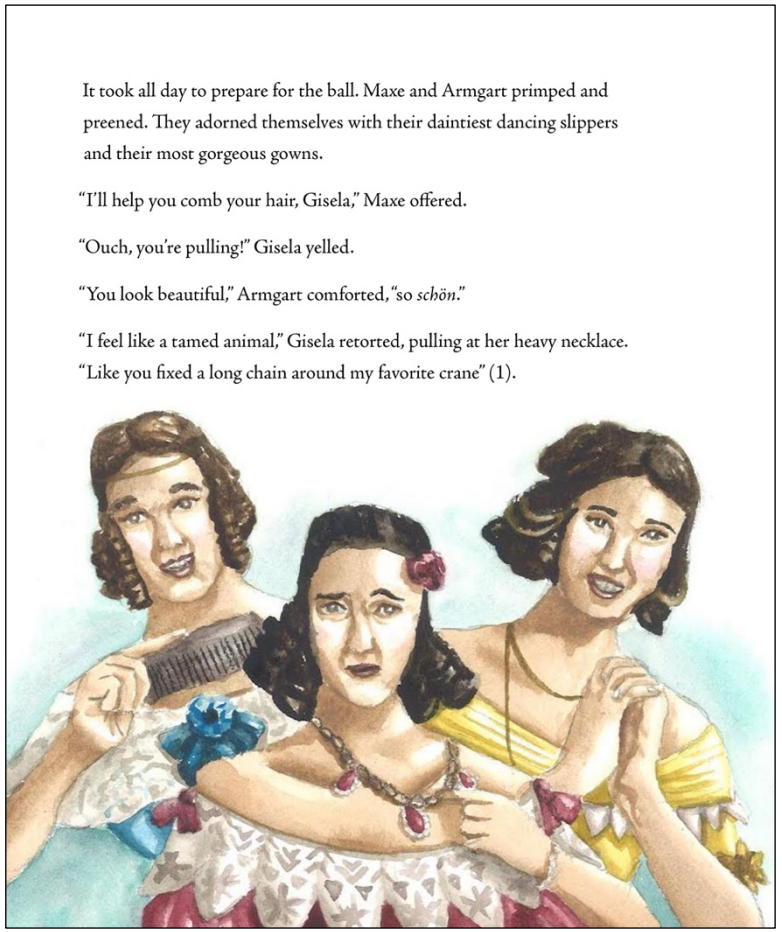
(13.1) As a landed family, the von Arnims were members of Prussia's petite aristocracy (Joeres, *Respectability and Deviance,* 88). In contrast, the Grimm family was just as famous because of Jacob's and Wilhelm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen,* but they had no title. Herman felt that he needed to reassure Gisela's brother Freimund that this class difference did not matter, when he and Gisela wed secretly in 1859 (Mey 152). Another brother, Siegmund, opposed the union, and Maxe and Armgart, who were both married at this point, realized the Grimms' lack of noble blood would bring the sisters' social circles further apart (154).

(13.2) Armgart described how the family moved between Bärwalde in the summer months and their Berlin home in the winter, returning to the city like many prominent Prussian families (Dramaliewa 7-8).

(13.3) The emblem on the carriage is the von Arnim family crest (Hahn and Stich).



(14.1) During the 1847 *Vereinigte Landtag*, a meeting of the Prussian state parliament, Gisela attended a party at the home of her uncle, Minister of Justice Friedrich Karl von Savigny. She recalled that she was in a sour mood all evening, because to increase her unending beauty, as she sarcastically described, Maxe had violently combed up her hair. With this hairstyle, decency and femininity overcame her, and she felt like a tamed animal (Mey 52).



It took all day to prepare for the ball. Maxe and Armgart primped and preened. They adorned themselves with their daintiest dancing slippers and their most gorgeous gowns.

"I'll help you comb your hair, Gisela," Maxe offered.

"Ouch, you're pulling!" Gisela yelled.

"You look beautiful," Armgart comforted, "so *schön*."

"I feel like a tamed animal," Gisela retorted, pulling at her heavy necklace. "Like you fixed a long chain around my favorite crane" (1).

(15.1) Gisela enjoyed the company of intellectually stimulating, close friends but did not appreciate having to interact with people who did not know and understand her (Mey 70). She had no aspirations about striving in court society (Mey 82)

(15.2) On an outing to the island of Pichelswerder, Maxe described how the Prince of Prussia decided to participate in the dancing at the last minute. The party needed one more woman to even out the pairs of dancers, so someone called Gisela onto the floor and placed her opposite the prince. She looked lovely and danced all the steps gracefully, but with her back to him the whole time, either from a sudden mood or because it was against her democratic sensibilities to dance with a prince (Mey 35).

At the ball, there were many women in long dresses, wearing jewels that sparkled and shone. They were escorted around the room by men with their chins held high. Maxe and Armgart disappeared into the crowd, but Gisela stood alone on the side (1). Suddenly, the musicians started playing a lively tune, and a young man appeared next to her. He bowed deeply. "I have just decided to dance," he announced, "and it seems I do not have a partner. Would you care to join me, *bitte*?" (2).

He raised his head, and Gisela could not believe her eyes. It was the *Kronprinz*! She remembered what her sisters had said. She could not say no. And so she nodded, reluctantly.

· 15 ·

(16.1) Gisela von Arnim had tutors for drawing and music, both of which she enjoyed (Joeres, "Gisela von Arnim," 215). These pastimes were considered acceptable for society women, especially as part of a Romantic ideal, and Gisela and her sisters often painted and performed together (Kölsch 8). Maxe characterized her younger sister as quite gifted at these artistic pursuits, as well (Mey 199).

Gisela and the prince began to waltz across the floor. Everyone watched. When he whirled her around, Gisela thought she could see Maxe and Armgart looking from the crowd, full of jealousy.

