Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the Idea of Nationalism in the 19th Century

Case Studies

Edited by Thorsten Fögen and Richard Warren

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Michael Sommer

Hermann the German: Nineteenth-Century Monuments and Histories

Abstract: In A.D. 9, Arminius, a Roman auxiliary officer and member of the nobility of the Cherusci, revolted and defeated a Roman army in the Teutoburg Forest. The Roman mutineer was rediscovered in the Renaissance and remodelled, by German humanists and reformers, as "Hermann": a figurehead of German(ic) unity and freedom from Rome which, in the sixteenth century, meant the Roman Church. By the early nineteenth century, Rome had become Napoleonic France from whose domination German intellectuals strove to break free. In the heat of the Wars of Liberation, Arminius-Hermann once again became a symbol for a better future in freedom and unity.

This paper revisits two monuments built to commemorate the *liberator Germaniae* in the nineteenth century: the *Hermannsdenkmal* at Detmold, where Ernst von Bandel, an artist and architect, promoted and, more or less single-handedly, was the impetus behind the project of a national monument; and the Hermann Heights Monument at New Ulm, Minnesota, where German immigrants to the United States clustered around the mythical figure, who stood for German and American freedom alike. The paper investigates the mutability of an "intentional history" that, once canonised, served as a blueprint for the monumentalisation of an imagined past – a past which, though far from real, contributed to shaping the collective identities of those involved.

1 Introduction

„In all likelihood, the *Hermannsdenkmal* near Detmold will remain forever incomplete. Only the giant platform has been finished. The erection of the statue, which lay scattered and in pieces around it, has failed due to lack of money." Thus wrote, in 1853, the weekly magazine *Die Gartenlaube* (vol. 11, p. 120). "The German spends money on banquets, opera and other things that titillate the senses", the anonymous author goes on, "but as soon as it comes to issues of national importance, the cash box is rarely open."

The project, first contemplated around 1800, designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel after the victory over Napoleon at Leipzig and finally initiated by Ernst von Bandel in 1838, was, by the middle of the century, obviously in dire straits. The revolution of 1848 had failed to create the political unification of Germany; on the contrary: through the kingdoms, duchies and petty principalities that formed Germany blew the icy wind of reactionism. Constitutions were revoked, parliaments dissolved, attempts at rebellion crushed. The notion that political unity could be achieved by idealism alone gave way to more stalwart ap-

proaches: if at all, Germany had to be united top-down, by means of *Realpolitik*. Suddenly, the political myths underpinning the national project had gone out of fashion – and so had the idea of building a national monument to the greatest of such myths: Hermann.

2 From Arminius to Hermann: a champion of freedom

Modern nations are prototypical imagined communities (see Anderson [7]1996). As such, they need symbols and narratives around which they can cluster, inspiring the notion in its members that they know, and belong to, each other. Such narratives have been labelled, by Hans-Joachim Gehrke, "intentional history".[1] While not true in an 'objective' sense, it is believed to be true. Intentional history, though an artificial construction, has a powerful impact on the real world. It often determines the political agenda of states, the political behaviour of individuals and the political orientations of large collectivities. Intentional history is written by people, but it is not necessarily the machination of sinister obscurantists. In most cases it evolves gradually, through, often contingent, additions by countless individuals. Intentional history is fluid, swiftly adapting to changing requirements and new challenges. As such, it could be described as the narrative dimension of a political myth, which usually precedes other manifestations: visual and practical.[2]

In the case of Arminius-Hermann, the creation of a political myth goes back to no other than Tacitus. In the famous disputation between the brothers Flavus and Arminius[3] the Roman historiographer contrasts Roman civilisation with

1 'Intentional history', as opposed to 'real history', is "(s)ocial knowledge of the past, in other words that which a society knows and holds for true about its past" (Gehrke 2001: 286). See also Gehrke (1994, 2003, 2004, 2005).

2 See Münkler (2009: 14–15). According to Münkler (2004: 221–222), it is only because of political myths creating meaning that individuals can act jointly and hence politically: "(Politische Mythen verbürgen) durch sinnhaft strukturierte Erzählungen Sinn (..., stiften) dadurch Vertrauen in die eigene Handlungsmächtigkeit (und ermöglichen somit erst) politisches Handeln im Sinne eines Zusammenhandelns von Menschen."

