

*Romantic nationalism or romantic retreat?
Re-evaluating the politics of Arnim and
Brentano's Des Knaben Wunderhorn
(1805/1808)*

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ROMANTIC NATIONALISM OR ROMANTIC RETREAT?
 RE-EVALUATING THE POLITICS OF ARNIM AND BRENTANO'S *DES
 KNABEN WUNDERHORN* (1805/1808)

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ABSTRACT

This article argues for a new approach to war and politics in Arnim and Brentano's Romantic poetry anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. It departs from previous *Wunderhorn* scholarship by considering the collection's three volumes individually, and paying attention to the different political circumstances of the two phases of its creation, 1805 and 1808. I show that there is a change of emphasis in the collection between volume I (1805) and volumes II and III (1808), identifying a shift away from political engagement and a withdrawal of the nationalist sentiments that are still, however, often associated with the collection as a whole. Instead, I argue that the later volumes of the collection turn inwards and come to reflect a more spiritual and escapist aspect of Romanticism, with a focus on the figure of the artist rather than any political goal. By exploring the change in emphasis between 1805 and 1808, my reading presents the *Wunderhorn* as a text torn internally between a tangible engagement with everyday politics on the one hand, and a tendency towards transcendence on the other. In this way, the collection represents two opposing impulses of German Romanticism around 1800.

Dieser Artikel erprobt eine neue Herangehensweise an das Thema Krieg und Politik in Arnims und Brentanos romantischer Liedersammlung *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Im Unterschied zu anderen *Wunderhorn*-Studien betrachte ich die drei Bände der Sammlung als eigenständige Werke und berücksichtige verstärkt die unterschiedlichen politischen Umstände ihrer Entstehungsphasen 1805 und 1808. Meine These ist, dass innerhalb der Sammlung zwischen Band I (1805) und den Bänden II und III (1808) eine Schwerpunktverlagerung stattfindet. Statt der gängigen Lesart, die politisches Engagement und nationalistischen Überschwang mit der ganzen Sammlung verbindet, konstatiere ich eine wachsende Abkehr vom politischen Denken und ein Erkalten der nationalistischen Gefühle nach 1807. Ich schlage vor, die späteren Bände der Sammlung als Beschäftigung mit anderen Aspekten der Romantik, ihrer Hinwendung zu Innerlichkeit und Geistigkeit zu lesen. Der Schwerpunkt vieler Gedichte liegt daher mehr auf der Figur des Künstlers als auf einem politischen Ziel. Meine Untersuchung dieser Verschiebung zwischen 1805 und 1808 zeigt, dass das *Wunderhorn* ein Text ist, der zwischen der konkreten Auseinandersetzung mit der Alltagspolitik und einem transzendentalen Streben hin- und hergerissen ist. Auf diese Weise vereint die Sammlung zwei gegensätzliche Impulse der deutschen Romantik um 1800.

INTRODUCTION

We often read that Achim von Arnim (1781–1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) made their Romantic poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

in order to unite the disparate people and cultures of the German-speaking lands, and to strengthen their defence against the French revolutionary threat. Hoffmann von Fallersleben's 1855 essay 'Zur Geschichte des *Wunderhorns*' described the collection as a work produced at the time of Germany's 'tiefsten politischen Erniedrigung', intended to strengthen the 'Fatherland' (das Vaterland aufzurichten).¹ Birlinger's introduction to his 1874 edition of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*² repeats this narrative: 'man sah das Elend ein, und klagte, jammerte. [...] nur eine Poesie des Patriotismus konnte zweckdienlich sein', but does this statement accurately reflect the collection as a whole?

This view of the *Wunderhorn* as a patriotic and nationalistic collection is still dominant, and often restated, despite queries raised by the eminent *Wunderhorn*-scholar Heinz Rölleke.³ My own reading of the collection identifies a significant shift in emphasis between the highly nationalistic first volume (1805) and the later volumes (1808), which reject this earlier form of militant nationalism. I suggest that the later volumes of the collection slip away from a 'Poesie des Patriotismus' and increasingly towards what we might call a 'progressive Universalpoesie' (to use the famous definition of Romantic poetry in Friedrich Schlegel's oft-cited *Athenäumsfragment* 116).⁴ By focusing on the differences between volumes I, II, and III, therefore, this article adds a new perspective to existing scholarship on the *Wunderhorn*, which usually considers only the first volume and overlooks the second and third. In this regard, my approach builds on work by Ulfert Ricklefs, whose 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*'⁵ is the only existing study that considers the political orientation of each volume individually.

Arnim and Brentano masked their often heavy-handed role in the creation of these texts by presenting them as having been collectively authored by the anonymous German 'folk'. The first volume bears the subheading 'alte deutsche Lieder' and many of the texts are presented as if they were collected from oral tradition, with the source description 'mündlich'. The extent to which Arnim and Brentano re-worked or sometimes created the poems of the *Wunderhorn* can be traced almost

¹ Hoffmann von Fallersleben, 'Zur Geschichte des Wunderhorns', *Weimarisches Jahrbuch für deutsche Sprache, Literatur und Kunst*, 2/1 (1855), 261–82 (261).

² Anton Birlinger, 'Vorrede,' in Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: alte deutsche Lieder*, ed. Anton Birlinger and Adam Adolph Christian Wilhelm Crecelius, Wiesbaden and Leipzig 1874–6, unpaginated.

³ 'Vorwürfe gegen durchgängigen Militarismus des Wunderhorn gehen an den wirklichen Intentionen (zumindest Brentanos) eklatant vorbei und bedürfen umfassender Revision'; Heinz Rölleke, 'Anmerkungen zu *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*', in *Beiträge des Kolloquiums im Freien Deutschen Hochstift* 1978, ed. Detlev Lüders, Tübingen 1980, pp. 276–94 (p. 284).

⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler *et al.*, 36 vols, Munich, Paderborn, Vienna, and Zurich 1959, II, p. 181.

⁵ See Ulfert Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*', in *200 Jahre Heidelberger Romantik*, ed. Friedrich Strack, Heidelberg 2008, pp. 119–59 (p. 120).

step by step in Rölleke's immense critical edition, published 1975–8 as part of the *Frankfurter Brentano-Ausgabe*.⁶ Bent Gebert and Ulfert Ricklefs have perceptively drawn attention to the 'kommentierende Begleitstimme'⁷ which gradually becomes audible in the collection, more so in volumes II and III, through paratextual elements such as song titles and juxtapositions, as well as editorial changes by Brentano and Arnim. Revealed by Rölleke's critical edition, Arnim and Brentano's editorial changes teach us to read the *Wunderhorn* as a constitutive whole. By following the 'invisible signals', it is possible to detect an overall narrative throughout the collection and to trace how this narrative responds to the topic of war in different ways as the years progress. While at first the narrative voice seems to uphold and celebrate the militant-patriotic discourse and call on the reader to support the need for war against the French, the later volumes retract this viewpoint and take on the more transcendental aspect of Romanticism. They imagine and depict a more spiritual, imaginative quest, rather than advocating for any political or military reality, as my reading will show in what follows.

THE *WUNDERHORN* AS AN ACT OF WAR AGAINST FRANCE: 1805

Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim met in 1801 in Göttingen where they were both enrolled to study philosophy. They travelled the Rhine together from Mainz to Coblenz, via Rüdesheim and Bingen, in June 1802, a journey that deepened their interest in folksong. Though the two friends saw very little of each other in the years 1802–5, they corresponded closely throughout this time, sharing their personal and literary ambitions as well as reflecting on the rapidly changing political situation in these years.⁸ A reading of their correspondence during this period shows that the two shared a patriotic outlook and that both saw the *Wunderhorn* as a nationalist project in defiance of the growing French occupation.

Since the unsuccessful Second Coalition against Napoleon in 1799 and the Peace of Lunéville in 1801, France had gained control of most of the left bank of the Rhineland. The allocation of new ecclesiastical and secular states to those who had lost territory to France between 1801 and 1803 had shaken up the political allegiances of the South of Germany and changed the shape of the Holy Roman Empire. Once Napoleon had declared

⁶ Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: alte deutsche Lieder*, ed. Heinz Rölleke, in Clemens Brentano, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 4 vols (VI–IX), Stuttgart 1975–8, VII, p. 199. From now on this source will be referred to by the abbreviation FBA (Frankfurter Brentano Ausgabe), followed by volume number.

⁷ See Arnim and Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: alte deutsche Lieder* (note 6); and Bent Gebert, "Ach Gott, wir han verschlafen!" Überlegungen zur Tagelied-Rezeption in Achim von Arnims und Clemens Brentanos "Des Knaben Wunderhorn", *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 57/3 (2007), 303–18 (311).

⁸ Their letters are accessible in a modern critical edition: *Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano: Freundschaftsbriefe*, ed. Hartwig Schultz, 2 vols, Frankfurt a. M. 1998; henceforward FB.

himself Emperor of France in 1804, the Third Coalition (made up of Russian and Austrian troops) was launched against France in Autumn 1805. This coalition was also unsuccessful, however, and soon after Napoleon forced the southern states of Germany to form the 'Rheinbund' in July 1806. This formalised a state of allegiance between the southern German States and France, leaving the North of Germany isolated and vulnerable.

Arnim's correspondence with Brentano from 1803 to 1805 shows their shared awareness of a need for an aesthetic project that would further the development of a specifically German national identity and drum up patriotic resistance against the French onslaught. Early ideas were the foundation of a school for folksingers in 1802 and, in April 1803, the opening of a people's printing press ('Volksbücherdruckerey').⁹ Similarly, Arnim's essay 'Von Volksliedern', composed in 1803, shows that he was already conceiving of his writing as a form of political action and thinking about folksongs as a tool for this purpose. In the summer of 1805, Brentano first suggested that a song collection might be the most effective way to unite people behind a common German project. He imagined 'ein wohlfeiles Volksliederbuch [...] nur ein hundert Lieder, die den gewöhnlichen Bedingungen des jezzigen Volksliedes entsprechen[...]'.¹⁰ One key requirement for their song collection, then, was to unite the German people against both military and cultural French influences and to remind them of their military power in the past. In a letter to Arnim from the summer of 1805, Brentano's tone suggests a patriotic excitement about the palpable effects that their collection could have in the world of politics:

dein teutscher Sinn könnte nicht göttlicher mächtiger wirken, als in der Erfindung eines geheimen Plans in deinem Vaterland eine mächtige Nation zu bilden, die leben, siegen, und sterben könnte.¹¹

He ends his letter with a final assurance of his commitment to the *Wunderhorn* project, and closes with the statement: 'Das heiße [*sic*], *Frankreich den Krieg erklärt*'.¹² Though elsewhere Brentano insisted, in keeping with a Romantic understanding of poetry, that the collection should 'float' between the Romantic and the everyday,¹³ he was on board with the idea that the collection should also have an urgent political function. His sense of urgency can only have been compounded by seeing increasingly large numbers of French troops marching through Heidelberg in September 1805.¹⁴ Three months later, Arnim tells Brentano that Gotha,

⁹ See FB, I, pp. 22 and 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 263.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 292.

¹² *Ibid.*, I, p. 293.

¹³ '[...] zwischen dem romantischen und alltäglichem schweben'; *ibid.*, I, p. 263 (15 February 1805).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 299.

too, was full of soldiers.¹⁵ Both poets felt the time had come to take action of their own, and saw the *Wunderhorn* as a nationalistic move against France.

