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# THE TWO FACES OF A NATIONAL HERO: ULRICH VON HUTTEN'S *ARMINIUS* AND HEINRICH VON KLEIST'S *HERRMANN*

RACHEL MAGSHAMHRÁIN

As A.D. Smith notes, “[a]ncient heroes [. . .] are not sought out for themselves, nor because there is any desire to return to them or their ways. [. . .] The cult of golden ages and heroes can only be grasped in the context of nationalist mythologies of communal pasts, in which they serve as focal points of comparison with the present [. . .]. The historicity of heroes and golden ages alike is quite secondary.”<sup>1</sup> Secondary or not, in anticipation of the 2009 two-thousandth anniversary of the *clades Variana*, the defeat of three Roman legions in a region of modern Germany referred to by Tacitus only as the *saltus Teutoburgensis* (Teutoburg Forest),<sup>2</sup> recent scholarship redoubled efforts to establish the historical facts,<sup>3</sup> including the precise location of the battle, and to separate the truth from the myth of what came to be seen as a foundational victory. This essay, however, is not primarily interested in the historicity of the battle and its hero, Herrmann, except where history functions as a trope for veracity. Its focus is rather on two literary incarnations of the hero that came out of the Teutoburg Forest as one of Germany’s legendary founding fathers: Arminius or (after Luther’s intervention) Herrmann, protector of *Germania libera*, the Cheruscan chief who

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), 200.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.60.3.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the ranking of ancient sources in terms of their historical accuracy in Horst Callies, “Bemerkungen zu Aussagen und Aussagehaltung antiker Quellen und neuerer Literatur zur Varusschlacht und ihrer Lokalisierung,” in *Arminius und die Varusschlacht: Geschichte, Mythos, Literatur*, ed. Rainer Wiegels and Winfried Woesler, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Paderborn, 2003), 175–83. See also discussion in Musolf, this volume.

united the Germanic tribes in triumph over an invading army.<sup>4</sup> The first version of the hero is found in Ulrich von Hutten's short dialogue entitled simply *Arminius*, written around 1515 and published posthumously in 1529, the other in Heinrich von Kleist's *Herrmannschlacht* (written 1808). In both of these texts we encounter a similar set of standard motifs, including that of the Germans as a freedom-loving people, but these ideas are treated in diametrically opposed ways by the two authors. For example, in its exploration of freedom, understood not as an intrinsic value but rather as a category that can be filled with radically different (and, indeed, dangerous) meanings, Kleist's text, although long read as a straightforward harnessing of historico-myth for the purposes of crude anti-Napoleonic nationalistic propaganda, reveals itself to be a clever deconstruction of the national narrative (see also Zelić, this volume). In fact, unlike von Hutten's uncomplicated if nakedly nationalistic text, Kleist's, although more immediately associated with the worst excesses of German nationalism, is not designed to be taken at face value at all, its hero personifying, rather, the very process of mythopoeia. Kleist's is a Herrmann who, while appearing to embody the German national ideal, seems upon closer inspection, surprisingly, almost to have been conceived from the negative Roman perspective, turning out to be less a hero than a prime example of that "race born to lie," as Velleius Paterculus had characterised the Germans in his first-century *Historia Romana* (circa 30 CE).<sup>5</sup>

Tacitus, upon whose work both of these Arminius texts draw, was virtually unknown in Europe until the rediscovery of his works by Italian Renaissance scholars and, subsequently, German Humanists. By coincidence, the climate in Germany at the time of this revival was particularly favourable to a proto-nationalistic mythologizing of an ancient shared past, and so the newly-discovered historical figure of Arminius, leader of the German uprising in AD 9 and liberator of Germany (as Tacitus had dubbed him), was enthusiastically embraced north of the

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<sup>4</sup> As Frank Becker points out, it would be incorrect to assume absolute consensus about who, precisely, the *Gründervater* or founding father of Germany was. Arminius' rival, for instance, in the Catholic camp was the eighth-century English missionary Boniface who converted the Franks: "Boniface was declared the real founding father of the German nation on the basis that it was only in the course of Christianization that any sense of statehood (seen as the prerequisite to any subsequent nationalist project) emerged in a Germany that had hitherto consisted of battling tribes. The full significance of this portrayal of Boniface only becomes clear in the context of his rival Arminius whom the Protestants had ordained as the ancient founder of the German nation. The fact that Arminius had fought [ . . . ] Rome in order to free Germania suited the anti-Roman Catholic thrust of the Protestant nationalist project": Frank Becker, "Konfessionelle Nationsbilder im Deutschen Kaiserreich," in *Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (Frankfurt a.M., 2001), 389–418, at 405 (my translation).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Velleius Paterculus, *The Tiberian Narrative*, ed. A.J. Woodman (Cambridge, 1977), 77.

Alps, and celebrated in the centuries to follow as a national hero, whether under his own Latinate name or as the more suitably Germanic- and bellicose-sounding He(e)r-Mann (lit. 'army-man'). So between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries we find several literary reworkings of the events in the Teutoburg Forest, all drawing on the same set of antique sources, principally Tacitus' *Germania* and *Annals*, but also Paterculus' *Compendium of Roman History* and Lucius Annaeus Florus' *Epitome of Roman History*. One reason for the popularity of this particular narrative was that the David-and-Goliath battle between Rome and an alliance of tribes from east of the Rhine provided ideal raw material from which to fashion Germany a suitable foundational narrative or myth.<sup>6</sup> It was a story that could easily be moulded to create the imaginary relations within the population that were needed for an invented national community to emerge.