3 Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.9–10, with Arminius invoking *fas patriae, libertatem avitam, penetrales Germaniae deos, matrem precum sociam* and Flavus citing the somewhat feeble rewards he received from Rome: *aucta stipendia, torquem et coronam aliaque militaria dona*. Flavus is also

Germanic tradition, freedom and sense of honour. As in the *Germania*, the Germanic barbaricum is used here as an antipode, epitomised by Arminius and exposing flaws and contradictions within Roman society. The *Germania* was pivotal for the rise of the narrative that turned the Germanic peoples into the ancestors of modern Germans. Rediscovered by Enoch of Ascoli in the mid-fifteenth century, Tacitus' *opusculum* rapidly spread throughout northern Europe and was eagerly read by humanists and religious reformers alike: men like Ulrich von Hutten, Heinrich Bebel and of course Martin Luther, who found plentiful ammunition in this text in his struggle against the Roman papacy.[4]

But it was not before 1508 – when Tacitus' *Annals* were discovered – that Arminius-Hermann became the champion of German assertiveness against Roman deceitfulness.[5] In 1520, von Hutten wrote his *Arminius Dialogus* in the style of Lucian of Samosata, and thus established the cult of Arminius in Germany. A few years later, Arminius became *Erman* in Johannes Turmair's *Bayrische Geschichte* ("History of Bavaria"). In his *Colloquia, oder Christliche nützliche Tischreden Doctoris Martini Lutheri*, published posthumously in 1566, Luther calls Arminius-Erman by his German name Hermann, asserting: "Ich hab in von hertzen lib" ('I love him with all my heart'). A collection of twelve biographies of Germanic rulers in rhymes (*Ursprung und Herkommen der zwölff ersten König und Fürsten deutscher Nation*), modelled after Suetonius' imperial biographies and published in 1543 by the poet Burkhard Waldis, irrevocably canonised Arminius as one of the ancient forebears of German political identity.

The Thirty Years' War put different issues of – now chiefly confessional – identity on the agenda; new intentional histories had to be written. Arminius-Hermann duly disappeared from the centre stage of intellectual debate. He was not rediscovered before the end of the seventeenth century. In 1689 and 1690, the Breslau-based lawyer and playwright Casper von Lohenstein published, in two volumes, his novel *Großmüthiger Feldherr Arminius*, thus triggering the second wave of Arminius literature (see Kösters 2012: 227–230, and Wiegels 2009). Over the whole eighteenth century, enlightened German intellectuals were heavily imbued with Hellenomania. But alongside the admiration for classical

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referring to the greatness and clemency of Rome: *magnitudinem Romanam, opes Caesaris et victis graves poenas, in deditionem venienti paratam clementiam*.

4 The book's career has recently been revisited by Krebs (2011). For a meticulous study into how the text was 'instrumentalised' by humanist intellectuals, see Mertens (2004).

5 On the following see Kühnemund (1953), Fröhlich (1999), Bemmann (2002), Benario (2004), Dreyer (2009: 225–231), Kösters (2012), Märtin (2008: 283–312), Ottomeyer (2009), Wolters (2008: 174–185), and the contributions in Wiegels & Woesler (^{3}2003).

Greece, and increasingly competing with it, there was a growing idealisation of the Germanic ancestors; their alleged love for simplicity, freedom and fairness was opposed to the alleged corruptness of the absolutist petty states eighteenth-century Germany was divided into. In 1743, Johann Elias Schlegel, a poet from Meißen, composed a tragedy *Hermann*, which was designed as a German national drama. Six years later, the tragedy *Arminius*, written by a lawyer and civil servant from the prince-bishopric of Osnabrück, Justus Möser, celebrated Arminius as a champion of German unity and freedom against discord, a true hero, whom to have as progenitor flatters the sensible ambition of each nation (see Märtin 2008: 294).