In addition to their use of militant-patriotic language in the letters, their selection of material for the first volume of the *Wunderhorn* also suggests that both Arnim and Brentano were fully supportive of the patriotic discourse in 1805. Three poems in this volume were based on market flyers produced during the period of the Seven Years' War, and seem to co-opt the emotions that were roused during that conflict for the current struggle. The poems 'Husarenglaube' (I, 43), 'Husarenbraut' (I, 188), and 'Die Prager Schlacht' (I, 237), are printed with the source description 'Fliegendes Blat aus dem letzten Kriege mit Frankreich' or 'Fliegendes Blat aus dem siebenjährigen Kriege'. These poems carry all the typical motifs of the militant-patriotic discourse: war is glorified and justified, and the enemies are dehumanised. 'Husarenglaube' (I, 43), for example, delights in its depiction of the Prussian army at work: 'Es ist nichts lustger auf der Welt, / Und auch nichts so geschwind, / Als wir Husaren in dem Feld, / Wenn wir beym Schlachten sind'.¹⁶ This aggressively gory tone is coupled with intense anti-French sentiment later in the poem: 'Wenn ihr das Fransche nicht versteht, / So macht es euch bequem, / Das Reden ihm sofort vergeht, / Wie ihr den Kopf abmäht'. The final word 'abmäht' comes as something of a shock in this verse, which creates a cruel comic effect. The reduction of the Frenchman to a mere body, of which the head is easily removed, also dehumanises the opponent in the typical manner of militant-patriotic war poetry. By resurrecting the voices of former Prussian soldiers to speak for a new national cause, these *Wunderhorn* texts cement an image of Prussia's past as one of glorious military victories and brave fighting men, suggesting Prussia will also triumph in future.

The same effect is created by using texts dating much further back in history, documenting German victories against armies of non-Germanic peoples. For example, 'Schlacht bei Murten' (I, 58) remembers a battle which took place between Swiss allied troops against a French king in 1476, as part of the Burgundian Wars, and 'Kriegslied gegen Karl V' (I, 97) rails against the invasion by a Spanish king in German lands ('Ohn Noth in Teutschen Landen') in 1546. 'Schlachtlied' (I, 254), a poem by Georg Rudolph Weckherlin (1584–1683), makes use of generic militant-patriotic motifs, appealing to the reader's sense of 'Germanness' in the fight against a nameless and cowardly foe.¹⁷ Goethe's review of this particular poem shows the resonance that it had with the German situation of 1806; he describes it as 'in künftigen Zeiten zu singen'.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 315.

¹⁶ FBA, VI, p. 40, ll. 1–4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 239, ll. 1–4 and 17–20.

¹⁸ See Heinz Rölleke, 'Lesarten und Erläuterungen zu *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*', FBA, IX/I, p. 440.

Indeed, contemporary reviews of the *Wunderhorn* can further explain what Brentano meant when he mentioned the ‘Bedingungen des jezzigen Volksliedes’. ‘Schlachtlied’ was one of the three songs printed by Karl August Varnhagen in his review of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in *Nordische Miscellen*.¹⁹ Another of these three, the short text entitled ‘Zauberformel zum Festmachen der Soldaten’ (I, 162a), also sprang from the war context.²⁰ Clearly, these war texts stood out to readers as particularly timely. In a letter to Arnim on 1 January 1806, Brentano suggested that Varnhagen had selected these texts in his review because they reflected the ‘allgemeine Bedürfnisse der Zeit’.²¹ It is clear that Arnim and Brentano chose these war poems deliberately, to bolster the image of Germans as a nation with a history of military power and to revive the militant-patriotic discourse from previous conflicts for the current situation.

THE REJECTION OF CATASTROPHIC WAR IN THE AFTERMATH OF 1807

If Arnim and Brentano had supported the widespread militant-patriotic fervour in 1805, by 1807 this was no longer the case, and the second and third volumes of the *Wunderhorn* published in 1808 reflect this change. In the intervening years, both editors changed their tune on the topic of war. Of course, this can partly be attributed to the fact that in 1808 Germany was under French occupation and so overt literary resistance was impossible. More significant than this, however, are the personal circumstances of both writers in this time, which, I suggest, affected their political stances and caused them to retract their previously aggressive tone.

Brentano seems to have accepted the inevitable victory of Napoleon fairly early on in the campaign of the Third Coalition. As a citizen of the ‘Rheinbund’, he was now legally obliged to fight for Napoleon if he joined the military, and so he and Arnim would have become political enemies.²² During the winter ceasefire in January 1806, he discouraged Arnim from enlisting in the military service, claiming that ‘es ist etwas entsezliches, in einer Zeit, wo nur die Idee siegt, mit den Waffen in der Hand zu sterben’.²³ Brentano’s assurance that all political states are acting only in their own self-interest belies a lack of faith in the justness of any specifically ‘German’ cause, and he asks Arnim to join him in creating an ‘unsichtbares

¹⁹ See *Nordische Miscellen*, 4/XXXXVI (1805), 321–3.

²⁰ The supernatural protective properties of a piece of paper with such wording are recorded by Grimmshausen, and also by Birlinger in his *Sagen, Legenden, Volksaberglauben*; see Rölleke, ‘Lesarten und Erläuterungen zu *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*’, FBA, IX/I, pp. 314–15.

²¹ FB, I, p. 329.

²² See Friedrich Strack, ‘Arnim, Brentano und das Wunderhorn’, in *Heidelberg im poetischen Augenblick: Die Stadt in Dichtung und bildender Kunst*, ed. Klaus Manger and Gerhard vom Hofe, Heidelberg 1987, p. 134.

²³ FB, I, p. 326.

