On May 4, 2009, U.S. forces struck the village of Granai, in Western Afghanistan. Afghan sources reported that upwards of 140 civilians were killed in the airstrikes, while the U.S. military initially placed the number between 20 and 30 civilian deaths, along with the deaths of an additional 60–65 Taliban militants (E. Schmitt). The strikes on Granai became a flashpoint in the Afghan war and underscored the difficulty of one of the principal missions of the campaign – the battle for trust and support among the civilian population. Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, the former commander of American forces in Afghanistan, has said that a reduction in civilian causalities is «essential to [American] credibility.» Any military victory, he argues, becomes «hollow and unsustainable,» if it creates animosity among the general Afghan population (E. Schmitt).

The attacks on Granai are representative of the saga of collateral damage that has become so characteristic of the war over the past nine years. The initial American reports stated that the civilians killed in Granai had been used as human shields, having been herded by the Taliban into the houses from which the attack against U.S.-Afghan ground forces was subsequently launched («U.S.-Afghan Report»). Reports from Afghanistan, however, denied this claim, laying the blame for civilian deaths solely at the feet of the Americans. So too did an American military investigation just days later, which found that military personnel had failed to follow strict protocol designed to prevent civilian casualties when carrying out the attack.

The tragedy of the attacks in Granai spurred widespread debate concerning operations in Afghanistan. The destruction caused by the 500 and 2000 pound bombs dropped on the village highlighted what many critics see as an American and NATO willingness to exercise a disproportionate amount of force when fighting insurrection (Human Rights Watch 5). Villagers described explosions powerful enough to rip human bodies to pieces. Mr. Said Jamal, who lost three children in the attack, told reporters, «There was someone’s legs, someone’s shoulders, someone’s hands […] The dead were so many.» Another witness remarked, «It would scare a man if he saw it in a dream» (Gall).
General McChrystal, to his credit, promised more precision and solid intelligence in the execution of future airstrikes. A noble goal, but one that proved difficult to realize, as evidenced by a NATO airstrike in September of 2009 that killed as many as 70 villagers in the north of the country and brought harsh international criticism to the German military, which had requested the attack (Kulish).

On a 2009 visit to Kabul, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates apologized for civilian losses in Afghanistan, but said also that «exploiting civilian casualties and often causing civilian casualties are a fundamental part of the Taliban strategy» (Gates). This allegation correlates with a 2008 report by the United Nations showing that the Taliban and other militant groups were primarily responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the recent sharp rise in the number of innocent deaths in Afghanistan (Filkins, «Afghan Civilian»). And so the war continues, with mounting civilian casualties caused by both sides. The clear loser in all of this is the general Afghan population, which is left trapped, with very few options and no place to turn. After a recent bombing in Kandahar during Ramadan, widely thought to be the work of the Taliban, Gul Muhammad, a 45-year-old vegetable seller, said, «Anything can happen to ordinary Afghans […] We are not safe. We are without value. We have no right to life» (Shah). The terror unleashed upon Afghanistan by the Taliban has placed coalition forces in a seemingly winless situation, as the pursuit of militants leads to more bombings and more civilian deaths, which are in turn manipulated to foster resentment among the Afghan population for the NATO campaign, making its success increasingly improbable.

A reading of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan may be furthered by an analysis of literary and historical models, as the Taliban’s asymmetrical warfare is by no means without precedent. In the German tradition, we find its dramatization as early as 1808 in Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Hermannsschlacht*, which as Angress argues, introduces the modern terrorist into literature (19). Surprisingly, despite Kleist’s stature as one of the most influential and important German artists of his generation, MagShamhráin’s 2008 translation of the play is the very first into English. Having been used as a propaganda piece for the great wars of the – twentieth century, the play has often been associated with a very dark and uniquely German history. During the 1933–34 theatrical season, *Die Hermannsschlacht* was the most widely produced play in all of Germany, in part because it lent itself to the propagation of total war, racial ideology, and the veneration of an heroic leader. It was officially billed as a proto-Nazi work, and its hero as a precursor to Hitler. «Hermann ist der aus dem Volk, der Rasse herausgewachsene Heros, der die politische Norm gibt. Durch ihn wird somit aus einer Anzahl von Stämmen das Volk, aus dem Volk
Inciting Rebellion

der Staat» (qtd. in Reeve 148). Following the war, the play brought with it criticism and controversy, and it wasn’t until Claus Peymann’s 1982 reinterpretation, greatly influenced by Che Guevara, Mao Tse-tung, and the RAF, that a production once again garnered overwhelmingly positive reviews (Reeve 152, 154). Throughout its history, the play’s reception has been almost entirely determined by the German political climate of the times (Reeve 141). In contrast to much of the production history, this article illustrates that Die Hermannsschlacht addresses topics that are strikingly contemporary and relevant far beyond the borders of German history, geography or national identity; a fact perhaps illustrated by MagShamhráin’s recent translation.