The *Kronprinz* peered down his proud nose at Gisela. "What talents would a beautiful young lady like you have?" he asked.

"I draw, and I sing, but most of all, I like to write," Gisela answered, thinking Herman would never look down at her like that (1).

· 16 ·

(17.1) Please see section V.2 of my analysis for further information on Gisela's politics and the subversion of the handsome savior prince trope.

(17.2) Gisela described in a letter how she spent one evening during the 1847 *Vereinigte Landtag* at the Savignys' house. She and Armgart began to debate with Prince Waldemar, who was also at the social gathering. At one point in the argument, with the thought the she would be the only one to tell the truth, Gisela retorted, "Wenn man denn auf einer Seite steht, so ist es doch jedenfalls ehrenvoller, auf der Seite des Volks zu stehn; überhaupt bin ich an und für mich revolutionär," which translates to: If one were to take a side, it is in any case more honorable to stand on the side of the people. Anyways, I myself am a revolutionary (Mey 53).

The prince raised his eyebrows and scoffed, "What would a girl like you have to write about?"

"Fairy tales," said Gisela, thinking the princes in the books she read were much more charming than the one here. "And what do you have to write about?" she asked angrily.

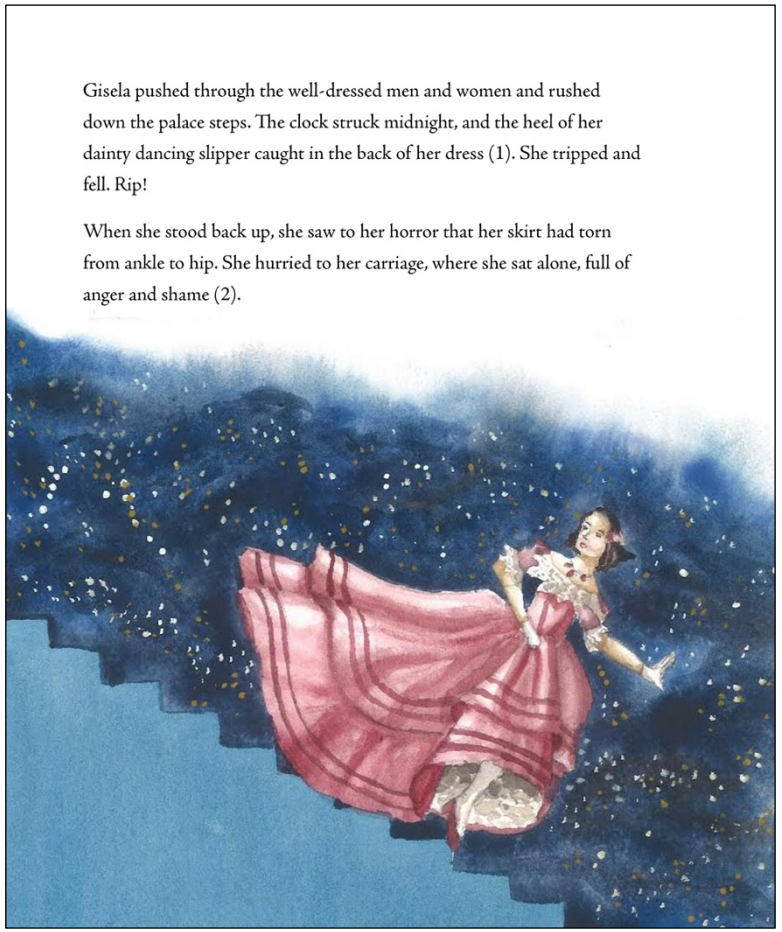
"I am learning to write proclamations and laws, so I can rule over the people," the *Kronprinz* responded (1).

"Well, I've never much liked rules and laws, and I think I'm on the side of the people!" Gisela retorted. Shocked with her own boldness, she turned and ran (2).

· 17 ·

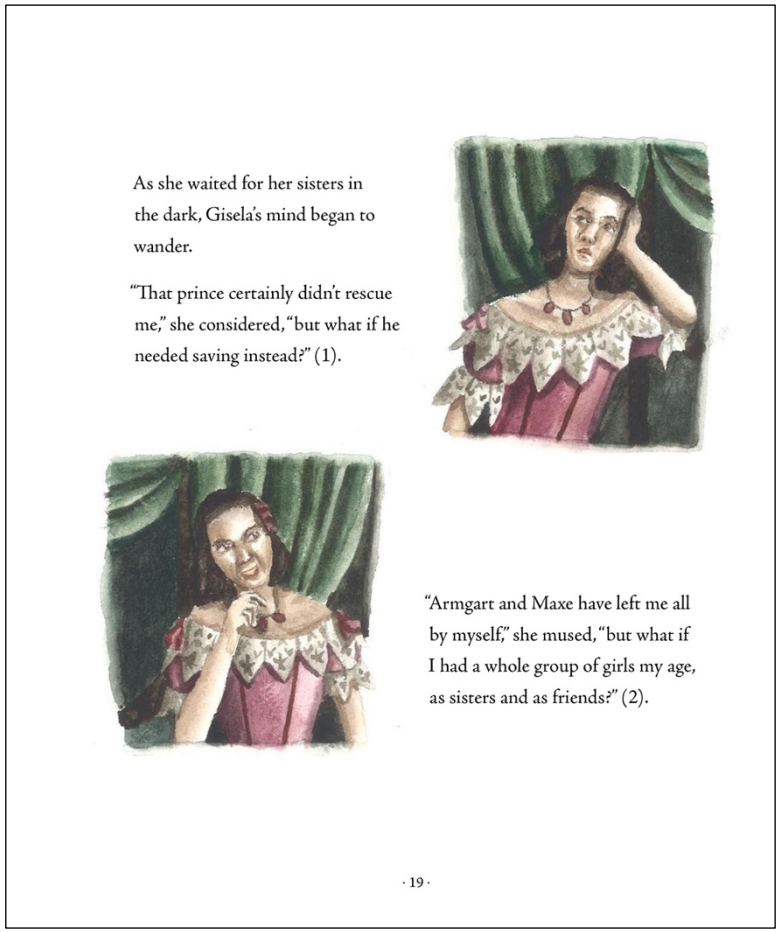
(18.1) I have alluded to the fairy tale Cinderella (*KHM* #21) in my text and my images, through details like the dancing slipper, staircase, and clock striking midnight, in order to highlight the prince's not-so-charming nature and Gisela's defiance. These character traits contrast the male savior role and the lack of female agency in the original story.

