

Julie von Bechtolsheim, a Political Life: Women's Work and Governance in the Age of Revolution

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Abstract: This article understands how women and girls in the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach negotiated core issues in the Age of Revolutions: early industrialization and political representation. The baroness Julie von Bechtolsheim (1751–1847) leveraged war, widowhood, courtly connections, and poetry to pursue a public 'career' as First Principal of Eisenach's Women's Association (Frauenverein) from 1814 to 1831, establishing a material link between her private estate and the political estate. The Association itself was contrived as a polity in microcosm. Accusations of Bechtolsheim's 'despotic' governance prompted a majority bourgeois managerial staff to establish electoral conventions. Not all women had equal claim to citizenship, however. The Association's records reveal a Romantic theory of labour that reinforced a social order built on women's work, and its 'Industry School' sustained a supply of female labour into the state's predominant industry, linen manufacture, as into the servant's quarters of its affluent homes.

Keywords: authorship, charity, class, gender, Germany, industry, labour, poetry, romanticism, textiles

This mentality has earned me the name *arch-democrat* among very zealous aristocrats, since I never gave their most rabid opponents cause to call me anything worse than a *very moderate* aristocrat. I even thought that reproach from both parties would be the greatest evidence of my healthy, *unimpassioned* judgment on these matters. [...] My entire existence is lasting evidence thereof.¹

Julie von Bechtolsheim to Christoph Martin Wieland, June 1794

The Thuringian baroness Julie von Bechtolsheim (1751–1847, Fig. 1) practiced politics in plain sight, through poetry, charity, and the management of 'women's work' in textiles. She herself declared, to the poet Christoph Martin Wieland, that her 'entire existence' evidenced a certain political 'mentality', a healthy hybrid of Old Regime and Revolutionary values. The baroness had in mind her bourgeois origins: She considered it a point of pride that her father, as a member of the so-called *Dienstadel*, had earned nobility through state service.² 'Not birth and rank but service, talent, amiability, utility, merits of mind and heart and disinterested humanity', she listed: 'to me, these are equal to *estate*'.³ Born a countess, Juliane Augusta Christiana von Keller was married at her mother's bidding to her uncle, Baron von Bechtolsheim, Vice-Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. And although she could not, like the men in her family, serve the state in any official capacity, this article shows how Bechtolsheim leveraged war, widowhood, courtly connections, and publication to pursue her own civic designs: a 'career' she outlined in the time of the French Revolution and executed in the wake of the Napoleon's defeat.



1. Silhouette of Bechtolsheim, 1785, by Johann Wilhelm Wendt. Goethehaus Frankfurt. 22.0 × 14.6 cm. © Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurter Goethe-Museum [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions)]

Stirred by the image of the *poissarden* (or ‘fish-wives’) of Paris who marched on Versailles in 1789, but appalled by the Revolution’s turn to Terror in 1793–94, Bechtolsheim developed an alternative vision of women’s participation in public life: a ‘career [*Laufbahn*] whereby every woman, healthy in body and soul, shall be magnanimous’. *Laufbahn*, which might simply mean course or path, gained its professional connotation in the late eighteenth century as one’s *life-path* — an academic, artistic, or authorial career. Perhaps, Bechtolsheim added, ‘the worthiest’ of women who took up such a career might earn the *corona civica*, a Roman military decoration in the form of an oak-leaf crown.⁴

In the absence of a more formal treatise, Bechtolsheim’s political ‘mentality’ must indeed be read in her life and *Laufbahn*. That career culminated in her position at the helm of the Patriotic Women’s Association, or *Frauenverein*, that she founded in the Duchy of Eisenach in 1814. One of nearly 600 *Frauenvereine* established across Germany at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Eisenach’s branch evolved from a charitable organization that clothed the ‘Fatherland’s’ soldiers to a sprawling textile collective composed of six industry schools in four local chapters. With a primary focus on flax production, the

Frauenverein provided clothing, (unpaid) work, and education to orphaned and impoverished girls.⁵

Under the guise of charity, Bechtolsheim's capacity as First Principal from 1814 to 1831 allowed her to govern on a public stage. It would be wrong 'to imagine "government" as completely unavailable to early modern women', as Maria Ågren has written. In fact, managerial work was an everyday experience for most married women of the period, who served as 'co-rulers' of their households.⁶ Women could exercise authority outside the home, too, in hospitals and orphanages.⁷ Other privileged women used domestic spaces and salon culture to exercise considerable geopolitical power in diplomatic negotiations.⁸ Bechtolsheim's brand of governance cohered in an analogy between household and commonwealth, and in a crafty combination of Romantic poetry and textile production. If marriage was the only viable 'profession' for women writers, charity offered Bechtolsheim an avenue in which to extend the purview of her domestic governance, linking the interests of her private estate with those of the political state.⁹ Working under the statutory aegis of the Grand Duchy, Bechtolsheim considered herself an 'instrument' of the *Landesmutter*, the Grand Duchess; and she received an annual loan from the Grand Duke roughly equal to the annual surplus she produced as governor of Eisenach's *Frauenverein*.

This article blends biography of Bechtolsheim, now an all but unknown figure, with a social history of 'women's work' to open up historical spaces of politico-economic agency and expression. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich prompted historians to 'learn a new language [...] in women's material culture', leafing over stitchery as well as poetry, reading homespun militia flags and embroidered banners, for instance, as political thought in action — in effect, as 'speechmaking'.¹⁰ Fiscal records of the *Frauenverein*'s textile production, and the lyrical world Bechtolsheim spun around it in her verse, can be read in the same genre, as artefacts of a forgotten form of civic life. Textiles also place the project of gendered agency at the centre of a discourse on emergent capitalism in Germany around 1800, when 'domestic' spinning and weaving took on a new connotation in the sense of a national economy.¹¹

The architecture of Bechtolsheim's political economy is significant. Her private rooms served as the chambers of a governance that extended out from the household to the spinning school, with direct channels to the Duchy's reading public as to its halls of power in the court of Weimar. This article draws such sites into conversation with the taverns, festivals, and other everyday spaces where historians have studied the emergence of a 'popular politics' in the revolutionary age between 1789 and 1848.¹² 'With formal agencies of political participation denied to common people', James Brophy wrote of German Rhinelanders,

public space was not just a site but a medium for subjects to contest an imposed social order and thus articulate their citizenship claims. By literally 'making a place' for themselves, publics developed a repertoire of tactics that spatially, orally, and textually produced a discourse of partisan political activity.¹³

Voluntary women's associations were not run by 'common' women but by those who claimed, like the statesmen of their age, to speak for *das Volk* or *le peuple*. For this very reason, *Frauenvereine* exhibit the spatial, oral, textual, and, I would add, material tactics by which some educated women made their own political place, between public and private.¹⁴

Crucially, not all women had an equal claim to citizenship in Eisenach's *Frauenverein*. Its records are riven with anxieties about class and social order. Built by and, to a large degree, for the ruling classes, Women's Associations sustained a steady supply of female labour into the Grand Duchy's predominant industry, linen manufacture, and into the servant's quarters of its affluent homes.¹⁵ Its leaders espoused a Romantic theory of labour that conflated women's education with women's work and reinforced class hierarchies. Even so, Bechtolsheim's bookkeeping reveals much of the lives of the labouring girls over whom she claimed dominion, especially those selected to be trained along artisanal lines as 'skilled masters' in spinning.