Vaterland' in the realm of literature.²⁴ Despite his friend's discouragement, when Prussia finally declared war on France in 1806, Arnim felt so involved in his nation's fate that he travelled to Königsberg that winter to support Prussia's last efforts against Napoleon. He stayed there until October 1807. Lothar Ehrlich and Bettina Zschieidrich have argued that Arnim's time in Königsberg left him with a changed attitude to war,²⁵ and nowhere is this expressed more openly than in his own words to Brentano from 17 June 1807, which are worth quoting at length:

Ich wollte oft einen Commentar dieser unbegreiflichen Zeit schreiben, ich habe viel, sehr viel gesehen und frey gesehen, weil mein Gemüth heftig bewegt, genug Gleichgewicht gewonnen, vieles zu durchschauen, was ich mit Ekel sonst von mir gestossen, die künftige Zeit wird mir dazu Ruhe geben, denn es wird mir allmählig die beruhigende Ueberzeugung, daß an dem meisten nichts, gar nichts verloren, was wir untergehen sehen, für mich lernt sich immer etwas, das Verstehen, besonders, was ich nicht glaube, daß ich verstehe, *wie auch so nichts daraus werden konnte, denn das hoffte ich doch noch als ich die Abhandlung bey unsern Volksliedern schrieb.* Ich habe hier eine Masse von hohen Verhältnissen näher kennen lernen, ich habe Ekel als wenn ich eine Kröte heruntergeschluckt und doch habe ich viel Liebenswürdigen gesehen. Unsre Eylauer Schreckenszeit ist eine wunderbare Episode.²⁶ (My emphasis.)

This passage demonstrates how deeply Arnim's convictions on the war were shaken by his experiences in Königsberg. The stumbling, inarticulate nature of the middle section of the passage makes translation difficult, and perhaps shows Arnim struggling to put his insights into words, though he could also be avoiding censorship here. Yet he does not abandon poetic language, nor did he give up political action in the wake of the events he had witnessed (as Ehrlich suggests).²⁷ However, he seems to have felt unsure exactly *how* to act. The italicised words in the above passage show that Arnim now doubted the effects that poetry could have in national politics, revealing a fundamental uncertainty about how he as a poet had contributed to the political events thus far. He seems to be acknowledging here that the *Wunderhorn* had failed as a national project: 'wie auch so nichts daraus werden konnte'.

While travelling back south with Reichardt in November 1807, Arnim visited Jena (the site of the disastrous Prussian defeat in 1806). A poem he wrote there recognises the need to take up arms and to carry the flag

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 326–7.

²⁵ Lothar Ehrlich, "Ich habe einen Ekel bekommen gegen das Kriegswesen": Arnims Alltag in Königsberg 1806/07, in *Die alltägliche Romantik: Gewöhnliches und Phantastisches, Lebenswelt und Kunst*, ed. Walter Pape, Berlin and Boston 2016, pp. 191–206 (pp. 196 and 199); Bettina Zschieidrich, 'Ein Kraköwer Konvolut Arnims, mit Exzerpten, Konzepten und Notizen 1806–1807,' in *Frische Jugend, reich an Hoffen': Der junge Arnim*, ed. Roswitha Burwick and Heinz Härtl, Tübingen 2000, pp. 165–80 (pp. 178–80, here p. 179).

²⁶ FB, I, p. 442 (17 June 1807).

²⁷ Ehrlich, 'Ich habe einen Ekel bekommen gegen das Kriegswesen' (note 25).

Table 1. Poems on the Theme of War in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, volumes II and III

II	III
17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32	38, 134, 233
65	
93, 95, 96, 100, 103, 107, 111, 112, *, *, 116, 119, 124, 127, 129, 137, 140, 142, 145, 149, 151	
197	
336, 339, *, 343, *, 344b	
383	
442	

for those who had died defending Prussian sovereignty: 'Für uns seid ihr gefallen / wie sollen wir euch danken?'²⁸ Yet, having acknowledged that the first *Wunderhorn* volume had failed to bring about the political victory he had envisioned, he now seems unsure of the answer to his own question, and this uncertainty is expressed, I suggest, by Arnim's approach to war in volumes II and III.

Now back in Heidelberg in 1808, it was Arnim, not Brentano (now in Kassel), who decided the order of the songs in *Wunderhorn* II and III, and so this element of the accompanying narrative voice can be attributed to him. Arnim brings the poems into relation with each other by placing them in a particular order, often allowing certain thematic blocks to emerge.²⁹ Table 1 shows all of the texts in the collection that I regard as war poems. Those in bold type are the songs which Arnim also identified as *Kriegslieder* in his table of contents to the *Wunderhorn*. (This was added at the last minute and was not comprehensive, however.)

Looking at the table, it is obvious that war as a topic is of great interest in volume II, but barely features in volume III. Secondly, it is clear from the page numbers³⁰ of war poems in volume II that these texts mostly appear in 'blocks', and I have arranged the table with the intention of making these blocks more visible. The first of these blocks appears early on in volume

²⁸ Achim von Arnim, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Roswitha Burwick *et al.*, 6 vols, Frankfurt a. M. 1989–94, V, p. 474, ll. 13–14.

²⁹ See Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung' (note 5), p. 119: 'In den Folgebänden ist die Anordnung reflektiert, thematisch, zeigt Blockbildung.'

³⁰ *Wunderhorn* poems are rarely numbered consecutively in the collection as their numbers instead follow the pagination of the original 1805 edition. In the blocks listed in the column for *Wunderhorn* II, for example, all songs appear one after the other in the collection, although their numberings do not appear consecutive, apart from where an intervening poem has been indicated by an asterisk (as between 112 and 116).

II (II, 17–32), then there is a ‘stand-alone’ poem (II, 65) before another (slightly less consistent) block begins a little later (II, 93–151).

