

Arminius in National Socialism

How the Nazis presented antiquity in propaganda



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10-08-2016

Contents:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract | 3. |
| Introduction | 3. |
| Reception studies | 4. |
| Chapter 1: Towards an understanding of National Socialist Propaganda. | 9. |
| • Propaganda as a concept and how the Nazi Regime put it to use. | 9. |
| • Backgrounds to racial inequality in National Socialist thought. | 12. |
| • The importance of the Classics and history as <i>Rassenkampf</i> . | 13. |
| Chapter 2: Nineteenth century propaganda of the antique past. | 16. |
| • Monuments, the materialisation of the link between nation building and antiquity. | 16. |
| • Nation building from 1871 onwards, antiquity as a common ancestry. | 20. |
| Chapter 3: 1933-1945; a period of ambiguity? | 23. |
| • Antique Greek art, the 'evidence' of a common primeval race. | 24. |
| • More ambiguity within the <i>Reich's</i> propaganda. | 27. |
| • Understanding the Nazis' appropriation of the antique past. | 29. |
| • Clashing ideologies. <i>Germanentum</i> or a broader idea of Aryanism? | 30. |
| Chapter 4: 1933-1945; The case of Arminius. | 33. |
| • Arminius as a propaganda tool for National-Socialists: Grabbe's <i>Die Hermannsschlacht</i> . | 33. |
| • Arminius as a propaganda tool for National-Socialists: the Lippe campaign 1933. | 36. |
| • Arminius as propaganda tool for National-Socialists: ' <i>Ewiger Wald</i> ' (1936). | 38. |
| • Arminius-propaganda put in perspective. | 41. |
| Conclusion | 46. |
| Bibliography | 49. |

Abstract

This thesis examines how the National Socialist regime in Germany between the years 1933 and 1945 interacted with the figure of Arminius, the German tribal leader who transformed during the nineteenth century into Hermann, the forefather of the German nation. The research is put against a background of how the Nazis dealt with the antique past in general. As some scholars have argued, the reception of the antique past in National Socialist ideology is at best ambiguous. Here, the way Arminius was appropriated by the regime is formed as a case study to answer the bigger question of how the Nazis filtered and presented the antique past to the public by way of using propaganda.

Arminius is taken as a case study, for he, as shall be argued, possessed many traits that caused problems for the regime to present an universal view of the antique past. In Tacitus' *Germania*, Arminius is presented as a civilised, worthy adversary to the Roman Empire. This work is the single most important source of inspiration for the Nazis. Arminius, fighting the Roman Empire, is glorified by the regime, but so is the Roman Empire in countless other instances. How and when Arminius is used as a source of propaganda will be explained in this thesis. This will hopefully give the reader an idea on how the Nazis dealt with the antique past.

Introduction

During my bachelors, I got introduced to the figure of Arminius, jokingly referred to as 'Hermann the German'. We learned that this tribal war leader, who defeated the Romans in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in a most decisive manner in A.D. 9, was mystified by Roman writers like Tacitus. In his work *Germania*, Arminius possessed noble and heroic virtues, which became a source of inspiration for nineteenth century nationalists. Arminius transformed into Hermann, a forefather to the German people and also a figure in popular culture. Numerous plays were performed which glorified the figure. Also, countless books and images of the figure were produced. A testament to his enormous popularity in that period was the erection of a statue of Hermann in the middle of the Teutoburg forest, measuring over fifty meters.¹ In nineteenth century Germany, Hermann was a figure that unified a nation. In the media Arminius was presented in a universal way, a figure for all the Germanic peoples, in such a way that even Dutch nationalists could identify with him. It seemed like Arminius was also a great tool for propaganda purposes in Nazi-Germany. How the antique past, where

¹ More on this topic can be found in: Martin Winkler, *Arminius the liberator. Myth and ideology* (London, 2016). In an excellent chapter, called: *Arminius' monument: the Hermannsdenkmal*, he writes about how the lineage with the ancient Germanic tribes was consolidated by building the monument.

the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest is part of, was perceived in Nazi ideology fits within the scholarly field of reception studies. To get a better sense of how the National Socialist Party interacted with Arminius, first we have to dive within the field of reception studies.

Reception studies

Reception studies is a scholarly field which is extensive beyond measure. Since we are solely occupied with reception of the antique past, we will only focus on the reception of the classical Greek and Roman culture. The reception itself is the process of trying to imitate or emulate ancient works in later periods of time. The study of these classical interpretations are concerned with factors like the political situation in which these interpretations were made, the message that the artist or the benefactor tries to convey to the public, the role of the public et cetera. In other words, scholars that do research within the field of reception studies are examining factors that influence the way the past was interpreted.² Interpretations of classical works were already produced in the antique past. However, the professionalization of reception studies started in the second half of the twentieth century.³

Before the term 'reception studies' was used, scholars spoke of Classical tradition.⁴ In 1949, Gilbert Highet wrote an important work, called *The Classical Tradition*.⁵ In this publication Highet argued that influential writers of the Greek and Roman past have had a lasting impact on Western literature. He tried to prove this by tracing recurring antique themes in Western storytelling. Highet has been criticized because, even though he managed to trace Roman and Greek elements within literature over the centuries, he did not include a detailed account of the impact these elements had on the people who were influenced by the Classical writers.⁶ Even so, his work has been regarded as a key work in the field of Classical tradition.⁷

During the 1960s, the humanities underwent a process that has been called the 'theory revolution'. This is a very broad term that encompasses the change of view by scholars from solely looking to the intentions of the writer, to also looking at the interpretation and impact the Classical works had on the public.⁸ For the reception studies, this meant that the field of

² For a full and satisfactory definition of reception studies, see: Lorna Hardwick, 'Reception Studies', *Greece & Rome. New surveys in the Classics* 33 (Oxford, 2003), 5.

³ Hardwick, 'Reception studies', 2-5.

⁴ Betine van Zyl Smit, 'Introduction', in: Betine van Zyl Smit (ed.), *A handbook to the reception of Greek drama* (Oxford, 2016), no page numbers.

⁵ Gilbert Highet, *The Classical tradition. Greek and Roman influences on Western literature* (Oxford, 1949).

⁶ Van Zyl Smit, 'Introduction', no page numbers.

⁷ Hardwick, 'Reception studies', 2.

⁸ Craig Kallendorf, 'Introduction', in: Craig Kallendorf (ed.), *A companion to the Classical tradition* (Oxford, 2007), 1-4, esp. 2.

Classical tradition, in which scholars theorised that the influence of the antique writers was linear, transformed into the field of reception studies, in which scholars also focused on the active participation of 'the influenced' in such a way that past and present was in interaction with each other.⁹ Hans Robert Jauss is an example of such a pioneer.¹⁰ In his *L'histoire de la littérature comme provocation*, one can see this change in thinking very clearly.¹¹ The goal of Jauss was to change this paradigm within his work.

This change in paradigm was followed by numerous works within the reception studies field. This paradigm shift also meant that the scholarly field broadened. Scholars started to focus on very specific time periods, instead of encompassing centuries. One of the first and most influential scholars to apply the merits of reception studies on the Nazi-period was Volker Losemann.¹² Volker Losemann is a retired German historian who focused on the antiquity. His publication, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike*, has dominated the debate for over forty years.¹³ The book focuses on the need for the National Socialists to define themselves by creating a direct lineage with the antique past. To get a firm grip on this lineage, Losemann describes how the Nazis started infiltrating and eventually dominating the German universities and the scholarly debate. Apart from the process of how they achieved this, Losemann gives insight in the ideology of high-ranked Nazi-officials like Heinrich Himmler. Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*, an organisation that tried to consolidate a genetic lineage with the Germanic tribesmen of antiquity through archaeology, is an example of Losemann's focus within his publication.

A more modern contribution within the reception studies is Bettina Arnold's *'Arierdämmerung'*.¹⁴ Arnold is currently a professor in anthropology and is in the possession of a degree in archaeology from Harvard University. She has written a few articles on the abuse of the field of archaeology in Nazi Germany for political purposes. In *'Arierdämmerung'*, Arnold discusses 19th century academics that influenced the racial discourse of the Nazi party. She also argues that the regime used archaeology to try to show the public the superiority of the 'Nordic' or Aryan race. The regime encouraged archaeological

⁹ Kallendorf, 'Introduction', 2. Also; Hardwick, 'Reception studies', 2.

¹⁰ Kallendorf, 'Introduction', 2.

¹¹ Hans-Robert Jauss, *L'histoire de la littérature comme provocation pour la science de la littérature* (Konstanz, 1967).

¹² Beat Näf, 'Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus', *Texts and studies in the history of humanities* 1 (Cambridge, 2001), 46-47.

¹³ Volker Losemann, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike. Studien zur Entwicklung des Faches Alte Geschichte in den Jahren 1933-1945* (Hamburg, 1977).

¹⁴ Bettina Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung". Race and archaeology in Nazi Germany', *World Archaeology* 38 (2006), 8-31.

and antiquarian research that could be used to illustrate that their German ancestors (of which Arminius was the most famous one) bested their neighbours in all facets of life, which in turn could be used to support the Nazis' political agenda. Arnold argues that the National Socialist regime, by doing so, devalued the antique cultures of the Mediterranean because for instance the ancient Greeks and Romans intermingled with races the Nazis viewed as inferior.

Bernard Mees is another author who writes about the way the Nazi regime appropriated the antique past. In his article *Hitler and Germanentum* he, like Arnold, describes how the Party funded archaeology in order to gather information which could be used to strengthen their ideology.¹⁵ The results of these studies were, among other things, used to persuade the public that the Aryan race had always been superior over the Slavic races. Also, they tried to convey the people that the Nazis had legitimate reasons to invade Eastern Europe with the help of these results. However, Mees does also refer to Hitler's ambivalence towards German antiquity. The dictator rejected the idea that the Aryan race in antiquity was most cultivated on German soil on one occasion but supported that claim in a speech. The Fuhrer himself had a seemingly ambiguous relationship with German antiquity. Mees, by investigating this relationship, stumbles upon an internal debate within the regime between Nazis interested in antiquity who believed in an advanced culture in which the Germanic tribesman lived, and others who dismissed that idea.

Another writer, who works within the field of reception studies and focuses on Arminius, is Martin Winkler.¹⁶ Winkler examines an extensive period of time (from the beginning of the sixteenth century until the late 1960's) in order to show the full scope of how this figure had become a symbol of national pride and the decline of that idea. Winkler however takes the Nazi-period, unlike many other historians, as his main arch of the book. Most authors, according to Winkler, acknowledge that Arminius was used as a propaganda figure in the Nazi-period. However, most historians only state this hypothesis for he was far more popular in the nineteenth-century, but they do not examine it further. Winkler on the other hand does, in a very extensive and satisfying manner. As Arminius is Winkler's main focus, the writer does only refer to the before mentioned internal debate in a minimal sense. Winkler tries to convey his reader of the idea that even though scholars maintain that Arminius was not as important to the Nazis as other historic figures that could function as German heroes, we should not underestimate Arminius' importance to the Nazis either. To

¹⁵ Bernard Mees, 'Hitler and Germanentum', *Journal of contemporary history* 39 (2004), 255-270.

¹⁶ Martin Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*.

support that claim, the author tries to examine as much Arminius propaganda of the Nazi-period as possible.

Within the field of reception studies the scope of publications, from the 1960s onwards has increased exponentially.¹⁷ Regarding the topic of interest of this study, Arminius within the Nazi-period, is becoming more and more popular. However, even the most recent contribution to the scholarly discussion does not encompass the ambiguous relationship between the Nazis and antiquity, as shown by Johan Chapoutot in *Der Nationalsozialismus und die Antike*.¹⁸ In an effort to show how this duality works, Johann Chapoutot writes a splendid work on how the regime coped with the past. Chapoutot claims that the Nazis mainly took from the Hellenistic world for their appropriation, but also the Roman Empire and the Germanic tribes of antiquity were being appropriated. Chapoutot examines propaganda tools for evidence. This work already made a great impact within the scholarly debate on the appropriation of the antique past by the national-socialist movement. Chapoutot writes about the conflict between prominent party members quarrelling over the cultural significance of German antiquity and their ambiguous relationship with antiquity on a general level. Because Arminius is the most important hero and potent symbol of German antiquity it seems to be a perfect focal point to try to figure out how the Nazis dealt with the antique past. This leads to the question: "*How did the figure of Hermann (Arminius) come in to play in National Socialist propaganda between 1933 and 1945, and does this tell us anything about the ambiguous relationship of the National Socialist regime and the antique past?*".

To answer this question it is important to define propaganda in the first chapter. The first chapter shall also function as a preface to the second, third and fourth chapter, introducing themes like nineteenth century influences on the racial discourse of the regime that shall further be examined in the later chapters. Within the second chapter these nineteenth century roots shall be investigated more thoroughly. The focus shall be on the appropriation of antiquity and the figure of Hermann and how these ideas influenced the Nazi ideology. In the third chapter, the focus will be on the appropriation of elements of Hellenistic and Roman antiquity. It is constructed in such a manner in order to establish how big of an influence the Nazis who saw the ancient Greeks and Romans as their ancestors had on propaganda. The chapter ends with an analysis between these party members and their ideological counterparts (i.e. the Nazis who were solely interested in the 'German' Aryan of that time). The fourth and

¹⁷ Näf, 'Antike', 46-47. Also; Hardwick, 'Reception studies', 2-3.