At the same time, the *Frauenverein* navigated its place within the popular political discourse of the *Vormärz*, the period preceding 1848. The best evidence of Bechtolsheim's political existence comes from the accusations of 'despotism' levied against her by the *Frauenverein*'s managerial staff. In the ensuing debate, a bourgeois majority established electoral conventions within the Association, contriving a polity in microcosm. As its governor — 'despot' — Bechtolsheim therefore contended with the same issues of early industrialization and political representation that animated the Age of Revolution.¹⁶

1. 'To My German Countrywomen'

And should this ideal world remain but a dream
Let us still unite in loyal, loving alliance
Not huddled beneath a Liberty Tree
No! in the vast universe, in every sphere of activity
Where women-creators beget a golden dawn.¹⁷

So read a few extant verses from a poem addressed 'to my German countrywomen', fragments of a treatise-in-verse 'dedicated to good women of all classes'. Perhaps, Bechtolsheim wrote Wieland, it might be published as 'my feelings on the female condition'. Bechtolsheim likely destroyed the poem after harsh censure from Wieland, who revoked the Grecian title he gave her as a young salonnière: Psyche, goddess of the soul.¹⁸ The name classified her as one who inspires but is not herself inspired. Wieland denied her poetic abilities, citing a 'thorough lack of [...] *inner substance* [and] *general interest*' in her lyrics. '[D]evoid of thought!' she exclaimed: 'Poor ex-Psyche! You counsel me like Hamlet to Ophelia: get thee to a nunnery!'¹⁹

Bechtolsheim's twenty-eight-page appeal to Wieland's 'verdict' helps reconstruct a treatise lost. An analogy emerges between Bechtolsheim's authorial pursuits and her political programme, both of which centred on an ideal of selflessness. Just as the 'self-denigrating posture of humility' Bechtolsheim shared with many women writers of the period registered a tactful approach to authorial legitimacy, her claim to political impartiality was also part of a prudent strategy.²⁰ As Lorely French has observed, women letter-writers often sought legitimacy by forswearing all 'self-initiative' and desire for public recognition.²¹ 'Never did I truly strive for the dangerous honour of being a *published* poet', Bechtolsheim wrote. The 'poem of 500 lines' that Wieland condemned was first read aloud in a spa town. 'From that day on I was a different being in the eyes of most people', Bechtolsheim recalled: 'those who hardly cast a cursory glance my way now came

to visit me'. Yet she added that a 'systematic book' on women's place in the polity required 'greater powers of mind than my own'. Oscillating between self-denigration and self-promotion, she maintained that the ideas behind the poem were 'so finely measured to the needs of Mankind that it would benefit the whole of society if, with the wave of a magic wand, all men *thought with me*, for then the great war against self-interest would end, and the golden age would return'. Bechtolsheim thus strove to exhibit the kind of 'disinterested humanity' and 'unimpassioned judgement' required by such a struggle.²²

Bechtolsheim's golden age would be born of 'women-creators' (*Schöpferinnen*) and maternal activity unconfined 'in the vast universe'. The Creation of their 'golden dawn', the enigmatic verses suggest, was an enlightened citizenry:

We collect wisdom for the children
And dedicate it, from their first words,
To the service of Reason and early joys.²³

If Bechtolsheim 'accept[ed] that our society be excluded from an active part in *the business of government*', she also saw the educated household as a repository of reason.²⁴ In the culture of Enlightenment, bourgeois domesticity was 'an intrinsic part of a politically progressive assault on the Old Regime'.²⁵ The exclusion of women from the public sphere, codified in new natural and legal taxonomies, was a basic tenant of republicanism.²⁶ Wary of a total assault on Old Regime institutions, however, Bechtolsheim configured 'republican motherhood' rather as a corrective to the Revolution's failings, an antidote to the '*spirit of partisanship* [that] dissolved the bonds of civil order' and compromised its nobler aims. As a self-described 'cosmopolitan' — 'a most zealous proponent of the American Revolution, the first admirer of the French Constitution' — she believed it her duty to promote the 'true enlightenment' of women.²⁷

So began a career of didactic poetry whereby Bechtolsheim presented herself as a tutor to educated women (Fig. 2), especially those of noble (i.e., governing) rank. Into her verse, she wove 'golden threads of noble domesticity'. This Bechtolsheim wrote to Caroline, princess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach upon her marriage in 1810, making her heir to the throne of the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Domesticity figured not as a discrete sphere but within an analogy between household and commonwealth. In Bechtolsheim's formulation of enlightened rule, the princess's self-denying virtues ought to manifest in public charity, promoting 'the happiness of humanity'.²⁸

By these means, Bechtolsheim spoke not only to the educated classes, the Grand Duchy's readers and rulers, but also for the uneducated masses, *das Volk* or *le peuple*. 'The people's voice, guided by love | Is also God's voice, which blesses you', she wrote to the princess, adding the proverb: '*vox populi, vox Dei*'. Joining in the political discourse of her time, Bechtolsheim used collective identities of 'the people' to show compassion for those whose sufferings she did not share. Yet as Hannah Arendt observed of *le peuple's* purchase during the Revolution, such rhetorical devices served to legitimate those who claimed to speak for the people.²⁹ Bechtolsheim's earlier treatise 'on the female condition' reconceived the *poissarden* of Paris not as an event in the Revolution but a 'misuse of our powers of mind'. For just as a lady of the 'higher classes' might, through a lack of 'true enlightenment', become 'nothing more than—a fishwife', so '*ingenious poets* may be found among Berlin's *HöckerWeibern*', or 'hunched-maidens', Germany's corresponding image of working women, so named for the baskets they bore on their backs.³⁰ Now, in 1810,



2. Portrait of Bechtolsheim in 1810 by Friedrich Bury. GSA, Klassik Stiftung Weimar. 186 × 246 mm (144 × 144 DPI)

Bechtolsheim leveraged *vox populi, vox dei* to argue that the people were her prerogative, both as subjects to govern and objects of pity.

Ultimately, the ‘war against self-ambition’ summoned self-denial’s corresponding virtue, collectivism: the ‘loyal, loving alliance’ of Bechtolsheim’s address to her countrywomen. Napoleon’s defeat in Russia in 1812 was followed by another at Leipzig in 1813, as the coalition chased French forces west once more. ‘The happy time has arrived’, Bechtolsheim wrote her ‘countrywomen’ again in 1814, ‘when one *common spirit, one desire, one will*, unites all the peoples of Germany’ — as if by a magic wand.³¹ These were the first lines of the *Frauenverein*’s founding document, printed and circulated through the Duchy of Eisenach.

2. Governing the (E)state

War came home to Eisenach in autumn 1810. On the night of 1 September — with the German states subdued in Napoleon’s Confederation of the Rhine — a seventy-four-horse French artillery transport passed through Eisenach’s central market. The sudden

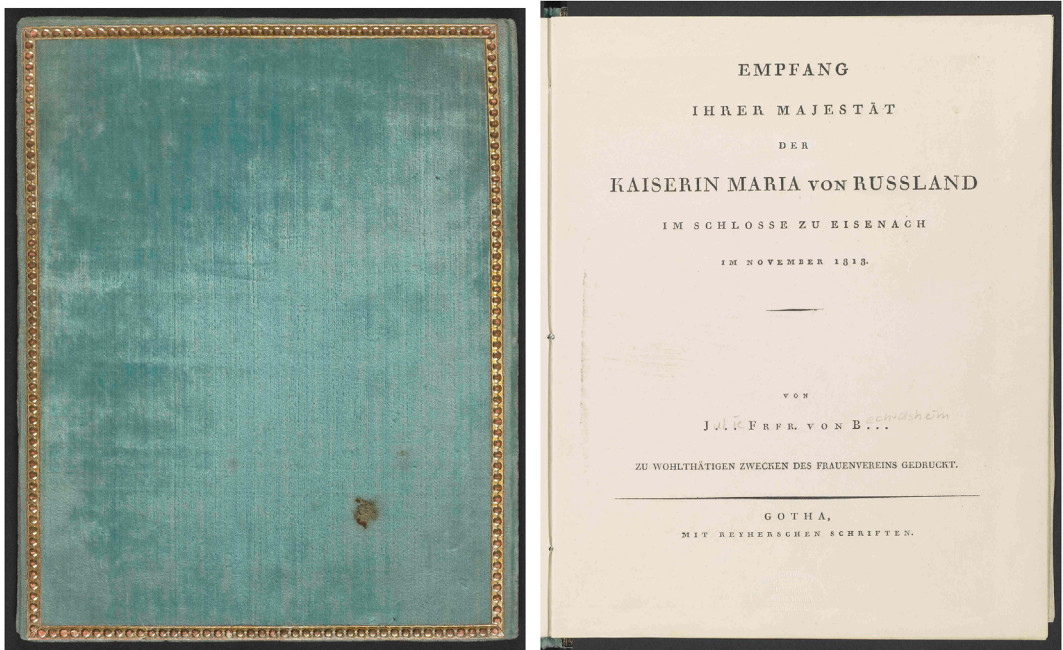
explosion of three powder-laden wagons decimated twenty-four houses, killing at least sixty-eight inhabitants and wounding hundreds more. An 'eyewitness' to the conflagration, Bechtolsheim described 'half-burnt corpses of humans and animals', limbs 'scattered in the streets'.³²

