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 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-older 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 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.
Bettina and Achim suffer crisis with their marriage.

1835 The publication of “Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde”.

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 Günderode”, a correspondence.

1842 The publication of “Dedie a Spontini”, a song book.

1844 Clemens Brentano dies on July 28th.
Meeting with Karl Marx in Kreuznach.

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 Pamphilus und die Ambrosia” is confiscated before it is published.

1848 “Ilius Pamphilus und die Ambrosia”, correspondence with Philipp
Nathusius.

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.

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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Püschel, Ursula: Bettina von Arnim – politisch, Erkundungen, Entdeckungen, Erkenntnisse, Bielefeld 2005
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