Ironically, this German hero was a re-importation from Latin Europe: France and Italy, where Arminius/Arminio had celebrated great successes as the protagonist of dramas and operas. Seminal for the reception of Arminius-Hermann in the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars was Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's Hermann trilogy, a series of epic poems based on the battle songs of Celtic bards.[6] Here, Hermann is portrayed as a prototypical hero, who ultimately sacrifices himself for the fatherland: for the sake of German freedom, culture and even language. After 1789, German intellectuals, welcoming the French Revolution as the long-desired liberation from the yoke of absolutism, duly associated Hermann with the ideals of the revolution. One German Jacobin, Carl Friedrich Cramer, who translated Klopstock's *Hermanns Schlacht* into French, even called Hermann a "Bonaparte of Germany" (see Kösters 2012: 252).

This changed with the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars in 1800, when Arminius-Hermann was no longer construed as a champion of freedom as such, but of freedom from foreign occupation. The new Hermann first emerged in 1805, when Ernst Moritz Arndt urged for a reborn Arminius, putting Napoleon on a level with the Roman general Varus. According to Arndt, the Battle in the Teutoburg Forest was an event of epoch-making importance, as it was here that the fate of the European nations was decided. In 1808, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, took on Klopstock's image of Arminius as the saviour of German culture, language and identity, but now with a distinct anti-French bias: while the Romance nations were linguistically corrupted by the influence of Latin and Greek, owing to Arminius only the Germans had preserved their language in its original purity (see Fichte 1808: 142).

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6 *Hermanns Schlacht. Ein Bardiet für die Schaubühne* (1769), *Hermann und die Fürsten. Ein Bardiet für die Schaubühne* (1894), and *Hermann und der Tod. Ein Bardiet für die Schaubühne* (1787).

Again in 1808, Heinrich von Kleist wrote his drama in five acts, *Die Hermannsschlacht*. The play was not performed until 1860 and went into print ten years after the author's death, in 1821. Here, Kleist celebrates the genius of Hermann who manages to instigate hatred among the Cherusci against Varus and the Roman occupying power. The more brutally the Romans oppress their Cherusci opponents, the more their endeavour to conquer Germany becomes a lost cause. The entire play was a call for the *levée en masse*, the great uprising, which Kleist hoped was underway. It was no accident that an intentional history had come to coalesce around Arminius and taken a decisive turn in 1808: the year before, Napoleon had crushed the army of the Prusso-Russian coalition in the Battle of Friedland. Prussia had sought peace at Tilsit, effectively becoming a French satellite state. The French presence to the east of the river Rhine now seemed permanent; the Holy Empire, which had been a loose, but symbolically still powerful political frame for the German nation, had been defunct since the resignation of emperor Franz II in 1806. In this darkest hour of its young history, the awakening nation desperately needed a hero; the only historical character who, in the circumstances, qualified for such a role was Arminius.

3 From history to monument: Ernst von Bandel and the Hermann of Detmold

Over the course of three centuries, the Hermann narrative had proved a remarkably flexible and versatile piece of intentional history. It had started its career as a tool in the hands of those in Germany challenging the religious and intellectual hegemony of the Roman Church and the papacy in particular. Arminius was then, by enlightened minds, turned into a martyr of freedom from oppressive regimes, namely the *anciens régimes* of pre-revolutionary Europe, only to become the liberator of Germany from foreign rule, this time from post-revolutionary French rule. According to circumstances, intentional history put emphasis on Hermann's anti-imperial struggle or on his revolutionary fight with established authority. He was either the champion of the people *as such* or of the *German* people. Arminius' capacity as a unifier of previously scattered hordes was a keynote of the narrative at all times, but it got a distinctly xenophobic bias in the wake of the French Revolution. Finally, the fatal equation 'Germanic = German' added up: Arminius was the first German.