The scene inspired a forty-four-page work of dramatic verse, which reads rather more as prophecy than eulogy. Dedicated 'to those in need', it calls upon 'sublime persons and the generous humanity of all estates' to bring about the city's 'rebirth'. Its lyrics contain the *Frauenverein's* philosophical template: a communitarian vision that endowed industry with spirit. In a 'hall of cypress trees', all members of society gather — 'townsman', 'savant' and 'burgher' — as 'white-clad maidens' scatter flowers over the ashes of the funeral pyre. 'Your numbers are few, but in unity | Your powers quickly accrue', says the 'Superior One'. Then the 'Principal' (*Vorsteher*) speaks a solemn oath:

To rouse beautiful industry
This is the noble science;
Each thinks, each does
As if another's fate was their own.³³

The oath is echoed by a 'Choir of the People'. 'The aim is the *well-being of the whole*', over which Bechtolsheim claimed a privileged position, as Principal to 'the people'.

All the elements of the 1810 eulogy reappear eight years later in another slim volume dedicated 'to the charitable aims of the *Frauenverein*' (Fig. 3). Silk-bound with gold trim, the book commemorates a visit to Eisenach made by Maria Pavlovna, Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach and head of its Central-*Frauenverein*. For a textile collective that



3. Julie von Bechtolsheim, *Empfang ihrer Majestät der Kaiserin Maria* (Gotha, 1818). Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Huld V 12 [1] [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

worked primarily in flax and wool, the silk binding signals its ties to august authorities. In 1817, Eisenach's expanding Association was incorporated into a state-wide network of *Frauenvereine*, which encompassed seven industry schools and four spinning institutes, employing 298 children and 318 adults.³⁴ This earned Pavlovna the title of 'Sublime Mother' under Bechtolsheim's pen. All around her 'white-clad maidens' gathered, now in an ancient temple, Bechtolsheim close behind her:

The high mother was followed
by the tender, beloved daughter,
Our model enshrined in her image.³⁵

The same lexicon is found in the Association's records. As its First Principal (*Erste Vorsteherin*), Bechtolsheim employed concepts of sublimity, ensoulment, and cultivation to account for the Industry School's 'influence [...] on the intellectual as well as the physical life of our foster children'. An 1817 report to the Supreme Mother described, in third person, how the First Principal found 'evidence' for this in the children's labour:

the dead, empty masses of flesh were ensouled thereby. Their vacant, inexpressive countenance transformed into one of joy and love. How truly touching to see how 40 children sit peacefully alongside each other, still and noiseless, in a very confined space, tirelessly working for 6 to 8 hours a day, and already they display such skill and dexterity that their products are not only useful, but some even deserve to be called *quite beautiful*.³⁶

Having foretold the re-animation of Eisenach, 'as dead matter divinely *ensouled*', Bechtolsheim described a prophecy fulfilled.³⁷

The translation of poetry into practice was a political act. In doing so, Bechtolsheim ensured ducal patronage of the *Frauenverein*, extended her own credit lines in the Weimar court, and constructed a public identity as an agent of the Grand Duchy. The very image of 'white-clad maidens' evoked the pomp of military parades and regal processions, underscoring the *Frauenverein's* role in the state. Before, during, and after Napoleon, Classically clothed girls featured in the public staging of political power, as symbols 'of what the soldiers were to defend'.³⁸ White-clad maidens were also a politically flexible symbol, adopted by Old Regime monarchists and *Vormärz* democrats alike.³⁹ This made them well-suited to the ideological 'amalgam' of the *Frauenverein*. As Jean Quataert observed, *Frauenvereine* were a "voluntary union of individuals" working for the "common goals of the state" and, so, appealed to both liberal and conservative positions after 1815.⁴⁰

The *Frauenverein's* function as an unofficial arm of government made its First Principal a de facto agent of the state. In Weimar, the Central-*Frauenverein's* 'Statutory Provisions', issued by the Grand Duke in 1817, followed the state's liberal constitution of 1816.⁴¹ Enlightenment mixed with Old Regime authority in Weimar's cosmopolitan court, and its new constitution ushered in moderate reforms, guaranteeing freedom of the press even as censorship tightened across the German lands. Authorities also wished to take advantage of the exuberant, but potentially radical, nationalism that resonated among literary circles and student fraternities after decades of war and occupation.⁴² Women's Associations, born of the 'War of Liberation', presented an instrument to that end, as 'private' enterprises that promoted loyalty to dynastic authorities.⁴³ Bechtolsheim styled herself accordingly, as a 'right useful instrument [...] of our highly esteemed Grand Duchess'.⁴⁴

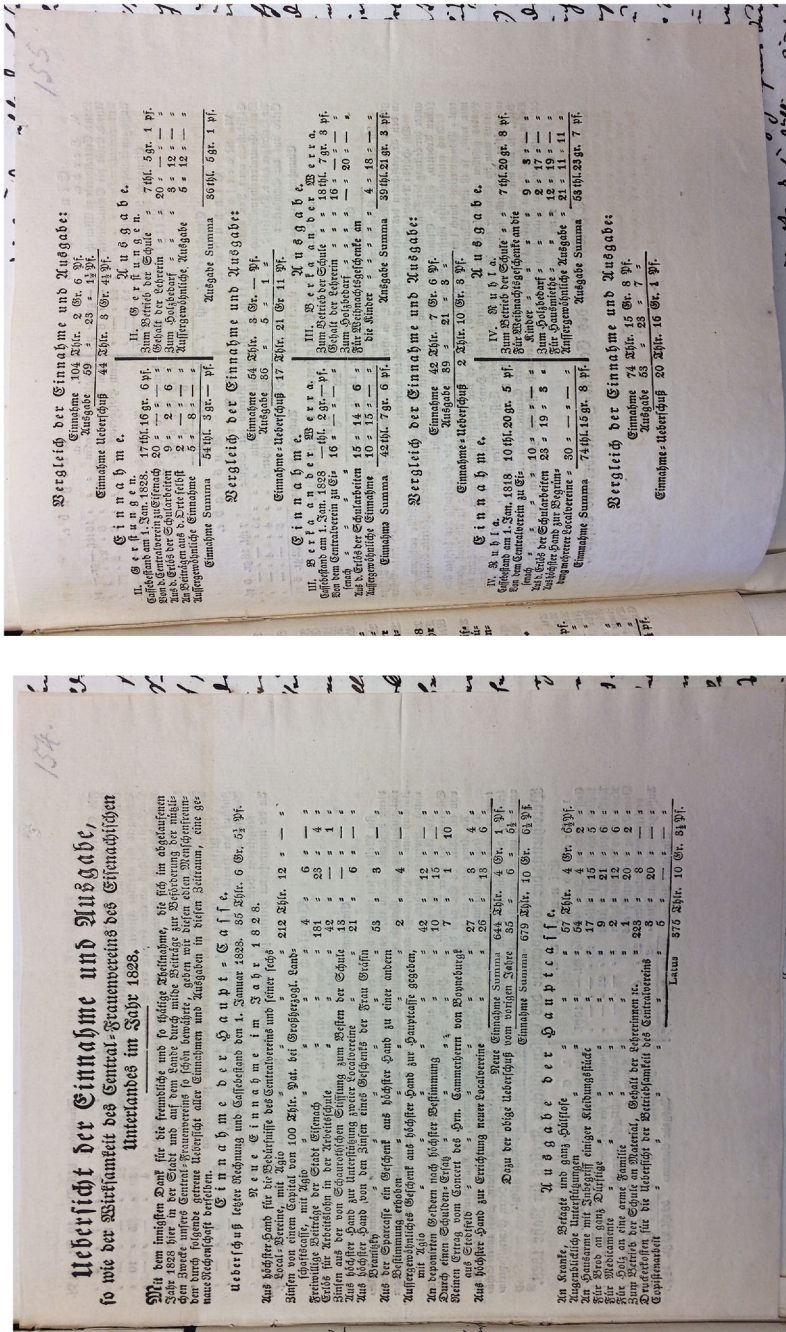
The *Frauenverein* also extended domestic governance — and 'women's work' — into the public life of the Grand Duchy.⁴⁵ Bechtolsheim's need for 'consolation' has been cited as