Four more songs appear close to one another in the second half of the volume (II, 336, 339, 343, and 344b). Arnim explained his thought process behind the first of these blocks (II, 17–32) in a letter to Brentano, highlighting the fact that these poems all explore the tragic nature of war:

Freue Dich aber über die Ordnung, die ich gemacht habe, sie hat mir Kopfbrechen gemacht, das Vorspiel, wunderbar, dazwischen die Trügllichkeit der Literatur, menschliche Verbindungen zu Glück und Unglück, *das Kriegsunglück tritt hervor*, es endet sich in einen literarischen Krieg, Wettstreit von Prose und Poesie, Wasser und Wein, Adel und Pöbel, nackter Naturzustand des Schäferlebens bis zum Ueberdruß u.s.w. [...].³¹ (My emphasis.)

This first block on the topic of war, ‘das Kriegsunglück’, seems to reflect Arnim’s post-Königsberg attitude: war as disaster. Its texts explore the traumas of war from a critical and mournful perspective, primarily through the voices of women who – in accordance with eighteenth-century gender norms – were excluded from active and direct participation in the process of war.³² Whereas the militant-patriotic war poetry of *Wunderhorn* I had been exclusively focalised through male speakers, Arnim organised this section to explore the tragedy of war through poems including female figures, as well as traditionally feminine domestic settings alongside the (traditionally masculine) battlefield settings. The majority of the poems show women performing their traditional wartime activities: mourning and missing the male soldiers who have left them behind,³³ and inhabiting the domestic sphere that becomes the site of military billeting and all the threats that it poses (as shown in II, 22). Yet poems II, 28 and II, 29 depict women who crave more involvement in the process of war. I suggest that Arnim invokes these frustrated female characters to speak on the behalf of all those – both men and women – who felt powerless in the face of Napoleonic conquest in 1808. The *Wunderhorn*’s focus on the female experience of warfare in these songs can, therefore, be seen as a way of exploring ‘the complex and often contradictory responses of the German public to the unsettling of societal, political, and personal hierarchies, systems of power, and ways of being’³⁴ during this Revolutionary period.

³¹ FB, II, p. 503 (18 February 1808).

³² See Karen Hagemann, ‘A Valorous Volk Family: The Nation, the Military, and the Gender Order in Prussia in the Time of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars, 1806–15’, tr. Pamela Selwyn, in *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and the Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall, Oxford 2000, pp. 179–205.

³³ See Karen Hagemann, ‘Of “Manly Valor” and “German Honor”: Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussian Uprising Against Napoleon’, tr. Pamela Selwyn, *Central European History*, 30 (1997), 187–220 (203–4 and 213).

³⁴ Julie Koser, *Armed Ambiguity: Women Warriors in German Literature and Culture in the Age of Goethe*, Evanston, IL 2016, p. 4.

The motif of grief at lovers' parting is the most commonly recurring theme in the series. It structures 'Schwimm hin, schwimm her, du Ringlein' (II, 17), 'Der Überläufer' (II, 21), 'Das Lustlager' (II, 25), 'Die Marketenderin' (II, 28), 'Wär ich ein Knab geboren' (II, 29), and 'Abschied für immer' (II, 30). The poems 'Reiterlied' (II, 27) and 'Soldatenglück' (II, 24), in contrast, imagine trysts between soldiers and women (these being, besides a lucky escape, perhaps the only kind of luck that a soldier can hope for). Clearly, the use of gender opposition runs throughout the series, supporting Patricia Anne Simpson's claim that 'gendered identity is at the center, not the margin, of the culture of war'.³⁵ By including voices and settings belonging to the female Other, war is explored from its *otherside*, as a disaster rather than a reason for celebration. At the same time, the focus on women and the private sphere would also have resonated with male longings to return to the safety of the home, with women and family life posited in opposition to the traumatic experiences of warfare. The turn to women's experience can therefore be seen to work in two ways. On the one hand, it functions as a kind of retreat from the arena of warfare and politics, and on the other, its depictions of female characters who crave more political involvement and power would have resonated with men who felt themselves to be powerless.

'Der Churmainzer Kriegslied' (II, 20), described as a recent song 'aus dem Revolutionskriege', similarly ends on a war-weary tone. The speaker shows few signs of hope in the third and fourth stanzas, calling to God for help, yet predicting a bloody future:

Gerechter Gott! Sechs Jahr verflossen,
Haben wir Churmainzer viel Blut vergossen,
Und ist zu hoffen noch keine Ruh.³⁶

This sense of disaster and hopelessness is carried into the next poem, 'Der Ueberläufer' (II, 21), which tells the story of a lover's betrayal:

Wir haben gar öfters beysammen gegessen,
Wie ist mir mein Schatz so treu gewesen,
Das hat ich mir nicht gebildet ein,
Daß mein Schatz so falsch könnt seyn.³⁷

Though at first glance this seems to be a typical love song, the text's positioning in a series on the topic of war invites the reader to see it as a political allegory about the German states that submitted to Napoleonic rule, of which Baden was one of the first. In the third stanza, Napoleon is suggested by the figure of the 'Jäger mit dem grünen Huth' (l. 11)

³⁵ Patricia Anne Simpson, *The Erotics of War in German Romanticism*, Lewisburg, PA 2006, p. 20.

³⁶ FBA, VII, p. 21, ll. 13–15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, p. 22, ll. 5–8.

and the sounds of the trumpets in the fourth and final stanza suggest the Napoleonic battles still going on in other areas of Europe:

Hört ihr nicht den Trompeter blasen,
In der Stadt auf der Parade?
Der Trompeter mit dem Federbusch,
Der mir meinen Schatz verrathen thut.³⁸

The accompanying editorial voice here encourages this allegorical interpretation through the title, 'Der Überläufer'. The original poem about betrayal in love has thus been recoded as a political allegory critiquing those German states which collaborated with Napoleonic rule.