¹⁸ Johann Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus und die Antike* (Darmstadt, 2014).

final chapter will be a case study of the propaganda of Hermann to see how frequent this figure was used by the Nazis and why, in order to establish an overview of the internal debate.

Chapter 1: Towards an understanding of National Socialist Propaganda.

In this chapter the propaganda of the National Socialist regime shall be discussed. This chapter will be dedicated to the difficulty of the term itself and what definition of the word shall be used to describe Nazi propaganda. Nowadays scholars are invested in the resurgence of the term 'propaganda'. For many years, propaganda was a concept that had been sidelined by for instance communication theory and the surge of persuasion as opposed to the dated concept of propaganda.¹⁹ Since the turn of the century however, due to for instance the crisis in the Middle East with on the one hand Al Qaeda videos demonising the United States and on the other hand American presidents appealing to the masses while promoting the war in Iraq, the once archaic-deemed term had been revitalised.²⁰ Nowadays propaganda study is a scholarly field which is researched with great regularity. To get a grip on Nazi propaganda it is important to present the reader with the different kinds of propaganda sources researched. Also, with respect to the Germanic hero Arminius, it is important to introduce themes that shall further be discussed in the later chapters. After an attempt to define propaganda, the focus shall be on nineteenth century erudite elitist views on race as well as the general interest in the Classical period in that era, which proved to be a source of inspiration for the Nazis. The themes touched upon in this chapter will prove to be an introduction into the world of Nazi pageantry of the antique past.

Propaganda as a concept and how the Nazi Regime put it to use.

At the end of the twentieth century within the Western scholarly world, it was very difficult to talk about propaganda in neutral terms, for it had received very negative connotations during the twentieth century.²¹ Propaganda had become a word that was, in popular imagination, immediately associated with "[...] bolsheviks and storm troopers", as one author puts it.²² The term was tainted by, among other things, images of the dictatorships of the early twentieth century. The term propaganda had been devalued in its usage and became a term that is not to be associated with one's own conveyance of ideas or ideology, which is commonly being masked with words like 'information' or 'publicity'. Propaganda had become something the

¹⁹ Nicolas O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and propaganda. Weapons of mass seduction* (Manchester, 2004), 1.

²⁰ O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and propaganda*, 1-2.

²¹ Randall Bytwerk, *Bending spines. The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (Michigan, 2004), 1-2.

²² O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and propaganda*, 1.

enemy is engaged in. Because of these negative connotations, propaganda as an usable concept for scholars was almost non-existent.²³

These negative connotations were absent during the times of the Nazi regime. Before the instalment of the regime, much like in the late twentieth century, to many Germans 'propaganda' was a foul word.²⁴ Propaganda was something that was widely regarded as a tool the allies used during World War I to trick honest Germans, an idea which fell in the same category as the *Dolchstoßlegende*.²⁵ The *Dolchstoßlegende*, was a concept in which the loss of WWI was attributed to leftwing politicians capitulating and thus stabbing Germany in the back. Believers in the *Dolchstoßlegende* (mainly supporters of rightwing politics) thought that the propaganda of the allies might have played a big role in the defeat of the German nation, ultimately persuading the men in charge to surrender.²⁶ During the years 1933-1945, however, propaganda was viewed by the Nazis as a very helpful and even necessary phenomenon. The same went for the opposing allied camp.²⁷ Propaganda can thus be seen as a term that is constantly subject to change, and as such interpreted as either useful and 'good' or as something that is trickery and thus 'bad'. To get a better understanding of propaganda and its applications in between 1933 and 1945 in Germany, it is important to establish a definition which will function as a base for this thesis.

Propaganda has been a problematic term for historians.²⁸ Because of the thin dividing line between the already mentioned terms 'information' and 'publicity' on the one hand and 'propaganda' on the other, it becomes hard to formulate a definition that implies both the transfer of ideas and the intended goals of the propagandist.²⁹ In the words of historian Richard Taylor: "*Propaganda is the attempt to influence the public opinions of an audience through the transmission of ideas and values.*"³⁰ As such, propaganda becomes something that is engaged in conveyance of information as well as the intended goal of the propagandist to persuade the public. This formulation makes the term propaganda graspable and as such it will function as the base for this thesis.

In order to achieve the intended goals, first the public must be reached. Because only the views of large proportions of society can have a lasting effects on public opinion, mass media has proven to be the most effective tool to convey messages on such a scale. One can

²³ Richard Taylor, *Film propaganda. Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London, 1998), 7.

²⁴ Bytwerk, *Bending spines*, 2.

²⁵ Ibidem, 2.

²⁶ Ibidem, 2. Also; Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 83.

²⁷ Bytwerk, *Bending spines*, 2.

²⁸ Taylor, *Film propaganda*, 1-17.

²⁹ Ibidem, 7-8.

³⁰ Ibidem, 15.

imagine that via radio, newspapers and nowadays the internet and social media, the audience of an ordinary political rally can easily be multiplied tenfold.

When one thinks of propaganda, predominantly the image of political parties trying to convince the public of their views comes up. In the scholarly-field, this phenomenon would be described as 'top-down' or in other words: The political party is influencing the public by way of propaganda, the public is on the receiving end of this spectrum. This is however a very one-dimensional take on propaganda. In order to be effective, there already must exist some sentiments which are consistent with the parties ideology.³¹ When we take the current American presidential campaign as an example, the views of the public are constantly monitored by way of public opinion surveys, polls et cetera by private media agencies like for instance the popular website *RealClearPolitics*. In the Third Reich public opinion surveys, like the ones we have in our society, were non-existent. In a political system that used terror to make their ends meet, it is nearly impossible for historians to assess how the public felt towards the regime because reported opinion in media controlled by the Nazis was often glorified or flat-out false.³² When one looks in hindsight at this period, keeping the millions of casualties of the war and the Holocaust in mind, it might seem that the National Socialist Party's ideology was printed on the *tabula rasa* that was the political awareness of the German public. It might be tempting, if one wants to tell a moralistic or oversimplified version of history (i.e. the Nazis were evil and the German people were their victims), to look at the period 1933-1945 in black and white. In other words: The German public swallowed everything the National Socialist Party said, for they promised them better days. This is only partially true. The Nazi propaganda machine could have never been this successful if it did not take from existing sentiments.

The *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (or RMVP), which was instituted in 1933 shortly after Hitler's grab for power, did in fact gather views of the public. They took great interest in reports from for instance The Secret Police, The Gestapo and local government instances.³³ In this manner, they could monitor the mood of the citizens very carefully. The RMVP was thus well aware of public sentiments and policies were made based on this information.³⁴

³¹ David Welch, 'Manufacturing a consensus: Nazi propaganda and the building of a 'National Community' (Volksgemeinschaft), *Contemporary European History* 2 (1993), 1-15, esp. 1-2.

³² Welch, 'Manufacturing a consensus', 1.

³³ *Ibidem*, 1.

³⁴ David Welch, 'Nazi propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: constructing a people's community', *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (2004), 213-238, esp. 216.

Backgrounds to racial inequality in National Socialist thought.

We also have to understand that Nazi leaders like Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler; *Reichsführer* of the SS and Joseph Goebbels; *Reichspropagandaleiter des Nationalsozialismus* themselves were products of the early twentieth century. As such, their world views had been influenced by existing traditions within public sentiment. One of those traditions or motifs was the hatred felt by many Germans towards the Jewish community.³⁵ It grew a strong foothold within all layers of society in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. But anti-Semitic sentiments was not the only nineteenth century heritage the Nazis drew from.

The elitist, scientific world of the nineteenth century had an enormous impact on Nazi ideology. The teachings of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) laid the basics for racial ideology of the National Socialist regime.³⁶ Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899) was a best-selling work that fits within the surge of what are now regarded as pseudo-scientific publications (although regarded by many contemporaries like for instance emperor Wilhelm II of Germany as 'academic') in which authors claimed that racial inequality was the main force in the way history formed.³⁷ Chamberlain theorised that all cultural highlights in European history were made possible due to the excellence of the Indo-European race (including all peoples of Germanic, Hellenic, Roman, Celtic and even Slavic descent) of which the Germanic Aryans were the most exceptional of all.³⁸ Like many contemporary erudite elites, Chamberlain focussed on themes of antiquity to support his argument. The ancient writer Tacitus proved to be a big influence on the writings of Chamberlain. Chamberlain used for instance Tacitus' descriptions of the Germanic tribesmen to glorify the Germanic Aryan.³⁹

Next to research solely based on literature, like Chamberlain's, the late nineteenth century is characterized by the growing interest in field surveys. During the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, findings within the field of anthropology became intertwined with research within archaeology.⁴⁰ These findings started to be used as confirmations for political thought which proclaimed racial inequality was real and thus politics had to act on that notion. This accumulated within the views of the

³⁵ Arnold, "Arierdämmerung", 10.

³⁶ Ibidem, 10. Also; Hajo Holborn, 'Origins and political character of Nazi ideology', *Political science quarterly* 79 (1964), 542-554, esp. 545-546.

³⁷ Christopher Krebs, *A most dangerous book. Tacitus's Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York, 2011), 207-209.

³⁸ Ibidem, 208-210.

³⁹ Ibidem, 209-210.

⁴⁰ Arnold, "Arierdämmerung", 10-11.

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei in the 1930's. *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* by Nazi-ideologist Alfred Rosenberg from 1930 is largely based on the writings of Chamberlain.⁴¹ Next to theorists like Rosenberg, the Nazi regime employed many leading academics for their state-funded antiquarian and archaeological research.⁴² They did this in order to give their ideology some academic credibility. As we shall see, during the early 1930's and the first half of the 1940's, the regime would tie racial ideology and antique history closely together.

The importance of the Classics and history as *Rassenkampf*.

As an alternative to the Christian and Hebrew origin story which implies that all men stem from Adam, in the eighteenth century enlightened thinkers like Voltaire theorised that mankind originated from India.⁴³ At the time, the Western world was introduced to miraculous India via the reports of Brits that either had taken part in the conquering or researching of the land. Western intellectuals started to tie India in with the origin story. Geographers claimed it was probably the oldest landmass of the known world and philologists like William Jones (1746-1794) believed in a strong relationship between Sanskrit and Latin, Greek and other more modern European languages.⁴⁴ Even deeply religious Christians could accept this new origin story, for the wonderful natural surroundings resembled descriptions of the Garden of Eden, and the mountain Ararat could well be located in the Himalaya.⁴⁵ Mankind supposedly had spread from India to Europe, and in the nineteenth century many academics believed that these Indo-Europeans would have been the founders of the great civilisations of antiquity. Especially within the German academic world, the thesis that Indo-Europeans would have spread culture had great resonance. So much so that by the nineteenth century, a large number of intellectuals started to talk about *Indogermanen* and Aryans; a race of culture bearers, stemming from India and settling in Germany and Scandinavia during antiquity.⁴⁶ Because of Germany's quest for identity during and after the Napoleonic Wars (which will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter) at the beginning of the nineteenth century German nationalists found great comfort in this Aryan-myth, which glorified the exploits of their race from antiquity well into their own time.⁴⁷ The Aryan-myth continued to

⁴¹ Arnold, "Arierdämmerung", 10.

⁴² Mees, 'Germanentum', 256.

⁴³ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 35.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 37.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 37.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 38-40.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 39.

be popular and was adopted within National Socialist ideology, however the Nazis filtered and added their own ideas as well as filtering or appropriating events from antiquity that they could use.

Since we are looking at the Nazi regime, a collective of peoples and ideas, talking about one universal ideology is difficult. The party sent on numerous occasions contradicting messages, which shall be discussed later. More than once, the Nazi regime has been explained within the scholarly field as a system that worked like a religion.⁴⁸ At first glance a lot of elements are indeed comparable with religion. National Socialism resembled a cult with millions of followers in which the Führer was the saviour who was still among the people. His teachings had been canonised in *Mein Kampf*, which functioned within National Socialism just like Scripture.⁴⁹

If we take over that religious vocabulary to describe the National Socialist regime, we can conclude that just like the Catholic church the Nazis tried to convey unity. They did this even though there was internal turmoil and contradicting ideas on a variety of issues. One of those issues was how the antique past could function as an example? We will come back to this subject in later chapters. For now it is important to keep in mind that there was no such thing as an universalist ideology, even though it is practical to talk in such terms. In the meantime, it is sufficient to look at Adolf Hitler as the most important carrier of National Socialist ideology.