(18.2) On the aforementioned evening on the island of Pinchelswerder (see note 15.2), during which Gisela danced with her back to the Prince of Prussia the whole time, Maxe commented wryly that her sister's punishment for this deed followed. In high spirits, Gisela jumped over a railing and tore off half of her dress. She had to spend the rest of the evening in the carriage (Mey 35).



(19.1) The following series of questions that Gisela asks herself all refer to elements in *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns*. Please see section V.2 of my analysis for an examination of the prince's haplessness and Gritta's role as a heroine in the text.

(19.2) Gritta forms a friendship with eleven other girls, who build a collective life together. Please see section V.1 of my analysis for a discussion of female collaboration in *Gritta* and Gisela's own life.



(20.1) Talking and personified animals are common characters in many fairy tales, including "The Frog King, or Iron Heinrich" (*KHM #1*), "The Golden Bird," (*KHM* #57), and "Puss in Boots," (omitted in the Grimms' original publications but included in the Zipes edition as *KHM* #216). In *Gritta,* the talking rats "swear a rat's oath on all that was holy and dear" to protect the young countess (9). Gritta herself expresses doubt about the unrealistic nature of this trope, just like Gisela in my story, as the old servant Muffert does not hear the rats and Gritta thinks she is dreaming when she notices their conversations (trans. Ohm 9; 27). Urang interprets the rats as a symbol of mob rule in his political interpretation of *Gritta* (171). In contrast, Blackwell divides different groups of rat characters into matriarchal and patriarchal roles ("Laying the Rod to Rest," 34).

She thought she saw a movement in the corner of the carriage and nearly jumped with fear. What if it was a mouse? But then she decided she felt braver than when she was a little girl, hiding in her sisters' beds. She had just stood up to a prince.

"Who are you, and why are you here?" she called into the darkness.

Silence.

"Silly Gisela, mice can't talk," she told herself. "But what if all of my animal friends could speak?" And with that, she fell asleep and began to dream (1).

· 20 ·

(21.1) These details are all plot points in *Das Leben der Hochgräfin Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns*.

(21.2) Gisela described in a letter to Herman how she used to sit at the window in the evenings, as a break from her strange plans, drawing, or embroidery, and become enraptured by the melancholy poetry of the landscape (Mey 24). She also included an image of a child sitting at a window and gazing down over a town in her fairy tale "Mondkönigs Tochter" (Konrad, 197).

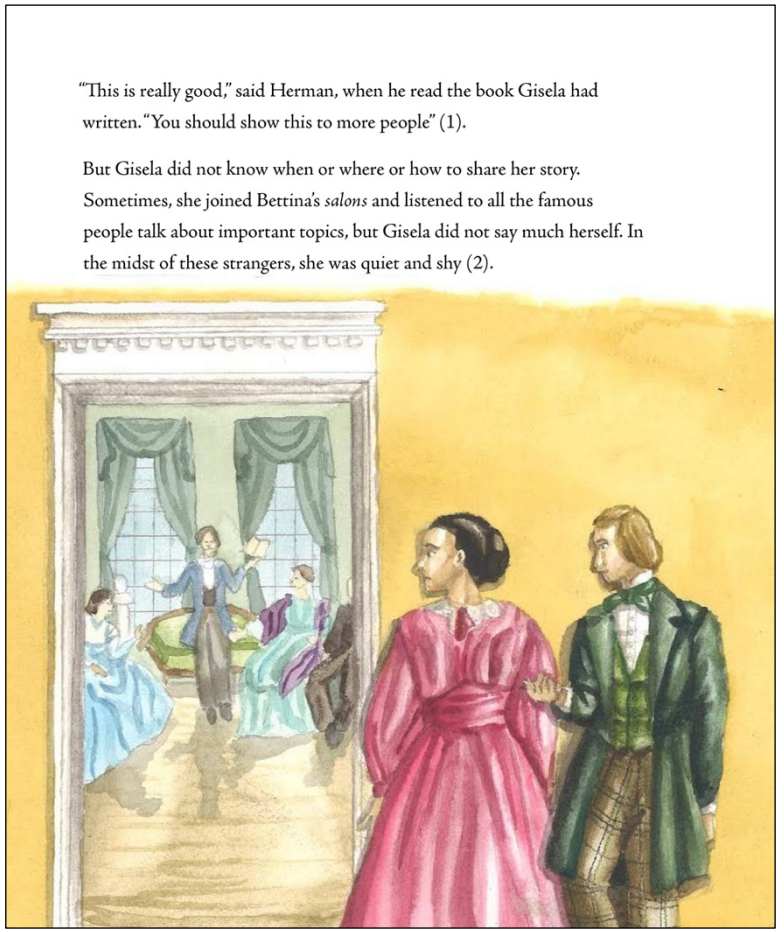
Finally, Maxe and Armgart came back to the carriage, and the three sisters returned home. The two older ones we nt right to bed, but Gisela did not. Instead, she grabbed a pen and began to write about a little girl in a castle full of talking rats, who finds twelve friends and saves a prince in a faraway land (1). Just like her *Mutter*, Gisela wrote all through the night, until she could see the sun rising over the treetops and houses of the big city, signaling the break of dawn.

Gisela worked and worked on her fairy tale, and the characters came alive in her mind.