Kleist’s play is the portrayal of Arminius’ victory over the Roman legions at the start of the Common Era, but it is quite clearly a reaction to the political situation in Prussia in the year 1808, as Napoleon’s troops still occupied German territories two years after their decisive victory at Jena-Auerstedt (Kittler 229). In the piece, Arminus, or Hermann as he is called in German, weaves intricate lies and layerings of deception to unite the Germanic tribes against their Roman conquerors. His success hinges on his ability to exploit the Germanic sense of pride through the manipulation of the popular image of Roman law within Germania. The perceived inadequacy and partiality of Roman law that results from his guile awakens in the Germanic tribes a collective anger rooted in their wounded pride and sense of self-worth and spurs them to take up arms against the technically superior Roman legions. Hermann argues that as long as the Germanic people remain subjects of the Roman Empire, they will be viewed as barbarians, no better than animals and not worthy of their Roman counterparts (HS² 585). This perceived colonial xenophobia, as will become evident, will be key in the struggle for Germanic liberty. Numerous references to the yoke of Roman occupation signify not only the threat to Germanic freedom, but emphasize the animalization of the population. The people are reduced to beasts of labor, whose pride and sense of self-worth, their very humanity, goes unacknowledged by their Roman conquerors. The sociologist Thomas Scheff notes that shame «automatically signals a threat to the safety of our social self, the person that we think we are and expect others to think that we are» (51). And shame, or wounded pride, can kindle social fragmentation and angry and violent disruption (53). This affective dynamism will become the lynchpin of Hermann’s rebellion. But Hermann’s is not a mythical figure and cannot defeat the Roman military machine alone. To succeed, he will need to rally all of the Germanic tribes around him.

In Théorie des Partisanen, Carl Schmitt notes that the historical situation in the first decade of the nineteenth century led to a new kind of warfare in Europe (3). Traditional warfare, restricted to formal campaigns on the battle-
field, proved insufficient when facing Napoleon’s army, a fact brought home to a German audience with France’s rout of Prussian forces in 1806. The fight was no longer one for political power or territorial conquest, but had become a «Schlacht um Sein oder Nichtsein,» a patriotic battle for one’s very existence and national sovereignty (Kittler 107). For Kleist, Arminius’ defeat of the Romans in 9 CE was the cradle of German freedom, and with its thematic adaptation in *Die Hermannsschlacht*, he had hoped to stage a partisan resistance in Prussia (Kittler 107, 131). Schmitt, too, reads the play as «die größte Partisanendichtung aller Zeiten» (15). Indeed, when read in the context of the Napoleonic wars, the work clearly reflects a Germanic nationalism that would lead to a nation state in 1871. However, a text-immanent approach complicates this reading, while uncovering a critical process in inciting popular revolt.

Both Carl Schmitt and Wolf Kittler, whose reading of the play is in large part founded upon the former’s theories, see Hermann as a leader of partisan forces. This reading is heavily influenced by Kleist’s own dream of a state-organized insurrection against the French (Kittler 226), and positions the play as a paradigmatic model for an anti-imperial war of liberation. Schmitt pinpoints four aspects common to all partisans. They are: irregularity, increased mobility, increased political engagement, and a telluric character (20). A close reading of *Die Hermannsschlacht*, however, reveals a common political engagement as absent from all but the final scenes of the play. The partisan, as Schmitt argues, is necessarily tied to a politically active party and thus remains «auf die Zusammenarbeit mit einer regulären Organisation angewiesen» (23). The partisan is a patriot, Kittler writes, and is motivated to fight not by fear or self-interest, but by love for the fatherland (132). In fact, it is this love of home and country, first made possible by the collapse of feudalism and rise of the bourgeois class, which marks the partisan as a modern fighter (Kittler 132).

The Germanic tribes of Kleist’s play, however, are primitive warriors and display no party affiliation. Nor do they seem to have any love for their homeland, beyond its economic value. They show a complete lack of political engagement, and can thus scarce be considered partisans. In fact, it is a lack of nationalistic fervor that prevents Hermann’s initial attempt at drumming up support for rebellion. In a meeting of tribal princes, he stresses the immediate need for autonomy:

Doch bis die Völker sich, die diese Erd’ umwogen,
Noch jetzt vom Sturm der Zeit gepeitscht,
Gleich einer See, ins Gleichgewicht gestellt,
Kann es leicht sein, der Habicht rupft
Die Brut des Aars, die noch nicht flügg’,
Im stillen Wipfel einer Eiche ruht. (HS 559)
Inciting Rebellion

Hermann’s overture to a common Germanic cultural pride, and hope for a budding nationalism, here represented by the traditional symbols of the eagle and the oak, falls on deaf ears, and the scorched earth policy that he will go forth to propose will be met with hesitation. His request that the princes slaughter their cattle and set fire to their lands elicits reactions of confusion and distrust:

WOLF.   Wie? Was?
HERMANN.   Wo nicht – ?
THUISKOMAR.  Die eignen Fluren sollen wir verheeren – ?
DAGOBERT.  Die Herden töten – ?
SELGAR.   Unsre Plätze niederbrennen – ?
HERMANN.   Nicht? Nicht? Ihr wollt es nicht?
THUISKOMAR.   Das eben Rasender, das ist es ja, was wir in diesem Krieg verteidigen wollen!
HERMANN.  abbrechend.
   Nun denn, ich glaubte, eure Freiheit wär’s. (HS 561)

This is a critical exchange in the play, as it shows that the economy of material possessions is a formidable distraction that stands between Hermann and his goal. Although lip service is paid to notions of Germania and Vaterland, the princes are first and foremost loyal to their own «Eigentum,» as Dagobert and Selgar make clear in an earlier exchange (550–51). Wolf sums up the dilemma: «Es bricht der Wolf, o Deutschland,/In deine Hürde ein, und deine Hirten streiten/Um eine Handvoll Wolle sich» (551). Wolf too, however, will balk at the excess of Hermann’s strategy, and the latter will quickly realize that he must find a way to cut through this barrier and into the core of Germanic hatred for their imperialistic conquerors. «Kann ich den Römerhaß, eh’ ich den Platz verlasse,/In der Cherusker Herzen nicht/Daß er durch ganz Germanien schlägt, entflammen:/So scheitert meine ganze Unternehmung!» (HS 600).