Already in 1926, within *Mein Kampf*, Hitler lays a thick emphasis on the importance of the antique past for the present. On numerous occasions he forges ties with the peoples of antiquity, especially the Germans, the Romans and the Greeks.⁵⁰ "*Man darf sich nicht durch Verschiedenheiten der einzelnen Völker die größere Rassegemeinschaft zerreißen lassen. Der Kampf, der heute tobt, geht um ganz große Ziele: eine Kultur kämpft um ihr Dasein, die Jahrtausende in sich verbindet und Griechen- und Germanentum gemeinsam umschließt.*"⁵¹ A few years later, Hitler argued: "*Griechen und Römer werden [...] den Germanen so nahe, weil alle ihre Wurzeln in einer Grundrasse zu suchen haben, und daher üben auch die*

⁴⁸ Bytwerk, *Bending spines*, 11-40. Also; Hajo Holborn, *Origins and political character*, 542-543. Although within the article of Holborn the author does not specifically argue that the Nazi regime worked like a religion, as Bytwerk does in his chapter 'Secular Faiths', terms like 'fanatic faith' and 'canonic National Socialist writings' give away that he at least is comparing certain assets of National Socialism with religion.

⁴⁹ Bytwerk, *Bending spines*, 14-19.

⁵⁰ Volker Losemann, 'Nationalsozialismus und Antike. Bemerkungen zur Forschungsgeschichte', in: Beat Näf (ed.), *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Zürich, 1998), 71-88, esp. 71.

⁵¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, ed. Franz Eher Nachfolger G.m.b.H., *Mein Kampf. Zwei Bände in einem Band. Ungekürzte Ausgabe* (München, 1943), 470.

unsterblichen Leistungen der alten Völker immer wieder ihre anziehende Wirkung aus auf die ihnen rassisch verwandten Nachkommen."⁵² Within these passages, one can see that the antique past plays a central role in Nazi ideology. In Hitler's mind, mankind's history was the history of racial conflict.⁵³ In Nazi ideology the Nordic or Aryan race was the purest and strongest of all races. The Nazis believed that one could recognise them by their light skin, light hair, and light eyes (a pure Aryan was 'Caucasian', light blonde and had bright blue eyes). Within Nazi ideology the Aryans were simultaneously superior and the most endangered race of all.⁵⁴ To create a racial 'pure' society was an ultimate goal to be achieved for National Socialists. To Hitler, it was of vital importance that the masses were made aware of these 'facts'. And what better way to do this than by employing propaganda?

According to Hitler, important principles of Nazi ideology had to be repeated over and over again so the public would become familiar with them, '*verging on religious certainty*'.⁵⁵ Propaganda was a tool to achieve a general conviction within the minds of the people. History as a *Rassenkampf*, was such an important principle of Nazi ideology. The conviction that events and figures from the antique past were an example for present day Germans did not come out of nowhere. Like the theory of racial inequality, its roots can be found in the nineteenth century. This shall be discussed in the next chapter.

⁵² Losemann, 'Nationalsozialismus und Antike. Bemerkungen', 71. Losemann got the quote himself from Ancient Archaeologist Gerhart Rodenwaldt (1886-1945) which in turn quoted Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and his speech for the Nuremburg rally in 1933.

⁵³ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 299.

⁵⁴ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 9.

⁵⁵ David Dennis, *Inhumanities. Nazi interpretations of Western culture* (Cambridge, 2012), 15.

Chapter 2: Nineteenth century propaganda of the antique past.

As briefly discussed in the first chapter, Hitler and his most trusted consorts were products of their own time. Thus, it is logical that they, who were invested in politics, were aware of popular views of their own generation. We have touched upon Hitler's ideology in *Mein Kampf* (1926) and his speeches in which the antique past is explained as an important teacher for present day Germans. It is important, if we want to know how the ambiguous relation with the antique past for the Nazis came to be and how this reflected on their propaganda, that we first learn something about the propaganda of the antique past in previous times. As discussed in the first chapter, Nazi ideology built on nineteenth century ideas, so looking at nineteenth century propaganda is no stretch. In the later years of the German Empire, the popularity of antiquity rose to unprecedented levels. The German people started to get especially invested within Germanic antiquity.⁵⁶ This enthusiasm was not limited to the scholars at the numerous universities or the erudite elites, but also people who were attracted to rightwing politics became increasingly interested in that period of time. This had everything to do with the surge of nationalism and the construction of a nationalistic vocabulary which correlated with the strengthening of the German nation-state.⁵⁷ Before the German Empire (1871-1918) interest in antiquity was apparent, however the glorification of the antique past had been mostly endeavours of private parties belonging to the erudite elite. A perfect example of this is the founding of the so-called *Hermannsdenkmal*.⁵⁸

Monuments, the materialisation of the link between nation building and antiquity.

Nineteenth century Germany was for the most part a very loose conglomerate of different political systems, especially during the times of the German Confederation.⁵⁹ This meant that culturally and religiously these states were also very different from each other.⁶⁰ Nationalists therefore started searching for unity within anthropology. Since the times of the Renaissance, German scholars had rediscovered the text of Tacitus, called *Germania*. In this text, the classical author names all the different German tribes north of the Danube and east of the Rhine.⁶¹ Tacitus' text was of great importance to nationalists, for they started to refer to their people as ancestors to the German tribesmen who used to live in that area, of which Arminius

⁵⁶ Mees, 'Germanentum', 255.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 255.

⁵⁸ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 67-69.

⁵⁹ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 32-33.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 33.

⁶¹ For more information on Tacitus' writings and cultural impact on Germany between the 16th and 19th century, read; *Themes and variations Arminius from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries* in Winkler's, *Arminius the liberator* (2016), 56-65.

was the most prominent member.⁶² During periods of nationalistic outbursts in the nineteenth century, themes of the antique past had been appropriated and used as celebratory metaphors for current events. Napoleon's expansionism had an enormous impact on the other European nations. The dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, which had existed from the Early Middle Ages up until 1806 as a result of France's imperialism, resonated in a restructuring of the German national identity within the social layer of erudite elites.⁶³ An example of this is the *Walhalla*, a massive monument celebrating the Germans glorious past. Plans for its construction were already created by Bavarian crown prince Ludwig in 1807. Ludwig, at the height of Germany's submission to France, wanted to build a German Pantheon in which the great German statesmen, artists and scientists would be commemorated in glorious fashion.⁶⁴ Only after Ludwig's accession, the building took place between 1830 and 1842. The massive monument took the shape of the famous Greek Parthenon, erected at the banks of the Danube near Regensburg. It housed a collection of busts and plaques in which the great German men were celebrated.⁶⁵ The Empire was shattered, so the need to emphasize an eternal tradition was greater than ever. Antiquity proved to be a perfect canvas to project this ongoing tradition of German excellence on.

Another example in which antiquity served as a base for national pride were the representations of the Wars of Liberation (1813-1814). During the Battle of Leipzig (1813) commonly known as the *Völkerschlacht* (The Battle of Nations), an alliance of Russia, Austria, Sweden and German states defeated Napoleon for the first time on what would ultimately be German soil. German nationalists would refer to this immense battle as a second *Hermannsschlacht*.⁶⁶ Just as the German tribal leader had rid himself and his people of the Roman yoke, the German states had fought off the First French Empire. In this way, to some the figure of Arminius or Hermann had become a father of a nation that yet had to be created. That the figure of Hermann was not yet embraced by the masses however can be seen through the struggle of Ernst von Bandel (1800-1876), the founder of the *Hermannsdenkmal*.

The earliest drawings for what eventually would be the *Hermannsdenkmal* stemmed from 1819. By that time the nationalistic outburst of the Napoleonic Wars must have been a vivid memory in the mind of sculptor Ernst von Bandel.⁶⁷ Sculpting began in 1838 on a hill in the Teutoburg Forest near Detmold, the place where it was thought that the Battle of the

⁶² Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 32-34.

⁶³ Joep Leerssen, *National thought in Europe. A cultural history* (Amsterdam, 2006), 119.

⁶⁴ Leerssen, *National thought in Europe*, 119.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 119.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 15.

⁶⁷ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 66-67.

Teutoburg Forest had taken place. Von Bandel planned that the monument would be finished within the course of the next year. However, due to lacking financial support as the main delaying factor, the build would only be finished in 1875.⁶⁸ The aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) meant a unification of the loose federation of German states within the *Deutsches Kaiserreich* or German Empire, led by emperor Wilhelm I. Financial support for the monument grew enormously. The newly crowned emperor took over patronage of the sculpture and made huge personal contributions to finish the project.⁶⁹ To be embraced as a forefather of a nation, that nation had to first come into existence. The burst of nationalism as a result of the humiliation of the French (which was seen by many contemporaries as a retaliation for the Napoleonic Wars) made that the comparison with Hermann destroying the Romans was now stronger than ever. The large role the state played in finishing the monument explicitly shows their need for constructing a dialogue with the antique past in order to legitimise and solidify their own power. It can be understood as an act of creating a national identity for the new nation-state.⁷⁰

Monuments were means to create a so-called *Staatsbewußtsein*, a scholarly concept that is probably best translated as national consciousness.⁷¹ This means that governments try to create unity amongst the people living within their territory, making them conscious of the fact that they are united and live together in a nation-state. National monuments and public holidays are means to create *Staatsbewußtsein* which in turn produces nationalistic sentiments. These feelings of national pride not only strengthen the cohesion between the people, but they are also used to pass off political aspirations of the respective governments as acts of national interest. This was a practise that the politicians of the German Empire from 1871 onwards preached (as did the National Socialists between 1933 and 1945).⁷² The combined result of the aspirations of emperor Wilhelm I and the nationalistic sentiments of Ernst von Bandel was a huge statue of Hermann measuring over 53 meters in height, towering above the trees of the Teutoburg Forest.

The symbolism of the monument is unmistakably linked with the formation of a national ideology. Arminius is wearing a winged helmet, raising a sword above his head with his right arm on which the inscriptions *Deutsche Einigkeit meine Stärke* and *Meine Stärke*

⁶⁸ Herbert Benario, 'Arminius into Hermann. History into legend, *Greece & Rome* 51 (2004), 83-94, esp. 89. and Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 66-67.

⁶⁹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 66-68.

⁷⁰ Kirsten Belgum, 'Displaying the nation. A view of nineteenth-century monuments through a popular magazine', *Central European history* 26 (1993), 457-474, esp. 457.

⁷¹ Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Bürgertum, Staatssymbolik und Staatsbewußtsein im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 16 (1990), 269-295, esp. 270-271.

⁷² Hardtwig, 'Bürgertum', 270-271.

Deutschlands Macht are visible.⁷³ Notice that the inscription reads *Deutschland* instead of *Germanien*. This is done in order to create a strong lineage with the empire.⁷⁴ Arminius is treading on a Roman legionary eagle and the *fasces* with his left foot. The *fasces* is a bundle of wooden rods with an axe sticking out of it, the symbol of power of the Roman magistrates.⁷⁵ The inscriptions at the pedestal refer to the victories over France during the Napoleonic Wars and the Franco-Prussian War in which the new nation is portrayed as superior.⁷⁶

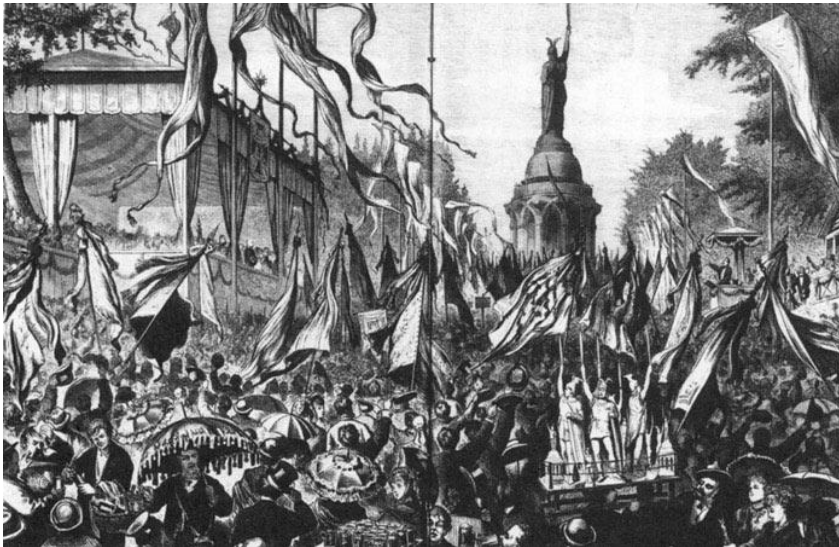


Fig. 1; The revealing of the *Hermannsdenkmal*, published in the magazine "Gartenlaube", 16th of August 1875.⁷⁷

Although the *Hermannsdenkmal* is far from the only national monument celebrating the newly found nation-state while representing themselves as the direct ancestors of antiquity, it is one of the clearest examples in which a national identity is created so closely linked with the antique past.⁷⁸ However, few people ever were able to visit these monuments.⁷⁹ The popular press proved to be the means that spread information about these monuments, but turned out to be the tool for constructing a narrative behind these monuments that got embraced by the masses. Not only newspapers covered the unveiling of national monuments, magazines would issue extensive articles on matters like these. An example of a magazine with a huge target audience was the *Gartenlaube*, a family magazine first released in 1853. It grew out to be most widespread read magazine of its time, both nationally and internationally.

⁷³ Bernario, 'Arminius into Hermann', 89-90.