The whole narrative could be read like a *roman à clef*. In 1815, it seemed, Arndt's vision of an Arminius reborn (Blücher?), shaking off the yoke of Varus'

(Napoleon's) rule over Germany, had become true.[7] What better symbol could be imagined for German national identity to cluster around than this grand hero from the early days of the imagined nation's history, the very man causing the historical big bang from which Germany was born? Arminius was now so closely associated with German unity and the liberation from Napoleon that reinterpreting the character once more was no longer an option. At last, the narrative had found its definite form. It had ceased to be fluid and was hence ripe for being translated into something more solid: an iconic creation, an image – a monument.[8]

Giving physical shape to the political myth of Arminius was first contemplated in the late eighteenth century, but such projects never got very far. Serious planning set in after the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, when Karl Friedrich Schinkel proposed a statue of the mounted Hermann piercing, in the pose of St. George the dragon slayer, a fallen Roman soldier with his lance. But from here, it took another twenty-five years for the idea to be turned into a practical plan for a monument on the supposed site of the battle near Detmold. As is so often the case, a coincidence of random circumstances facilitated the monument's realisation: in 1837, William IV, King of Great Britain and Hanover, died. The art-minded king had been a cash cow for Ernst von Bandel, a Munich-born, Hanover-based architect, sculptor and painter, who had been a close associate of Christian Daniel Rauch und Johann Gottfried Schadow. William had commissioned von Bandel to decorate the Hanover palace and to plan a new assembly hall for the University of Göttingen. Once the king was dead, von Bandel's future as an architect looked bleak.

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7 The equation 'Blücher = Arminius' was as obvious as it was popular in post-1815 Germany. Ludwig Börne ([3]1848: 61) criticised his contemporary, the poet and critic Wolfgang Menzel, for proposing an utterly anachronistic view of Arminius and the Germanic peoples of the first century A.D.: "Herr Menzel hat selbst eine Geschichte der Deutschen geschrieben, und zwar mit einem so feurigen Turner-Patriotismus, daß Arminius und Blücher sich wie zwei Brüder ähnlich sehen." Börne then goes on: "Ich bitte ihn daher in seinem eigenen Werke die Kriege der Germanen mit den Römern nachzulesen, und mir dort eine Spur von Patriotismus aufzuzeigen. Die deutschen Völkerschaften kämpften damals weder für ihren Boden, noch für ihre Stammesgenossen, noch für ihren Nationalruhm, noch für ihre Freiheit. Sie kämpften nur für ihre Führer, und fochten mit gleicher Lust und Tapferkeit, in der Reihe der Römer gegen ihre Landesleute, wie in der Reihe ihrer Landesleute gegen die Römer." Not everyone was convinced by the myth woven around Arminius and the 'Germans'.

8 The work of reference for the following is Tacke (1995). See also the contributions in Lux-Althoff (2001) and Zelle (2014).

However, the father of seven was a man of many resources. He talked Leopold II, prince of the tiny principality of Lippe-Detmold, into revisiting the plans for a Hermann monument near his capital Detmold, a town of 5,000 souls, provided the funding was solid and the design 'dignified' (see Märtin 2008: 314). In 1838, a *Verein für das Hermannsdenkmal* was established at Detmold; other German towns followed suit. The prince himself provided the plot on the Grotenburg, a 386 m high hilltop in the southeast Teutoburg Forest. Besides, he donated the substantial sum of 1,000 *Reichstaler*. By the end of the following year, the *Verein* had raised 11,000 Taler, one quarter of the monument's estimated cost. This seemed a promising start.

By this time, von Bandel had also devised the monument's physical form. The idea was to put the hero's statue on top of a massive base to be built in the Gothic style, with pointed arches and pinnacles, crowned by a giant rock. Two German monarchs who took a keen interest in the project and had become its main sponsors, intervened. Ludwig I of Bavaria, for whom von Bandel had worked during his time in Munich, wanted to see the rock replaced by a dome, which made the base look like a classical monopteros. Nonetheless, von Bandel agreed, as he relied on the king's financial support. In the meantime, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the king of Prussia and the project's second large-scale sponsor, had prompted Schinkel and Rauch to draft, on their part, an alternative design. The statue, on top of a classical Roman base, depicted a thoughtful Hermann, leaning on his sword and contemplating victory. Von Bandel's reaction to the "chimney sweeper" was harsh. Successfully, he defended his own design: a statue of Hermann with his right arm raised, sword in hand. The architect wanted Hermann to be the symbol of "our eternally youthful strength (…), a signpost to the site of our fame and to illustrate our power and great glory." According to von Bandel (1937: 268–269), the raised sword was emblematic for German unity.