Three centuries may lie between our two works, but, as is increasingly recognized,<sup>7</sup> the nationalist concerns (or at least rhetoric) of German Humanists coincided to a large extent with those of Germans in Kleist's period when the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire had left a nation-shaped vacuum in its wake. So, while of course there were differences between the 'nationalisms' of a Conrad Celtis (see Flood, this volume) and, say, a Fichte, enormous social and political upheaval in both periods meant that the idea of a unified nation held a certain specific appeal for each. As Hirschi notes, although we are perhaps not used to thinking of Humanism in what may appear to be the slightly solecistic terms of nationalism, it was in fact a concept that found particular resonance in the chaotic setting of the late medieval period, providing a much-wanted sense of belonging and stability. The concept was at the time, he continues, however, "of an imaginary rather than of a concrete or practical nature [. . .]. Nevertheless, it did colour perception [. . .] and provide a sense of security. In this counterfactual world, everything had its place."<sup>8</sup> To quote Peter Bietenholz, just as the Italian Humanists "habitually took pride in presenting themselves as [. . .] direct descendants of the glorious Romans, their German counterparts were delighted to find in Tacitus' *liberator Germaniae* an ancestor who would help them match the Italian pretensions."<sup>9</sup> In any case, the presence of such proto-nationalist tendencies in the German political world of the sixteenth century in turn explains why Hutten's text was suddenly revisited by a German-speaking central European

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of all the various reworkings, see, for example, Klaus Bemma, *Arminius und die Deutschen* (Essen, 2002), esp. 103–12.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Hans Kloft, "Die Idee einer deutschen Nation zu Beginn der frühen Neuzeit: Überlegungen zur *Germania* des Tacitus und zum *Arminius* Ulrichs von Hutten," in *Arminius und die Varusschlacht*, ed. Wiegels and Woesler, 199–209.

<sup>8</sup> Caspar Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen: Konstruktionen einer deutschen Ehrgemeinschaft an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2005), 378 (my translation).

<sup>9</sup> Peter Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden, 1994), 183.

readership some three hundred years later. To them the work was of obvious and direct appeal, even though now the enemy was more west of the Rhine than south of the Alps. It is no coincidence, then, that the first translation of Hutten's Latin text into German appeared in 1815 at what was arguably a peak of national patriotic fervour in Germany—*in-spe* following the defeat of Napoleon by Wellington and Blücher at Waterloo.<sup>10</sup> In addition, as Yasser Djazaerly has pointed out, the revival of Hutten's work, particularly his Arminius dialogue, was due in no small measure to its reception by Goethe,<sup>11</sup> who, when he came across the works, was so struck by the timeli- and timelessness of these old texts that he declared himself to be "astonished to discover [in the texts] something that had first emerged so long ago now manifesting itself again anew in our time."<sup>12</sup>

Of the many literary adaptations of the Arminius material (by Hutten, Lohenstein, Hans Michel Moscherosch, J.E. Schlegel, Klopstock, Grabbe, and others), it is Hutten's dialogue that is credited with having started the "Herrmann cult in German poetry"<sup>13</sup> and with having influenced later interpretations, including Kleist's—although the nature of the influence in this infamous case, does not, as we shall see, take the form of a straightforward borrowing, but more of a wholesale deconstruction.<sup>14</sup> A great deal of the perennial appeal of Hutten's text in this three-hundred-year period derives from his particular characterisation of the German people. As Elisabeth Monyk puts it, "it is in the Arminius dialogue that we first really encounter the idea of German nature as inherently freedom- and independence-loving." Hutten's text is also the first, she notes, to emphasize to such a degree the major role played by Arminius in the liberation of Germania from the tyranny of Rome.<sup>15</sup> If Hutten's text is credited with having started the cult of Herrmann worship, then the 1808 play by Kleist, *Die Hermannsschlacht*, described by Kuehnemund in his study of 1953 as "the greatest

<sup>10</sup> This 1815 edition, edited by Friedrich Fröhlich, was published in Vienna, and provided both the Latin original and German translation.

<sup>11</sup> Yasser Derwiche Djazaerly, "Goethe's Reception of Ulrich von Hutten," *Goethe Yearbook* 15 (2008): 1–18.

<sup>12</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke*, vol. 5, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, ed. Emil Staiger (Frankfurt a.M., 1970), 644 (my translation).

<sup>13</sup> Wilhelm Scherer quoted in Justus H. Ulbricht, "Hermann heeßt'r: Germanenphantasien als deutsche Selbstbilder zwischen Befreiungs- und Vernichtungskriegen," in *Aufbrüche, Seitenpfade, Abwege: Suchbewegungen und Subkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Linse et al. (Würzburg, 2004), 135–46, at 136 (my translation).

<sup>14</sup> For a brief diachronic overview of different appropriations and adaptations of the "Hermannsschlacht" story see Victoria Pagán, "Beyond Teutoburg: Transgression and Transformation in Tacitus Annales 1.61–62," *Classical Philology* 94 (1999): 302–20, at 316, n. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Elisabeth Monyk, *Zwischen Barbarenklischee und Germanenmythos: Eine Analyse österreichischer Geschichtslehrbücher zwischen 1891 und 1945* (Vienna, 2006), 20 (my translation).

modern interpret[ation] of the Arminius theme,"<sup>16</sup> arguably finishes it. It does not, however, deal a lethal blow to the tradition in the way that we might expect from its later reception. In other words, Kleist's text deviates from the inherited paradigm not because it indulges in the rabid xenophobia ascribed to it by admiring Nazis,<sup>17</sup> but rather because its version of the German national hero is one which diverges radically, if subtly, from established patterns of heroism in national foundational narratives, giving those with eyes to see it all the ammunition needed to criticise nationalism's rhetoric and worst excesses.

If in traditional foundational narratives we are presented with a supposedly exemplary, usually male,<sup>18</sup> preferably although not necessarily real, and ideally long-dead man of action, a brave warrior whose bravery is tempered only with a sense of justice and fair play, and whose selfless struggle for his people's freedom is painted in large and unambiguous strokes by an unapologetically sympathetic author, then Hutten's work is a classic example of the genre. But while Hutten's dialogue straightforwardly, one might even say crudely, and more or less uncritically apotheosizes Arminius into a hero of national dimensions, Kleist's work is the diametric opposite. Kleist's Herrmann is an anti-hero, prepared to manipulate both Romans and Germans, and indeed anyone else to hand, in the dogged pursuit of a particular kind of freedom, namely one that creates a united and Roman-free *Germania magna* over which he can then rule. Moreover, and belying his name, he defeats a militarily superior force not by the methods and strategies of standard military conflict, nor indeed by dint of his derring-do and strategic genius on the battlefield, but rather by thoroughly nefarious, backstairs means, engaging in a campaign more of misinformation than of warfare, and, somewhat precociously, employing all the stratagems and tricks of partisan combat that the Peninsular Wars were just introducing to Europe in 1808. Crucially, Kleist's Herrmann considers these underhand measures to be completely justified by his ultimate goal, which is after all that of 'freedom' (where the term is emphatically understood by Kleist as empty of any fixed universal significance,

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Kuehnemund, *Arminius or the Rise of a National Symbol in Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1953), xii.