⁷⁴ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 69.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, 69.

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 70.

⁷⁷ Knut Ekwall, *Festscene bei der Einweihung des Hermann-Denkmalles*, (ed.) Ernst Keil's Nachfolger, *Die Gartenlaube* (Leipzig, 1875), 640.

⁷⁸ For more information on national monuments, street names and art that served to build a national identity after 1871, read Hardtwig, 'Bürgertum', 269-295.

⁷⁹ Belgum, 'Displaying the nation', 458.

Historians have estimated the number of readers to be in the millions by the 1870s.⁸⁰ By 1871 the tone of the magazine had become nationalistic.⁸¹ The *Hermannsdenkmal* was covered on numerous occasions, and the verdict of the journalists was overwhelmingly positive. It brought the monuments, as well as information about German antiquity into hundred thousands of households. Hermann would remain a figure of Germany's unity throughout the German Empire and well into the Weimar Republic (1919-1933).⁸²

Nation building from 1871 onwards, antiquity as a common ancestry.

Before the unification, "Germans" as a unified people did not exist.⁸³ There was a notion of German history in which Germans from different regions played crucial roles, however the history of Germany itself was not a reality.⁸⁴ In order to build a nation-state, a new collective memory had to be constructed which all, or at least most, Germans could identify with. The emperor and his advisors thought that glorifying the story of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, with Hermann as a national hero, would help to reconstruct Germany's collective memory. Unity was found in Tacitus' pageantry of their ancestors within *Germania*. Over the years to come, the themes discussed in *Germania* started to get increasingly racist connotations. If one is to understand the rise of National Socialism, the nationalistic and racist sentiments which started to take shape during the turn of the century must be examined.⁸⁵

The founding of the German Empire in 1871 and the newfound unity was being celebrated. Even so, many middle-classed and highly educated men found that too many German speaking peoples did not live within the newly established territory.⁸⁶ They started to form political organisations in which Pan-Germanism (the political aim to unify all German speaking peoples into one territory) became the main goal. The supporters of such sentiments started to become increasingly influential, and eventually formed the *völkische Bewegung*.⁸⁷ The increasing popularity of this movement resulted in the founding of associations like the *Alldeutscher Verband* (Pan-German League) in 1891.⁸⁸ The ideology of the movement started to combine nationalism and Pan-Germanism with increasingly anti-Semitic sentiments. This

⁸⁰ Belgum, 'Displaying the nation', 460.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 459-461.

⁸² Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 79.

⁸³ Alon Confino, 'The nation as a local metaphor. Heimat, national memory and the German Empire, 1871-1918', *History and memory* 5 (1993), 42-86, esp. 47-49.

⁸⁴ Confino, 'The nation as a local metaphor', 47-49.

⁸⁵ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 11.

⁸⁶ Krebs, *A most dangerous book*, 203-204.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, 203-204.

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 203.

especially was visible in the numerous pseudo-scientific researches in which *völkisch* men practised fields like archaeology and physical-anthropology in order to show Aryan superiority over numerous other peoples, especially the Jews.⁸⁹ Tacitus' writings in particular greatly influenced these scholars. They claimed that the ancient writer praised the Germanic tribes for their racial purity.⁹⁰ An example of an influential *völkisch* scientist was Indologist Leopold von Schroeder, who wrote: '*All great intellectual advancement by humanity, for thousands of years, consists of nothing other than the further development of individual Aryan tribes.*'⁹¹ High ranked Nazi officials like Himmler and Rosenberg were influenced by authors like Schroeder and Chamberlain who became frontrunners of the *völkische Bewegung*.⁹²

At the same time the field of ancient history was undergoing major changes within the educational system of the German Empire. By orders of emperor Wilhelm II, from the 1890's onward teachings on the great deeds of ancient Greeks and Romans became a real focal point within German schools.⁹³ Similar education was given to a young Adolf Hitler, who received ancient history class in Linz, Austria-Hungary in 1900, by outspoken anti-Semite Leopold Poetsch.⁹⁴ Hitler later recalled the great influence Poetsch had on him. According to Hitler, Poetsch was able to link historical conflict with the present, which made the young Hitler despise the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy.⁹⁵

During the early years of the Third Reich, the National Socialist regime presented themselves as *völkisch*. However they insisted that their ideology, especially in the field of propaganda, was carried out in such a way that it spoke to the erudite elite as well as to the working class.⁹⁶ High Nazi-officials like Joseph Goebbels satirized Weimar culture in saying that it was drenched in an elitist, 'art for the sake of art' attitude which was largely caused by the Jewish community. These Weimar erudite elites had lost their focus on the goal of making art. The focus should be on making art in service of the *Volk*, and not for the bragging rights or even worse; for money.⁹⁷ The Führer himself on the other hand was presented as the *artist-politician*, much like the architect of unity during the times of the German Empire; Chancellor

⁸⁹ Krebs, *A most dangerous book*, 204-206. Also; Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 10-11.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, 204.

⁹¹ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 11.

⁹² Ibidem, 10-11. Also; Krebs, *A most dangerous book*, 206, 211-213.

⁹³ Stefan Bittner, 'Die Entwicklung des Althistorischen Unterrichts zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus', in: Beat Näf (ed.), *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Zürich, 1998), 285-303, esp. 288-289. Also; Leerssen, *National thought in Europe*, 213-214.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, 289.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, 289-290.

⁹⁶ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 37-38.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 38.

Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898).⁹⁸ Between 1871 and 1918, a German idealist tradition had been formed which retained the notion that artistic endeavours could shape a nation's reality.⁹⁹ In other words, by propagandizing for instance military victories in art, which were projected on the *Hermannsdenkmal*, the people would gain nationalistic sentiments towards the nation-state and a sense of unity would become the norm. The artist-politician was a person who intuitively knew what would be best for the *Volk*, and thus had the right to nudge the people into thinking in such a manner. Art, which often was a depiction of the antique past, became a tool for strengthening a nation's cohesion in the German Empire. Using antiquity-themed art as a political tool was resurrected by the National-Socialists.¹⁰⁰ The Nazis in turn positioned themselves against the decadence of the artist of the Weimar Republic.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Otto Karl Werckmeister, 'Hitler the artist', *Critical inquiry* 23, (1997), 270-297, esp. 270-278.

⁹⁹ Werckmeister, 'Hitler the artist', 273-274.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem, 273-275.

¹⁰¹ Dennis, *Inhumanties*, 38.

Chapter 3: 1933-1945; a period of ambiguity?

The previous chapter ended with the notion that the National Socialist regime was influenced by nineteenth century ideas that the German nation was superior to other European states because of the people's excellence. Particularly the propagandizing of a glorified past to create a sense of unity within the *Reich* was one of the methods the Nazis appropriated. Tacitus, who idealised the Germanic peoples within his texts was a source of inspiration for German nationalists from the sixteenth century onwards.¹⁰² Hermann as a 'father of the nation' was starting to be largely accepted by the *Volk*. The foundations of this phenomenon were already laid in the nineteenth century. It seemed that the Nazis, seeing themselves as *völkisch*, could capitalise on this motif and use it to present the German people as the racial offspring of these noble tribes. Being that the Germanic tribesmen did not write history themselves, the Nazis relied on the views of the Roman intellectuals of old. Although Tacitus was not the only one who wrote about the Germanic tribes, it is safe to say that he was the most influential Roman writer for the German nationalists.¹⁰³ However, the Greek and the Roman past would also be a source for inspiration for the Nazis. The Nazi ideology and its propaganda can perhaps best be shown in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (1920-1945), the official newspaper of the NSDAP and eventually the most widely read newspaper in Nazi Germany.¹⁰⁴ While commonly representing Roman culture as decadent, there were certainly figures who were presented in more positive terms within the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Horace (65 B.C. - 8 B.C.) for instance was praised for his love for the rural area where he supposedly cultivated wine with his bare hands on his farm. In doing so, Horace became *volkstümlich*, or a *völkischer* character.¹⁰⁵ National Socialism's relation towards the Classical period was complex to say the least.¹⁰⁶ The following chapter will dive into the propaganda of the Hellenistic and Roman past and how the Nazis legitimised the glorification of the cultural greats belonging to these ancient civilisations.

¹⁰² Arnold, "Arierdämmerung", 14.

¹⁰³ For more information, see chapter 8: *A Bible for National Socialists* in: Krebs, *A most dangerous book*, 214-244.

¹⁰⁴ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 1-12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, 38-39.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, 128.

Antique Greek art, the 'evidence' of a common primeval race.

As discussed in the first chapter, Hitler saw the ancient Greeks and Romans as close relatives to the Germans for they had ancestors in the same *Grundrasse*.¹⁰⁷ This allowed the Nazis to appropriate cultural elements from those times, the most commonly known phenomenon was the Hitler salute which emulated the ancient gesture meant to salute the Roman emperors. Hitler was not the only voice within the Nazi party to believe in the common ancestry of the ancient peoples. In 1929, eugenicist and 'racial expert' of the NSDAP Hans Günther dedicated an entire book to answering the question if the Greeks and Romans had a Nordic ancestry. The *Rassengeschichte des hellenischen und des römischen Volkes* aimed at glorifying the Nordic race by attributing the most influential cultural achievements of the antique past to this superior race.¹⁰⁸ The 1932 publication of *Musik und Rasse* by Richard Eichenauer falls within the same genre; *Rassenforschung*.¹⁰⁹ The common element within these racial researches is the notion that race is the precursor to either cultural genius or poverty.¹¹⁰ The superiority of Greek music in *Musik und Rasse* was due to its 'Apollonian' nature which was a consequence of Nordic influence.¹¹¹ Authors of publications like *Rassengeschichte* (1929) and *Musik und Rasse* (1932) were influenced by nineteenth century theorists who first claimed the Greeks stemmed from a Nordic people.¹¹² Already in 1824 did historian Karl Otfried Müller publish his *Die Dorier. Geschichten hellenischer Stämme und Städte* in which the historian claimed the Dorians were a people who had an enormous impact on Greek culture because of their Nordic descent. It was a work that heavily influenced writers like Hans Günther.¹¹³

The idea that the Nordic race was responsible for infiltrating Greek culture was legitimised by practising the scholarly field of anthropology. Before 1933, National Socialist racist ideology was based on numerous loosely appropriated scholarly contributions in fields of anthropology, archaeology et cetera.¹¹⁴ After the Nazis' seizure of power, they started to appropriate the synthesis that one was able to map the century long struggle between the 'long-skulled' Nordic race and the 'round-headed' Semitics/Arabs/Slavs at a general level.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁷ Another source who confirms this is; Hans-Ernst Mittag, 'Antikebezüge nationalsozialistischer Propagandaarchitektur und -skulptur', in: Beat Näf (ed.), *Antike und Altertumswissenschaft in der Zeit von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Zürich, 1998), 245 -265, esp. 256.

¹⁰⁸ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 64.

¹⁰⁹ Leo Treitler, 'The politics of reception. Tailoring the present as fulfilment of a desired past', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116 (1991), 280-298, esp. 293.

¹¹⁰ Treitler, 'The politics of reception', 293.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 293.

¹¹² Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 64-66.

¹¹³ Ibidem, 65-66.

¹¹⁴ Arnold, "Arierdämmerung", 11.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem, 11.

This synthesis was partially derived from linguist and archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna (1858-1931), who was the architect of the *Kulturkreis* concept. This theory meant that the territory of an ethnic group can be identified by the archaeological finds.¹¹⁶ The work of Hans Günther (1891-1968) can also be seen as a precursor to this generally accepted synthesis. Günther researched the helmets of Greek warriors who, to his mind, could only be worn by people with slim, lengthy heads, in other words peoples of Nordic descent.¹¹⁷ Eventually the eugenicist also stepped into the field of art history. Within his publications he presented ancient statues and pictures whilst providing them with comments which were grounded in racial theories.¹¹⁸ This admiration for the ideal Greek figure can also be found in the magazine *Kunst der Nation* of German painter Otto Andreas Schreiber.¹¹⁹ Schreiber became a member of the NSDAP in 1932 and can be seen as a member of a National Socialist cultural reform movement trying to link art with Nazi ideology. Within *Kunst der Nation* Greek art, for example the Laocoön group, is glorified on numerous occasions.¹²⁰



Fig. 2; Translated: "*Reichs Labour Service. We are preparing body and soul.*" (1936). The *Reichsarbeitsdienst* was a program set up by the regime to put young, unemployed men to physical work whilst educating them into becoming useful members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In this poster we can clearly see the topless idealised Aryan body derived from Greek culture; well-built males with blonde hair, light skin and (if one looks closely at the figure on the right) long skulls.¹²¹

In Günther's work we find descriptions of this ideal Nordic body, derived from the ancient poet Homer. Helen, who is praised for her unmatched beauty, is being described as blonde,

¹¹⁶ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 11.

¹¹⁷ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 67-68.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, 67-71.

¹¹⁹ Mittig, 'Antikebezüge', 257.

¹²⁰ Ibidem, 257.