Construction on the site made rapid progress. On 8 September 1841, the vault for the foundation stone was completed and the achievement marked with a ceremony. In his address, the *Denkmalsverein*'s president, Moritz Leopold Petri, emphasised the battle's importance as a turning point in history. He put Arminius on a level with Christ: the Germanic hero and the Christian redeemer had been, according to Petri, the new stars eclipsing the light of the Roman empire. Petri's speech was restrained and by no means anti-French: on the contrary, it had been Arminius' mission to establish the freedom of all nations on an equal footing. The *Festschrift* published to mark the day pointed out that the site of the monument should be a "rock of harmony, of German patriotism and of German strength and greatness" (Schwanke 1841: 37). Painstakingly, the *Denkmalsverein* had avoided any provocation of the ruling dynasties, including any allusion to the German democracy movement and its symbols.

At this time, frictions between von Bandel and the *Verein* had become apparent. The architect was reluctant to comply with the association's rules and procedures; more importantly, the enthusiasm for the monument had slowly but surely ebbed away. When, in 1846, the base was finally completed, a debt of 4,400 Taler had been piled up. Von Bandel blamed the *Denkmalsverein* for insufficient publicity; in return, the dignitaries in charge of the *Verein* accused the architect of wasting funds. The difficult economic situation in the second half of the 1840s and in particular the failure of the 1848 revolution put the final nail in the coffin of the *Hermannsdenkmal*. Many of the princely patrons had lost interest in the project, as they preferred their own prestige projects – like Bavaria's Ludwig who, consecutively, commissioned the Walhalla near Regensburg, the Befreiungshalle at Kelheim, the Pompeianum, a reconstructed Roman villa, at Aschaffenburg and the Ruhmeshalle at Munich. Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia turned his interest to the completion of the Cologne Cathedral; Hermann and the Teutoburg Forest had gone out of fashion.

In the meantime, the prince of Lippe had settled the *Verein*'s debts, but its financial situation was still desperate. Donations trickled in so slowly that Petri, the president, estimated completion could take another 90 to 100 years. Between 1846 and 1860, hardly any progress was made; von Bandel, however, revised his drafts and came up with an even taller statue, whose stability he had greatly improved. Towards the end of the 1850s, the issue of national unity returned to the intellectual agenda, and suddenly Hermann was back. National 'feasts' – the *Turnfest* in Coburg 1860, the *Sängerfest* in Nuremberg in 1861, and the *Bundesschießen* in 1862 – rallied people by the thousands. Renewed enthusiasm for the monument increased the cash flow into von Bandel's workshop; but the profile of the donors had changed. While in the early 1840s the bulk of the money had come from individuals belonging to all classes, massive donations from the high nobility and the ruling dynasties prevailed in the 1860s. Von Bandel disassociated himself from the *Verein* and the state of Lippe-Detmold; he moved back to Hanover – which was to become Prussian in 1866 – declaring that "he should not, before Germany, be guided by the will of four men; he should not be forced to continuous sacrifice of time and money."[9] By the middle of the decade, the monument to Hermann had become the project of Germany's kings and princes. It is symptomatic that in 1871, after the empire had been proclaimed at Versailles, 10,000 Taler were donated at once by the ruling houses of the German states; in 1874, the Prussian king and now German emperor,

9 Translation from *Bericht an Fürstliche Regierung über das Hermannsdenkmal* (1861: 1), written by the Verein für das Hermanns-Denkmal.

Wilhelm I, added a further 9,000 Taler – an amount sufficient to fund the monument's completion.

On 16 August 1875, the monument was dedicated in a solemn ceremony. Present were, besides von Bandel, the emperor, the crown prince, Friedrich Wilhelm, and 30,000 spectators. The show was a display of Germany's new self-confidence as a great European power, as monumental as the *Hermannsdenkmal* itself: 57.4 metres tall, the monument overlooks Detmold and the Teutoburg Forest, the sword pointing westward. The sword alone, a donation by the Krupp Company, weighs 600 kilograms and is seven metres long. On one side, the words *DEUTSCHE:EINIGKEIT:MEINE:STAERKE* ("German unity my strength") are engraved into the sword; on the other it reads *MEINE:STAERKE:DEUTSCH LANDS:MACHT* ("My strength Germany's power"). On its head, Hermann wears a winged helmet – epitomising the German eagle, the symbol of the new empire, while, to his feet, lies crushed the Roman eagle along with a bunch of lictors' *fasces*. The metal of a French canon had been fused to form a portrait of emperor Wilhelm to which the following lines were added:

> "Der lang getrennte Stämme vereint mit starker Hand,
> der welsche Macht und Tücke siegreich überwandt,
> der längst verlorne Söhne heimführt zum deutschen Reich,
> Armin, dem Retter, ist er gleich."
>
> ('The one who has united long-separated tribes with his strong hand, who has victoriously overcome Walhaz [i.e. French] power and perfidy, who has repatriated long since lost sons into the German Reich, he is equal to Arminius, the saviour.')

Other inscriptions draw parallels between the victory over France in 1870/71 and the Napoleonic Wars, in which the German people had "become weak through discord".

From such a perspective, a crescendo leads from Arminius, who cast off the Roman yoke, through the Wars of Liberation to Wilhelm I, the accomplisher of German unity. Since the early days of the monument's planning, Arminius had maintained his role as the defender of Germany against *welsche Macht und Tücke*, as a champion of German unity and redeemer from discord. But as the project of German unity moved from embodying the democratic aspiration of the German people – or, rather, that of its bourgeoisie – to the mission of the Prussian dynasty, Arminius was no longer the figurehead of a popular uprising, but of a *Reichsgründung* top-down.

4 Another history, another monument: Julius Berndt and the Hermann of New Ulm

Ironically, Detmold's Hermann has a little brother in the wide prairies of the northern United States.[10] The Hermann Heights Monument at New Ulm, Minnesota, was completed in 1897. When the monument was dedicated, Governor David Marston Clough of Minnesota said, "We must tell our children and our children's children the story of the heroes of every land and every time who have given their lives that liberty and fraternity and equality might survive among men." Instrumental in the planning, funding and construction of the monument was a local architect and engineer of German roots, Julius Berndt. Born in Silesia in 1832, he immigrated to the United States around 1850. After, in 1851, the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux, struck between the US government and parts of the Sioux tribe, had opened the Minnesota plains to white settlement, Berndt moved from Chicago to the Minnesota River. Here, members of the Chicago Land Association founded the town of New Ulm.

As the name suggests, the bulk of the settlers had German ancestors. Conflicts with neighbouring Indian tribes and the harshness of the prairie created strong bonds of solidarity among the newcomers, for whom their German heritage soon became a centrepiece of cultural identity. In 1881, Berndt was among the founding members of a local lodge of the "Sons of Hermann", a fraternal society of German-Americans established in 1840. The society's foundation responded to growing anti-German resentment while immigration from Germany was reaching a first peak in the late 1830s (see Adam 2005 [vol. 2]: 985–986).

As in their native country, to the growing German immigrant community Arminius-Hermann was a figure of prime symbolic importance. He was an emblem of German unity and solidarity. Even more than in Germany, he was regarded among the German-Americans as a champion of freedom – the very freedom for which many of them had migrated to their new homeland. Not accidentally, a town in the so-called Missouri Rhineland chose Hermann as its namesake in 1842; German-Americans even projected a "Hermann University" in Austin County, Texas.

Arminius-Hermann also resonated well with the Anglo-Saxon environment the German immigrants to America found themselves in. From the early nine-

10 For the following see Conzen (2003: 1–3 and 75–80), Lange (2013), and Pohlsander (2010: 99–102).

teenth century onwards, many English and an increasing number of American intellectuals had subscribed to the myth of a common ancestry of Germans, English and Americans. "Race" was identified as a pivotal factor in the growth of the British Empire and provided legitimacy to American *manifest destiny*. Eminent historians such as Charles Kingsley, John Richard Green, Edward Augustus Freeman and William Stubbs emphasised the "Teutonic" parentage of the modern English nation, inferring a genetic superiority over other "races". According to the liberal critic Charles Wentworth Dilke (1868 [vol. 2]: 155), it was England's mission to renew the greatness of Rome, but now based on its Teutonic heritage and "greater Saxondom which entails all that is best and wisest in the world." To such intellectuals, the fall of Rome was the result of racial "corruption, feebleness, decay", as the historian John George Sheppard (1861: 172) put it, while the Germanic race embodied "development, progress and dominion".