<sup>17</sup> Certain lines of the play, notoriously, found favour with Alfred Rosenberg, main ideologist of the Nazi party.

<sup>18</sup> On the role of gender and gender stereotypes in nationalistic myth-making, see, for example, Tamar Mayer, "Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage," in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. eadem (London, 2000), 1–22, esp. 10. See also Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (1998): 242–69, esp. 244: "[W]omen are relegated to minor, often symbolic roles in nationalist movements and conflicts, either as icons of nationhood, to be elevated and defended, or as the booty or spoils of war, to be denigrated and disgraced. [. . .] [T]he real actors are men who are defending their freedom, their honour, their homeland and their women."



but full of potential local meanings). In what is almost a textbook example of political cunning and manipulation, Kleist's protagonist pretends to be an ally of the occupying Roman forces, employing the rhetoric of subservience that speaks to the invading force's sense of innate cultural superiority, but all the while secretly plotting their downfall. And, while Arminius embodies what Hutten sees as specifically German virtues, including directness of speech, sharing with his fellow countrymen a "frank manner of speaking [. . .], avoid[ing] flattery" and "speaking freely and seriously,"<sup>19</sup> interestingly Herrmann's anti-heroism in Kleist's text is not cast as a particularly German characteristic. He is, in fact, the text suggests, rather international in this respect, almost matched in cunning by the Roman legate Ventidius, who, in his turn, attempts to ingratiate himself with the Germans and convince them that the Roman invasion is nothing more than a temporary, necessary, and benevolent occupation by a superior culture. However, Ventidius is out-manoeuvred by the infinitely more devious Herrmann, and the Roman legions are led into a marshy forest trap and routed, whereupon Herrmann receives in reward the crown of Germany he so dearly covets.

Hutten's dialogue takes up where the twelfth of Lucian's popular thirty *Dialogues of the Dead* left off. Hannibal, Scipio, and Alexander have competed for the title of greatest general of all time, a contest presided over by King Minos, one of the judges of the underworld, and which Alexander wins. In Hutten's version, Arminius, who has arrived too late, confronts Minos, demanding that the competition be rerun because his military achievements have not been recognized and weighed against those of the other competitors. He then describes to Minos his many outstanding virtues, and defends himself against the various counter-arguments brought by his three rivals. All of his points are conceded by Minos, who finally declares, however, that the original judgement cannot be overturned in retrospect. He nevertheless sends out Mercury to spread throughout the world news of Arminius' many achievements, thereby ensuring him a legacy as the greatest *freedom* fighter of all time, and awarding him "the primary place amongst the defenders of liberty" (*inter patriae libertatis vindices primo loco*).<sup>20</sup> The dialogue is an almost bafflingly simple piece of work in which the character of Arminius is a one-dimensional heroic type with neither nuance nor shade, free from any vices that might serve to humanize him or make him plausible. This is, then, a text of the classic Arminius-literature type, characterized by Kuehnemund as *Tendenzliteratur* (that political, cultural, and moral propaganda that generally emerges in times of crisis), and featuring two core themes: "Rather death than slavery and In unity lies strength."<sup>21</sup> Only in one small detail is the piece

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ernest Walker, *Ulrich von Hutten's Arminius: An English Translation with Analysis and Commentary* (Bern, 2008), 24.

<sup>20</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 35. Latin original taken from Hans-Gert Roloff, "Der Arminius des Ulrich von Hutten," in *Arminius und die Varusschlacht*, 211–38, at 234.

<sup>21</sup> Kuehnemund, *Arminius*, xiii.

somewhat anomalous, as Bernd Fischer points out: citing Tacitus' *Annals*, Hutten's text notes that Arminius may have freed the Germans, but he was in turn killed by his compatriots because of *their* love of freedom, which they clearly felt to be incompatible with being ruled by him. As Fischer notes, "it is interesting that Hutten does not attempt to smooth over the contradictions inherent in a freedom fighter who is potentially also a tyrant."<sup>22</sup> While Hutten's text does not further explore this idea of a lethal freedom that requires the death of the very hero who has achieved it, it is easy to see in this uncharacteristic passage a ghostly precursor of Kleist's damning critique of the uncritical embracing of undenominated freedom-as-such.

Traditionally, Klopstock's *Hermanns Schlacht* is seen as the immediate source of Kleist's retelling of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest.<sup>23</sup> And, indeed, by the time a first German translation of Hutten's text was published, Kleist had already been dead for four years. However, if, as Djazaerly points out, it is likely that Goethe used Hutten as the basis of his *Götz von Berlichingen* of 1773,<sup>24</sup> then we can at least hypothesize that Kleist may have known the Latin original even though the German version was not available in his lifetime. But whether or not Kleist's knowledge of Hutten's original can be positively determined, Kleist's text does rely heavily on Tacitus,<sup>25</sup> and as Tacitus is also the explicit source of much of Hutten's text (Tacitus is even summoned before Minos as a witness, and his descriptions of Germany and Arminius are cited verbatim and at length), they are closely enough linked intertextually via this third party to make noteworthy the sheer extent to which Kleist's poisoned chalice of a national drama deviates from Hutten's Arminius. In fact, when these two texts and their heroes are placed side by side, we discover a series of uncannily precise inversions or negative mirrorings, as though it were precisely Hutten's brand of mythopoeia that Kleist was attacking.

The most notable of the deviations is perhaps the fact that in Hutten's version the overweening ambition of Kleist's Herrmann is, if not missing, then at least certainly not pathological. In Hans-Gert Roloff's words, Hutten's hero is "modest, only interested in virtue, not in fame [. . .], but proud nevertheless of his achievements and of the various obstacles he has overcome."<sup>26</sup> The main

<sup>22</sup> Bernd Fischer, *Das Eigene und das Eigentliche: Klopstock, Herder, Fichte, Kleist. Episoden aus der Konstruktionsgeschichte nationaler Intentionalitäten* (Berlin, 1995), 79 (my translation).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Ebrahim Estarami, "Das Verhältnis von Kleists *Die Hermannsschlacht* zu den historischen Quellen," *Pazhubesh-e Zabanba-ye Khareji* 40 (2007): 5–16.

<sup>24</sup> Djazaerly, "Goethe's Reception of Ulrich von Hutten," 6.