¹²¹ John Heineman, 'Reichs Labor Service. We are preparing body and soul', *The Third Reich Nazi propaganda 1935-1938* <http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/prop/ns_rad.html> [accessed on: 01-06-2016].

bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked. On top of that she has red lips, a pale skin and thin white hands, checking all of the boxes in Günther's idea of a Nordic body type.¹²²

In 1936 the regime held the Olympics in Berlin, a initially unwanted inheritance of the Weimar Republic.¹²³ The pacifistic and international nature of the Olympics and the Nazi ideology did not go well together.¹²⁴ Even so, Hitler and Goebbels decided to take on the enormous project because they saw an opportunity to propagandise the German nation-state.¹²⁵ Within the scholarly field, there is still a lot of debate on how to interpret the propaganda of the 1936 Olympics. Especially Leni Riefenstahl's movie *Olympia*, which was indirectly financed by the regime, is problematic.¹²⁶ The movie is clearly designed to celebrate the human physique. Therefore, there has always been much debate on how to make sense of the shots in which the African-American athlete Jesse Owens is featured.¹²⁷ What we can say with certainty is that the filmmakers are trying to create a lineage with the Greek culture. This becomes especially apparent in the shot where the *Discobolus*, (the famous sculpture of the ancient Greek Myron) seamlessly morphs into the figure of German athlete Erwin Huber.¹²⁸

Between 1934 and 1937 the appeal to antiquity was in the process of establishing itself firmly within German culture.¹²⁹ Under influence of important technocrats like Albert Speer and Reinhard Heydrich, the focus of National Socialist art started to lay more heavily on the classical period.¹³⁰ This, despite the consensus within the 1930's academic field that the ancient Greeks laid the foundations for future democratic, humanistic and elitist intellectual cultural systems. These elements of Greek antiquity were clearly at odds with the notion of a purely German culture as well as Nazi ideals.¹³¹ How was the regime able to sideline undesired elements of Greek culture, whilst glorifying useable assets of that same culture?

¹²² Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 67-68.

¹²³ Daniel Wildmann, *Begehrte Körper. Konstruktion und Inszenierung des 'arischen' Männerkörpers im 'Dritten Reich'*(Würzburg, 1998), 19.

¹²⁴ Michael Mackenzie, From Athens to Berlin. The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, *Critical Inquiry*, 29 (2003), 302-336, esp. 302.

¹²⁵ Wildmann, *Begehrte Körper*, 19.

¹²⁶ Mackenzie, 'From Athens to Berlin', 303.

¹²⁷ See; Wildmann, *Begehrte Körper*, 13. as well as the article; Mackenzie, 'From Athens to Berlin'., if you want to know more on the scholarly debate on the interpretation of *Olympia*.

¹²⁸ Mackenzie, 'From Athens to Berlin', 319.

¹²⁹ Wildmann, *Begehrte Körper*, 24-25.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, 25.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, 24.

More ambiguity within the *Reich's* propaganda.

The complex nature of the National Socialist regime with the antique past can perhaps best be shown by examining the figure of Hitler himself as well as comparing Hitler's ideas with Nazi propaganda. Adolf Hitler whilst promoting the Greek or Hellenistic ideal of culture for its beauty, rejected rationalist and humanistic trends that were introduced first in Greek ancient times.¹³² While glorifying Roman history, and especially the Roman imperial heritage, as the greatest mentor for the German people, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, of which Alfred Rosenberg was the editor, compared the culture of the Late Roman Empire with Weimar decadence.¹³³ Above all they compared Roman imperial policy towards Carthage with the Treaty of Versailles (1919).¹³⁴ And then we have the case of Arminius who defiantly fought off the legions of the Roman Emperor. How did the regime reconcile these conflicting traditions and were they even able to do so? To grasp these paradoxes, an even deeper understanding of Nazi propaganda is needed.

In search for stable foundations of the new *Reich*, Hitler aimed for a civilised society in which state-architecture would capture the political support of the people as well as projecting an image of the people's unity.¹³⁵ The state would promote and finance the construction of large public buildings, build by and for the *Volk*. From the Nazis perspective, the Weimar government did not invest enough in state-architecture. The Nazi regime however, would have to go through great lengths to finish these bombastic monuments which would show the people their firm conviction in the regime's cause.¹³⁶ For public monuments the eternal cities of antiquity would become the example.¹³⁷ In pursuit of this neo-classist template as the main form of state-architecture, Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer found each other.¹³⁸

From a National Socialist perspective, because of their Jewish/Bolshevik nature forms of modern art and architecture had no place within state-architecture.¹³⁹ The classicist tradition appealed to both Hitler and Speer. Hitler, however, did not believe in the idea that Germanic antiquity had ever existed, pointing out that even though the previously mentioned

¹³² Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 127.

¹³³ Sabine Wilke, "'Verrottet, verkommen, von fremder Rasse durchsetzt'. The colonial trope as subtext of the Nazi 'Kulturfilm' 'Ewiger Wald'", *German Studies Review* 24 (2001), 353-376, 369.

¹³⁴ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 128.

¹³⁵ Werckmeister, *Hitler the artist* (1997), 282.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, 282.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, 282.

¹³⁸ Mittag, *Antikebezüge*, 257.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, 257.



Fig. 3; "Germany's modern architecture" (1937). This poster was for foreign consumption, intended to lure tourists to Germany to come and view the marvels of the new architectural style of the *Reich*. This style, largely inspired by the time period of the Roman Empire, was perfected by German architect Albert Speer.¹⁴⁰

Walhalla (1842) at Regensburg was meant to commemorate the Germanic past, the monument was built in a classical Greek architectural style.¹⁴¹ Hitler and Speer instead took much inspiration from the great ancient Roman Empire. Both men liked to discuss the ruins of the Roman Empire, which still resonated the greatness of that time even after its fall.¹⁴² They initially forged plans to build the new buildings of the *Reich* in such a way that when they eventually would become ruins, the power of the regime would still be visible. This shows that Speer saw the important relationship between architecture and political power.¹⁴³ He later recalled that at the time he, as well as Hitler, firmly believed in a common ancestry of both the ancient Greeks and the Aryans.¹⁴⁴

While Hitler was concerned with mirroring the new *Reich* with the power of the Roman Empire, the Party's newspaper the *Völkischer Beobachter* generally downplayed the strength of Imperial Rome.¹⁴⁵ Articles concerning the Roman Empire were focussed more on the weakness of the emperors, who led the Empire to ruin. The editors of the paper also tried to convey a message that the downfall of the Weimar Republic resembled much of the demise of Carthage. Imperial Rome, mirroring the allied forces in WWI, was the evil aggressor in this story, forcing a once great nation to its knees because of their craving for colonial overlordship and warmongering, punishing Carthage with demilitarisation and excessive

¹⁴⁰ John Heineman, 'Germany's modern architecture', *The Third Reich Nazi propaganda 1935-1938* <http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/prop/ns_architect.html> [accessed on: 01-06-2016].

¹⁴¹ Mittag, *Antikebezüge*, 258.

¹⁴² Barbara Lane, 'Architects in power. Politics and ideology in the work of Ernst May and Albert Speer.', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1986), 283-310, esp. 301.

¹⁴³ Lane, *Architects in power* (1986), 301-302.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 302.

¹⁴⁵ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 137.

payments.¹⁴⁶ However, as the pageantry of Horace has shown, the *Völkischer Beobachter* was not negative of all ancient Roman culture but they kept on attacking the vision of strength that the Caesars would have possessed.¹⁴⁷

Similar contradicting noises within Nazi ideology can be found between the ideas of Nazi officials. Himmler and Rosenberg were especially invested in proving the high culture of the Germanic tribes in antiquity. In organisations like *Amt Rosenberg*, established in 1934 and the *SS-Ahnenerbe*, founded in 1935, they tried to find evidence of a German antiquity by practising archaeology and anthropology.¹⁴⁸ Hitler wanted nothing to do with these endeavours. Apparently, he once stated: "[...]daß bei den Ausgrabungen von Siedlungsstätten unserer Vorfahren aus vorchristlicher Zeit immer sehr viel Geschrei gemacht werde. Er sei gar kein Freund davon. In derselben Zeit, in der unsere Vorfahren die Steintröge und Tonkrüge hergestellt hätten, von denen unsere Vorzeitforscher soviel Aufhebens machten, sei in Griechenland eine Akropolis gebaut worden."¹⁴⁹

Understanding the Nazis' appropriation of the antique past.

As shown, the Nazis used different motifs of the antique past to create a lineage with the Greek and Roman ancient cultures. In a seemingly opportunistic manner, in one instance the regime chose to identify themselves with the glorified Greek body and in another instance Roman architecture was appropriated to convey the public of the regime's strength. This had everything to do with the historical discourse the Nazis created.¹⁵⁰ Within their historical narrative, the Nazis stemmed from a common primeval race the Greeks and the Romans also belonged to. In order to reinforce these ideas, the regime appropriated elements of these cultures in instances they deemed most useful.¹⁵¹ For the 1936 Olympics, the opportunity to create a link with the Hellenic world, by placing the bodies of the German athletes within the world of Greek imagery, was never greater than before.¹⁵² It is therefore not strange that the regime capitalised on that. For the Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg, a link with the greatness of the Roman Empire and Nazi Germany through Speer's architecture was presented. The parade ground for the *Wehrmacht* (although never completed) on this huge

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem, 137-141.

¹⁴⁷ Dennis, *Inhumanities*, 141.

¹⁴⁸ Mees, 'Germanentum', 256.

¹⁴⁹ Marion Bertram, 'Zur Situation der deutschen Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung während der Zeit der faschistischen Diktatur', *Forschungen und Berichte* (1991), 23-42, esp. 25. Also Mees refers to this reference in his article; Mees, 'Germanentum' (2004), 266.

¹⁵⁰ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 401-402.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem, 401-403.

¹⁵² Ibidem, 170-172.

terrain was called the *Märzfeld*, creating ties with the Roman *Campus Martius* whilst commemorating the month in which the regime recovered their military sovereignty in 1935.¹⁵³ However, not all party members were concerned with presenting a lineage between the German people of their time and the Greeks and Romans of the antique past. To get a better grip on this phenomenon, we take a closer look at the Nazis ambiguous relationship with the antiquity.

Clashing ideologies. *Germanentum* or a broader idea of Aryanism?

After 1933 it was almost impossible for enthusiasts to investigate for instance the *Kulturkreis* concept without coming to terms with the regime's ideology.¹⁵⁴ Even the official institutes of Rosenberg and Himmler had to cope with incidental negative remarks of their Führer. Himmler's interest in the German primeval times were grounded in the convictions that the Germans in order to battle the Jews, the *Volk* needed to reinstate an unadulterated German agricultural life and that there should be a racially-pure nation-state.¹⁵⁵ To legitimise these claims, a different approach to the German primeval times was needed. With his *Ahnenerbe*, Himmler promoted a noble lifestyle based on that of the racially-pure Germanic tribesmen who were invested in high-culture and agriculture.¹⁵⁶ For Rosenberg too there existed a historical narrative in which the world had once revolved around the Nordic/Germanic race. Rosenberg wanted to resurrect this ancient culture within the present in order for this race to reclaim its superiority within the world.¹⁵⁷

The antiquarian organisations of Rosenberg and Himmler had a big impact on Nazi ideology. The elevation of the status of the Germanic tribesmen resulted in the slander of Non-Nordic elements within the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations.¹⁵⁸ To the minds of many National Socialists, because of their regular contact with Semitic peoples (racial offspring from Africa and the Middle East) the culture of the Greeks and Romans had been tainted.¹⁵⁹ Hitler himself had no use for these anti-Mediterranean sentiments. At the same time that the phenomenon of *Germanentum* was embraced by the regime's elites, the Führer started to contest it.¹⁶⁰ *Germanentum* was the German equivalent to the Italian concept of *romanità*.

¹⁵³ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 270-272

¹⁵⁴ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 11-12.

¹⁵⁵ Bertram, 'Zur Situation', 26.

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem, 26.

¹⁵⁷ Frank Lothar-Kroll, 'Geschichte und Politik im Weltbild Hitlers', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 44 (1996), 327-353, esp. 337.

¹⁵⁸ Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung'", 14.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Mees, 'Germanentum', 257, 264.