When an appeal to a shared cultural inheritance fails, Hermann searches out a more visceral point of attack – the offended sense of pride and self-worth.

At this point, a brief intermission from Kleist’s play is needed to introduce another German work, this one much closer to our own time and undoubtedly influenced by the current wars in the Middle East. Peter Sloterdijk’s 2005 publication Zorn und Zeit seeks to establish anger as the principal emotion, engine, and driving force behind the unfolding of European history. Taking pains to distance himself from Freud, Sloterdijk argues against a psychoanalytic anger rooted in eros and a lack of material possession, resurrecting in its stead the thymós of Ancient Greece, the «Regungsherd des stolzen Selbst»(24). The thymós is the appetitive self and tells the Greek hero, among other things, when to eat, drink, or attack his enemy (Dodds 16, 138). Felt in
the chest or in the belly, the *thymós* is engaged in the preservation of the self, in both its protection as well as the validation of its desires. As such, it has a broad range of meanings that can be translated as «will,» «courage,» «heart,» or «life.» In its negative sense, it is usually translated as «anger» (Faraone 144). The *thymós* is the part of the self that houses feelings of dignity and desire, and that demands equal treatment as well as recognition by others of our individual value. Central to the *thymotic* affect are notions of justice, honor, courage, and pride (Wenning 90). «Während die Erotik Wege zu den «Objekten» zeigt, die uns fehlen und durch deren Besitz oder Nähe wir uns ergänzt fühlen, erschließt die Thymotik den Menschen die Bahnen, auf denen sie geltend machen, was sie haben, können, sind und sein wollen» (Sloterdijk 30). Rather than valuing what one lacks, *thymotics* values what already is, and it is the injured *thymós* that reacts fiercely to injustice and demands recognition of self-worth. Although Sloterdijk’s language differs slightly from Scheff’s, writing of wounded pride instead of shame, their theories parallel one another. Like Sloterdijk, Scheff also writes of shame as a «master emotion» because of its primacy in «psychological and social functions» (53). And as both theories argue, this emotion’s dynamic energies can manifest themselves in a violent anger towards offending parties (Sloterdijk 28).

The expression of anger, which in antiquity was praised as a productive force (Sloterdijk reminds us of Homer’s praise of the wrath of Achilles), becomes taboo in the modern world. Demonized as ethically primitive and base, vengeance is transcended in part by civil law, which grants satisfaction through abstract punishments and fines. The courts, as Sloterdijk argues, represent a symbolic therapy for anger, in which waves of revenge are transformed into feelings of justice (79–80). This abstract punishment, however, proves to be an insufficient outlet for the expression of anger. Despite the institutional appropriation of justice, an angry flame continues to burn inside the individual’s heart, as the *thymós* is denied adequate satisfaction. What develops is an economy of anger, what Sloterdijk terms a *Zorn-Bank*. Left unresolved, anger begins to accrue in the shared memories of individuals, creating a reserve that is inherited by following generations, compounding with each passing year until a common cache of anger develops: «Wenn die Stufe der Übertragung auf nachfolgende Agenten erreicht ist, hat sich eine authentische Zornwirtschaft herausgebildet» (Sloterdijk 95). This cache is highly volatile, and herein lies its danger as well as revolutionary potential. The philosophers of emotion, Demmerling and Landweer, write that almost all forms of emotion are intensified when shared by others (297). The intangibility of civil retribution, its lack of immediacy, runs the risk of being perceived as inadequate by those seeking to be avenged and may serve only to intensify feelings of
victimization (Sloterdijk 80). When the influence of these civil institutions begins to wane, and their ability to curb the immediate expression of anger fails, this reserve of anger may surface violently: «Der Zorn wird zum momentum einer Bewegung in die Zukunft, die man schlechthin als Rohstoff geschichtlicher Bewegtheit verstehen kann» (Sloterdijk 97). Like pressurized steam, the collective rage of a society, if released, can explode into social movements ranging from revolutions to holocausts.

We return to the first act of Kleist’s play, in which Wolf, unaware of Hermann’s larger plans, accuses him of ceding too quickly to the Romans: «Mithin ergibst du wirklich völlig dich/In das Verhängnis – beugst den Nacken/Dem Joch, das dieser Römer bringt,/Ohn auch ein Glied nur sträubend zu bewegen?» (559). Wolf’s boiling anger at the abasement of foreign occupation, which he equates with imprisonment and slavery, lies dormant among the rest of the population. Hermann, in his quest to ignite a fire under the Germanic tribes, appears to have an innate understanding of the possibilities to be had should he be able to unleash and channel this violent thymotic potential. Hermann is recruiting an army from below. As Horn notes, his will not be a force of princes and professional armies, but one of the people. Access to their reserve of anger, their Zorn-Bank, is possible through manipulating and undermining the image of the impartiality of the Roman occupation of Germania. Through trickery and clever deception, Hermann seeks out and highlights those moments in which the reputation of the Roman legions is at its most vulnerable, and in which the Germanic thymós, its feeling of pride, is most threatened.