The emerging theme of love and loss in the poems above opens the way for a series dealing explicitly with lovers separated by war (II, 25, 27, 28, 29, and 31). In both 'Das Lustlager' (II, 25) and 'Abschied für immer' (II, 31), Arnim splices material from two different texts together, and the result is a stronger focus on the woman's perspective as well as more emphasis on the grief of parting. Friedrich Strack noted Arnim's tendency to give women the 'last word' in other poems too, inverting the traditional role divisions.³⁹ Although Strack saw this tendency to give more dialogue to female figures as emancipatory in some cases,⁴⁰ I think in these songs the focus is on the female perspective in order to accentuate the suffering they feel when left behind by men who go off to war, allowing women's emotions to represent the suffering of the nation as a whole.

The next two songs also speak through female figures. In 'Die Marketenderin' (II, 28) the speaker is presented as a suttler, selling food to soldiers at war, while in 'Wär ich ein Knab geboren' (II, 29) the speaker is left to stay at home and wishes she could join the battle. Goethe's Klärchen sings a song with a similar refrain towards the end of Act I in *Egmont* (1788), which was no doubt based on the same oral tradition. Klärchen and her song may well have partly inspired this section of the *Wunderhorn*, as both II, 28 and II, 29 play with the idea of the woman at war, in the first instance allowing her to take her place among the soldiers on the battlefield, and in the second frustrating that desire, leaving her in her domestic role.

In the next song, 'Einquartierung' (II, 22) (also edited by Brentano, though barely altered), the focus is on the members of a family whose home is about to be occupied by billeted soldiers. It is highly reminiscent of Anna Louisa Karsch's 'Schlesisches Bauerngespräch' for its rendering of a conversation between peasants, in dialect, about the effects of contemporary warfare on civilians. As the family try to discern the nationality of the soldiers, they identify them at various times as 'Husaren'

³⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, p. 22, ll. 13–16.

³⁹ See Strack, 'Arnim, Brentano und das Wunderhorn' (note 20), p. 132.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

(l. 5), ‘Tralpatschen’ (l. 11), and ‘Panduren’ (l. 20), suggesting that the source text was composed during the Seven Years’ War. The family members fear that they will be beaten, raped, and robbed, and so the title of the poem ‘Einquartierung’ appears as an ironic understatement, revealing the extremely threatening and destructive nature of the wartime practice of billeting for civilians.

All the above examples show how Arnim selected and shaped the material in a very deliberate way at the opening of volume II. Its representation of war is starkly different from the way war was approached in volume I: the ‘hidden signals’ now suggest a far more mournful, critical, and hopeless response to the wars with France.

THE *WUNDERHORN*’S RETREAT FROM WAR

While this early block of the *Wunderhorn* on the subject of war stresses the tragedy and hopelessness of war, the later sections seem to retreat from the world of politics altogether, moving into a more ironic and distant literary mode which reaches its epitome at the end of volume III. The poem which closes the first series of *Kriegslieder*, ‘Großer Kriegshymnus in der Gelehrtenrepublik’ (II, 32), appears as a turning point in the narrative, changing the mood from lamentation to comedy. Taken from a source printed in 1665, this poem is a satire about the role of the educated classes in times of war. It criticises the fact that educated people are never involved in the real fighting of wars, but remain in their ivory towers merely theorising about them and their legalities. The speaker plans, if he were leading an army, to make it up out of book lovers, writers, and lawyers, mockingly suggesting that they would be invincible in the face of death.⁴¹

This poem forms a threshold between the series on ‘Kriegsunglück’ and the series of poems which Arnim described as enacting a ‘[ein] literarische[r] Krieg, Wettstreit von Prose und Poesie, Wasser und Wein, Adel und Pöbel, nackter Naturzustand des Schäferlebens bis zum Ueberdruß u.s.w.’.⁴² The effect is a deliberate turning away from the distressing, usually under-represented realities of true warfare, especially as experienced by civilians, and a return to the world of literary fantasy in which war is reduced to a metaphorical motif. I suggest this change of direction signals that Arnim was changing his understanding about the role of poetry in times of war.

Ricklefs has pointed out that Arnim felt drawn to the healing power of literary fantasy in 1808 as a way of coping with his political disappointment. He cites a letter from Arnim to Bettine on 10 March 1808, saying: ‘Es vergeht hier [d. i. in Heidelberg] kein Tag ohne literarischen

⁴¹ FBA, VII, pp. 33–4.

⁴² FB, II, p. 503 (18 February 1808).

Scherz; welche Erquickung, während mein Herz vor Schmerzen um mein Vaterland zusammengedrückt ist.⁴³ In a letter to Brentano towards the end of his time in Königsberg in 1807, Arnim had expressed a wish for literary distraction from all memories of this painful period:

ich will lachen und nicht viel schreiben. [...] der politische Strudel hatte mich wohl ergriffen, weil er sich aber im Sande verlaufen, so bin ich auch wieder auf dem Trocknen und erquike mich an den getrockneten Früchten der Gelahrtheit [...].⁴⁴

Overwhelmed by the political mess and feeling powerless to help, Arnim presents himself in this letter as retreating from the political arena entirely and going back to a 'dry' world of literature and learning, though not without a hint of irony. In the light of these statements, it is tempting to read an autobiographical moment in 'Großer Kriegshymnus in der Gelehrtenrepublik'. The poem questions the value of writers and poets in times of war, just as Arnim appears to have done in July 1807, once his faith had been destroyed by Napoleon's victory. Closing the war section with an ironic turn towards the 'republic of letters' suggests a change in practice. While the first volume of the *Wunderhorn* was made with the hope of uniting and mobilising the German nation through poetry, this hope had now died, and the next two volumes took a turn for the esoteric, even for contemporary readers.