· 21 ·

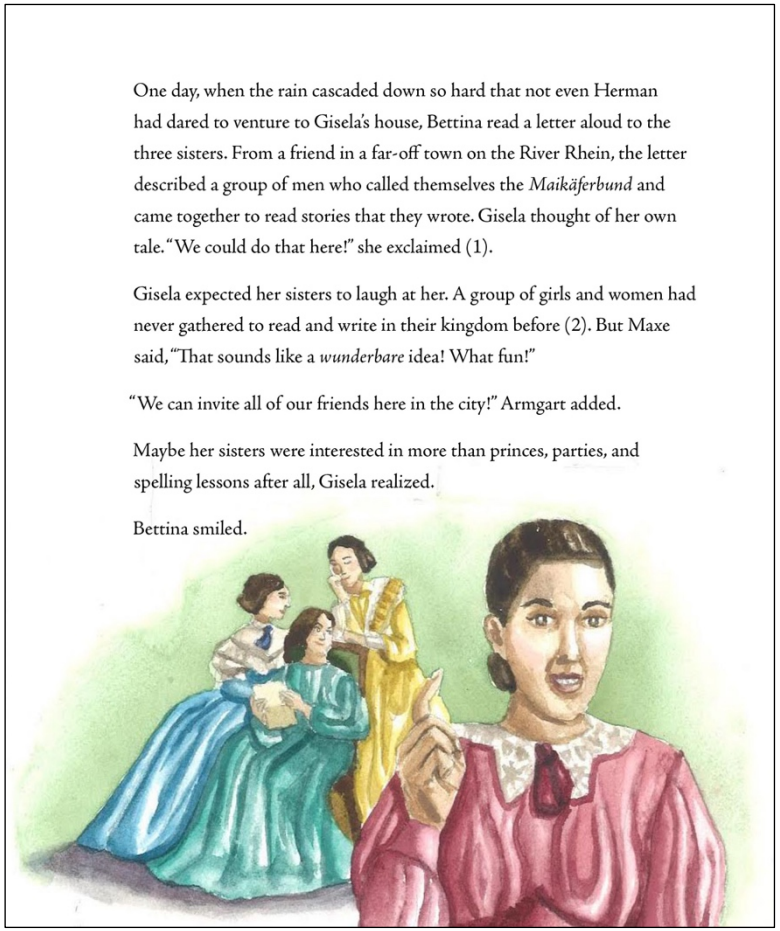
(22.1) Gisela clearly trusted Herman as one of her first readers, because in their shared diary in December 1844, she wrote to him asking that he promise to not show her fairy tale to anyone else (Mey 37).

(22.2) See note (15.1) about Gisela's shy personality.



(23.1) Gisela and her sisters were inspired to found the *Kaffeterkreis* based on a description of the *Maikäferbund*, an all-male literary circle in Bonn, in a letter from their former music teacher, Johanna Matthieux. As Maxe read the letter aloud, Gisela exclaimed "Das könnten wir eigentlich hier machen!" which translates to: We could do that here! (Mey 33). Blackwell characterizes Gisela as "the main force behind the *Kaffeterkreis*" ("Laying the Rod to Rest," 25)

(23.2) As Patricia Heminghouse explains, most German women writers worked in isolation, because there were few social structures or public meeting opportunities in place. She mentions the *Kaffeterkreis* as one of the few literary clubs formed by women, though she argues that it did not have as much influence as the male dominated "Tunnel over the Spree," for instance (90). Some women did participate in intellectual discussions in *salons* like Bettina's, but Petra Wilhelmy considers the *Kaffeterkreis* only on the very fringes of the definition of a *salon* (183). The group was more of a literary circle or *Literaturkränzchen*, according to Wilhelmy's definitions, because it had set constraints for membership and a formalized program (30). Moreover, it was not formed around one specific woman and did not take place on a set day of the week (25). Thus, the *Kaffeterkreis* represents a unique forum for German female artistic and literary achievement.



One day, when the rain cascaded down so hard that not even Herman had dared to venture to Gisela's house, Bettina read a letter aloud to the three sisters. From a friend in a far-off town on the River Rhein, the letter described a group of men who called themselves the *Maikäferbund* and came together to read stories that they wrote. Gisela thought of her own tale. "We could do that here!" she exclaimed (1).

Gisela expected her sisters to laugh at her. A group of girls and women had never gathered to read and write in their kingdom before (2). But Maxe said, "That sounds like a *wunderbare* idea! What fun!"

"We can invite all of our friends here in the city!" Armgart added.

Maybe her sisters were interested in more than princes, parties, and spelling lessons after all, Gisela realized.

Bettina smiled.

(24.1) The first meeting of the *Kaffeterkreis* took place on March 30, 1843 (Werner 177).

(24.2) The founding members of the *Kaffeterkreis* were Maxe, Gisela, and Armgart von Arnim and Carolina and Minne Bardua (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit?," 103-106). Ottilie von Graefe and Marie Lichtenstein rounded out the original group (Werner 177). Members who joined later included Valeska von Grabow, Pauline and Anna von Wolzogen, Nina, Marie, and Hedwig von Olfers, Louise Bardua, Amalia von Herder, and Fernanda von Pappenheim. Other possible women of the *Kafeterkreis* are unidentifiable because the *Kafffeterzeitung* only mentions their nicknames. Marie von Guatia from Frankfurt am Main, Johanna Matthieux from Bonn, and Mathilde Krummacher from Elberfeld joined via correspondence (Werner 178-179). The youngest original member of the group was Gisela von Arnim, at fifteen (Koehler 132). The oldest was Carolina Bardua, at sixty-one (Werner 177).

(24.3) According to Jarvis, the members of the *Kaffeterkreis* wore "pointed brown paper hats with pink veils to hide their blushes when words of praise overwhelmed them or if their forays into a public sphere rendered them meek" ("Trivial Pursuit?," 102).