<sup>25</sup> Estarami notes, for example, the parallels between a Roman commander's description of the marshy woods in which Varus is trapped (*Die Hermannsschlacht*, lines 1891–1896) and Tacitus' description of the same territory in *Annals* 1.63–64.

<sup>26</sup> Roloff, "Der Arminius des Ulrich von Hutten," 219 (my translation).

characteristic of Kleist's Herrmann, on the other hand, the very driving force of his personality, is his willingness to subordinate everything to an all-consuming desire to achieve what is *his* ultimate goal: not German freedom *per se*, as the character's rhetoric (and indeed the reception of the figure since Hutten) might lead us to believe, but rather what Germania's freedom brings *with it*, power for whoever enthrones himself as ruler of what will then be a substantial territory united in the defeat of a common enemy.

Herrmann's untrammelled thirst for personal power is not as easily demonstrated as one might think, though, precisely because of his gift for cunning and slippery speech, something that deceives both his fellow characters and has perennially also duped the audience. (After all, in drama, as there is generally no narrator, the viewing public is reliant on the speech of key figures on stage for orientation, and Herrmann, quite simply, is not to be relied upon.) He has no real confidantes in the play, an absolute loner in pursuit of a kingdom, never revealing his thoughts, and rarely revealing his true intentions either to allies or enemies (and therefore, by extension, audience), unless they absolutely must be revealed. And, even then, what is made known is often not the entire truth, but a secondary deceit to replace the first one. Lies and half-truths are Herrmann's stock-in-trade, and indeed his only real weapon since his military power is so limited. However, at certain junctures his mask of deceit slips momentarily, as, for instance, in the scene where, in an incongruous display of lack of self-control, he fights other German princes to garner for himself the honour of killing the Roman general Varus. In this scene, he threatens violence to the very comrades who have won his victory for him, but who may now snatch from under his nose the strategically all-important title of Varus-slayer. Herrmann's ally, Fust of the Cimbri, asks to be allowed to kill Varus to assuage the guilt he feels for having been conquered earlier in the Roman campaign and made a traitor to his Fatherland, as he puts it. To this request, however, Herrmann replies in uncharacteristic rage, challenging Fust to a duel: "To hell, / Fallen son of Teut, with *your* revenge! / Am I to relinquish the honour / Which I have chased these twelve long years, / So that you can purge yourself of your shame? / Approach, draw your weapon, make ready to fight— / And damned be the one who touches the Roman / Before we have settled this quarrel between us" (ll. 2501–2508).<sup>27</sup> A strange statement, if it is to be believed,<sup>28</sup> from one who early on in the play

<sup>27</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Hermannsschlacht*, vol. 1.7 of *Sämtliche Werke: Brandenburger Ausgabe*, ed. Roland Reuß and Peter Staengle (Frankfurt a. M., 2001) (my translation).

<sup>28</sup> It is a typically Kleistian ploy to have a liar and arch-manipulator at the core of the play's action, controlling the flow of information not only to other characters but, by extension, to the audience. The cleverness of our hero leaves the play's interpreters and audience, like the other characters in the play, at the mercy of Herrmann's impressive armoury of words. This puts all readings of the play at a distinct disadvantage, trapping

was so scathing in his criticism of his compatriots' concerns about private losses and gains when their country was all the while being overrun by Roman invaders. Various German princes—Wolf, Thuiskomar, Dagobert, and Selgar—had tried to encourage Herrmann to save Germany from the Romans, whereupon he had asked them first to “Lay waste to your lands, slaughter / Your cattle, set fire to your camps” (374–381). When they replied, astonished by his request, that “these are the very things / That we are fighting this war to defend!” (387), Herrmann, in seeming contempt of their petty selfishness, retorted, “Forgive me, I thought it was for your freedom” (388), before stalking off indignantly. So, while apparently scornful of his fellow Germans' inability to leave their selfish concerns and squabbles aside and to fight together for a common and greater cause, Herrmann's main concern later in the play is precisely such a selfish one—it is not the death of Varus *per se* and the defeat that comes with it that interest him, but the fear that he might not be *perceived* as the one who has effected this defeat, a defeat that would serve to mark him out as the natural future king of Germany. His rare outburst of uncontrolled fury stems not, in other words, from any threat to Germany's freedom, but from the threat to the free rein of his ambition, from the fear that the twelve years he has spent plotting his political ascent may have been in vain if he does not have the symbolic victory of slaying the commander of the invading legions and Caesar's man in Germania. He was, after all, not first to the battlefield, as Komar, captain in the army of the Suevian chieftain Marbod, confirms to his leader when he notes that, the title of Kleist's play notwithstanding, “Even Arminius / Must concede that the battle was won by you!” (2459–2462).

Nevertheless, Herrmann's self-control is such that he seem to lose command of his emotions and therefore actions at only one other juncture in the play, when he is visibly (if quite possibly not genuinely) moved by the war song of the German bards (*sic*) (2246–2247). So we have little explicit evidence of his true intentions. If, however, we are in any doubt regarding his dubious motives, some insights are

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the reader in a kind of liar's paradox, trying to gain a purchase on a text that is as slippery as its deceptive protagonist. As interpreters we ask questions of the work that find their counterpart within the text in Aristan's fateful question about the truth of where Germania lies, a naïve question for which he pays with his life. However, although we can never fully break through the tissue of lies and get to the truth (for one thing because truth in this sense does not exist as a category for Herrmann), the text and its anti-hero have certain undeniable “tells,” including the series of precise inversions of the classical national heroics found in Hutten's dialogue. Another tell at an aesthetic level is the strange and uncomfortable admixture of styles in the play, ranging from the grotesque and comic to the tragic and heroic (cf. Zelić, this volume). If it is not possible to discover precisely where truth lies in this text, we can examine these fault-lines in the text, and safely infer from these and other discrepancies, as well as from the uncomfortable interpretative situation in which the work deliberately places us, that the text is saturated with a tricky brand of Kleistian irony that is designed to render meaning infinitely problematic.

vouchsafed us, if not by displays of emotion, then by slight slips of the tongue. One such slip is the strange statement Kleist's Herrmann makes when warned that his ambush plan leaves Cheruscia's flank at the Lippe River exposed to a potential attack by the Roman Pästus. Seemingly indifferent to this threat in the manner of truly brave and selfless national heroes, Herrmann replies: "Defend Cheruscia! What? Wherever Herrmann stands and triumphs / That is where Cheruscia is" (1854–1855). It may seem at first, in the context of all his assurances that the freedom of Germany is his ultimate and only objective, that this lack of interest in his tribal lands reflects an overriding concern for Germany as a whole. But the strange language and logic of the statement demand closer attention. Herrmann's metonymous replacement of territorial concerns with himself, his own person, inadvertently reveals that he himself is the only sovereign territory that interests him, and it is for himself and not for general freedom that he is willing to stake so much. It is his positive freedom to rule Germany rather than Germany's freedom from tyranny that is his concern.