the Association's motive force.⁴⁶ She had lost her husband and six sons to warfare and disease after 1806. In the *Frauenverein's* founding document, addressed to 'women and daughters of all classes and estates', she spoke the language of self-sacrifice. The Association would be midwife to the 'rebirth of the world', said a mother who lost a son to the Battle of Jena.⁴⁷ But social history suggests another layer of interpretation, for widowhood sometimes afforded women an otherwise inaccessible degree of legal and economic agency.⁴⁸ The scope of Bechtolsheim's household governance expanded considerably after her husband's death in 1806. Correspondence from subsequent decades shows her managing labour on the estate and its gardens and negotiating the sale of property.⁴⁹ She even used her influence as hostess to the Russian general Peter Wittgenstein to divert a cavalry 8000 strong from billeting in Eisenach.⁵⁰

By serving the ducal state Bechtolsheim ensured the preservation of her private estate. Even as women's participation in the European labour force began a sharp decline after 1800, domesticity retained its customary place in the lexicon of political economy — as a language of order or protest, spoken by men and women, in finance and fiction, from the Atlantic to the Continent.⁵¹ As 'economy' itself stems from the Greek for household management, so statesmen spoke of the *Staatshaushalt*, or state-household. Bechtolsheim's use of a familial language — the *Landesmutter* and the Duchy's 'daughters' — recognized the correspondence between household and commonwealth. The economic maintenance of the *Frauenverein* was bound up in that of Bechtolsheim's household. Her means reduced by war and widowhood, Bechtolsheim let rooms of her home, the neoclassical Palais am Jakobsplan, famous for the salons she once held. Damaged by the 1810 explosion, the Palais later housed as many as fourteen family members, as Bechtolsheim herself moved into the upper floor with a maid.⁵² It became more important than ever to maintain relations with the Grand Duke and Duchess, on whom she now depended for an annual loan of 100 taler. Their patronage also accounted for some 28%–37% of the Association's annual funding under Bechtolsheim's leadership, with a minimum contribution of 212 taler per annum 'from the highest hand'.⁵³ Bechtolsheim's capacity as an 'instrument' of the Duchess's designs may be best evidenced by a loan of 6000 taler she received, also from 'the highest hand', in 1839, that she might live her last years unbundled by debt.⁵⁴

Authorship was one aspect of *Haushalt*, the managerial labour by which Bechtolsheim navigated the public dimension of domestic space.⁵⁵ It was in the upper floor of the Palais, after all, that Bechtolsheim and her stepdaughter kept the Association's accounts: tallying donations and material production, keeping logs of the comings and goings of women and children workers, and writing up reports based on the First Principal's on-site supervision of the spinning school.⁵⁶ While Pavlovna's visits and birthdays occasioned yet more lyrics to the 'Sublime Mother' from her 'faithful daughter', Bechtolsheim's fiscal management of the Association was published annually in the *Eisenachisches Wochenblatt* under the heading 'Oversight of Earnings and Expenses' (Fig. 4).⁵⁷

These tableaux *accounted* for Bechtolsheim's governance (Fig. 5). Compiled from monthly charts, they logged every alms given and cubit of yarn spun. Annual sums measured contributions from concerts, local donors, and the royal court against the Association's distribution of bread and wood to the poor; the cost of food, books, stationary, and medicine for its pupils; and, above all, the material maintenance of its textile industry. As historians have studied calendars and other unassuming works of print culture as artefacts of popular politics, the *Frauenverein's* tabular accounts can be read as organs of its governor's platform.⁵⁸ Each issue typically began with a testament to the 'exactitude' and 'faithfulness' of its *Rechenschaft*, its account (ability). In turn, public records of



4. 'Oversight of Earnings and Expenses' from 1828 in the Eisenachisches Wochenblatt, THSaW, ZD 299, pp. 154–55 [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

The image shows two pages of a handwritten diary by Bechtolsheim, recording the daily activities of industry schools. The tables are organized into columns with dates, descriptions of activities, and numerical values.

Table 1 (Left Page):

Date	Activity	Value
1. 12. 17	...	14
2. 12. 17	...	16
3. 12. 17	...	9
4. 12. 17	...	1
5. 12. 17	...	1
6. 12. 17	...	5
7. 12. 17	...	14
8. 12. 17	...	16
9. 12. 17	...	22
10. 12. 17	...	2
11. 12. 17	...	4
12. 12. 17	...	22
13. 12. 17	...	2
14. 12. 17	...	2
15. 12. 17	...	13
16. 12. 17	...	4
17. 12. 17	...	60
18. 12. 17	...	23

Table 2 (Right Page):

Date	Activity	Value
1. 12. 17	...	1
2. 12. 17	...	1
3. 12. 17	...	1
4. 12. 17	...	1
5. 12. 17	...	1
6. 12. 17	...	1
7. 12. 17	...	1
8. 12. 17	...	1
9. 12. 17	...	1
10. 12. 17	...	1
11. 12. 17	...	1
12. 12. 17	...	1
13. 12. 17	...	1
14. 12. 17	...	1
15. 12. 17	...	1
16. 12. 17	...	1
17. 12. 17	...	1
18. 12. 17	...	1
19. 12. 17	...	1
20. 12. 17	...	1
21. 12. 17	...	1
22. 12. 17	...	1
23. 12. 17	...	1
24. 12. 17	...	1
25. 12. 17	...	1
26. 12. 17	...	1
27. 12. 17	...	1
28. 12. 17	...	1
29. 12. 17	...	1
30. 12. 17	...	1

Handwritten notes and signatures are present throughout both pages, including 'Bechtolsheim' and '1817'.

5. Tables in Bechtolsheim's hand, recording the daily activities of Industry Schools. THSaW, ZD 293, p. 163 [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

scrupulous bookkeeping bespoke the thrifty governance of their keeper. Bechtolsheim could boast of an annual 'surplus revenue' between 50 and 200 taler — as if to balance her debt to the Grand Duke in deeds done for the Grand Duchy.⁵⁹ The magnanimous 'career' she once envisioned had become her own.

From ornate books of verse to public records of fiscal management, these publications gave the Patriotic Women's Association a page in the story of a 'developing nation'. Though war was the *Frauenverein's* animating impulse, it belonged to 'an era of the book more than one of the sword'.⁶⁰ Literacy rates rose in the German lands, from about 25% in 1800 to 40% in 1830, as the reading public kept pace with the rise of republics, printing of legal codes, and promulgation of new constitutions.⁶¹ To the reading public, Bechtolsheim gave an account, both lyrical and numerical, of her place in the *Staatshaushalt* of the Grand Duchy.