(24.4) The original rules of the *Kaffeterkreis* dictated that members could only drink coffee and eat rolls and orange salad at the end of their meetings, so that worldly pleasures did not distract their intellectual pursuits. Soon, though, the rotating hosts began to serve hot chocolate, cakes, and tortes. As everyone began to eat and drink, Maxe would start the meeting by waving her scepter of white wood, wound with pink ribbon and decorated with flowers (Werner 181).

The three sisters worked together to plan the first meeting of their literary society. Finally, the big day came (1). The room was filled with women and girls, old and young, who all liked to write (2). The members of the *Kaffeterkreis*, as they called their new group, wore pointy brown hats with pink veils (3). As they drank coffee and ate oranges and rolls, Maxe waved a white wand, decorated with pink ribbons and flowers, and called the meeting to order (4). "I am Präsident Maiblümchen," she proclaimed, "and these are my sisters Lord Armgart and Herr Giseloff" (5).

Maxe explained how each member would receive a nickname and submit a story, a drawing, or a song each week, to share with the whole group. The others could shake rattles if they didn't like it or blow on little trumpets to applaud (6). Then, they would gather the contributions together in the Kaffeterzeitung, their own newspaper (7).

· 24 ·

(24.5) All of the members of the *Kaffeterkreis* originally had to be unmarried women, but they took male pseudonyms (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit?," 103). As their leader, the group named Maxe "Präsident Maiblümchen" (President Mayflower). For her imperious nature, they called Armgart "Lord Armgart." Gisela was at first known as "Herr Giseloff" (Mr. Giseloff) and then after she wrote the story "Aus den Papieren eines Spatzen" ("From the Papers of a Sparrow") she became "Spaß von Spaßenheim" (Werner 177)

(24.6) For every meeting, each member of the *Kaffeterkreis* brought something creative to share (Dramaliewa 19). Women would read aloud a story they had written, show off an artwork they had painted or drawn, or play or sing a musical composition. The other members would criticize the piece by shaking a children's rattle or praise it by blowing on a trumpet (Werner 181).

(24.7) The meeting protocol was known as the *Kaffeterzeitung* (Kaffeter Newspaper) (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit?," 103). Although Johannes Werner analyzed some of this text in his biographies of Maxe and the Bardua sisters, most of the literature from the *Kaffeterkreis* was lost between World War I and II (106).

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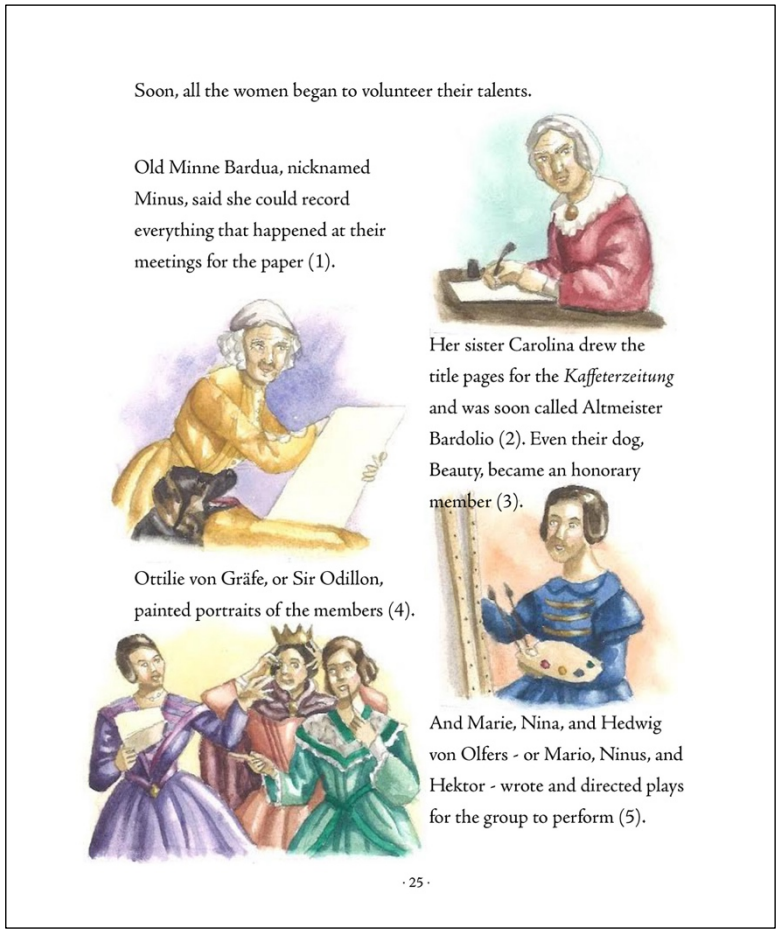
· 24 ·

(25.1) As one of the secretaries of the *Kaffeterkreis*, Minne Bardua (1789-1865) served as the editor of the *Kaffeterzeitung* (Dramaliewa 18). She recorded the minutes of the meetings and read them aloud at the beginning of the next one (Werner 181). Werner writes that Minne, nicknamed "Minus," was the "eigentliche Seele" or "true soul" of the group (176). Although she was much older than many other members, she had a youthful spirit and easily befriended the younger women and girls (177).

