

BETTINA von ARNIM, born Brentano
(1785 – 1859)
Buried at Wiepersdorf
Writer

Born, Elisabeth Catharina Ludowica Magdalena, she preferred to go by the name of Bettine and so she is frequently credited as such by the authors of modern literary research.

Bettina's father was a merchant and the "Kurtrierische Resident" in Frankfurt a. M., Peter Anton Brentano (1735 – 1797). Her mother was Peter Anton's second wife, Maximiliane von La Roche (1756 – 1793) a daughter of the author Sophie von La Roche (1730 – 1807).

Bettina was the seventh child from this marriage. One of her elder brothers was the



Bettina Brentano, 1809

poet Clemens Brentano (1778 – 1842) to whom she felt a close bond, both in friendship and in spirit. He is said to have influenced her immensely in developing her particular sensitivity and outlook on life.

Clemens became acquainted with a fellow student, the young Achim von Arnim, in 1801 and their close friendship stimulated each other's writings and work. Both published and edited an acclaimed collection of folk songs ("Des Knaben Wunderhorn") and became involved in various spiritual and literary circles. Bettina also became included in this circle of friends and was involved in the ideas of the Romantic period. This eventually led to her marriage to Achim von Arnim.

- 1793 The death of her mother.
- 1793 -1797 Bettina is raised at the monastery of the "Ursulinen" at Fritzlar together with her three sisters.
- 1797 The death of her father. Initially Bettina lives temporarily in the household of her 20-year-old half-brother Franz at Frankfurt a. M. She and her sisters Lulu and Meline move to their grandmother Sophie von La Roche's house at Offenbach in the same year.
- 1801 Their grandmother now brings up the grandchildren.
Bettina meets Achim von Arnim for the first time.
She begins a one-sided friendship with Karoline von Günderode (also sometimes spelt Günerrode).
- 1806 Her friendship with Karoline von Günderode fails, who breaks off all connections.
Karoline von Günderode commits suicide.
After this event, Bettina begins a close motherly and friendly relationship with Goethe's mother.
- 1807 Her grandmother von La Roche dies.
Bettina visits Goethe and begins a correspondence with him.
- 1808 She stays in Munich, Landshut and other places; starts studying music with the "Hofkapellmeister" (conductor at court), Peter von Winter;
She becomes acquainted with Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Ludwig Tieck.
- 1810 Bettina makes the acquaintance of Beethoven in Vienna;

- She again visits Goethe.
She is engaged to Achim von Arnim;
- 1811 She marries Achim von Arnim on February 24th in Berlin.
They visit Goethe; a dispute with Christiane von Goethe takes place;
a rift develops between Goethe and Bettina.
- 1812 A futile attempt at reconciliation with Goethe.
- 1814 The family takes up residence in Wiepersdorf;
in the meantime their sons Freimund and Siegmund are born.
- from 1814 The family moves between Wiepersdorf and Berlin alternatively.
- 1823 Bettina and Achim suffer crisis with their marriage.
- 1830 Achim von Arnim's last visit to Bettina in Berlin in November/December;
- 1831 Achim dies on January 21st in Wiepersdorf.
In the summer of that year there is a cholera epidemic in Berlin and
Bettina involves herself in the relief measures in the poor areas of Berlin.
- 1835 The publication of "Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde".
Her son Kühnemund dies at the age of 18 after a bathing accident.
- 1837 The publication of the first volumes of Achim von Arnim's writings,
"Sämtliche Werke" by Wilhelm Grimm by order of Bettina.
- 1840 The publication of "Die Gündelode", a correspondence.
- 1842 The publication of "Dedie a Spontini", a song book.
Clemens Brentano dies on July 28th.
Meeting with Karl Marx in Kreuznach.
- 1843 The publication of "Dies Buch gehört dem König".
- 1844 Clemens Brentanos „Frühlingskranz aus Jugendbriefen ihm geflochten
wie er selbst schriftlich verlangte“ is published and immediately
confiscated.
After Bettina's personally intervention and appeal to King Friedrich
Wilhelm IV the book is released for publication.
- 1847 Bettina is sentenced to 2 months in prison for alleged defamation of the
municipal council but is able to escape from this sentence.
- 1847 "Ilius Pamphilius und die Ambrosia" is confiscated before it is published.
- 1848 "Ilius Pamphilius und die Ambrosia", correspondence with Philipp
Nathusius.
"An die aufgelöste Preußische Nationalversammlung", Stimmen aus
Paris.
- 1850 „Petöfi der Sonnengott“ is published.
- 1852 „Gespräche mit Dämonen“ is published.
- 1853 Bettina's entire works are published in 11 volumes.
- 1854 Bettina suffers a stroke.
- 1859 Bettina dies after a long period of illness on January 20th in Berlin

Bettina was not an obedient, order following child and would not grow up to be like that as an adult either. She needed her personal independence, and allowed her actions to follow her feelings and affections. She wanted to be paid attention to and did not stay demurely in the background. "I require keeping my freedom. To what end? – To the end that I can achieve and fulfil what my inner voice tells me to do". Her alert intellect and the pronounced efforts to exchange ideas did not only end in many debates but, above all, in correspondence with several prolific historical figures. She brought together and published these correspondences, but only from her side of them and as such, they are not very reliable as sources. They are not always accurate and authentic in her publications and, if it took her fancy, she added

fictitious letters and formed them all into a novel in letter form. Her life married to a nobleman of the landed gentry was not to her taste. It was expected that she should be a competent and efficient lady of the manor and stay at his side, but she could not keep up this pretence. Thus she lived predominantly in Berlin while her husband Achim von Arnim took over the farming of the manors Bärwalde, Wiepersdorf etc. Therefore the question of finding better opportunities for the education of her children would most probably not have been the only decisive factor for the division of the household. As a wife and a mother she did not have an easy time. She had given birth to and brought up seven children. Her husband was ill many times and money troubles were the order of the day. Bettina needed the lively atmosphere of a city and the cultural lifestyle, intellectual exchange of ideas and social interaction that came with such a life.



Bettina von Arnim,
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She revealed her talents as writer /poet and her independent intellectual power manifested itself again only after Achim's death.

To an increasing degree she took up socio-critical subjects. She defended victims of persecution, started petitions, demanded civil rights and liberties for the individual and the press and complained about the lack of general education and censorship. In the end she even took a critical look at the type of rule and social condition of her time in her work "Dies Buch gehört dem König".

More and more she met with rejection and lack of understanding by her own family, in her aristocratic surroundings and by the authorities. However, this did not prevent her from remaining true to her principles.

Works by Bettina von Arnim:

- Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde
- Die Günderode
- Dedie a Spontini
- Dies Buch gehört dem König
- Clemens Brentanos Frühlingskranz aus Jugendbriefen ihm geflochten wie er selbst schriftlich verlangte
- Ilius Pamphilus und die Ambrosia
- An die aufgelöste Preußische Nationalversammlung, Stimmen aus Paris, Berlin 1848
- Petöfi der Sonnengott
- Gespräche mit Dämonen, des Königsbuchs zweiter Band

A small selection of bibliographical material:

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Further information:

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<http://www.gutenberg.spiegel.de/arnim>
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