

## BOOK REVIEW

*Arminius the Liberator. Myth and Ideology.* By MARTIN M. WINKLER. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 384, 39 illustrations. \$74.00. ISBN 9780190252915.

I first visited the Hermannsdenkmal in the autumn of 1952, when serving in the U.S. Army. The statue was being repaired and the sword was lying on the ground, so that one could easily read the inscription on each side of the blade, DEUTSCHE EINIGKEIT MEINE STÄRKE, MEINE STÄRKE DEUTSCHLANDS MACHT (“German Unity Is My Strength, My Strength Is Germany’s Might”). The statue remains one of Germany’s great public images (its main rivals are, I think, *Germania*, the national monument above Rudesheim, where the Rhine makes its big sweep to the north, and the equestrian statue in honor of Kaiser Wilhelm I at the Deutsches Eck in Koblenz, where the Moselle runs into the Rhine.)

Winkler’s book is a very expansive and detailed study of Arminius himself, his life and achievements, but, above all, the impact he has had on German tribes and the German people in the more than two millennia since the great battle which gave him fame. The emphasis is on the eighteenth century and subsequently. He discusses movies and TV shows which I have never seen. Perhaps the most intriguing narrative relates how Hitler and the Nazi party employed Arminius in their rise to power.

The book is crammed with information and is well-produced. Yet I found that there were numbers of items and themes which Winkler barely mentioned, which I think a modern reader would have been glad to see. I shall mention five such subjects.

The first is the quite meager discussion of Ulrich von Hutten (one reference only in the index, but there is more in the extensive footnotes), who with his essay entitled *Arminius*, written only four or five years after the discovery and publication of the Tacitean *Annales* 1–6 in 1515, wherein, at the end of Book II, Tacitus calls Arminius *liberator haud dubie Germaniae*. Hutten’s title speaks of Arminius as *homo patriae amantissimus*. The author was a staunch nationalist.

Until the discoveries at Kalkriese, no one had been able to identify the location of the great battle in the Teutoburg Forest. Walter John had written an entry

for Pauly-Wissowa (vol. 24 [1951] columns 907sq.), which discussed the more than 600 suggestions which had been made. John is not mentioned in the book at all; he and his successors deserve citation for their cumulative collections of information (and imagination). The most recent encyclopedia entry of which I am aware is *Brill's New Pauly, The Classical Tradition I*, 2006. Tony Clunn, the British army officer who finally discovered the locale with abundant proof of the battle there, is given a few mentions, but the story of his success is not revealed. It is a marvelous tale, which surely merited a page or two.

The bimillenary year of Arminius' great victory in 2009 was commemorated in three cities, Haltern-am-See, which focused on Varus and his career, Kalkriese, the battlesite, and Detmold, whose theme was essentially *Nachleben*. It was a splendid progression, from west to east, and I find it very difficult to understand how a visitor to the "battlesite" and museum at Kalkriese could doubt that it was indeed the location. But there are still some who cling to Detmold.

Two artistic areas which Winkler essentially ignores are painting and opera. There are two great paintings which I shall now recommend, both with Thusnelda as their central figure. The earlier is by Benjamin West, dated 1773, depicting a pregnant Thusnelda among the members of her family as her father requests succor from Germanicus (Tacitus, *Ann.* I.57.4), now part of the Royal Collection Trust in Great Britain. The second is a vast painting in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich, showing her in Germanicus' triumphal procession (Strabo, VII 291 and following). The work of Hans von Piloty, it was completed in 1873. It is a huge undertaking, measuring 7.1 by 4.9 meters, with some ninety-five individuals represented.

Opera offerings are much more extensive. There is record of seventy-five operas on the Arminius theme, performed between 1676 and 1910. Many were composed to the same libretto, none is part of the repertory of any modern opera company. Few of the composers will be familiar even to a devoted student of opera, but among them are Alessandro Scarlatti and George Frideric Handel. The latter's opera was issued by *Virgin veritas* in 2001. He had composed it in the autumn of 1736. History is given cavalier treatment. Arminius and Thusnelda are married long before the great battle; Varus is in love with Thusnelda; and Arminius is captured by the Romans but is spared from death by Varus. I could mention more mix-ups, but without Handel's music that would be too painful.

A book as wide-ranging, and as learned, as Winkler's is, will evoke varied responses. I learned a great deal, and I am grateful to him. I shall close by mentioning

three of my own works, which may help the novice to these studies understand some of the gaps mentioned above.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Arminius into Hermann: History into Legend," *G&R* 51 (2004) 83–94; "Females in Germanicus' Triumph," *AHB* 19 (2005) 176–80; "IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS. The Bimillenary of the Battle in the Teutoburg Forest," *Amphora* 7.1 (2008) 12–13, 19.