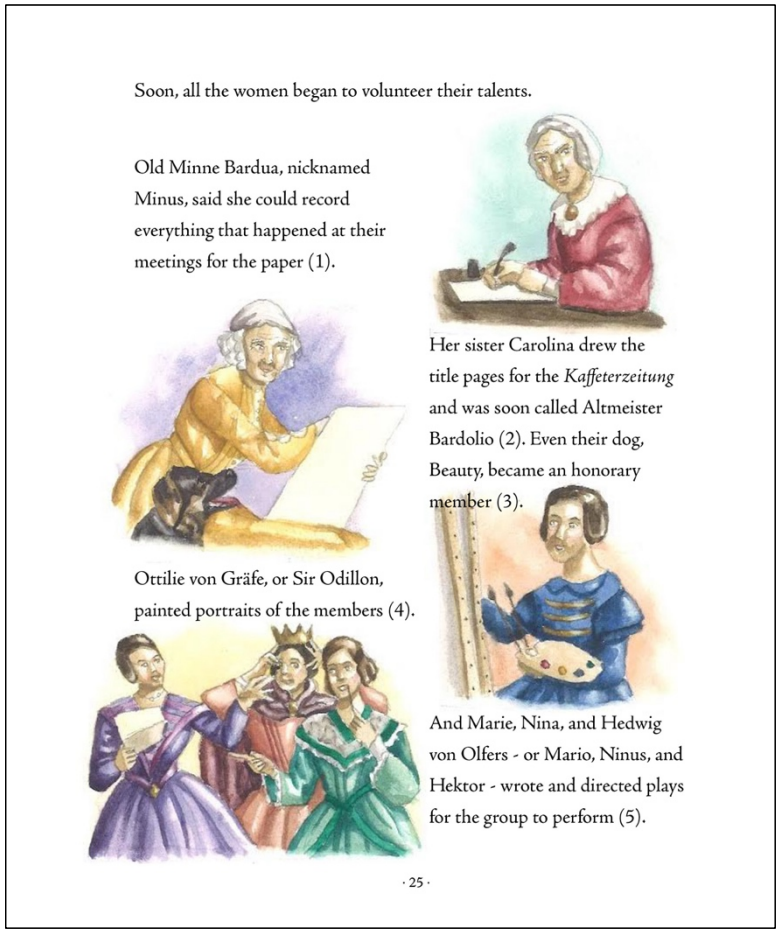
(25.2) As a co-secretary for the *Kaffeterkreis* and an artist, Carolina Bardua (1781-18640) drew a title page for each issue of the *Kaffeterzeitung* (Werner 177). She was the oldest member of the group and received the nickname "Altmeister Bardolio" or "Old Master Bardolio" (177).

(25.3) Beauty the dog attended all of the sessions of the *Kaffeterkreis*, even when lady-in-waiting Valeska von Grabow hosted the literary circle at the royal palace. Gisela once submitted a letter from his point of view to the *Kaffeterzeitung*, in which he humorously complained about his degraded position after a move to a new house (Werner 180).

(25.4) As a talented painter, Ottilie von Gräfe (1816-1898) drew portraits for the *Kaffeterkreis* members (Dramaliewa 18). Nicknamed "Sir Odillon," she also possessed a beautiful alto voice (Werner 177). Her likeness in this image is based on a title page produced for an 1847 issue of the *Kaffeterzeitung* by Carolina Bardua, when Ottilie had to relinquish her position in the literary circle upon her marriage to Hermann von Thile (Eshbach, "The Kaffeter").

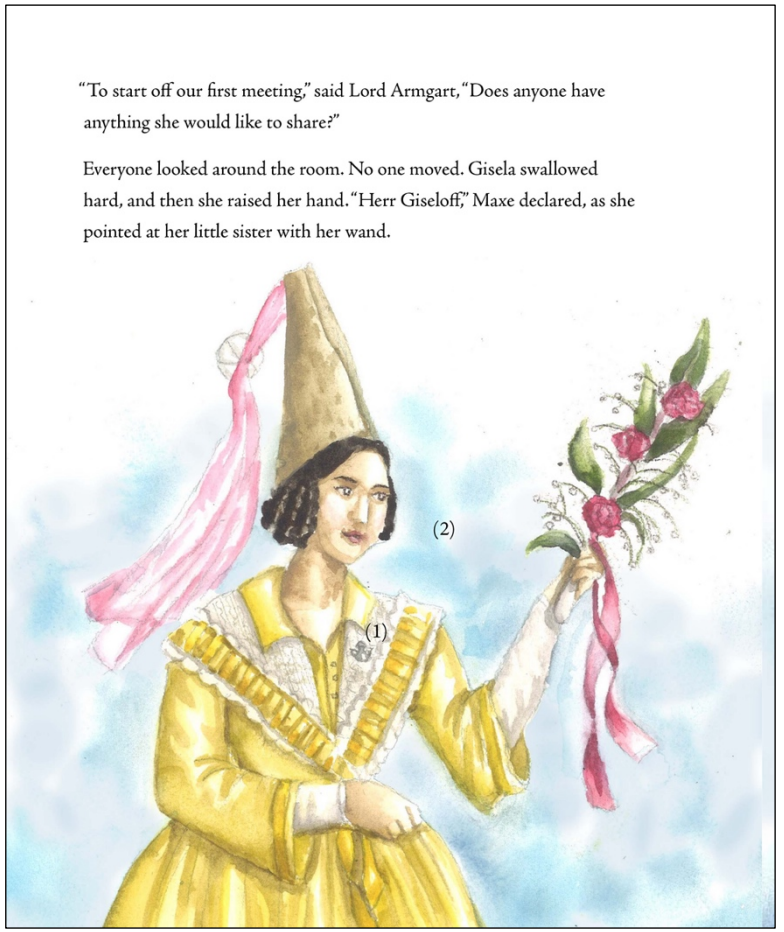


(25.5) The von Olfers home was a center for upper class culture in Berlin, and as close family friends, the von Olfers and von Arnim sisters came together almost every night to read and socialize (Dramaliewa 15-16; 19). The three von Olfers daughters, Nina ("Ninus") (1824-1901), Marie ("Mario") (1826-1924), and Hedwig ("Hektor") (1829-1919) were also active participants in the *Kaffeterkreis* (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit," 103). Their mother, also named Hedwig von Olfers (1799-1891) was an author and salon host in Berlin, who wrote fairy tales herself and often helped the *Kaffeterkreis* rehearse plays (Dramaliewa 19). In 1853, Hedwig and Marie wrote a fairy tale play called *Ohne Herz*, in which Gisela played a character named Fürstin Salamandra. When Gisela forgot to make her costume, Bettina constructed one out of their fire-colored curtains (Dramaliewa 41-42). Gisela was draped in a purple cloak and donned a gold foil crown, as one of the von Olfers sisters wears in this image (Mey 34).