In other words, it is a concept that is used to describe people who tried to define and emulate the essence of (ancient) Germanic culture. Hitler's perception of the end of times consisted of two options. Either the Jews would win the *Rassenkampf*, which would result in an apocalyptic last phase of the world, or the Aryan race would be the victors, meaning that the world would be saved.¹⁶¹ Hitler thus had no use for the Party's leading voices to work towards a reinstatement of the German primeval times.¹⁶² In 1938 he openly denounced the endorsement of such aspirations, which was picked up by the Ministry of Propaganda, led by Joseph Goebbels who was Hitler's greatest admirer.¹⁶³ National-Socialism was not to be changed into a neo-pagan cult and mysticism within the SS was criticised by the dictator.¹⁶⁴

For Hitler the *Rassenkampf* between the Jews and the Aryans was most noticeable during the times of ancient Rome and Greece. According to him, the downfall of these great civilisations and its Aryan culture was due to the perseverance of the Jewish race.¹⁶⁵ In order to prevent this from happening again, one had to follow the steps of the ideological plan which Hitler thought National-Socialism provided.¹⁶⁶ Within the mindset of Himmler and Rosenberg there seemed to be a lineage with nineteenth century racial ideology.¹⁶⁷ The theme of ancient Germans as the saviours of Europe was heavily present in the teachings of Chamberlain which inspired these Party's elites.¹⁶⁸ Rosenberg attributed the cultural heritage of the Greeks and Romans to the influx of the Germanic Aryans in later times.¹⁶⁹ He ascribed the success of the Roman Empire cultural- and military wise to assimilated Germans. *"Ein Feldzug nach dem andern zeigt krieggewohnte römische Taktik vergebens gegen urwüchsige Kraft am Werke. Blonde riesige 'Sklaven' treten in Rom auf, das germanische Schönheitsideal wird Mode im verfallenden ideallosen Volkstum. Auch freie Germanen sind in Rom keine Seltenheit mehr, germanische Soldatentreue wird nach die stärkste Stütze des Cäsars."*¹⁷⁰ Hitler's focus lay with the Aryans in a broader sense. Still, he did not completely dismiss the role the Germanic tribal societies played within his worldview. They too were Aryans, and as such were a part of a cultivated superior race. This moved Hitler to refer to the Germanic tribes in a minimal sense. Even though he would take part in the glorification of Germanic

¹⁶¹ Lothar-Kroll, 'Geschichte und Politik', 337.

¹⁶² Ibidem, 337.

¹⁶³ Mees, 'Germanentum', 264.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem, 264.

¹⁶⁵ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 299-301.

¹⁶⁶ Lothar-Kroll, 'Geschichte und Politik', 338.

¹⁶⁷ Mees, 'Germanentum', 264-265.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem, 264-265.

¹⁶⁹ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 75-77.

¹⁷⁰ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*, (ed.) Hoheneichen-Verlag, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* 34 (München, 1934), 80.

values like bravery and their apparent racial consciousness (all which can be traced back to Tacitus' pageantry), he would not indulge in *völkisch* attempts to reform the nation-state to resemble these ancient times.¹⁷¹ But what did all this mean for the propaganda of Germany's most famous tribesman; Arminius?

¹⁷¹ Lothar-Kroll, 'Geschichte und Politik', 341.

Chapter 4: 1933-1945; The case of Arminius.

With regards to the previous chapter, it has become clear that the Nazis used the antique past to show continuity with those times. They even tried to convey an image of a common ancestry with the noble blooded peoples of antiquity. Whether they were Greek, Roman or German did not matter all that much, as long as it served a purpose. On a general level, the Nazis appropriated all kinds of elements from the antique past. When one investigates the affluent stream of propaganda material further and connects the dots between the created propaganda and Nazi ideology, one can understand why on Nazi propaganda posters elements from for instance the Roman past are so prominently present. However not all members of the NSDAP had the same views on German antiquity. There seems to have been a major discrepancy between the views of the most prominent members of the regime. Himmler and Rosenberg were enthusiastic promoters of a refined prehistory formed by Germanic tribesmen which, to their minds, existed alongside the advanced Roman civilisation. Meanwhile Hitler made contradicting statements regarding the German prehistory.¹⁷² On one occasion he denounced the idea of a high society that would have existed during Germany's prehistory on another he proclaimed that the Germans did not have to feel ashamed about their Germanic ancestors stating in a speech from 1934: "[...] *Wir können vielmehr darauf hinweisen, daß die Germanen schon 1000 Jahre, bevor Rom gegründet wurde, einen kulturellen Hochstand erlebt haben.*".¹⁷³ The Führer himself appears to have had a complex relationship with the Germanic past. Even so, many scholars believe that Hitler only had little sympathy for that period of time.¹⁷⁴ Did Hitler change his views on the Germanic past over time, did he have contradicting ideas within his mind from the start or did he just glorify whatever suited his political agenda at a certain given time? It is therefore important to look at the propaganda of the Germanic antiquity and its most famous figure; Arminius since propaganda was the main tool to broadcast Nazi ideology.

Arminius as a propaganda tool for National-Socialists: Grabbe's *Die Hermannsschlacht*.

The Nazis as mentioned previously, were influenced enormously by nineteenth century erudite elites. Not only the (pseudo-)scientific world of the nineteenth century proved to be a draw for National Socialists, also elements within the world of the arts of the previous century kept on inspiring them. One of the clearest examples of this phenomenon was the apparent

¹⁷² Bertram, 'Zur Situation', 25.

¹⁷³ Ibidem, 25. Also; Mees, 'Germanentum', 266.

¹⁷⁴ Lothar-Kroll, 'Geschichte und Politik', 341. Also; Mittag, *Antikebezüge*, 258. There is still discussion about Hitler's view on Germanic prehistory, which is briefly discussed in: Mees, 'Germanentum', 256-257.

popularity amongst Nazi officials of a play by Christian Dietrich Grabbe from 1835-1836.¹⁷⁵ In '*Die Hermannsschlacht*' Arminius' hand is forced in choosing between the military and legislative culture of the Romans and the culture of his own people.¹⁷⁶ The themes of this play are of importance if one is to understand its attraction to National Socialists within the Third Reich. The play celebrates both regionalism and nationalism.¹⁷⁷ Grabbe himself was born in Detmold, and it was thought that the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest had taken place in its backyard, which might be an explanation for the focus on the glorification of the woodland area.

The nationalistic character is shown throughout of the play. The Romans take on the role of suppressors, subordinating the noble Germans to their foreign political, jurisdictional and moralistic way of life.¹⁷⁸ By polarising the two groups early on, the stage is set for an epic battle for liberation. Hermann himself is portrayed as an ideal leader who is a great military tactician and who is also able to bend the will of the Germanic people into wanting to be victorious and free.¹⁷⁹ Great emphasis is laid on the importance of the people and their cultural identity. "[...] *Welch ein Dummbart wär ich, wollt ich was sein ohne mein Volk.*"¹⁸⁰ The Germanic culture is portrayed in Grabbe's play as a rustic, rural lifestyle in which tribesmen housed a deep respect for nature.¹⁸¹ In the last scene of the play, upon hearing the news of his legions being slaughtered, a dying emperor Augustus prophesizes the downfall of the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity as well as the coming of a new age. In this respect, the play implements a religious and also worldly perspective.¹⁸² On numerous occasions, the characters refer to their lands as Germany. These anachronisms show the reality of 1835 in which Germany as an unitary state was not yet a reality. German nationalists like Grabbe longed for such a nation.¹⁸³

The play can be understood as both a homage to the homeland of Lippe (the principality in which Detmold was located) and its history, as well as a glorification of a German nation-state.¹⁸⁴ Its *völkischer*, nationalistic and mythical character, as well as its

¹⁷⁵ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 59.

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem, 61.

¹⁷⁷ Lothar Ehrlich, 'Christian Dietrich Grabbes Hermannsschlacht. Werk und Mythos, in: Rainer Wiegels and Winfried Woesler, *Arminius und die Varusschlacht. Geschichte, Mythos, Literatur* (Paderborn, 2003), 389-397, esp. 390.

¹⁷⁸ Ehrlich, 'Christian Dietrich Grabbes', 391.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, 391.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem, 391.

¹⁸¹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator* (2016), 59.

¹⁸² Ehrlich, 'Christian Dietrich Grabbes', 392-393.

¹⁸³ Ibidem, 393-394.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 394.

glorification of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, the relationship between the strong leader and the people and the noble Germanic tribesmen living united and free in nature must have played a factor in the popularity of the play in the Third Reich.¹⁸⁵ One can clearly see its appeal to National Socialists drawn to mysticism and *Germanentum*. The play, although written in 1835-1836, had never been performed, up until 1934 in Nazi Germany.¹⁸⁶

Grabbe's *Die Hermannsschlacht* was easily appropriated by the Nazis.¹⁸⁷ Grabbe's plays had become such a success that in 1936 Nazi official and *Gauleiter* Dr. Meyer saw an opportunity to propagandise the playwright by initiating the so-called *Grabbe-Woche*.¹⁸⁸ To honour the death of Grabbe, a week of celebrations and shows were held in Detmold, in which Joseph Goebbels took on the role as patron.¹⁸⁹ Dr. Meyer previously wrote essays in which he emphasized the role that the German heroism within Grabbe's work could play in Nazi propaganda. The Nazis saw in Grabbe's work useful cultural education for the *Volk* and made the *Grabbe-Woche* into an annual event.¹⁹⁰ In 1937 the *Grabbe-Gesellschaft* was installed. The *Grabbe-Gesellschaft* was a society headed by Rainer Schlösser, who at the time was *Reichsdramaturg* in the RMVP and president of the *Reichstheaterkammer* which gave the whole operation allure. The plays of Grabbe had such resonance in the Third Reich that soon the plays were performed in theatres all over the nation.¹⁹¹



Fig. 4; *Die Hermannsschlacht* (1937), performed at the *Waldbühne Heessen* near Hamm. the photo depicts the victorious Germanic tribesmen after defeating the Romans.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Ehrlich, 'Christian Dietrich Grabbes', 397.

¹⁸⁶ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 60.

¹⁸⁷ Ron Engle, 'Theatre in Detmold 1933-1939. A case study of provincial theatre during the Nazi prewar era', in: Glen Gadberry (ed.), *Theatre in the Third Reich, the prewar years. Essays on theatre in Nazi Germany* (Westport, 1995), 33-45, esp. 40.

¹⁸⁸ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 83. Also; Ron Engle, 'Theatre in Detmold', 40.

¹⁸⁹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 83

¹⁹⁰ Ron Engle, 'Theatre in Detmold', 40.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 40.

¹⁹² Julia Freifrau Hiller von Gaertringen, *Der Einzige völkische Visionär seiner Zeit. Grabbes "Hermannsschlacht" auf dem Theater*, *Lippische Landesbibliothek Detmold* <<http://www.llb-detmold.de/wir-ueber-uns/aus-unserer-arbeit/texte/2009-4.html>> [accessed on: 05-08-2016].

Arminius as a propaganda tool for National-Socialists: the Lippe campaign 1933.

The giant monument near Detmold was thought to be a perfect opportunity to use as a symbol for the movement's struggle during the elections of the so-called *Landtag* or regional parliament in January 1933.¹⁹³ After the failed elections of 1932, the Nazis started to lay their focus more on these regional elections. Detmold was thought to be a location to test their newfound strategy. The *Landtag* campaign in Lippe's capital Detmold was seen as a chance to revive the wavering party morale. Joseph Goebbels stressed the importance of a political victory in the *Landtag*, saying that it was a matter of prestige.¹⁹⁴ Although the campaign focussed on a region that had no more than 180.000 inhabitants, the Nazis promoted their party with an unusual amount of exertion.¹⁹⁵ The symbolic connotations (like the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest) that region possessed were used in their propaganda apparatus. In January of 1933 a large number of events were held in which Nazi officials held speeches in which they laid a link between Hermann's struggle and their own.¹⁹⁶

The result of the election was won decisively by the NSDAP, who won with 39.5 percent of the votes.¹⁹⁷ Some scholars argue that, although the Lippe-Detmold area was but small, the victory of the Nazi Party was of crucial importance for their rise to power. These scholars believe that it was one of the deciding factors which resulted in Hitler taking the position of chancellor on January 30th, 1933.¹⁹⁸ The Nazis posed their electoral victory as a breakthrough battle or a final push to power.¹⁹⁹ The Führer too indulged at the time in a discourse in which the Nazis posed themselves as having to fight against a yolk, much similar to what Hermann and his tribesmen did in 9 A.D.. A few months prior to the election in Lippe, Hitler was handed a copy of Grabbe's play by NSDAP-member Walter Steinecke. Hitler would have enthusiastically replied that a second Battle of the Teutoburg Forest would be a very useful metaphor in the upcoming election.²⁰⁰ The use of this tactic can be shown in the many produced campaign posters in which the *Hermannsdenkmal* plays a crucial part.

¹⁹³ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator* (2016), 10 Arminius in National Socialism.

¹⁹⁴ Juan Linz, 'Democracy's time constraints', *International Political Science Review* 19 (1998), 19-37, esp. 36.

¹⁹⁵ Detlef Mühlberger, 'Hitler's voice. The Völkischer Beobachter 1920-1933', in: Peter Lang (ed.), *Organisation and Development of the Nazi Party 1* (Bern, 2004), 553.

¹⁹⁶ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator* (2016), 87-88.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 88. Winkler states: "[...] *Their electoral success made it possible for the Nazi's to put increased pressure on Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher and his government in the national parliament, the Reichstag. When Schleicher resigned that same month, Hitler was appointed chancellor in his place on January 30. Exactly two weeks after the Lippe elections, the Nazi's were in power.*". Linz's argues among the same lines in: Linz, 'Democracy's time', 36.

¹⁹⁹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator* (2016), 86-114.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, 95-96.