3. Putting the Soul to Work

More than linens or loyalty, labour was the *Frauenverein's* most significant contribution to the state. Enlightened rule in late eighteenth-century Germany viewed the *Volk* as a resource of untapped potential.⁶² Prussia built orphanages to supply its military ranks with 'patriotic-minded recruits'; the Saxon mining complex founded technical schools to make mine foremen of 'common' boys; and among Göttingen's many journals, one founded in 1789 was devoted to industry schools and 'the moral and economic improvement of the *Volk*'.⁶³ 'The only means of alleviating poverty, and the evils it spreads through the state', said its inaugural issue, 'is by cultivating the diligence and skill of children in various forms of labour, indeed, where possible, imparting some *Rafinement* in their industry'.⁶⁴ Two and a half decades later, Bechtolsheim's first sketch of Eisenach's 'Industry School for Girls' echoed the same imperative: moral cultivation through manual labour. 'The labours so vital for life, such as spinning, knitting, and sewing', she wrote the Grand Duchess, 'seem the surest means of occupying the youth of the female sex, and guarding them from idleness and the vice that arises from it'.⁶⁵

Bechtolsheim's School served the Grand Duchy's linen industry in a manner similar to Prussian military orphanages and Saxon mining schools: its primary objective was not so much performing work as producing workers. High demand for spinners (every ten of whom could supply enough yarn for one weaver) created a pool of cheap, if not unpaid, labour in orphanages and spinning schools.⁶⁶ By the early 1840s, the institution Bechtolsheim built could furnish seven weavers with flax and cotton yarn.⁶⁷ But even when she attempted to mechanize the School's textile operations, output was only as important as instruction. The School's 'spinning machine' was itself conceived as a pedagogical instrument. It 'occupies 8 children', Bechtolsheim wrote in 1817, 'and due to the attention and skill it demands, seems to us a very useful thing, in that it teaches the children competency in all spinning and bobbin labours'. This competency was required of pupils 'dismissed to the local spinning factory'.⁶⁸

The poet-principal of Eisenach's Industry School wielded Romantic language to 'cultivate' people to economic and aesthetic ends. Reappraisals of early German Romanticism describe a movement not merely inward-turning but civic-minded.⁶⁹ 'One must build a poetic world around one's self', wrote Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), who was both a member of the Jena circle of Romantics and a manager of Thuringian salt mines.⁷⁰ The likes of Hardenberg, Friedrich Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt — all of whom revolved, like Bechtolsheim, around Thuringian cultural centres — responded to Revolution

with aesthetic models of self-cultivation, or *Bildung*, institutionalized in new museums and reformed universities.⁷¹ But Romanticism considered as governance goes beyond the 'institutional approach'. It accounts also for the Romantic promotion of the labour regimes required to build a 'poetic world'.⁷²

To this end, Bechtolsheim made work a matter of the soul. In her earlier poetry, she used the verb *beseelen* to describe the animating action of nature or God. While flowers might be 'ensouled by the pure breath of the gods', Elizabeth of Thuringia, a medieval princess who dwelt in Eisenach's Wartburg Castle, was 'ensouled by divine mercy' when she spun wool for the poor.⁷³ In Elizabeth's image, Bechtolsheim described her own charity as 'ensouling for me'.⁷⁴ And to the Grand Duchess, she reported a 'sense of ensoulment' at the sight of clothing spun for Eisenach's poor.⁷⁵ Ultimately, Bechtolsheim endowed herself with the power to reanimate the 'dead, empty masses of flesh' that were her pupils.⁷⁶

Ensoulment was also the language of Bechtolsheim's popular appeal. In the *Frauenverein's* founding document, she promised those willing to join her cause 'the ensoulment of your innermost *Gemüth*', a faculty of mind and spirit that defies translation.⁷⁷ It was indeed a radical gesture to extend a lexicon of cultural refinement, typically reserved for the learned not the labouring world, to 'all classes and estates'. But the gesture also signalled her position atop a 'hierarchy of head and hand', as one capable of infusing manual work with the intellectual virtues she claimed as a poet.⁷⁸ Soul and *Gemüt* have a political history, too. According to one early modern model of statecraft, state and regent are 'bound together like body and soul': 'the prince is the mind [*gemüthe*], and the state the body [*corpus*].'⁷⁹ As mind to body, head to hand, Bechtolsheim's governance extended over the *Frauenverein* and its allegedly vacuous, un-ensouled workers.

Ensoulment, like cultivation, was a normative term charged with the values — and prejudices — of the educated classes, who stood to gain from a steady supply of 'refined' female labour. In Weimar and Eisenach, pupils not 'dismissed' as factory hands usually served as maids in the homes of the Grand Duchy's ruling classes, a common fate for girls raised by *Frauenvereine* across Germany. Like poems and paintings of virtuous, contented spinners, Bechtolsheim's Romantic theory of labour thus sustained a social order built on women's work.⁸⁰ 'A cultivated *Gemüth* makes the wage-labourer respectable', wrote Caroline Rudolphi, an advocate of women's education.⁸¹ Across Europe, women's work in textiles was considered integral to their intellectual formation, as docile and industrious housewives and producers. '[E]mbroidery was now taught so as to inculcate obedience and patience', Mary Harris wrote of women's education, 'as girls sat quietly for long hours, their heads bowed over work whose technical complexity became submerged in the submissiveness it was expected to instil'.⁸² According to reformers like Rudolphi and Bechtolsheim, women's work was women's education.

Rudolphi, to whom Bechtolsheim compared herself, published plans for an institute like Eisenach's in an addendum to her didactic novel, *Portrait of Female Education* (1807). The programme was based on a school she established in the mid-1780s. As in Eisenach, Rudolphi's pupils were schooled 'from an early age in women's handiwork'. Cultivation in the form of book learning, art lessons, and gardening were to ensure that 'children are made into more than work-machines'. 'Nor should poetry be banned from this Republic of Maidens', she argued, prescribing regular garden strolls 'between hours of learning and labouring to breathe in fresh air and a newfound will to work'.⁸³

Rudolphi's pupils were prepared more for family life than factory work.⁸⁴ Still, they were raised to know 'their place in society', not in a table of ranks but in an economy of goods and services:

It must never seem to them dishonourable to labour for others. They must know that human society exists only through the exchange of services. To serve another with one's own labour must, therefore, never be regarded as contemptible. Nor should girls be averse to performing fine women's work for money. No false ambitions shall creep into their *Gemüther*.⁸⁵

If good work made for cultivated minds, cultivated minds made for good workers. Rudolphi outlined an ideal correspondence between material and moral life, equating capacity for skill and industry with comportment of mind and soul, just as Bechtolsheim would a decade on. Rudolphi defined the 'industrious life' of girls 'contented with silent joy' as the 'uniform of their *Gemüthes*'.⁸⁶ In Eisenach, ensoulment was measured by the 'still and noiseless' industry of the children, the 'joy' that overcame their 'vacant' faces, and the utility of their products.⁸⁷ Industry became a register of mind and spirit.

Presented as meritocracy, this Romantic theory of labour risked substituting soul for rank as a measure of social worth. Certainly, the idea that one might enrich their *Gemüt* through industry implied a degree of social mobility, at least for those with some skill. But it also reinforced existing hierarchies, as in the Old Regime distinction between 'honourable' and 'dishonourable' trades. For poor girls and women already disadvantaged, this formulation led into a vicious circle, since they often lacked the social and material capital with which to craft their cultivation. Rudolphi's institute simply closed its doors to 'the offspring of very degenerate stock', arguing that 'children of upstanding parents should always be given priority'. To preserve 'the spirit of the house', the school ought only to admit girls 'of the good sort'.⁸⁸ If girls deprived of 'spirit' (read: 'stock') were turned away from Rudolphi's institute, Bechtolsheim's turned out those who 'show no capacity for great progress' in textile work. So she wrote of a pupil who had learnt 'domestic work' and 'stitching and knitting' sufficiently enough to 'earn her own bread' but was nevertheless returned to her parents while others advanced to spinning.⁸⁹