When told of his three palaces that had been plundered and burned, Hermann orders his messenger to spread the news that it was seven. Of the mother and child who were brutally murdered and then buried by Roman soldiers, his command is to tell everyone that the father had been thrown into the pit alive after them for complaining. And upon hearing that Roman soldiers felled the holy 1000-year-old oak of Wodan and set fire to the surrounding settlements, Hermann declares, «Gleich, gleich! – Man hat mir hier gesagt,/Die Römer hätten die Gefangenen gezwungen,/Zevs, ihrem Greulgott, in den Staub zu knien?» (HS 579–80).

Hermann’s exaggeration of the events described above serves as propaganda that emphasizes the transgressions against the Germanic people and, in Horn’s words, «magnifies the effects of colonialism far beyond the reality.» The desecration of holy sites, burning of palaces and brutality towards civilians comes to be seen as clear proof of Rome’s disrespect for the natives. To the Romans, the Germanic barbarian is nothing but «eine Bestie/Die auf vier Füßen in den Wäldern läuft!» (HS 585). The Germanic thymós is not recognized by the occupying army, and the natural reaction is one of anger. Her-
mann’s true genius, however, lies in his erosion of Germanic trust in Roman law. As a system established to transcend the immediate expression of anger and revenge, Roman law, and the acquiescence that it encourages among the population, is the greatest bulwark against revolution. As a modern institution in primitive Germany, the law removes social relations from the immediacies of context by means of disembedding mechanisms that «lift out social activity from localized contexts, reorganizing social relations across large time-spaces distances» (Giddens 27, 53). Its success hinges on the civil inattention of the population, which concedes its claim to anger the moment there is a broad willingness to place trust in the anonymity of the legal system. This inattention demands positive experiences at access points, or those moments where society comes into contact with the system (Giddens 83–85).

As Varus, the Roman general, comes to apologize to Hermann for the actions of his men and to assure him that the soldiers will be executed for their crimes per Roman law, he is attempting to transcend any immediate reaction from the Germanic tribes by offering retribution on the intangible, legal level. Hermann asks the general to spare the men’s lives, however (HS 587–88). This will have the desired effect on his own people, as Roman law will be perceived as having failed to deliver justice in favor of the natives, who will then feel the crimes committed against them two-fold. This calculated move breaks through the civil inattention of the native people by forcing the failure of the institution of Roman law at its access points. Germanic trust in the system has been broken, and with this break the institution fails to work, and the opportunity arises for the people to give unmediated expression to their anger. The Roman cause is lost in the moment that the partiality and inadequacy of their laws, whether actual or perceived, awakens in the Germanic tribes a collective outrage born out of wounded pride and the unrecognized value of their lives. Only now is Hermann able to recruit his army, which he proceeds to do in a cold and shockingly graphic manner.

Hermann gives a secret order to Eigenhardt, his trusted advisor, to dress his own men as Roman soldiers, and send them into the countryside to burn and plunder the villages.

Hast du ein Häuflein wacker Leute wohl,
Die man zu einer List gebrauchen könnt?

Nun hör, schick sie dem Varus, Freund,
Wenn er zur Weser morgen weiterrückt,
Schick sie in Römerkleidern doch vermummt ihm nach.
Laß sie, ich bitte dich, auf allen Straßen,
Die sie durchwander, seng, brennen, plündern:
Wenn sie geschickt vollziehn, will ich sie lohnen! (HS 581)
When Hally, the daughter of the blacksmith, is raped shortly thereafter, it is very possibly carried out at the hands of these men in Roman garb. Textual clues appear to link this «Meute von geilen Römern» to Hermann and Eigenhardt’s own band of undercover soldiers (HS 604). Firstly, the stage directions indicate that Hermann and Eigenhardt appear on the scene together, illustrating their shared association to the crime. Secondly, Hermann’s feigned ignorance of the event comes as a surprise to his people: «Was! Fragst du noch? Du weißt von nichts?» they ask (HS 604). Hermann’s claim that he was in his tent is untrue, for in fact he and Eigenhardt had been lurking in the alleys (HS 601). Hermann has no reason to lie about his whereabouts, save only to disguise his relationship to what he calls this «Römerhaufen» (HS 605), a label that in itself draws semantic connections to the original order for a «Häuflein wackrer Leute» (HS 581).