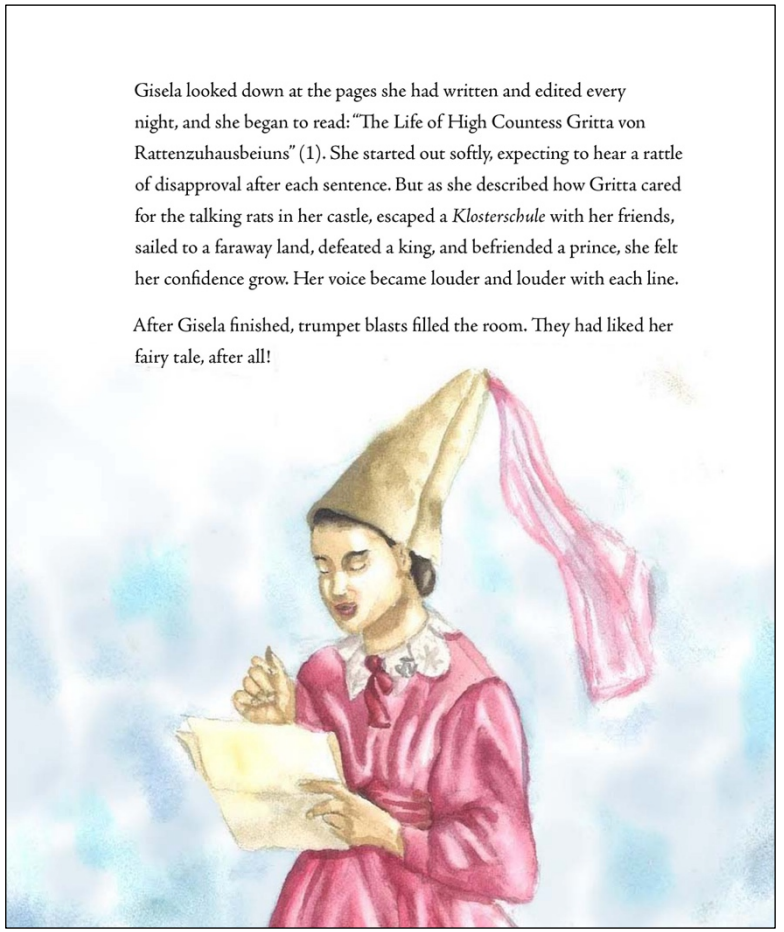


(26.1) The *Kaffeterkreis* named its founding members the "Order of the Golden Coffeepot," and secondary members were in the "Order of the Silver Coffeepot" (Werner 181). I have represented this distinction with coffeepot-shaped pins on Maxe's and Gisela's collars.

(26.2) The image of Maxe as Präsident Maiblümchen is based on a drawing by Ottilie von Gräfe, published in Werner's text (n.p.).



(27.1) As Gisela wrote *Gritta* during the *Kaffeterkreis* era, Blackwell asserts that she could have read selections from the text out loud at meetings ("Laying the Rod to Rest," 25).



Gisela looked down at the pages she had written and edited every night, and she began to read: "The Life of High Countess Gritta von Rattenzuhausbeiuns" (1). She started out softly, expecting to hear a rattle of disapproval after each sentence. But as she described how Gritta cared for the talking rats in her castle, escaped a *Klosterschule* with her friends, sailed to a faraway land, defeated a king, and befriended a prince, she felt her confidence grow. Her voice became louder and louder with each line.

After Gisela finished, trumpet blasts filled the room. They had liked her fairy tale, after all!

(28.1) Koehler argues that the *Kaffeterkreis* shaped Gisela's "development as a writer," as she received encouragement and constructive criticism in a collective female environment (115).

(28.2) Jarvis notes that the illustrations for *Gritta* were drawn by both Gisela and Herman. Herman also probably helped with editing the text ("Nachwort," 225). Some of the drawings appeared in Gisela's and Herman's shared diary from the years 1846-1847, and scholars do not know if they were created before, during, or after Gisela wrote the *Gritta* story (226). Jarvis points out, though, that the illustrations show characteristic styles of different artists, such as Gisela's broad strokes and Herman's measured lines (227).

(28.3) Herman actually became the first male member of the *Kaffeterkreis*. Gisela wanted to include him as her close friend, but members like Minne Bardua argued against her. When author Cristoph Ernst von Houwald attended multiple *Kaffeterkreis* sessions and the group designated other male fairy-tale writers as honorary members, opposition to men's participation weakened. Upon his admittance to the literary circle, Herman became one of the most eager members of the group, contributing high-spirited stories and pen-and-ink drawings to the *Kaffeterzeitung*. Additional male members included Emanuel Geibel and Gebhard von Alvensleben (Werner 179). Authors Edward Mörike and Hans Christian Andersen gained an honorary position in the group, as well, yet the literary circle remained led by women (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit?," 102-103).

The other women showered Gisela with praise, but they also offered suggestions on how she could make her book better. So Gisela wrote some more, and with every word, she improved (1). She even drew pictures to go along with her story, and Herman, who loved art (2), helped (3).

The other members of the *Kaffeterkreis* wrote, drew, and composed, too. Soon, the fame of the group grew. Princesses and duchesses, government ministers and ladies-in-waiting, and even princes began to visit the weekly meetings, to see what these women and girls had to write about, and they were impressed with what they found (4). Each guest had to pay 4 *Groschen* to attend, and Gisela collected the coins at the door (5).