Rudolphi and Bechtolsheim's writings are rife with class concerns, their philosophies riven with contradictions. Here was a theory of labour constructed by women who knew little of manual toil, and who often scorned the very people they claimed to cultivate. Rudolphi insisted that her pupils 'must always be under the eyes of a cultivated person, so they do not become accustomed to coarse, common behaviours or rude speech'.⁹⁰ The same anxieties led Bechtolsheim to single out 'girls from the better estates' in the School's early years, believing they 'would feel ashamed to be in a class of lowly, rude children'. Yet it was the highest authority, the Supreme Mother, who reproached Bechtolsheim for this. Wary of being perceived to rule the *Central-Frauenverein* arbitrarily, Pavlovna argued that segregating the children by class would promote 'a deleterious division of minds and *Gemüther*'.⁹¹ In so saying, she exposed a tension at the heart of Bechtolsheim's ensouling project: that '*the well-being of the whole*' was, in fact, based in a carefully 'cultivated' division of labour in women's work.⁹²

4. *Cultivating Skilled Masters*

The conceit of the Industry School was to be indispensable to and distinct from the region's textile industry.⁹³ The larger and more productive the School became, the more Bechtolsheim felt the need to elevate its 'fine' crafts above factory production, even as she continued to 'dismiss' pupils from one to the other. With twenty-six original pupils in January 1817, the School developed a workforce of sixty children by the year's end

and eighty-six by 1819.⁹⁴ In 1820, Bechtolsheim reported the 'complaint one often hears in public that the *industry school for girls* cannot produce anything more than stocking-hands [*Strümpfe-Handen*]', unskilled workers in linen manufactories.⁹⁵ Thereafter, the School's leadership adopted an artisanal model by which 'select girls' were trained as 'masters' of their craft. The model offered a workaround to Pavlovna's direction to preserve unity, while also preserving the School's distinction among other forms of work.

The Industry School belonged to a rural, agrarian economy. *Industrie* itself still connoted the personal quality of diligence even as it began to evoke the large-scale refinement of raw materials.⁹⁶ The Thuringian linen industry was characterized, like most of Germany, by the coexistence of various modes of production: a variegated landscape where independent artisans worked in household workshops, merchants shuttled raw materials to a rural labour force that returned finished goods, and manufactories, which concentrated capital, were as likely to be found in the country as the city.⁹⁷ Yet the spectre of the factory system loomed ever larger in the west. German writers who travelled to England, like Weimar's Johanna Schopenhauer, reported on the ghastly 'sight of mechanical life without end' in Manchester's cotton mills. 'The wheels are truly alive', Schopenhauer wrote of its steam-powered looms in 1818, 'while the humans operating them are but machines'.⁹⁸

To avoid any likeness to such soulless labour, Eisenach's Principal Raußing suggested to Bechtolsheim that a '*demoiselle*' (of middle-class heritage, as the granddaughter of a clergyman) be 'fully cultivated as a *skilled master in all fine women's work*'. Like a journeyman gone on the tramp, the master would return to the Industry School 'to teach a higher education in women's work to girls already capable in knitting stockings and sewing shirts'.⁹⁹ This higher education entailed not only a material process distinct from large-scale linen manufacture but also a 'moral cultivation' that the likes of Raußing, a physician's wife, associated with the 'cultivated classes'.¹⁰⁰ Another of the School's instructors was 'Madame Grambow', a civil servant's wife of respectable though not ruling rank credited with prowess in 'fine spinning'. Grambow was selected not only because 'she gives the most precise instruction in flax spinning [and] tends to the condition of the spinning wheels and the purchase of flax with true circumspection' but also because 'she finds in this useful work some solace', and 'her example is good encouragement for others who now seem to want to do something significant'.¹⁰¹ As the principals saw it, Grambow's expertise in the minutiae of spinning wheel maintenance and the 'love and steadfastness' she imparted in her lessons were mutually reinforcing qualifications.

Grambow's successor, recorded as 'young Sülzeern', is the exception that proves the rule of the School's Romantic theory of labour. Neither a 'madame' nor a '*demoiselle*', Sülzeern was an erstwhile factory worker who nevertheless rose to mastery in 'fine spinning'. Because her journey from *Fabrik* to *Feinspinnerey* was so exceptional, its records are all the more revealing of the value accorded to different forms of textile production in the Industry School, by principals and pupils alike.

Embroidery, lace-making, and other needlework with fine materials were generally considered a class above more physically demanding work in wool and flax: the one a lady's pastime, the other a cottage industry. Bechtolsheim once asked Wieland if she 'had better learn to spin and cook rather than write verse?'¹⁰² Spinning represented a failure of intellect for the *salonnière*.¹⁰³ Notably, 'finer needlework' and embroidery were performed in the School, as part of a young woman's upbringing. But Bechtolsheim and other principals also saw the ability to spin a 'fine thread' of flax as a particular mark of distinction, a material link that bound the spinner to the skilled sewers and genteel needleworkers she supplied. Fine spinning demanded not only expertise in the preparation of flax —

an industry unto itself — but also the embodied technique required to simultaneously draw and twist its fibres with such practiced tension and torque as to spin a thread suited to sewing and embroidery, rather than yarn for knitting and weaving. For it is not the wheel that distinguishes variously attenuated yarns and threads, but the deft labours of the spinner herself, who mediated natural variation in the fibres as in the humidity and static of the very air in which she worked.¹⁰⁴

To train Sülzeern as a master in these arts, Bechtolsheim commissioned two ‘*Wanderungen*’ — or travels of apprenticeship, akin to the journeyman’s *Wanderschaft* — both to Stadtlengsfeld, some thirty kilometres southwest of Eisenach.¹⁰⁵ During the first, in 1822, Sülzeern ‘learned to spin a truly beautiful and fine thread’, an example of which Bechtolsheim enclosed in a report to the Grand Duchess. But ‘she has not yet learned flax preparation’, the First Principal noted, laying plans for Sülzeern’s return to Stadtlengsfeld in the spring. There, in journeyman’s fashion, she would earn her keep as a domestic servant while mastering her craft: retting flax stalks in water or dew to loosen the fibres from the stem, or ‘boon’; cleansing and aligning its fibrous harvest with scutching knives and hackling combs; and, finally, yielding a silvery, hair-like material with which to dress the distaff that is fixed upon the spinning wheel.

Not material skill alone but also moral disposition allowed Sülzeern to transcend the apparent indignity of her factory work.¹⁰⁶ For the apprenticeship was meant to draw her *back* into the Association’s moral sphere. Once a pupil of the School, Sülzeern had ‘yielded to the wishes of her family and gone to work in the local factory’. According to Bechtolsheim, this ‘diminished the love and trust that the other girls felt toward her and threatened to ruin her reputation as an instructor’. Perhaps Sülzeern had been among the pupils dismissed five years earlier, ‘some to the local spinning factory, two as housemaids’. Bechtolsheim narrated the ‘stirring scene’ in May 1818, as pupils and principals gathered to see ‘the best of them’ depart, ‘gushing tears’ as she went. ‘She is the tallest and prettiest and also the most capable in our institute, and we saw in her a soul torn from vice’.¹⁰⁷ Years later, Sülzeern’s own beauty would prompt concern over the ‘threat’ of a ‘marriage proposal’, which might deprive the School of its instructor. And much as the pupil of May 1818 appeared morally fortified for her new life, Sülzeern’s virtues would ensure her reintegration from the factory. ‘When she is grown and becomes an instructor, she will impress this upon her pupils’, Bechtolsheim said of Sülzeern’s ‘goodness’.¹⁰⁸

Sülzeern completed her apprenticeship in April 1823, and in May, she gave her first instruction at the School. Even Grambow’s thread drew finer thanks to Sülzeern’s newfound cunning. Bechtolsheim acquired three more spinning wheels and, with the start of Sülzeern’s lessons, began training ‘the three most advanced pupils’ along the lines of her apprenticeship. So the artisanal lifecycle went on, as ‘select girls’ were schooled into ‘skilled masters’, ultimately giving rise ‘to the grand idea of a branch of industry here in Eisenach dedicated to advancement of flax spinning’.¹⁰⁹

This artisanal model dealt with public concerns about the School’s likeness to a factory while sidestepping Pavlovna’s directive not to segregate girls by class. Separating them instead by training allowed Bechtolsheim to promote the School’s distinction, much as a guild master guards the ‘honour’ and market of his trade. Indeed, Bechtolsheim governed labour like a guildsman.¹¹⁰ She concerned herself not only with fiscal management but also with the moral life of her workers; and she assigned privilege based on a form of travel — Sülzeern’s *Wanderung* — meant to inculcate the values and virtuosity of the craft. Even her pupils’ matrimonial prospects did not escape the purview of Bechtolsheim’s guild-like governance.