Hutten's Arminius, by contrast, assures Minos repeatedly of his devotion to the higher cause of German freedom, despite various claims by the other great generals present that his actions were merely self-serving ambition disguised as freedom fighting. Hannibal, for instance, asserts that, while Arminius prides himself on having "removed the yoke of servitude from [his] people," it was only to "impose a yoke of [his] own."<sup>29</sup> To this charge, Arminius replies that "the desire for power was never part of my thoughts," and adds that it is only jealousy that inspires such accusations, and that "we all know from human experience that the person possessing the greatest virtues will also be the one to engender the most envy."<sup>30</sup> While the brevity and somewhat wooden nature of the piece does not provide us with much in the way of evidence about the nature of Arminius' character or intentions, whether heroic or base, we may be sure for another reason that he is hiding nothing. Minos, privy to the truth of the matter in the way of judges of the underworld, finds for Arminius in his appeal, declaring *ex cathedra*, as it were, that far from being self-servingly ambitious, Arminius is the very quintessence of what a freedom fighter should be, and that no one has "achieved greater advantages for the sake of [his] people."<sup>31</sup>

In the case of the Kleistian Herrmann, neither regard for the *Gemeinwesen* nor those other important attributes of Hutten's Arminius, personal bravery and "military courage,"<sup>32</sup> are in evidence, despite the protagonist's careful self-styling as hero of Germany's struggle. To the contrary, *actio distans* or illocutionary warfare rather than direct acts of bravery or violence seem to be our anti-hero's preferred mode: he generally contrives to have other people act for him, including

<sup>29</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 35.

on the battlefield, even managing, as we have seen, to turn up late to the very battle that Kleist, ironically, named for him — so late, in fact, that the Suevians and Marbod have already won him his laurels.

It is not, in other words, in battle but rather in outflanking of a political and rhetorical kind that Kleist's odd specimen of a national hero shines. In conversation with the Roman legate Ventidius, Herrmann had intimated as much, saying, in his forked-tongued way, that since the battle in which Ariovist was defeated, "I have not returned to the battlefield; / That was a lesson I will not soon forget. / In the midst of the terrible chaos, it was as though / An apparition came to me and warned / That fortune did not favour me here" (442–445). But this admission should not be mistaken for an uncharacteristic lapse into frankness: although, on the one hand, Herrmann seems to admit that his talent does not lie in battle, this act of revelation is intended only to conceal from the Romans his plans to defeat them, which, true to his lying word, will not involve any courage on the battlefield on this part. Be that as it may, and bearing in mind Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is merely politics by other means, this non-fighting Herrmann of Kleist's cannot help seeming an unusual choice of national symbol, not least because the most enduring image of the Arminius figure is that of the Hermann monument near Detmold, where he stands brandishing a sword in a warlike pose reminiscent, bizarrely, of nothing so much as a bellicose version of the Statue of Liberty (cf. Brechtken, this volume).

Herrmann's self-centred ambition (rather than any devotion to the commonweal of his countrymen) as well as the cowardly distance he always keeps between himself and any battle action can be seen at work in tandem and most effectively in one of the more cunning of his plans. Determined to turn to his personal advantage a conflict that he cannot win by strength, he uses a combination of these less-than-heroic traits to ensure as a matter of utmost priority that it is clear to all the German tribes, even those in the Roman camp, that the triumph over the Roman legions is due not to the concerted efforts of all involved, or even to the best German army or warrior, but rather to him as unique author of the masterful ambush plan. To this end, he shoots arrows, the ultimate form of fighting *in distans*, into the camps of all the Germans, telling them to join with *him* in *his* uprising. Using what are literally *Flug-blätter* in an early act of blanket leafleting, he pins by arrow his name to the event, marking the territory as his and the *Schlacht* as Herrmann's. These arrows also serve to pin down Herrmann's real meaning, in a sort of early literalization of the idea of the Lacanian anchoring point, or "point de capiton."<sup>33</sup> The missile missives cut through all Herrmann's obfuscation, making it clear that Herrmann, as the mastermind of the victory if not its bravest warrior, is staking his claim as the country's leader, even though it is Herrmann's stated intention to crown his Suevian archrival,

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<sup>33</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), 117.

Marbod, king of Germany once Rome has been defeated. But we would do well, as Marbod does not, to examine Herrmann's declared intentions very carefully. Oblivious to the subtle war being waged by Herrmann at a rhetorical level, Marbod reads aloud without suspicion Herrmann's plan for him: "to join with him / [. . .] And to exterminate the whole hellish brood / In the marshes of the Teutoburg Forest. / As my prize, when victory has been won, / He wants to crown me German king" (1331–1334). Despite what seems to be a magnanimous gesture of respect and recognition of Marbod and the Suevians' military superiority, Herrmann, who knows that he cannot win on the battlefield, subtly makes this promise to Marbod into an almost imperceptible claim to kingship of a united Germany for himself—for it necessarily takes a higher, even superior power to bestow kingship over this newly-founded proto-nation. In other words, if it is within Herrmann's power to declare Marbod king, then this can only mean that Herrmann outranks Marbod, and is automatically, contrary to his explicit declarations, the obvious, indeed only, choice of ruler himself.