Fig. 5 (left); "Liste 7. Macht frei das Hermannsland" (1933). This campaign poster from January 1933 clearly shows the lineage the Nazis tried to portray between their party and the Hermann's myth.²⁰¹

Fig. 6 (below); "Auf Propagandafahrt durchs Lipperland". This photo depicts the NSDAP campaigning in Lippe in 1933, taken from Arno Schröder's 'Hitler geht auf die Dörfer' (1938). The party members are marching with the poster on the left-hand side.²⁰²



In 1938 eyewitness and participant of the 1933 campaign Arno Schröder published a work called "Hitler geht auf die Dörfer...", in which the events of that campaign are described in a day-by-day manner.²⁰³ The first words of the introduction read: "Vierzehn Tage vor der Machtübernahme wurde in Lippe die Durchbruchsschlacht zur nationalen Revolution geschlagen."²⁰⁴ It shows the importance of the campaign in the memory of the National Socialists. The victory the NSDAP achieved in Lippe may have been a vital one for the Nazis grab for power, at least it was perceived as such by party members.²⁰⁵ Schröder described the victory on the 8th of January as follows; "Ganz Lippe spricht von nichts anderem mehr als von Adolf Hitler und seinem einzigartigen Triumphzug durchs Hermannsland."²⁰⁶ Therefore, the symbolism of Hermann should not be underestimated.

²⁰¹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 98.

²⁰² Arno Schröder, "Hitler geht auf die Dörfer...". *Der Auftakt zur nationalen Revolution. Erlebnisse und Bilder der entscheidenden Januarwahl 1933 in Lippe* (Detmold, 1938), 230.

²⁰³ Schröder, "Hitler geht auf die Dörfer...".

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 7.

²⁰⁵ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 94-96.

²⁰⁶ Schröder, "Hitler geht auf die Dörfer...", 164-165.

That statement however has to be put in perspective. Even though one must not downplay the importance of Hermann in Nazi ideology and propaganda (as the popularity of Grabbe's play throughout the lifespan of the Regime shows), scholars have reached a consensus that the figure of Arminius was not one of the central figures in their ideology and propaganda.²⁰⁷ The ambiguity of Hitler's statements, on the one hand identifying with the figure and on the other hand criticizing the lack of culture during Hermann's time, can be understood by further investigating Hitler's statements on the German Aryan of antiquity. After reviewing another instance in which the German tribesmen were glorified, this time on the big screen in the film *Ewiger Wald*, these paradoxes will be examined and hopefully become more clear.



Fig. 7; "Free Hermanns country!" (1933). This poster from the 1933 campaign in Lippe shows a strong lineage between the two German leaders. Both 'Führers' freed the German people, and the Nazis pay homage to their ancestor by way of greeting him with a German Salute. Hermann is placed in such a manner that it looks like he responds in kind with his sword.²⁰⁸

Arminius as propaganda tool for National-Socialists: *Ewiger Wald* (1936).

To the Nazis cinema was an instrument used to shape the minds of the German public into being open to their ideology. By 1933, the German film industry was among the most powerful, if not the most powerful entertainment industry in Europe.²⁰⁹ The sheer size of the country, as well as the many German speaking peoples outside of its borders had meant a serious spread of the German film both nationally and internationally.²¹⁰ By the time of the Nazis grab for power, the public already was used to cinema being a tool for the state. It was one of the main reasons they could put the existing film industry to use.²¹¹

A movie which was clearly intended to portray and spread the National Socialist ideology was the semi-documentary *Ewiger Wald*. The film was released in 1936 under the

²⁰⁷ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 86.

²⁰⁸ Ibidem, 99-100.

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Film propaganda*, 142.

²¹⁰ Ibidem, 142.

²¹¹ Ibidem, 142-143.

auspices of the *N.S.-Kulturgemeinde*, a governmental agency invested in spreading cultural content imbued with National Socialist ideology.²¹² The film displays 2000 years of German culture (or at least what these Nazi filmmakers perceived to be German culture) in which nature plays a crucial role.²¹³ The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest also makes an appearance for instance. The filmmakers built *Ewiger Wald* around the principle of *Blut und Boden*, a *völkisch* concept that existed within National Socialist ideology.²¹⁴ *Blut und Boden* for the Nazis meant that their racially pure people have had a mythical relationship with their territory from the earliest times on. In *Ewiger Wald*, this is portrayed by the noble peasant and his environment; the German forest, living together in harmony.²¹⁵ Another concept within Nazi ideology that is incorporated within the movie is the idea of *Lebensraum*.²¹⁶ This concept was built on the premise that the German people were in tune with nature and their environment and as such lived off the land. This in turn meant that the people needed space in which they could find enough means to survive. Within Nazi ideology, the German people should strive to expand the existing territory in order to preserve their superior race.²¹⁷

That the filmmakers thought along the lines of these two concepts, becomes obvious on multiple occasions in the film. Within the prologue of the film *Blut und Boden* and *Lebensraum* are most apparent.²¹⁸ The film's opening sequence is over ten minutes of footage of German landscape in changing seasons while a choir and an orchestra support the images by performing a dramatic score. After trying to impress the audience by these images of the German woods, the filmmakers introduce their story with the text: "*Euch, die ihr kamt, im Bilde das Gleichnis zu schauen, Das die Natur euch lehrt im 'Stirb' und im 'Werde', Volk, Dir, das sucht, kämpft und ringt, Das unvergängliche Reich zu bauen, Ist gewidmet dies Lied.*"²¹⁹ After the text fades whilst the a big lone tree on a hill is being shown and the narrator takes over by reciting the following text: "*Ewiger Wald, ewiges Volk. Es lebt der Baum wie du und ich. Er strebt zum Raum wie du und ich. Sein 'Stirb' und 'Werde' webt die Zeit. Volk steht wie Wald in Ewigkeit.*"²²⁰ The forest itself is introduced as a participant or an actor, next to the *Volk*. They are presented as two parts of a whole; *Blut* (the people) and *Boden* (the forest). Also, the filmmakers emphasise the need for *Lebensraum* in order to sustain an eternal *Reich*.

²¹² Wilke, "Verrottet", 354.

²¹³ David Welch, *Propaganda and the German cinema 1933-1945* (London, 1983), 86.

²¹⁴ Wilke, "Verrottet", 357.

²¹⁵ Welch, *German cinema*, 86.

²¹⁶ Ibidem, 86. Also; Wilke, "Verrottet", 357. As well as, Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 165-166

²¹⁷ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 165-166.

²¹⁸ Ibidem, 164-165.

²¹⁹ Rolf von Sonjevski Jamrowski and Hans Springer, *Ewiger Wald*, (ed.) N.S.-Kulturgemeinde (1936).

²²⁰ Von Sonjevski Jamrowski and Springer, *Ewiger Wald*.

Like the tree who needs his space to survive and grow, so too must the German people expand their territory.²²¹

The mythical bond between people and their land is especially put onto the foreground in the scene which depicts the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. The scene is introduced by a Roman eagle standard which comes prominently into view acting as a prelude to the coming danger for the Germanic tribesmen.²²² The next few shots show the Romans wading through rough terrain into the uncharted territory of the German forests. The tribesmen, obviously at home in the woods, use the terrain to camouflage themselves and move silently in their respective positions.²²³ Using tactics from guerrilla warfare, the Germanic tribesmen creep up on their enemy and completely surprise them.²²⁴ In the heat of battle a storm rages and the trees sway in the wind. As if the forest is fighting the foreign invaders itself, trees that are being struck by lightning conveniently fall on top of the Roman soldiers.²²⁵ During the clash, the bearer of the Roman standard is toppled of a small cliff into a pond, and before lifting the Roman eagle one final time out of the water the standard and its bearer descend into the deep.²²⁶ The next shot shows the same pond but now the surface of the water is calmed and overgrown with vegetation. Peace has returned and nature has restored its balance.²²⁷ After the battle, the viewers are presented with a scene in which the fallen German heroes are burned in a funeral fire. The fire lights up and a flaming "S"-rune is being shown, in a similar style as the "SS"-symbol.²²⁸ Finally the image fades and another epoch of "German culture" commences.

Arminius, or Varus for that manner, are not singled out within these scenes, which is striking. This has everything to do with the fact that the film wants to portray the *Volk* as a uniform being.²²⁹ In accordance with the idea of *Blut und Boden*, the defeat of Varus is portrayed as an achievement of the people and as such there is no need for one hero to rally the people to this cause. Even so, it is obvious to historians that this scene is in fact a re-enactment of the famous Battle of the Teutoburg Forest.²³⁰

²²¹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 165-166.

²²² Welch, *German cinema*, 88.

²²³ Von Sonjevski Jamrowski and Springer, *Ewiger Wald*.

²²⁴ Wilke, *Verrottet* (2001), 358.

²²⁵ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 170.

²²⁶ Von Sonjevski Jamrowski and Springer, *Ewiger Wald*.

²²⁷ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 170.

²²⁸ Welch, *German cinema*, 88.

²²⁹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 172-173.

²³⁰ *Ibidem*, 163-177. Also; Welch, *German cinema*, 88. As well as; Wilke, "'Verrottet'", 358.

Arminius-propaganda put in perspective.

The previous examples are a testament to the fact that during the Nazi-period the heroic story of Arminius was being appropriated in National Socialist propaganda. Whether the trials and tribulations of the German tribesman were depicted on stage, during political rallies or on the big screen, Arminius' legend had been used by the Nazis to show a continuum with their own time and especially with their own ideology. It is however crucial not to overstate the importance of these propaganda sources. Historians have reached a consensus on this matter which implies that Arminius/Hermann was neither the central historic figure in National Socialist ideology, nor the most important character in their representation of the German past in propaganda.²³¹

In the previous chapter the antiquity-debate between the party's elites has been addressed. It became clear that Hitler did not have much sympathy for the idea of a Germanic antiquity which thus moved him to refer to Arminius in a minimal sense. Still, within the Lippe campaign the dictator presented himself as an admirer of the Cheruscan chieftan. It is safe to say that Hitler purely paid homage to the figure of Arminius/Hermann out of political reasons. The Lippe/Detmold area had their own hero, which made it a great symbol for the Nazis to appropriate. To strengthen that statement it is important to look at the comments of Hitler on German antiquity. "*[...] Da wird irgendwo ein Schädel gefunden, und alle Welt sagt: So haben unsere Vorfahren ausgesehen. Wer weiß, ob der Neandertaler nicht ein Affe war. Jedenfalls haben dort unsere Vorfahren nicht gesessen in jener Zeit! Unser Land war ein Sauland, durch das sie höchstens durchgezogen sind. Wenn man uns nach unseren Vorfahren fragt, müssen wir immer auf die Griechen hinweisen.*".²³² This monologue, recorded in the 'Wolfsschanze' (one of the military headquarters during World War II, located in Poland) in 1942 shows how Hitler spoke about the antiquarian endeavours of his Party members.²³³ In another monologue Hitler's opinion on the supposed high culture of the Germans is even more outspoken. "*[...] Bei allen Funden in unseren Gegenden bin ich skeptisch: Diese Sachen sind oft ganz woanders erzeugt worden. Für ihren Bernstein haben die Germanen der Küste diese Dinge bekommen. Sie waren auf keiner höheren Kulturstufe wie heute die "Maori" (Neuseeländer Negerstamm), [...]*".²³⁴ These rare insights in the mind of Hitler illustrate how he really looked at the archaeological finding of organisations like *Amt Rosenberg* and *SS-*

²³¹ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 86.

²³² Adolf Hitler, *Wolfsschanze 18.1.1942, nachts*. in: (ed.) Henry Picker, *Hitler's Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Berlin, 1945), 85.

²³³ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 81-83.

²³⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Wolfsschanze 4.2.1942, abends*, in: (ed.) Henry Picker, *Hitler's Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Berlin, 1945), 101.

Ahnenerbe. To his mind, not only was the idea of a German antiquity comparable to that of the Greeks and Romans ridiculous, it could potentially be damaging for the ideology that should be conveyed.²³⁵

Hitler's love for Roman antiquity was so profound and obvious to his adversaries that they chose to use it against him. General Erich Ludendorff, the famous German officer who was hailed as one of the heroes of the Battle of Tannenberg (1914) and after the war became a rightwing political activist, initially found an ally in Adolf Hitler and participated alongside the future dictator in the *Bierkellerputsch* of 1923.²³⁶ However, Ludendorff became disenchanted in the figure of Hitler and started to openly criticize him.



Fig. 8; "*Hermann zerbrach das römische Hoheitszeichen, Adolf Hitler richtet es wieder auf*" (early 1930's). This postcard was produced by the *Volkswarte Verlag*, the publishing house of Ludendorff. It shows Arminius treading on the Roman standard and Hitler raising it. It implies that Hitler is glorifying Germany's oldest enemy and that nationalists should vote for a leader that focuses on German sovereignty, values and history.²³⁷

This piece of propaganda also shows that Hitler's love for Mediterranean antiquity was no secret already in the early 1930's. After the 1933 election, Hitler only referred to Hermann on a handful of occasions. On the 30th of May 1942, the Führer held in Berlin's *Sportpalast* a speech before ten thousand lieutenants in which he took the ancient chieftain as an example to show that ruling with force is beneficial to the ruled.²³⁸ The legend of the military genius must have appealed to the imagination of the officers. "*Als sich zum ersten Male ein deutscher Einiger erhob, Hermann der Cherusker, hatte er vor sich ein Gemengsel von Stämmen. Aus diesen Stämmen versuchte er eine größere Einheit zu bilden, nicht etwa mit dem freien Willen aller, sondern im Gegenteil unter Anwendung so manches Mal sehr harten Zwanges, denn die ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Bausteine dieses ersten größeren deutschen Volkskörpers hatten*

²³⁵ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 81-84.