Word of the *Kaffterkreis'* success spread so far that even the *Kronprinz* wanted to know what all the fuss was about. So one day, he decided to visit the literary circle himself.

(6)

· 28 ·

(28.4) Visitors to the *Kaffeterkreis* began as only parents and friends but soon included members of the court, military, and academic circles (Wilhelmy 183). Princes and princesses, government ministers, ladies in waiting, duchesses, intellectuals, lieutenants, artists, and members of the clergy all attended meetings (Werner 182). The group even hosted a party for King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia in 1845 at the von Savigny's house, which included a highly praised theatrical performance (Wilhelmy 183).

(28.5) The visitor fee for the *Kaffeterkreis* began as 1.5 *Silbergroschen* and rose to 4 *Gute Groschen* when the literary circle's popularity increased (Werner 181).

(28.6) This house is based on Armgart's sketch of the von Arnim home at *In den Zelten 5* in Berlin, where the family lived from 1847-1859 (Eshbach,"Joseph Joachims Briefe…").

The other women showered Gisela with praise, but they also offered suggestions on how she could make her book better. So Gisela wrote some more, and with every word, she improved (1). She even drew pictures to go along with her story, and Herman, who loved art (2), helped (3).

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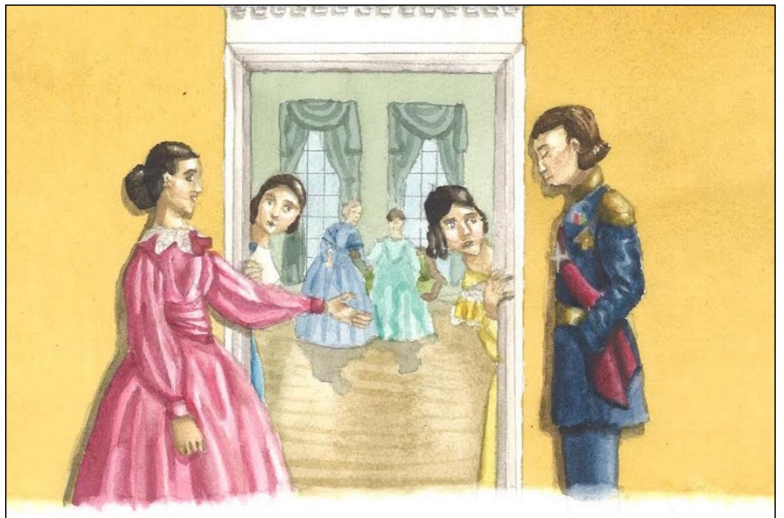
· 28 ·

(29.1) Out of embarrassment, members never charged princes the entry fee for the *Kafffeterkreis*. They did make all other guests pay, though, including Friedrich Karl von Savigny when they hosted the literary circle in his own home (Werner 181).



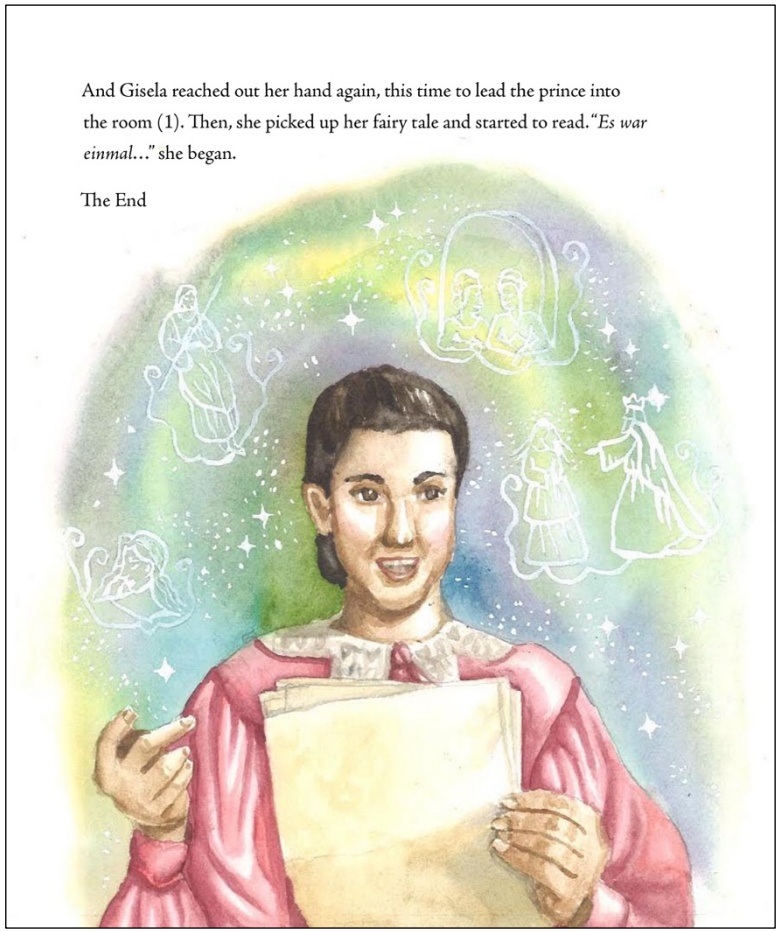
Gisela was surprised to see the prince arrive. "4 *Groschen*, Your Highness" she demanded, reaching out her hand for the money.

"Gisela!" cried Argmart and Maxe, shocked that she would speak to royalty that way (1).

The *Kronprinz* looked down at his feet. "I'm sorry, but princes never carry any money," he mumbled. "But I have heard of your story about the little countess who saves a kingdom, and I know just as little about the ways of the world as the prince in that tale. I should not have laughed at you at the ball. Now, perhaps you could teach me how to write something besides proclamations, laws, and rules."

· 29 ·

(30.1) The Prussian crown prince did become an honorary member of the *Kaffeterkreis* (Jarvis, "Trivial Pursuit," 102-103).



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