While Walker is correct to point out in his comparison of Kleist and Hutten that "the nineteenth[-]century drama could sustain developments of plot and motivation which the sixteenth-century dialogue could not,"<sup>34</sup> it is important, nevertheless, to point out that Hutten's national hero occupies the diametrically opposite end of the spectrum to Kleist's master of cunning and self-promotion, declaring of himself that he was not motivated by any "desire for fame, or greed."<sup>35</sup> And, again, Minos is our guarantor of the truth of this claim, announcing from his divine position of omniscience "I know that all that was said was true, unembellished by Arminius."<sup>36</sup> Arminius' honesty, which Minos again and again confirms, and which indeed Tacitus, acting as a witness on behalf of Arminius, also underwrites, is, as we have seen, a major point of difference between these two versions of the same national hero. While Hutten's Arminius tells nothing but the truth, at times to the point that his truthfulness seems arrogantly boastful and perhaps a little unseemly, Kleist's Herrmann is, when not lying, then being manipulatively economical with the facts. Truth as such and as a worthy end in itself, so important to Arminius, is of absolutely no interest to Kleist's protagonist. He is, of course, not averse to telling the truth, but only when and if it serves his purpose. Herrmann's radically instrumentalist approach to truth and lies starkly contrasts not only with Arminius' honesty but also with the truth-preoccupation of his own compatriots in Kleist's play. His allies in the text have a diametrically different (and somewhat simplistic) attitude to information, their preoccupation with facts as a good and an end in themselves causing one of Herrmann's rare outbursts. When his embellishments of Roman crimes in Cheruscia for the purposes of anti-Roman propaganda are met by the

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 124.

<sup>35</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 35.

puzzled “whys” and “hows” of his fellow Germans, who are perplexed that his claims do not correspond to the truth, he loses patience with them, exclaiming that the Germans, with their constant exclamations of puzzlement, are as stupid as aurochs (937). Unlike them, he has no such compunctions, inventing Roman crimes where none at all exist, and, where needs must, possibly even committing them as well in the Romans’ stead. Arguably the rape of the German girl Hally is a case in point, coming as it does immediately after Herrmann’s ominous statement to his captain: “Come, we’ll slip stealthily through the streets / And see what fortune may bring us” (1526–1527).<sup>37</sup>

Another demonstration of Herrmann’s strictly utilitarian approach to truth and lies can be found in the scene where he tells his (admittedly rather vapid and vain) wife Thusnelda the unvarnished truth about Rome’s secret colonialist intentions towards the local populace. He does so not because he feels that it is imperative she should know the truth for its own sake, but rather in order to get her to kill her Roman suitor, the legate Ventidius, whom she imagines to be genuinely and deeply in love with her. To this end, Herrmann forces her to read and reread the letter in which Ventidius’ betrayal of her is revealed, the letter containing one of her blonde locks as a sample for the captured-hair trade in Rome.<sup>38</sup> Another case of “vanquish by proxy,” Arminius disposes of Ventidius by sending his wife into a jealous fury which drives her to feed her erstwhile lover to a wild bear.

While Kleist’s Herrmann uses a weaponized language and deliberately fans the flames of rumour, suspicion, and fear so that the local German population will take action against the occupying Romans, Hutten’s Arminius rejects any such distortions and exaggerations, for whatever purpose, saying “I do not consider it necessary to try to equal the magnitude of this deed with my words.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, in precise contrast to Kleist’s plot, Hutten’s Arminius criticizes not

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<sup>37</sup> This thesis is not as improbable as it might at first seem. While Regina Schäfer does not explicitly accuse Herrmann of Hally’s rape, she does note that Herrmann’s stated intention to make Roman trouble where none exists at the end of Act IV, Scene 3 is followed immediately and abruptly in the next scene by news of Hally’s rape, encouraging us to see the rape as the direct outcome of Herrmann’s devious plan. So, while Elystan Griffiths and others have seen Herrmann, although willing to use the rape for his political ends, as ultimately privately dismayed at Hally’s fate, Schäfer suggests not only that Herrmann’s dismay may be purely public, but also that it is quite possible that he took matters into his own hands. See Regina Schäfer, “Der gefälschte Brief: Eine unkonventionelle Hypothese zu Kleists ‘Hermannsschlacht,’” *Kleistjahrbuch* 40 (1993): 181–89, at 183. See also Elystan Griffiths, *Political Change and Human Emancipation in the Works of Heinrich von Kleist* (Rochester, NY, 2005), 63.

<sup>38</sup> *Germania crines* [German hair], mentioned for example, by Ovid in his *Amores* (1.14.45), was one of the spoils of Roman expansionist war, and used in Rome in the lucrative wig trade.

<sup>39</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 30.



German but *Roman* rumour-mongering. According to Hutten's text, it was exaggeration of Arminius' victory by the Romans themselves that unleashed fear and panic in the Roman population. His Arminius, however, claims that, anxious Roman speculation notwithstanding, it was never his plan, as they feared, "to see Rome seized and occupied by me."<sup>40</sup> Arminius' plan to remain within the territorial boundaries of Germania is, in itself, another point of deviation from Kleist's version, for in Herrmann's final speech upon the defeat of the legions, he announces that it is precisely his intention, now that the fight for freedom has been won, to engage in a war of aggression against the enemy, fought now on their terrain: "We still have to hurry to the Rhine / To cut off any Romans who are attempting / To escape from Germania's sacred soil: / And then — Well, then we boldly make for Rome! [ . . . ] Because this world will have no peace / From this murderous brood / Until we have fully destroyed the outlaw's lair" (2627–2634). This is a campaign declaration that places Kleist's hero firmly beyond the bounds of a just war as defined in Cicero's *De officiis*,<sup>41</sup> a text which the play explicitly mentions (2209), and which clearly states that the only just wars are those that are fought "that we may live in peace unharmed."<sup>42</sup> Wars of aggression, in other words, are, by definition, immoral, illegal, unjust, and unjustified. When Hutten's Arminius is reproached by Hannibal for "the excessively cruel and treacherous way in which he brought Varus to his defeat,"<sup>43</sup> of having waged, in other words, an unjust war in terms of the excessive cruelty shown to the enemy, contravening Cicero's injunction to show clemency to the defeated foe, Arminius replies that he was merely fighting fire with fire, and demands that Minos alone should decide if Arminius can "justify the atrocities carried out against Quintilius as reprisals for his earlier atrocities?"<sup>44</sup> He adds that, although at times he did keep his "intentions [ . . . ] hidden within,"<sup>45</sup> he only did so to the extent that any military strategist must in order to vanquish the enemy, and that, if he did match the cruelty of his opponents, he was morally superior because, unlike them, he did not succeed "by great acts of treason nor by [ . . . ] actions against pregnant

<sup>40</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Sossou reads Kleist's play as a conscious act of intertextuality that deliberately refers to Cicero's *De officiis* and Ovid's *Ars amatoria* in order to undermine (or at least expose the shortcomings of) limited and limiting ideas of nationhood and national literature by referencing an ancient and thoroughly transnational European literary tradition and cultural heritage: Pierre Kadi Sossou, *Römisch-Germanische Doppelgängerschaft: Eine palimpsestuöse Lektüre von Kleists Hermannsschlacht* (Frankfurt a.M., 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA, 1913), 37.