Hally’s rape is fortuitous for Hermann, who seizes the opportunity to unite his people. Having dissolved all confidence in the ability or willingness of Rome to provide legal satisfaction, Hermann is finally able to harness the common cache of anger dwelling in the Germanic heart. In a climactic scene, he divides Hally’s body into fifteen pieces, which he sends to the fifteen tribes of Germany. The totality of the humiliation caused by Roman colonization finds carnal expression in Hally’s violated and dismembered corpse, which represents not only an immediate threat to all Germanic women, but the de- filement of future generations as well (Fischer 312). Hermann’s calls for revenge are answered by the people who, with one voice, call out, «Empörung! Rache! Freiheit!» (HS 606). The sequencing of the words Empörung, Rache, – Freiheit is of utmost importance to what Kleist is presenting, as each word develops out of the last, illustrating the productive process of thymotic anger. Anger was praised in the premodern world because it was associated with action and served as a healthy and driving force for social change (Sloterdijk 13). Here, too, the unrecognized value of Germanic women, embodied in the crimes committed against Hally, produces a collective anger and outrage (Empörung) that gives birth to action. The vengeance (Rache) that it ignites is the productive force needed to liberate (Freiheit) the Germanic people from Roman rule.

Hermann battles on two fronts throughout the play. Not only must he incite rebellion among the Germanic tribes, but he must also persuade his queen, Thusnelda, of the evil of all Romans. This will prove to be perhaps his most difficult maneuver, as Thusnelda’s affection was won by Ventidus, a Roman emissary who saved her life while on a boar hunt at the play’s outset. Thusnelda, who is able to distinguish between good and evil Romans, and who sees the wholesale slaughter of all Romans as barbarous, is the play’s
humanist voice that stands in opposition to Hermann’s insidious plans for their absolute annihilation. Played out in the conflict between Hermann and Thusnelda is a debate about the primacy of self over other, and as Hermann’s deception reveals, Thusnelda’s love of self, her pride, her *thymós*, will come to eclipse any humanist ideals she may espouse.

The truth of the relationship between Ventidus and Thusnelda is never wholly revealed to the reader, as it is unclear whether Ventidus’ fondness for Thusnelda is candid, or mere political finesse. Thusnelda’s affection for her savior, on the other hand, is nothing if not genuine. When Ventidus cuts a lock of hair from Thusnelda’s head, however, leaving her both flattered and insulted, Hermann seizes the fortuitous moment to tell her a story of Romans who shave the heads of Germanic women and sell their hair in Rome to the highest bidder. The Roman women, he tells her, have thick, black hair, and long for the fine hair of Thusnelda’s people (*HS* 583). Hermann portrays the Germans as yet another natural resource for the Romans to harvest. Thusnelda remains skeptical, and as Hermann explains his plans for the extermination of every Roman in Germania, her humanist conviction presents itself, and she begs for Ventidus’ life. When Hermann produces a letter allegedly found on a Roman messenger in the woods, however, she is outraged by what appears to be Ventidus’ duplicity. The letter seems to be a note from Ventidus to the Empress of Rome, to whom a sample of Thusnelda’s hair has been sent, and in which is written, «Hier schick ich von dem Haar, das ich dir zugedacht» (*HS* 612). Whether the letter that was found in the woods is truly from Ventidus, or another cunning deception at the hands of Hermann, is not clear. In his article, Allan assumes that Ventidus’ affection for Thusnelda was a «means of sophisticated – but essentially exploitative – flattery» (238). One could perhaps also argue that Ventidus’ flattery of Thusnelda was genuine, and that the exploitation comes at the hands of Hermann, as it does in the rest of the piece; or most likely that the queen has become a pawn of both men in their political chess match. The outcome of the incident is the same, however, regardless of who is using Thusnelda. The queen’s pride is hurt, and Ventidus, who seems not to recognize her self-worth, will become the unfortunate object of her wrath.

Hermann also succeeds in directing Thusnelda’s anger at Rome itself. When Thusnelda hears about the Roman practice of shaving heads and pulling out teeth, she is stunned: «Bei allem, was die Hölle finster macht!/Mit welchem Recht, wenn dem so ist,/vom Kopf uns aber nehmen sie sie weg?» she cries. Hermann answers her dryly, «Für wen erschaffen ward die Welt, als Rom?» (*HS* 585). The Germanic people are animals in the eyes of the Romans, no more important than the elephants of Africa. To shave their heads is no different than to harvest the elephant’s tusks. Thusnelda realizes that she has no ac-
cess to the «rights» and laws of the Romans. She is but a beast in the forest, not worthy of the humanist equity and compassion that she was so keen to bestow on her Roman conquerors. «Ich habe mich gefaßt, ich will mich rächen!» she declares (HS 614). Thusnelda’s vengeance takes a most brutal form, as she lures Ventidius into a garden, in which he is mauled to death by a hungry bear. The focus on Thusnelda’s animalistic aggression illustrates her recognition of her status in the eyes of the Romans – «Er hat zur Bärin mich gemacht!» (HS 631) – and stands as a coup d’etat of the thymós over humanism.

Hermann’s ability to tap into and release the thymotic potential of his queen and of the Germanic tribes allows all of them to adopt, if only temporarily, the path of immediate revenge, a path that both Sloterdijk and Scheff note has traditionally been viewed as primitive. Thus does the focus on Thusnelda’s unrestrained aggression illustrate the primitive nature of her revenge (Leistner 149). Likewise, Hermann is not bound by Cicero’s modern laws on waging war, and when the Roman commander Septimius begs for pardon at the end of the play, Hermann laughs and has him clubbed to death: «Du weißt was Recht ist,» he says, «Und kamst nach Deutschland, unbeleidigt,/Um uns zu unterdrücken?» (HS 627). Hermann defeats the Roman army by replacing its system of justice with his own primitive and corporeal justice, in which the power of anger and vengeance can be harnessed.