5. 'A Republic of Maidens'

Bechtolsheim was not alone in governing Eisenach's *Frauenverein*, however. Records reveal the Association not only as a platform for the construction of Bechtolsheim's identity, but also as an arena in which educated women practiced democracy: a constitutional monarchy in miniature. In fact, Bechtolsheim's own abuses of power prompted the political agitation of her collaborators.

Unlike the Central-*Frauenverein* in Weimar, dominated by noblewomen, the leadership of its counterpart in Eisenach was majority bourgeois.¹¹¹ The directory of 1825 is a cross-section of the educated classes. Bechtolsheim is identified with her late husband's role as privy counsellor (*Geheimrätin*, rather than her noble rank of *Freifrau*) alongside the wives of military officers, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and civil servants. The division of labour between 'principals' and 'assistants' generally corresponded to their family's rank in Eisenach society: women identified as Major, Chief Medical Counsellor, and Ecclesiastical Counsellor shared administrative work with the First Principal, keeping books and overseeing alms donations. Meanwhile, manual instruction and material maintenance in 'I. Finer needlework', 'II. Embroidery', and 'III. The improvement of flax spinning' were delegated to unmarried *Fräulein*, lesser counsellors, and 'Court Solicitor Grambow'.¹¹²

However stratified, this constituency was also vested with the power to elect principals and assistants and deliberate on a range of matters. It took 'a majority of votes from a delegation' to determine reforms at the local branch in Creuzberg, for instance: a 'unanimous vote' to elect a new principal and treasurer in Berka an der Werra; a 'resolution unanimously passed: to elect [a] *principal of the Nadelthor-District*'; and another 'unanimous vote from the Association to elect' Bechtolsheim's daughter-in-law as a Deputy Principal employed in bookkeeping. As their representative in Weimar, Bechtolsheim presented all such mandates to the Grand Duchess, whose 'eminent approval' she sought.¹¹³

These proceedings yielded a corpus of administrative text in which Bechtolsheim's 'most subservient reports' synthesized a still larger archive of communiqués received from subsidiary branches. That corpus is crucial to understanding the emergence of a small-scale civil society within the Association — an argument Ian McNeely has advanced of German society more generally around the turn of the nineteenth century. Contrary to the Habermasian model of a bourgeois public sphere, which emancipated itself from state tutelage, McNeely suggests a proliferation of bureaucratic text effectively schooled citizens in their own legal and economic autonomy. The *Frauenverein*'s members can be seen, like McNeely's scribes and civil servants, as 'practical intellectuals'.¹¹⁴

Consider the 'farewell letter' of 'Vice-President [Henriette] Schwendler', who argued that 'too few *collective resolutions* [*Gesamt-Beschlüsse*] were drafted, deliberated, and implemented, resulting in conflict and despotism' in the Association's leadership. Schwendler's complaint, the First Principal conceded, 'is not without cause'. Even in reports mediated by Bechtolsheim, concerns over the distribution of power and transparency of decision making evince democratic sensibilities in the Association. At the same time, they betray Bechtolsheim's scepticism toward democratic practice, consistent with her earlier judgement of the French Constitution as a 'masterpiece of human reason, even if it is not thoroughly applicable to actually existing humans'.¹¹⁵ She countered Schwendler's charge of 'despotism' in a similar vein, arguing that efforts to devolve power among principals and assistants were inefficient: 'Experience has taught us ad nauseum that deliberations among a dozen women, as we once had, led nowhere and, through excessive gabbling back and forth, tested the patience of the honourable male members of the Institute'.¹¹⁶

Here again are echoes of 1794, and her 'rebuke of women who do nothing but *prattle* and *dream* of state reform, freedom and Enlightenment'.¹¹⁷ Action legitimated authority, she argued to the Grand Duchess: emergencies involving ailing or orphaned children gave the First Principal the 'right', as she saw it, to bypass the managerial assembly altogether. In Bechtolsheim's judgement, the Association's democratic experiment had failed.

Ultimately, Schwendler's challenge led to a statutory reform, reflecting the collective's political capacity. Bechtolsheim found fault not in her own governance but in the 'organic failure of our Statutory Provision' of 1817, which 'did not sufficiently determine the relationship of the Principal to her assistants'.¹¹⁸ The Provision's framers had, in fact, foreseen this very issue on a state-wide rather than local level. Concerned that the Grand Duchess's leadership would signal 'arbitrary rule', its preamble assured the public that she would 'embody the principles of impartiality and disinterest'.¹¹⁹ Bechtolsheim adopted a similar stance to address concerns about her own arbitrary rule and to maintain the prudent hybridity of one who mediated between a voluntary association and a ducal court — one-part '*arch-democrat*', one-part '*moderate aristocrat*'.¹²⁰ Yielding to the majority, she informed Pavlovna that, 'in the interest of preventing *all personal despotism* and preserving



6. Portrait of Bechtolsheim by Ludwig Döll, 1817. Private Collections of the Family Mauchenheim genannt Bechtolsheim

the assent of the whole', all important decisions were henceforth to be 'voted upon by convening the Association, or through a written circular'. The measure was adopted as 'Fundamental Law [*Grundgesetz*] without exception'.¹²¹

The politicking in these records does not suggest Thuringian women made inroads into civil society through the *Frauenverein*, which was, after all, compartmentalized as 'charity' in an acceptable, female-coded space. But its inner workings reveal a polity in microcosm, its agents engaged in the same questions of legitimate authority and political participation that characterized the Age of Revolutions.

6. Conclusion. Yarn, Book, and Lyre

Three images of Bechtolsheim survive. In the first (Fig. 1), a silhouette made in 1785, she is shown winding yarn before an umbrella swift. In a letter from the period, she described writing, needlework, and governance accordingly, as leisurely pastimes whiled away 'in my cabinet, where I collect my thoughts, manage accounts, work on embroidery, or write letters and occasionally think up little rhymes'.¹²² The second is a portrait of 1810 (Fig. 2), the year of Eisenach's fateful explosion. Widowed and left to manage a decaying estate, Bechtolsheim nevertheless appears as a dignified woman of rank and learning. Poised over a book in a library of heavy tomes, the white feathers of her black hat evoke the design of her family crest. And in the third and final representation (Fig. 6), from 1817, we meet not the founder of an Industry School but a Grecian muse, goddess of the arts. Crowned by laurels, Bechtolsheim, then sixty-six, is mythologized as a 'white-clad maiden', perhaps even as Psyche.

One looks in vain for Bechtolsheim the governor. Such a representation — of a political woman — was hardly possible. Indeed, it would have been at odds with Bechtolsheim's own politics, which marshalled 'self-denial' in the 'war against self-ambition'. Scholars have suggested that early modern women 'exercised authority in many ways, but they seem to have been especially visible in the sources when they did so in a subtle way'.¹²³ The governance Bechtolsheim practiced operated subtly within existing social and sexual order, through poetry and charity. Yet here was a realm of politics in plain sight, in the *Frauenverein's* accounts of economic agency, its guild-like management of labour, and its spirited electoral politics.

Though these images bespeak little of Bechtolsheim's 'career', the last of them portrays its achievements, allegorized in a laurel crown still more magisterial than the *corona civica* she wished to bestow upon magnanimous women. The year Ludwig Döll painted her Grecian likeness is also the year her Association was drawn under the auspices of the Grand Duchy. Like Bechtolsheim, Döll drew his income from Thuringian courts. He is remembered for portraits of territorial rulers — dukes and duchesses, princes, a king — Bechtolsheim among them, albeit as a muse. Behind the muse was a poet; behind the poet a politician.