<sup>43</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 38.

<sup>45</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 36. Potentially, this idea of secrecy, although by no means an intrinsic part of Arminius' nature in Hutten's text, but rather a strategic necessity, provided the germ of an idea from which Kleist's naturally secretive Herrmann grew.

women, but rather [. . .] openly armed and [. . .] stung by a proper sense of and desire for revenge.”<sup>46</sup>

If what Arminius says is true, as Minos guarantees it is, then in their treatment of women, including their wives, our two heroes could not be more different either. When Arminius recalls his wife’s kidnapping by the Romans, he describes his grief at her loss, and the loss of their unborn child, but says “[n]evertheless, I remained true to my objective and would not allow my personal sorrows to lessen my love for my land and my people. Consequently, my sorrow turned into anger and I resolved to continue what I had begun.”<sup>47</sup> This differs starkly from Herrmann, the possible rapist of Hally, who is willing to use his wife Thusnelda to attract the Roman legate Ventidius and then lure him into a trap. In fact, so heavy-handed and unapologetic is his use of Thusnelda as a pawn in his political ascent that even the none-too-bright Thusnelda feels he has gone too far, and, in a scene that recalls less husband and wife than pimp and prostitute, pleads with him to spare her “The visits of this Roman. / I am nothing but the proverbial tub / Thrown out to distract the whale; / But if there are any other means by which / You can preserve yourself on open seas, / Then, I beg you, use not Thusnelda but these” (612–618). Herrmann however, ignoring her plea, gets her to murder her lover for his political ends, making a she-bear of her, as she later describes it.

Another counterpoint to Hutten’s text is offered by Herrmann’s helpful, if comparatively innocent and ingenuous German supporters in Kleist’s version. In Hutten’s text, one of Arminius’s claims to greatness is that, unlike the other three generals with whom he is competing, he achieved so much alone, without any assistance. He acted without “resources, aid, or support,” and was forced to “rely on the one thing I had, my courage.”<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, while Kleist’s Herrmann certainly sees himself in the role of sole and ingenious author of German victory against the Romans, the triumph would, in fact, have been impossible without the help of the Suevian leader, Marbod, an erstwhile Roman ally—a fact that Herrmann knows only too well, and one which makes his propaganda campaign by arrow so necessary. So desperate is Herrmann, in fact, to have Marbod for an ally that he voluntarily sends his young sons as hostages into the enemy Suevian camp in an attempt to demonstrate the supposed honesty of his intentions. Marbod, astonished by so drastic a gesture, erroneously assumes that no father would be so heartless as to gamble with his children’s lives unless some greater good were at stake. He is compelled by what he sees as a self-sacrificing and therefore inherently honest and apparently unequivocal act to believe Herrmann’s (incidentally quite correct) assertion that the Romans are encouraging intertribal warfare in order to weaken Germany internally and make a Roman victory easier, and thus agrees to Herrmann’s ambush plan, putting the full force

<sup>46</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 32.

<sup>47</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 29.

of the Suevian army behind him, and finally defeating the Roman army on Herrmann's behalf.

This is not the only instance of support for Herrmann in Kleist's version: although Fust, prince of the Cimbri, and Gueltar, prince of the Nervii, fight briefly with the Cheruscan chief for the glory of killing Varus, these two leaders are effectively his (admittedly somewhat hapless) sidekicks. In fact, Kleist's hero is surrounded by no shortage of well-intentioned and powerful German allies. Indeed, aside from the exaggeratedly villainous Aristan, prince of the Ubii,<sup>49</sup> most of the German leaders and tribes support Herrmann. While at times distracted by their rather risible quarrels about tribal territories, they are on the whole biddable, well-meaning, and well versed in the art of battle, and they expect Herrmann to lead them against Rome and govern the united country. They are, of course, infinitely more naïve than he, and have a certain buffoonish, caricatured quality, frequently repeating fragments of Herrmann's statements, as though they had not quite digested them properly, and uttering such improbable lines as "O Germany! Fatherland! Who will save you now, / If a hero such as Siegmar's son will not!" (395–396). But for all his allies' shortcomings, Herrmann is most certainly not the isolated, misunderstood, and much-maligned character of the Hutten dialogue, who is threatened and betrayed on all sides, and whose own treacherous brother "within our ranks [ . . . ] was devising a plot."<sup>50</sup> Perhaps somewhat unusually for a foundational narrative, in Hutten's dialogue Arminius' reputation and life are constantly assailed not only from without, but equally from within the German camp: "Many members of my household," he says "were enticed by money and helped develop a plot to ambush me and take my life."<sup>51</sup> But the only treachery in Kleist's play is spun by Herrmann himself, of whom a disappointed Varus says "O Herrmann! Herrmann! / To have such blond hair and blue eyes / And yet be false as a Phoenician!" (2096–2098).<sup>52</sup> Ironically, it is precisely Herrmann's falseness that garners the Germans their victory in Kleist's text, and, by extension, it is upon this that *Germania's* freedom is grounded.

In a similar vein, parodying values eulogized in traditional foundational stories, the final stroke of genius in Herrmann's victory by deception takes the form (but only the form) of an act of supreme generosity. When, in the final scene, Herrmann seems to hand over control of all Germania to his Swabian rival Marbod, what he actually does, as we have seen, is lead Marbod into a logical or

<sup>49</sup> Aristan is, for all his villainy, Herrmann's stark counterfoil in terms of truthfulness and loyalty, even if his is a stubborn loyalty to Rome.