A word might be said about the cold precision of Hermann’s actions. Some scholarship has seen his calculated pursuit of freedom as evidence of a controlled and exclusively political spirit. Angress writes that Hermann «is not in the grip of any emotion, he is the servant of a cause. The significant difference lies in the perfect control which he always maintains over himself and therefore over his surroundings» (20). Horn too argues that Hermann’s ability to «make history» is predicated by his complete control and lack of emotion. Why, however, must reasoned and calculated thought preclude emotions? Plato writes in the fourth book of Republic that the thymós often works in tandem with reason, a characteristic noted by Wenning when he writes that thymótic anger can at times be unbridled and at times deliberate: «The German term ‹Jähzorn› (fury, irascibility), a particular kind of ‹Zorn› (rage), captures this difference. Zorn might be supported by reason. Jähzorn, on the other hand, is an instinctive and immediately released form of fury that leads to reckless action» (91). Thus, when the injured thymós is manifested as Zorn, it may be put into the service of the rational mind, allowing for a strategic and seemingly objective commission that is in fact deeply rooted in the core of the emotional self.

Angress is correct when she writes that Hermann is in the service of a cause, but that cause is the validation of the thymós. He is not adept at suppress-
ing his own subjectivity, as she argues (28), but it is his complete embrace of subjectivity that drives him forward in his struggle. However, it cannot be denied that Hermann also harbors what can best be described as nationalist motives, and that his actions have a clearly defined teleology: the political independence of the Germanic territories. His fight is thus both subjective and objective, both private and political. Hermann is the embodiment of the partisan fighter, but a fighter who belongs to a party of one.

I believe that Angress may be incorrect, however, when she argues that Hermann’s movement is one of «powerful anonymous currents,» in which the masses abandon their own private gardens for political means. There is, rather, a complete lack of a common political ideal among the Germanic tribes, illustrated in Hermann’s failed first attempt at recruiting the princes to his cause. The only fodder they provide is their unabashed self-interest. To forge a political focus among the tribes, Hermann must cultivate their feelings of iniquity and wrong doing. He doesn’t distract his people from their subjectivity, but shines a light on it, illuminating their injured thymós and wounded pride, tapping into their Zorn-Bank, and in so doing, releasing an anger capable of defeating the Roman army.

An analysis of the battle itself illustrates the moment in which Germanic thymotic potential is transformed into a patriotic, quasi-nationalistic movement. Heretofore, Hermann’s push for independence was marred by the infighting and self-interest of the various tribal leaders. At the murder of Hally, these leaders coalesce around a shared sense of wrongdoing and threat to dignity. Their alliance, although formidable, remains a product of their shared anger, however, and cannot yet be attributed to a common political ethos. For evidence, we look to the choir of bards who sing the warriors into battle.

CHOR DER BARDEN aus der Ferne.
Wir litten menschlich seit dem Tage,
Da jener Fremdling eingerückt;
Wir rächten nicht die erste Plage
Mit Hohn auf uns herabgeschickt;
Wir übten, nach der Göttler Lehre,
Uns durch viel Jahre im Verzeihan:
Doch endlich drückt des Joches Schwere,
Und abgeschüttelt will es sein! (HS 628)

Three points salient to our discussion can be made about the bards’ song. Firstly, we note the import that suffering plays in uniting the tribes. Occupying the song’s pole position, suffering serves as the locus out of which the rebellion is born. The bards are explicit about the nature of their suffering,
and it is critical to our argument that it be «menschlich,» a suffering as human. This begs the question of what «human» suffering means. Consider Thusnelda’s own claim to what can best be described as humanistic ideals. Her compassion for the Romans as people, as humans who deserve to be judged individually on their merits, expresses itself in an appeal to Hermann for leniency. When he initially refuses to spare the lives of the innocent, Thusnelda levels her strongest accusation against him. «Unmenschlicher!» she cries (HS 609). Hermann’s unwillingness to recognize the humanity of the Romans, their Menschlichkeit, is embodied in his refusal to concede their right to be judged as individuals. The parallel situation between Thusnelda and the Roman refusal to grant her the same rights as the women of the Republic, discussed earlier, likewise brands them as unmenschlich. What it means to be human, or menschlich, appears thus to imply a willingness or ability to recognize the value of others, in other words: compassion. However, this is contingent on the recognition of one’s own individual value in the eyes of others, illustrated most clearly in the rumor that Ventidus plans to shave Thusnelda’s golden hair, which leads to the loss of her own humanity and compassion for others, and to his barbaric death in the jaws of a she-bear. Thus humanity, or the claim to humanism and the civilized behavior that is supposed to accompany it, requires that one’s own dignity and pride, one’s thymotic value, not be ignored by others. This is das menschliche Litten of which the bards sing.