Arnim's next long block of war songs comes much later in the volume (II, 93–151). In this block, it seems the historical distance between the events described and the contemporary moment is large enough to prevent a strong emotional resonance. The details of most of the conflicts recorded in the songs would most likely have been unfamiliar to the majority of *Wunderhorn* readers. They are taken from the Thirty Years' War (II, 93, 95, and 96), the Schmalkaldic War (II, 111, 112, and 116), and the Burgundian Wars (II, 137), for example. Perhaps to aid the reader, the titles given to most of these songs are mostly straightforward, descriptive, and unironic, simply naming the battle that the poem depicts. The effect is that the accompanying editorial voice seems to have retreated from the material, no longer providing paratextual commentary, showing a lack of editorial engagement with the theme.⁴⁵

This historical section includes nineteen texts (sixty pages), making it the longest thematic block in the volume, and the fact that the accompanying editorial voice is so uncharacteristically absent, coupled with the obscurity of the historical settings of most of these songs, makes it almost impenetrable. In a letter of March 1808, Brentano praised Arnim's ordering of the material up to about II, 48, yet mentions one

⁴³ Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung' (note 5), p. 129.

⁴⁴ FB, II, p. 444 (5 July 1807).

⁴⁵ Cf. Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung' (note 5), p. 119.

area which he found to be rather long-winded: ‘Deine Ordnung, die in den ersten 3 Bogen reizend ist, wird wo die vielen langen alten Steifleinen zusammen kommen etwas schwermüthlich, mische, mische!’⁴⁶ Though Rölleke suggests that Arnim followed Brentano’s instructions,⁴⁷ I wonder if in fact it was this ‘historical’ section to which Brentano was referring. Could Arnim have left it like this deliberately, and if so, how does this over-saturation affect the message conveyed about war here? Though we might read the series as attempting to demonstrate Germany’s rich military history, as in *Wunderhorn* I, an alternative reading would be that this piling up of poems on the theme of war suggests Arnim’s (and the nation’s) saturation with the topic of violence and conquest. The accumulation of so many poems here certainly seems to detract from their emotional impact. There is an overwhelming sense of *déjà vu*, which could represent the bitterness felt by a nation under occupation from its ancient enemy. In any case, it is impossible to read this section with the same emotional involvement with which one encounters the first block on war. While the first block depicted dramatic stories of men and women whose lives were torn apart by armed conflict, in the second block, the ‘narrative voice’ of the collection seems to have disengaged emotionally, seeking more distance from the world of war.

A NEW ROMANTIC POLITICS: THE MISSION OF SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

If the collection retreats from an open engagement with the themes of war and politics, that is not to say that it becomes entirely apolitical. On the contrary, I read the closing text of volume III as calling for a new kind of politics, that of individual and spiritual survival within a religious – and still profoundly Romantic – framework.

Volume III ends with a series of twenty songs taken from the pietist songbook, *Anmuthiger Blumen-Krantz aus dem Garten der Gemeinde Gottes*, which was printed in 1712.⁴⁸ The original songbook contained 777 songs, and Arnim selected and cut material from these songs in order to create a closing song cycle for the *Wunderhorn* (III, 203–31), followed only by the poem ‘Hans Sachsens Tod’ (III, 233, the last part of which, from l. 101 onwards, is also Arnim’s own invention). These texts have been carefully chosen and edited, and their function as the ‘conclusion’ to the *Wunderhorn*

⁴⁶ FB, II, p. 517.

⁴⁷ Heinz Rölleke, ‘Die historischen Balladen in Achim von Arnims und Clemens Brentanos Liedersammlung “Des Knaben Wunderhorn”’, in *Ballade und Historismus: Die Geschichtsballade des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Winfried Woesler, Heidelberg 2000, pp. 246–62 (p. 252).

⁴⁸ *Anmuthiger Blumen-Krantz aus dem Garten der Gemeinde Gottes; in sich fassend allerhand göttliche Gnaden- und Liebes-Würkungen ausgedruckt in geistlichen lieblichen Liedern [...]*, Leipzig [?] 1712. The title of this collection is listed in the online British Library Main Catalogue, which provides links to two freely available digitised versions: the British Library’s own, under the identifier Digital Store 844.c.17, and that of Google Books.

is surely significant. They are introduced, first, by an excerpt from the 1712 collection which explains the original editor's reason for putting the book together (III, 203). The excerpt tells us that, like the *Wunderhorn*, the 1712 collection was created at a time of crisis and despair: ('da man in der ganzen Welt nichts als Klag, Angst und Gefahr vorsiehet').⁴⁹ Like Arnim and Brentano, the editors decided to change their material wherever they saw fit, in the belief that they were working to emulate God's word ('dem Vorbild des heilsamen Wortes'). The pietist texts are presented as offering spiritual healing, encouraging the reader to reject the outer world and instead turn inward. Politics and the machinations of worldly empires are no longer worthy of attention. Though the song cycle features many military images, drawn from the account of the war in heaven in the Book of Revelation (12:7–10), the battles depicted are of a purely metaphorical and spiritual nature, and the cycle completes the turn inward.