<sup>50</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Walker, *Arminius*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Even Aristan, the play's traitor and "of all the German chieftains / [ . . . ] the very worst" (2094–2095), but, ironically, the only German prince who does not take part in the Germans' treacherous plot, is shocked by Herrmann's cunning, exclaiming, when the German plot is finally revealed, "Treachery! Treachery!" (2058).

discursive trap every bit as sticky and effective as the swampy trap laid for the Romans. Marbod is placed by Herrmann's carefully chosen words in a pernicious position whereby, if he accepts the kingdom so generously offered by Herrmann, he must, by his comparative selfishness, lose the support and admiration of the German princes required to rule it. Alternatively, if he tries to match Herrmann in magnanimity and generosity, thereby retaining the respect of the Germans, he can do so only by handing back the crown. More than this, by accepting a Germany proffered by Herrmann, Marbod has been forced to recognize the legitimacy of Herrmann's claim to all of Germany, for what Herrmann gives must be his to give away. Herrmann says, in his cunning rhetorical snare, an adaptation of the liar paradox: "Hail Marbod, my valiant friend! / And, if Germany hearkens to my voice: / Hail to its great leader and king" (2569–2571). The operative phrase here is "if Germany hearkens to my voice," for if all Germany listens to his voice, then Herrmann is *ipso facto* the country's ruler. This gift that Herrmann has bestowed on Marbod is therefore a gift only in the dubious, poisoned sense that Marcel Mauss uncovered for us.<sup>53</sup> It puts Marbod momentarily into the position of king, but the only act that he can perform as sovereign is immediately to reverse Herrmann's decree and recognize Herrmann's prior claim to the throne: "I tell you again, stand up! If I am your king, / Then my first command to you is stand up! / And I say: Hail to you, Herrmann, saviour of Germany! / And if Germany will hearken to *my* voice / Hail to its great leader and king!" (2576–2580).

Many readings of Kleist's *Hermannsschlacht* have, quite understandably and correctly, seen it as a drama about nationalism or as a fairly straightforward political play, as in Jens Reichenbach's recent analysis which interprets it as part of the author's literary campaign against Napoleon.<sup>54</sup> Yet the comparison with Hutten undertaken here demonstrates that the text's political message is complicated by the fact that Kleist's Herrmann is, far from being a national hero, if anything, a deliberate recasting of Hutten's hero as a national creep. It is undeniably difficult and indeed undesirable to bracket out the relationship between Kleist's text and historical circumstance in what is after all a relatively easily decipherable *drame-à-clé* that draws wishful parallels between Germany in 1808 and Germania Magna in A.D.9 when Arminius routed Varus, uniting the German tribes into what some later saw as an embryonic German nation. But criticism of the last twenty years or so has recognized that, to do Kleist's work fuller justice, it must be understood not only in relation to history (meaning both its own historical period and the various periods and ideologies which subsequently appropriated it) but also in terms of the text's precise content carefully read. This is a balancing act that has been singularly and strangely hard to achieve, as Miran Kwak

<sup>53</sup> Marcel Mauss, "Gift, Gift," in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward a Logic of Generosity*, ed. A. Schiffrin (New York, 1997), 28–32.

<sup>54</sup> Jens Reichenbach, *Die nationale Stimme Heinrich von Kleists: Sein politisches Wirken im Dienst der deutschen Nation (1808/9)* (Saarbrücken, 2007), 111.

points out,<sup>55</sup> noting that reception of the play has tended to fluctuate between the extremes of reading the text aesthetically to the exclusion of the political dimension and reading it politically to the exclusion of the aesthetic. The problem of reconciling the politics and the aesthetics (particularly the irony) of the text is exacerbated by the fact that the *Hermannsschlacht* was, particularly in the first post-war decades, seen as a political embarrassment and anomaly within the body of Kleist's work because of its appropriation by National Socialism. Walter Müller-Seidel, for instance, famously commented that "only with continuing reservations can this play be included in the body of Kleist's work."<sup>56</sup> However, with Angress' re-interpretation of the play in 1977 encouraging us to "be suspicious" of what we are told by the Kleistian text,<sup>57</sup> the famous stage production by Peymann in Bochum in 1982, and W. C. Reeve's *In Pursuit of Power* (1987), to name but a few milestones, the *Hermannsschlacht* was somewhat rehabilitated. In his reading, Reeve also pointed out that critics' inordinate focus on the political intent and uses of the play had led them to ignore its literary merit, while, in fact, poetologically speaking, the text "[did] not necessarily represent [a] radical [. . .] departure from Kleist's previous works."<sup>58</sup>

If read as a deliberate deconstruction of the uncritical myth-making of other Arminius texts such as Hutten's, Kleist's play appears diametrically different from what one might expect of a play variously described as a "descent, unredeemed and unrevoked, into bestiality,"<sup>59</sup> or as evidence of the fact that Kleist "placed his pen completely in the service of the Fatherland."<sup>60</sup> Kleist's text takes and inverts almost every positive attribute ascribed to Arminius in Hutten's dialogue—his love of his wife, his truthfulness, his bravery, his selflessness, his lack of support, his self-declared modesty, even his low standing (Kleist's Herrmann is a *bon viveur*, clearly used to the finest things in life, to the point that Thusnelda calls him a sybarite)—and gives us an anti-Arminius. However, crucially, Herrmann's repulsive character notwithstanding, he is every bit as successful as the heroic Arminius of Hutten's dialogue. As in other works, most notably, perhaps *Die Marquise von O. . .*, Kleist's text revisits here the subject of the abhorrent hero.

<sup>55</sup> Miran Kwak, *Identitätsprobleme in Werken Heinrich von Kleists* (Frankfurt a. M., 2000), 141–42 (my translation).

<sup>56</sup> Walter Müller-Seidel, *Versehen und Erkennen: Eine Studie über Heinrich von Kleist* (Cologne, 1961), 53 (my translation).

<sup>57</sup> Ruth K. Angress, "Kleist's Treatment of Imperialism: 'Die Hermannsschlacht' and 'Die Verlobung in St. Domingo,'" *Monatshefte* 69 (1977): 17–33, at 21–22.

<sup>58</sup> W. C. Reeve, *In Pursuit of Power: Heinrich von Kleist's Machiavellian Protagonists* (Toronto, 1987), 21.

<sup>59</sup> Sigurd Burkhardt, *The Drama of Language: Essays on Goethe and Kleist* (Baltimore, 1970), 129.

<sup>60</sup> Sigismund Rahmer, *Heinrich von Kleist als Mensch und Dichter* (Berlin, 1909), 187 (my translation).

Where there we had the rapist in shining armour, here we have the crafty and self-serving founding father, who founds a nation merely in order to have one over which he can preside. How different Minos' judgement of this version of the *liberator Germaniae* would have been, we can only imagine.