The second aspect of this song that supports the argument at hand is the emphasis on the foreignness of the occupation: «der Fremdling.» The wording highlights the otherness of the Romans, and establishes the struggle at hand between diametrically opposed internal and external forces, between self and other. At its very core, the movement is founded upon a demonization of outsiders, and, at times, misrepresentation of the danger that they pose to the native self. The otherness of the Roman army thus necessarily represents a threat to the security and safety of what the indigenous people understand to be their identity. As the shared cultural identity of «Germanic» initially proves too weak of a unifying force (the players tend rather to identify along tribal lines, such as Sueven, Katten, Ubier, etc.), the threat to the self comes to mean a threat to the tribe, or, as personified in the figure of Thusnelda, a threat to the individual him- or herself. The «Joches Schwere» of occupation has tormented the people for years. Mentioned earlier, the yoke appears repeatedly in the piece, and is a powerful symbol not only of slavery, but more poignantly, of the beastialization of the people, of their dehumanization. Just as the yoke harnesses two oxen together, in the bards’ song, its image inexorably couples the foreignness of the Romans to the threat
that they pose to the freedom of the natives, and to their very human nature itself.

Finally, the forgiveness practiced «nach der Götter Lehre,» which up until this point had pacified the Germanic peoples, and diverted their anger away from revenge, is shown to be incapable of damming the coming flood of rebellion. Religion is a modifying force that transcends anger and functions similarly to civil law, as the individual’s right to retribution is absorbed by the hereafter and by a belief that God will avenge him or her on a judgment day (Sloterdijk 72–73). As a controlling mechanism, religion often serves to check acts of anger and rage. When the mechanism fails to assuage, as the bards make clear, a moment of opportunity arises for the unmitigated expression of anger. This, as has been illustrated, is the point at which Hermann is able to manipulate the *thymós*.

Born from the victory enjoyed on the battlefield by Hermann and his allies is, at long last, a politically stable unity around which a nationalistic movement can be organized. In the play’s final scene, the various tribal heads including Marbord, the king of the Sueven, kneel before Hermann and declare him their king, «Heil, ruf ich, Hermann, dir, dem Retter von Germanien!/ Und wenn es meine Stimme hört/Heil seinem würdigen Oberherrn und König!/Das Vaterland muß einen Herrscher haben, ... (HS 641). The *Vaterland* worthy of patriotic defense, fully absent at the play’s outset, emerges from the battle in the Teutoburg forest. From here, the tribes will rally around a nationalistic ideal, and, as one partisan force, will have the power to claim total victory over Rome. Hermann is granted the play’s final words: «Von dieser Mordbrut keine Ruhe,/Als bis das Raubnest ganz zerstört,/Und nichts, als eine schwarze Fahne,/Von seinem öden Trümmerhaufen weht!» (HS 643). The rest of the play serves as a crescendo to this moment, but functions also as a recipe for inciting popular rebellion, when no localizing patriotic or cultural ideal can yet serve to motivate the masses.

Hermann’s methods of manipulating Germanic pride as a means of building an army correlate, while perhaps not one to one, at the very least strongly with contemporary insurgency efforts in Afghanistan, particularly those of the Taliban. Following the astounding «victory» by coalition forces in Afghanistan in 2001, the focus of the US and its allies shifted, for the most part, to Iraq. By 2003, it was publicly suggested by the Bush administration that the war in Afghanistan was in a cleanup stage. Then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared that the coalition had «clearly moved from major combat activities to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction activities» (Scarbourough). However, the Taliban fighters, who had been driven out of Kabul and had fled to the Pakistan border, were beginning their steady resurgence.
Much of the Taliban’s current success hinges on the Pashtun ethnic region that straddles the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pashtuns constitute one of the largest and most powerful ethnic groups in Afghanistan (Dupree 161). Although not a homogenous group, the Pashtuns share a common language (Pashto) and common culture, which is in large part based upon the traditional honorary code *pashtunwali* (Johnson 119). Understanding the rising power of the Taliban, the members of which are almost exclusively rural Pashtuns from Ghilzai tribes, requires an understanding of this code (Johnson and Mason 76).

*Pashtunwali*, which translates as “the way of the Pashtuns,” is an oral code of ethical principles and customary laws that is followed not only by the Pashtun, but is also, as Patton notes, recognized in some form or another by most ethnic groups in Afghanistan (95). First and foremost, *pashtunwali* is a way of life that “stresses honor above all else … [it] is all about being, maintaining, and preserving one’s self honor and honor of the family, clan, and tribe” (Patton 95). Among its central tenets, and what concerns the discussion at hand, is the concept of *badal*, or “revenge.” “*Badal* (revenge) is the means of enforcement by which an individual seeks personal justice for wrongs done against him or his kin group. It is this right and expectation of retaliation that lies at the heart of the *Pashtunwali* as a non-state legal system” (Patton 95). The demands of *pashtunwali* can overrule both the laws of the state and the teachings of the Qur’an. In fact the preservation of honor would demand it (Allen 121).

One of the Taliban’s greatest advantages in Afghanistan is their understanding of the potential of *badal*, and their ability to exploit its uncompromising demands. This is enhanced by “collateral damage” and the deaths of citizens, which is explicitly used by the Taliban to play upon feelings of honor and the obligation of revenge (Johnson 121). In an August 2003 report, the International Crisis Group warned of the long-lasting negative effects of civilian losses, saying that “when a child is killed in one of these villages, that village is lost for 100 years. These places run on revenge” (qtd in Johnson 124). Coupling this with a widespread failure on the part of coalition forces to explicitly apologize for the deaths of innocent civilians, the Taliban has manufactured an environment primed for rebellion.