Ricklefs interprets the cycle as an allegory for the contemporary political situation, equating Satan with Napoleon, Babel with the French, and Zion with Prussia.⁵⁰ He describes the cycle as providing a necessary political counterpart to the otherwise transcendental aspects of the Romantic aesthetic in the *Wunderhorn*.⁵¹ Ricklefs identifies the spiritual nature of the battle depicted in this closing cycle, but on the whole his reading of this cycle stresses the political (though allegorical) message of anti-French resistance more strongly. My reading is different. The allegorical 'battle' which the poems explore seems to me not political, but rather of a purely spiritual, personal nature, to be won through various processes of inner and artistic experience; the poems' titles suggest: 'Erziehung durch Geschichte' (III, 207), 'Erziehung durch Natur' (III, 212), 'Erziehung durch Glück' (III, 213), 'Erziehung durch Leidenschaft' (III, 214), 'Erziehung durch Erkenntniss' (III, 215), etc. The cycle can be seen to depict the stages of a Romantic educational process, as also explored in the following fragments by Friedrich Schlegel, where the artist's sincere 'Bildung' is itself seen as a form of religion:

Auch ist das Verhältnis des wahren Künstlers und des wahren Menschen zu seinen Idealen durchaus Religion. Wem dieser innre Gottesdienst Ziel und Geschäft des ganzen Lebens ist, der ist Priester, und so kann und soll es jeder werden.⁵²

Rather than reading the song cycle as a political allegory of national struggle, I instead read the designation of 'chosen people' ('erwählte[s] Volk') described in II, 208 as pointing to the Romantics themselves, or to the figure of the Romantic artist. Numbers 9 and 10 in the cycle (III,

⁴⁹ FBA, VIII, p. 200.

⁵⁰ See Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung' (note 5), p. 143.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁵² *Athenäumsfragment* 406; Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (note 4), II, p. 241.

216 and 217), in particular, seem to explore the question of how the speaking figure (the Romantic artist?) should find meaning in the world. There is a tone of weariness and resignation, but also a suggestion that true contentment comes from other sources: 'Suchst du noch Ruh in äussern Dingen, / Ach glaube mir, du findst sie nicht.'⁵³ Song 9 considers the inward-looking life of the hermit as the only possible way to a full experience of the divine, suggesting that retreat from political life is the key to a fuller understanding: 'Drum fort o Seel! entzeuch geschwinde / Dich der Gesellschaft dieser Welt!' (p. 213, ll. 17–18). The idea of withdrawal into the inner world and a dedication to spiritual life is echoed in the title of Arnim's journal, *Zeitung für Einsiedler*,⁵⁴ which he also founded in 1808.

If we read this closing song cycle, like the *Zeitung für Einsiedler*, as turning away from political events and instead turning inwards to the artist's world of the imagination (and a community of like-minded Romantic readers rather than the nation as a whole), then salvation can be personal, and is not dependent on political outcomes. The closing poem in the cycle, depicting the wedding of Christ with his Church, offers a sense of joy and hope that the world of politics has not provided:

Hier ist die Stadt der Freuden,
 Jerusalem der Ort,
 Wo die Erlösten weiden,
 Hier ist die sichre Pfort.
 Hier sind die goldnen Gassen,
 Hier ist das Hochzeitsmahl;
 Hier soll sich niederlassen,
 Die Braut im Rosenthal.⁵⁵

The repetitions of 'hier' stress that a state of peace and salvation is available here and now, and that there is no need to seek alternative futures or ways of being in order to find peace in the world. Rather than working for political goals, as Arnim and Brentano intended when first creating *Wunderhorn* in 1805, this poem insists that the spiritual life is more important and more rewarding, and that this can be strengthened through 'Poesie'.

Building on this suggestion, the last poem in the whole collection, 'Hans Sachsens Tod' (III, 233), presents the poet as a kind of visionary prophet. The speaker of this poem, Adam Puschmann von Görlitz (1532–1600), recounts a vision in which he encounters the poet Hans Sachs as an old man and witnesses his death. Yet the final section of the poem, composed by Arnim, adds a new scene to the vision in which Sachs appears in the

⁵³ FBA, VIII, p. 214.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ricklefs, 'Kunstthematische und politische Rahmenbildung' (note 5), p. 149.

⁵⁵ FBA, VIII, p. 227, ll. 37–64.

form of a dove, offering a message of hope to the previously despairing poetic speaker. The dove points to the book Sachs had been reading in the first part of the vision (l. 57) and the speaker reveals that this is the book offering salvation: 'Dies Buch such auf du frommer Christ / Das dir den Frieden bringt.'⁵⁶ In the poem's closing lines, the speaker affirms that he has understood the message, and will continue to seek his way according to this revelation: 'Die Taube bleibet mein Gesell / Und trinkt des Buches ewgen Quell, / Gottes Wort in der Natur' (p. 234, ll. 158–60). The closing image of the *Wunderhorn* depicts the poet as a prophet and the salvation offered by literature and nature as the individual's true goal.

In this regard, the collection closes with the same tone we see at the opening of the *Zeitung für Einsiedler*, with its rejection of political and contemporary reality in favour of a peaceful, imaginary, *literary* setting, just as, in a letter to Zimmer from 1808, Brentano described the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* as being 'aus der Zeit des Mittelalters, oder vielmehr einer imaginären literarischen Zeit'.⁵⁷ The figure of the 'Einsiedler' can be seen as a symbol for the disengaged Romantic poet: turning away from immediate reality and from society, preferring the transcendent realms of memory and the imagination instead. Whereas the first *Wunderhorn* volume had sought to mobilise readers and engage them in the national conflict, both the *Zeitung für Einsiedler* and the later *Wunderhorn* volumes attempt to transcend the present political situation. In view of this shift in emphasis, the *Wunderhorn* should be recognised as a project which evolved over time, and which embraced opposing tendencies of the German Romantic movement. At first, it sought to rejuvenate national politics with fresh impulses from German 'folk' culture, and to reject French dominance, but later it also sought an escape from the political realm, preferring a retreat to an imaginative and spiritual space. The *Wunderhorn's* concluding message advocates a more individualistic (but no less important) politics of spiritual survival, in what Brentano and Arnim can only have perceived as the greatest crisis of their age.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 233, ll. 139–40.

⁵⁷ Heinrich W. B. Zimmer, *Johann Georg Zimmer und die Romantiker*, Frankfurt a. M. 1888, p. 178.