In this logic, the Battle in the Teutoburg Forest had all the qualities of a turning point in history. None other than Arminius was the saviour of Germanic freedom from Roman corruption and subjugation. Such a positive image of the victorious hero was soon popularised. English school children were told that Arminius "was our kinsman, our bone and our flesh. If he had not hindered the Romans from conquering Germany, we should not be talking English; perhaps we should not be a nation at all" (Freeman 1869: 22). The Teutoburg Forest was hence not only the birthplace of the German nation, even England owed its existence to Arminius. In the US, "Teutonism" had become popular in the 1850s. Arminius was celebrated as the true founding father of American freedom and independence. The myth was further fuelled by Prussia's victory over France and the foundation of the German empire, which, by some Germanophile Americans, was interpreted as one further step towards "Teutonic" world domination. To them, the *Hermannsdenkmal* in the Teutoburg Forest soon became a place of intellectual pilgrimage, a true "cradle of the liberties of the English-speaking nations".[11]

The *Reichsgründung* in 1871 and the new empire's swift rise to great power also inspired pride in many German-Americans. The idea to monumentalise the German presence in the United States and its – perceived – contribution to American values was by no means far-fetched. The architect Berndt who had become the founding president of New Ulm's Hermann lodge, went public with the project and soon convinced the fraternity's national organisation of the im-

11 See Barrows (1897: 32–33). On the reception of Arminius-Hermann in Britain and the United States, see now the excellent study by Holsten (2012).

portance of a Hermann monument. Money was raised, and the cornerstone was laid in June 1888. Berndt's design for the statue closely followed the Detmold model, but the base, by contrast, looks rather classical. It is devised as a monopteros with ten slender, elegant columns and a spiral staircase in its interior. In contrast to the Detmold monument, the New Ulm Hermann faces east, towards the European homeland of German-Americans.

Nine years after the cornerstone had been laid, the monument was completed. One of the speakers at the dedication ceremony emphasised the compatibility of German and American values for which Hermann stood: "In Hermann and his deed are embodied not only German virtues, but the civic virtues of every high-minded person." And he continued: "Americans are a noble, industrious, progressive, public-spirited people, and we have become an integral part of that people" (quoted in Conzen 2003: 2). In the historical context of the pre-World War I United States, Hermann seemed the perfect role model allowing for the integration, or even total absorption, of the German newcomers into American society.

Remnants of this spirit have survived the crises of two world wars and the almost residue-free amalgamation of the German immigrant community with the majority society of the United States. After a period of neglect, the monument was declared a Historic Site in 1973; in 2000, US Congress declared the monument and park a "National Symbol for all Americans of German descent". In the following years, the Hermann Heights Monument was extensively refurbished, and in 2007 a Hermann Monument Society was established. To the present day, the town is the venue for various recurring festivals: a "Heritagefest" and assorted beer festivals, commemorating the place's German traditions. When, in 2009, the 2000th anniversary of the battle was celebrated, New Ulm received almost as much attention as Detmold.

5 Conclusion

The monuments at Detmold and New Ulm pay witness to the amazing mutability of Arminius-Hermann as the protagonist of various successive, and partly competing, political myths. While the protagonist set off as a local warlord and possibly a Roman mutineer, he became, during his long career, a spearhead of the Protestant Reformation against the Roman Church, an anti-absolutist *liberator Germaniae*, a symbol of German unity and of liberation from French occupation, an *alter ego* of the first German emperor, Wilhelm I, and finally a figurehead for the German immigrants' community in the United States and its

struggle between assimilation and preservation of its group identity. Freedom, unity and identity are recurring themes in most of the stories involved, and not accidentally did the Hermann cult reach its apex while Germany was struggling to achieve freedom and unity. With monumentalisation, the political myth entered, as it were, its second, less fluid phase, but it was still sufficiently versatile to be instrumentalised for quite different agendas. Both monuments continue to attract people by the thousands, year by year. Hermann is now dead as a political symbol, but he is still very much alive as a folkloristic curiosity.

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