²³⁶ Winkler, *Arminius the liberator*, 105-107.

²³⁷ Ibidem, 106-108.

²³⁸ Ibidem, 120-122.

auch ein Eigenleben."²³⁹ Later in the speech Hitler stated: "[...] aber in dem Moment, in dem der Schöpfer dieser Einheit fiel und die einzelnen Stämme wieder zu ihrer sogenannten Selbständigkeit zurückkehrten, begann das Schicksal wieder, über sie hinwegzurollen. 300 Jahre später ist von diesen Stämmen nicht einmahl mehr der Name bekannt, [...]."²⁴⁰ The enlightened leader, (cultivated and trained by the Romans), died and thus the tribes returned to their natural, meaningless state. It easy to imagine Hitler defending his occasional appropriation of Arminius whilst downplaying the possibility of a German antiquity by pointing out the fact that within the legend, Hermann spend considerable time among the Romans. In fact Hitler once stated: "*Wenn die Römer die Germanen nie in ihr Heer geholt hätten, wäre der germanische Bauer kaum der im Waffenhandwerk geübte Soldat geworden, der sie - die Römer - hernach vernichtet habe. Am deutlichsten werde einem das in der Person Armins, der Kommandeur der 3. Römischen Legion gewesen sei und eine soldatische Ausbildung und Erfahrung, aufgrund deren er die Römer schlagen konnte, somit von ihnen selbst in jungen Jahren bezogen habe. Auch seine tapfersten Mitstreiter beim Aufstand gegen die Römer seien Germanen gewesen, die irgendwann einmal als Legionäre im römischen Heer Dienst getan hätten.*"²⁴¹

What about the quote of Hitler mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, stating that before the Romans, the Germans already lived in a state of 'high culture'? By quoting a short snippet of Hitler's speech held on the 5th of December 1934 in Karlsruhe, in her article Bertram is able to show ambiguity in Hitler's thinking on the cultural value of German antiquity.²⁴² However, when one takes a closer look at the speech one can see that the dictator lays the focus on a common ancestry of European peoples. "*Wir können und müssen mit noch vielmehr Recht darauf hinweisen, dass fast alle europäischen Völker indogermanisch sind, wie nicht nur die deutsche, sondern wie die europäische Vorgeschichtsforschung bewiesen haben.*"²⁴³ In the eyes of Hitler, during the earliest of times, the Germanic tribes did have some culture of a certain higher level in comparison to contemporaries, however they remained in that state for decades and the Romans eventually surpassed them. The reason to underline the Indo-Germanic ancestry within this speech becomes clear later on: "*Die gemeinsame indogermanische Grundlage sollte die Völker Europas stärker verbinden, als das*

²³⁹ Adolf Hitler, *War der Zweite Weltkrieg für Deutschland vermeidbar?*, in: (ed.) Henry Picker, *Hitler's Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Berlin, 1945), 711.

²⁴⁰ Adolf Hitler, *War der Zweite Weltkrieg für Deutschland vermeidbar?*, 711.

²⁴¹ Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 84-85.

²⁴² Bertram, 'Zur Situation', 25.

²⁴³ Gerd Simon, 'Denkschrift über Vorgeschichte', Ebenhard Karls Universität Tübingen <<https://homepages.uni-tuebingen.de/gerd.simon/DSVorgesch.pdf>> [accessed on: 06-08-2016].

häufig der Fall ist, und sollte sie mahnen, einander besser und höher zu achten und sich gegenseitig beizustehen im Kampfe gegen Mächte, die aus dem Osten komend, Europa z. B. im Bolschewismus wieder bedrohen, wie es in der Geschichte schon vielfach der Fall war."²⁴⁴

Ewiger Wald, the film in which the superiority of the German antique peoples is portrayed, stood under the auspices of Alfred Rosenberg, who at the time headed the *N.S.-Kulturgemeinde*.²⁴⁵ It is therefore not strange to think that the *Reichsleiter* had an influence on the film and the mystic character of the film. This might also explain why the entire film purely focuses on "German culture", instead of looking at the cultural achievements of the Indo-Germanic people as a whole.²⁴⁶ The focus on the pagan cremation rituals might also be influenced by Rosenberg. Alfred Rosenberg was a large proponent of the *völkische Bewegung* (on the contrary to the more cosmopolitan Goebbels).²⁴⁷ Elements of this movement next to the previously discussed Pan-Germanism and anti-Semitism are, among other things, the superiority of the Nordic race and the natural heroism that is inextricably tied with the Nordic character, the idealization of the German peasant, interest in folklore and a tendency to reject all non-traditional aesthetic styles.²⁴⁸ Another element to the *völkisch* ideology was the idea that specifically the northern countries of Europe had always housed the most pure offspring of the Nordic race.²⁴⁹ These elements were heavily present in *Ewiger Wald*; the focus on *Blut und Boden* and *Lebensraum* and the depiction of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest can be linked with the glorification of the German peasant, his superiority and his mystic relationship with nature, Pan-Germanism and folklore. These concepts made it a film that promotes the *völkisch* ideas of the *N.S.-Kulturgemeinde* and Alfred Rosenberg.²⁵⁰

Hitler countered the idea that the Aryans living in the North were purest of blood by stating that the Greeks were Germans as well. He referred to the idea that the Germanic tribes mass migrated in antiquity and largely settled in the Mediterranean.²⁵¹ In fact, Hitler openly attacked the *völkisch* ideology at a speech in Nuremberg in 1934.²⁵² Among the supporters of the *völkische Bewegung* within the NSDAP were Dr. Meyer and Rainer Schlösser, the biggest

²⁴⁴ Gerd Simon, 'Denkschrift über Vorgeschichte', Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen <<https://homepages.uni-tuebingen.de/gerd.simon/DSVorgesch.pdf>> [accessed on: 06-08-2016]. Notice "komend" which should probably be "kommend", however I have copied the text correctly.

²⁴⁵ Wilke, "'Verrottet'", 354.

²⁴⁶ Welch, *German cinema*, 86.

²⁴⁷ Wilke, "'Verrottet'", 369.

²⁴⁸ Ibidem, 369-370. Also; Mees, 'Germanentum', 260.

²⁴⁹ Alexander Demandt, 'Klassik als Klischee. Hitler und die Antike', *Historische Zeitschrift* 274 (2002), 218-313, 297.

²⁵⁰ Ibidem, 370-371.

²⁵¹ Ibidem, 297. Also; Chapoutot, *Der Nationalsozialismus*, 82-83.

²⁵² Wilke, "'Verrottet'", 369.

promoters of Grabbe's play *Die Hermannsschlacht*. Rainer Schlösser even had been active in "völkisch politics" from 1924 onwards and had been an editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.²⁵³ Hitler and Goebbels did not sympathise with these old rightwing ideas. As Bernhard Mees argues: "Overtly supported by Rosenberg and Himmler, the memory of the more ridiculous antics of the old radical right tempered Hitler's enthusiasm for the revival of the spirit of Germanentum, much as some of the more gnostic aspects of the völkisch tradition, in response to the Fuhrer's public criticisms, were officially discouraged in the German racial state."²⁵⁴ The Fuhrer had constructed a racial discourse in which *Germanentum* had no place. Out of fear for a surge of enthusiasm for an ideology that solely created ties with Germanic antiquity instead of also glorifying the ancient Aryans of the Mediterranean, Hermann and his noble Germans were sidelined. Hermann's legend, in the eyes of the Nazis, only highlighted the Germanic farmer/warrior. That is why Arminius never became the most important historic character in Nazi ideology and that is also why he never became the main focal point in Nazi propaganda.

²⁵³ Alan Steinweis, *Art, ideology, and economics in Nazi Germany. The Reich Chambers of music, theater, and the visual arts* (Chapel Hill, 1993), 55.

²⁵⁴ Mees, 'Germanentum', 269.

Conclusion

The idea for the subject of this thesis came to me when I started pondering on the connection between Roman antiquity and the Nazi regime. The Nazis had appropriated a lot of elements from the Roman antique past like, for instance, the Roman salute. Nowadays it is commonly referred to as the Hitler salute and a lot of people, at least from my generation, do not have a clue that this gesture was something the Nazis appropriated from antiquity. Maybe the Nazis emulated even more 'hidden' elements from Roman antiquity? Even so, Roman antiquity proved not to be the only source of inspiration for the Nazis. National Socialism also took the Germanic tribesmen of old to heart, and glorified their close ties with nature and their fighting spirit. However, the Germanic tribesmen once fought the Roman Empire. How did the Nazis reconcile the clash of these civilisations? Naturally the idea of Arminius as a focal point came up. Arminius, once served in the Roman army and used that knowledge to destroy the legions of Varus. In the nineteenth century he had been a great German hero, but had he also been appropriated by the Nazis? After some research it appeared that the Nazis indeed had a ambiguous relationship with antiquity. Thus, this thesis started out with the question: "*How did the figure of Hermann (Arminius) come in to play in National Socialist propaganda between 1933 and 1945, and does this tell us anything about the ambiguous relationship of the National Socialist regime and the antique past?*".

Looking at propaganda as a scholarly concept and whilst having that information in mind examining nineteenth century ideologies that influenced National Socialism was the first step. After the Franco-Prussian War and the German unification, it was important for the government of the new nation-state to create a national identity for the entire population of the German Empire. Arminius or Hermann proved to be a powerful symbol because his legend told the story of a people who resisted power-hungry imperial forces. The link between the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest and the Napoleonic/Franco-Prussian Wars was quickly established. Hermann became a figure the German people could rally behind. At the same time, the Indo-European origin-myth caused great academic interest in racial differences and within the German Empire this met with nationalistic ideas of German superiority. These two phenomenon made for a helix in which German identity became more and more a story of racial dominance. Pseudo-scientific works, like the study of Germanophile Houston Chamberlain, became the eminent tool to prove this racial ideology. This ideology can be seen most prominently in the appearance of the *völkische Bewegung* at the end of the nineteenth century. Within the minds of the *völkischer* men, even though the Indo-Europeans cultivated the continent, the Nordic Aryan race was the most exceptional branch of all.

Völkischer propaganda glorified the German farmer and aspirations of Pan-Germanic expansions.

The *völkische Bewegung* had an enormous impact on later National Socialism. The old radical right inspired forces within the Nazi top, like Himmler and Rosenberg, to subsidise antiquarian and archaeological research in which leading academics and pseudo-scientists exalted the status of the prehistoric Germanic tribesmen. *Germanentum* became an ideology within National Socialism, a specific branch of racists that aspired for overlordship of the German Aryan. Meanwhile a more cosmopolitan view within National Socialism, of which none-other than Hitler was its most avid supporter, on the history and destination of the Aryan race had been established. Hitler envisioned the coming of a final showdown between the Aryans and the Semitic peoples. All of history had pointed to the coming of this Armageddon. Aryans of all of Europe and beyond had to be persuaded to join forces with each other in order to live happily in a thousand year *Reich*, or march to their doom. To convey this message, Hitler could indulge in the appropriation of elements of the Greek and Roman world. With great regularity he shared his ideas of a common ancestry between the ancient peoples and the Aryans of the present. He had no use for his party members to spread *Germanentum* over the German people.

Arminius as a symbol within this story was too problematic. The public denunciation of people within the Führer's party who solely were preoccupied with creating a lineage with a specific German version of history, made that the propaganda that could be categorised as non-universal was reduced to a minimum. After researching the debate extensively, I was unable to find any remarks of Himmler and Rosenberg reacting to Hitler's criticism in neither the used literature nor in speeches and books that focussed on the archaeological research conducted under the auspices of these men. Either they did not want to disapprove of the Führer's ideas in public, or their remarks aren't as well documented as Hitler's. It makes one wonder how, if at all, these men reacted to the scolding of Hitler. Even so, it is clear that both men wanted to give their worldviews some academic credibility, as well as (of which *Ewiger Wald* is an example of) spreading that ideology amongst the people.

Making Hermann into a national symbol however, like the old rightwing had once done, meant that the spirit of the Germanic tribesman was also worshipped. Even though Hitler could identify with the 'Führer of antiquity', for he was Aryan and had been cultivated by the Romans, his legend was a story of turmoil between Aryans. To revere a brother war was something that had no place within Hitler's idea of National Socialism. It moved him to refer to Arminius only when it could serve him well, like in the Lippe campaign of 1933.

Other instances in which Hermann was appropriated prominently can be shown as outbreaks of suborn supporters of a mystic, German centric ideology within the regime. The seemingly ambiguous relationship of the Nazis with the antique past was thus caused by contradicting ideas within Nazi ideology.

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