Acknowledgements

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NOTES

1. Julie von Bechtolsheim to Christoph Martin Wieland, 2/18.06.1794, in *Wielands Briefwechsel*, ed. by Klaus Gerlach (Berlin, 1995), XII.II, 222. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
2. For biographical perspectives, see Eva Schmidt, *Julie von Bechtolsheim: Wielands 'Psyche'. Eine Biographie*, 2nd edn (Rattenkirchen, 2009) and Volkmar Schumann, *Julie von Bechtolsheim, Eine Eisenacher Persönlichkeit: Wielands 'Psyche' und Goethes 'Seelchen' in Eisenach* (Eisenach, 1997).
3. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, *Briefwechsel*, p. 222.
4. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 2/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 230–31.
5. On Women's Associations, see Dirk Alexander Reder, *Frauenbewegung und Nation: Patriotische Frauenvereine in Deutschland im Frühen 19. Jahrhundert, 1813–1830* (Köln, 1998); Karen Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre': Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens (Paderborn, 2002).
6. *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society*, ed. by Maria Ågren (Oxford, 2017), pp. 210, 140–46.
7. Christina Vanja, 'Amtsfrauen in Hospitälern des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit', in *Vergessene Frauen an der Ruhr*, ed. by Bea Lundt (Köln, 1992).
8. Brian Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 112–24; David Do Paço, 'Women in Diplomacy in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul', *The Historical Journal* 65.3 (2022), 640–62.
9. Louise A. Tilly, Joan W. Scott, and Miriam Cohen, 'Women's Work and European Fertility Patterns', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 5.3 (Winter 1976), 462–63; Susanne Zantop, 'Trivial Pursuits? An Introduction', in *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers, 1700–1830*, ed. by Jeannine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop (Lincoln, NE, 1990), p. 26.
10. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, 'Of Pens and Needles: Sources in Early American Women's History', *The Journal of American History*, 77.1 (1990), 205–06. See also Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood, 'The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternative Discourses of Power', in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750–1950*, ed. by Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (London, 2016); *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers*, ed. by Serena Dyer and Chloe Wigston Smith (London, 2020).
11. Elisabeth Krimmer, *In the Company of Men: Cross-Dressed Women around 1800* (Detroit, MI, 2004), pp. 18, 32–33, 69–71, 83.
12. Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton, NJ, 1991); James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800–1850* (Cambridge, 2007); Brian Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).
13. Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 108–09.
14. Cf. Rebekka Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums. Eine Familiengeschichte, 1750–1850* (Göttingen, 2000); Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning and Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 11–12.
15. Jean H. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2001), pp. 44.
16. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789–1848* (New York, 1996).
17. 'und bleibe diese Ideen Welt auch nur ein schöner Traum, | laßt uns treu vereint im liebevollen Bunde | nicht in dem engen Kreis von einem Freyheitsbaum | Nein! in dem weiten All, in jedem WirkungsRaum | die Schöpferinnen seyn von mancher goldnen Stunde!': Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 2/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, p. 229.

18. Schmidt, *Julie von Bechtolsheim*, pp. 91–128.
19. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 2/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 222–28. On hostility toward 'female learnedness', see Zantop, 'Trivial Pursuits?', pp. 19–22.
20. Mary Terrall, 'Émilie Du Châtelet and the Gendering of Science', *History of Science*, 33.3 (September 1995), 283.
21. Lorely French, *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750–1850* (Cranbury, NJ, 1996), pp. 241, 250–51.
22. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 2/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, p. 222.
23. 'wir Klugheit für die Enkel sammeln | und sie dadurch bey dem ersten Stammlen, | dem Dienste der Vernunft zu frühem Glücke weihn': Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 20.05.1794, *Briefwechsel*, p. 214.
24. Cf. Joanna Wharton, *Material Enlightenment: Women Writers and the Science of the Mind, 1770–1830* (Woodbridge, 2018), p. 23.
25. Todd Kontje, *Women, the Novel, and the German Nation 1771–1871: Domestic Fiction and the Fatherland* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 4.
26. Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), p. 12; Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2004), pp. 65–74; *Gender in Transition: Discourse and Practice in German-Speaking Europe 1750–1830*, ed. by Ulrike Gleixner and Marion W. Gray (Ann Arbor, MI, 2006).
27. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 02/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 221, 230.
28. 'Abschiedsworte einer Bergbewohnerin', in Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv (hereafter GSA) 20/129. On women writers' uses of sympathetic, collectivist language in political theory, see Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 4–5.
29. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, 2006), p. 65.
30. Bechtolsheim to Wieland, 02/18.06.1794, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 222–33.
31. Julie von Bechtolsheim, 'Ein Wort an's Herz', THsAW, ZD 293, p. 3.
32. Julie von Bechtolsheim, *Der erste September 1810 in Eisenach. Ein Gedicht von Julie Freylin von Bechtolsheim als Augenzeugin. Zum Besten der Hülfbedürftigen* (Gotha, 1810), p. 2.
33. 'Schöne Thätigkeit zu wecken | Sey des Edlen Wissenschaft; | Jeder denke, jeder thue | Als erwart' ihn gleiches Loos': Bechtolsheim, *Der erste September*, p. 43.
34. Reder, *Frauenbewegung*, p. 263.
35. 'Der hohen Mutter folgt die zarte, | Geliebte Tochter. Sie bewahrte | Ihr Abbild uns, als Helferin': Julie Freifrau von Bechtolsheim, *Empfang ihrer Majestät der Kaiserin Maria von Russland im Schlosse zu Eisenach im November 1818. Zu wohlthätigen Zwecken des Frauenvereins* (Gotha, 1818).
36. 'Ew. Kaiserl. Hoheit', 9–12.03.1817, THsAW, ZD 293, p. 89.
37. Bechtolsheim, *Der erste September*, pp. 28–29. Emphasis added.
38. Vick, *Congress of Vienna*, p. 36.
39. Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth', pp. 476, 478–79; Stella Musulin, *Vienna in the Age of Metternich: From Napoleon to Revolution, 1805–1848* (London, 1975), p. 109; Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals*, pp. 250–51.
40. Quataert, *Staging*, pp. 42–44.
41. Reder, *Frauenbewegung*, p. 263.
42. Helmut Walser Smith, *Germany, a Nation in its Time: Before, During, and After Nationalism, 1500–2000* (New York, 2020), pp. 204–05.
43. Quataert, *Staging*, p. 42.
44. Julie von Bechtolsheim to Ludwig von Herda, 29.03.1823, in GSA 20/129.

45. Maria Ågren, 'Lower State Servants and Home Office Work', in *The Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere in Europe: 16th to 19th Century*, ed. by Joachim Eibach and Margareth Lanzinger (London, 2020).
46. Reder, *Frauenbewegung*, p. 284.
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48. Ågren, *Making a Living*, pp. 87, 211; Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, 'Introduction', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (London, 1999).
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50. Reder, *Frauenbewegung*, p. 284.
51. Kontje, *Women*, p. 11; Sarah Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 16–17; Lissa Roberts, 'Practicing Oeconomy During the Second Half of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Introduction', *History and Technology*, 30.3 (2014).
52. Reder, *Frauenbewegung*, p. 284.
53. THsaW, ZD 295, p. 6; ZD 296, pp. 20, 148; ZD 297, pp. 58, 108; ZD 299, p. 154; ZD 300, p. 14.
54. Schmidt, *Julie von Bechtolsheim*, p. 151.
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73. 'Die Blumen aus Norden', THsaW, Großherzogliches Hausarchiv A XXV, Nr. 1067, p. 87; 'Abschiedsworte einer Bergbewohnerin', GSA 20/129.
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93. Bechtolsheim to Maria Pavlovna, 24.02.1814, THsaW, ZD 293, pp. 1–2; 23.02.1814, THsaW, ZD 293, pp. 10–11.
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