Al Qaeda, after years of operating in Afghanistan, seems to have taken a page from the Taliban strategy book. Shortly before the 2009 German elections, then Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden released a video in the European Union. With German subtitles, he makes reference to American forces packing thousands of Taliban prisoners into freight containers like sardines, locking them inside until they had suffocated and died, and then casting their
corpses into mass graves in the Dasht-e-Leili desert in northern Afghanistan (Cole). Bin Laden was referring to an alleged massacre in November 2001, just days after the fall of Kabul, during which anywhere between several hundred to several thousand Taliban militants are reported to have been murdered by Abdul Rashid Dostum, an American-backed general in the Afghan army (Benjamin). Despite requests by the FBI, the State Department, the Red Cross, and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the group that examined the grave site in 2002, the Bush administration repeatedly refused to investigate the allegations. Nathaniel Raymond, a PHR researcher and representative, expresses his frustration, «Our repeated efforts to protect witnesses, secure evidence and get a full investigation have been met by the U.S. and its allies with buck-passing, delays and obstruction» (qtd. in Risen). Whether or not the allegations of war crimes can be substantiated, or whether they were carried out with American approval or not was of no consequence to bin Laden's argument. American inaction, and its unwillingness to pursue an investigation, opened a window of opportunity for bin Laden, who now had at his disposal a very pointed and emotional reference to a European, and more specifically German, audience – a reference that conjures up images of the Holocaust and prisoners in freight containers and the millions who died at the hands of Germany and her allies. Bin Laden, like Hermann, was striving to create the perception of a partial and unjust occupation, one in which there is no room for fairness or equality. He opened his address to the EU by saying:

To the European people: Peace to those who follow the path of righteousness. You know that violations bring down their originators and that injustice has deadly consequences. And killing people is an enormous injustice. This is precisely what your governments and soldiers are doing in Afghanistan under the cover of NATO […] When the United Nations initiated an investigation of the crimes of the north, the Bush administration put pressure on it and stopped the investigation. This is what American justice is like. (qtd. in Cole)

American justice comes to mean the failure of due process, an affront to Afghan pride, the inability to provide legal satisfaction, and yet another moment at which the image of the United States can be manipulated in the service of terrorism, insurrection and rebellion.

The asymmetrical strategy of both al Qaeda and the Taliban is not one that seeks outright victory, but one that strives to avoid defeat. It is a «war of the flee,» whereby a large army defeats itself in fighting a small, agile, and ubiquitous enemy (Johnson and Mason 87). There is a bitter truth in the oft-cited Taliban boast «NATO has all the watches, but we have all the time» (Shinn). Simply through a continued existence among the general popula-
tion, they provoke attacks like that on Granai. In their analysis of the Taliban insurgency, Johnson and Mason offer a succinct evaluation of the Taliban strategy:

They gladly trade the lives of a few dozen guerilla fighters in order to cost the American forces the permanent loyalty of that village, under the code of Pashtun social behavior called *Pashtunwali* and its obligation for revenge (*Badal*), which the U.S. Army does not even begin to understand. The advent of suicide attacks is particularly alarming. The Taliban is getting American forces to do exactly what they want them to do: chase illiterate teenage boys with guns around the countryside like the dog chasing its tail and gnawing at each flea bite until it drops from exhaustion.» (87)

Add to this an unwillingness to investigate allegations of war crimes, as well as the inability of NATO forces to curb civilian deaths, both those caused by allied attacks and those resulting from militant activity, and any authority and justification that the campaign may once have had among the populace is quickly eroding. Just as Hermann is able to ignite the collective anger of the Germanic tribes, so too are the Taliban and al Qaeda, in their own way, brewing hate in Afghanistan. I remind the reader of Gul Muhammad, the grocer from Kandahar who told reporters that average Afghans feel that they are «without value» and have «no right to life» (Shah). The injured *thymós* of an entire people will not go unrecognized or unavenged. On August 5, 2009, American soldiers in Kandahar shot and killed four armed brothers suspected of carrying explosives for roadside bombs. Speaking from a hospital telephone, the brothers’ uncle told reporters, «I want to announce to ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) and NATO forces who are here that they are like blind and deaf people. They cannot investigate, they cannot evaluate who they are attacking and why they are attacking,» he said. «So deaf and blind people, the only thing they can do is bomb, because they cannot hear or see.» He concludes, «If these kinds of things continue, we will be forced to take guns against them and join the other side.» Following the shootings, hundreds of angry civilians, chanting anti-American slogans, carried the corpses to a house owned by the city’s governor. «These are the enemies of Muslims!» they cried (Filkins, «Road Bomb»).

Like the Germanic tribes that cry out «Empörung! Rache! Freiheit!» at the sight of Hally’s dismembered body, these Afghans see an injustice in their foreign conquerors. The perceived partiality of the NATO occupation is the weakest link in its campaign. Hermann recognizes this same weakness in the Romans, and through exaggeration, deception, and manipulation, he achieves the calculated dissolution of Germanic trust in the justice of the Roman occupation and its laws. This loss of trust in the retributive power of the abstract...
system of the law manifests itself in a torrent of anger released on the Roman soldiers. Hermann realizes, as do insurgents up to the present day, that the greatest battle is not in defeating the enemy’s armies, but in destroying its reputation among conquered territories. Once trust in its authority has been lost and the populace has been mobilized by wounded pride, an occupying power stands little chance of success. In this way, Kleist’s *Die Hermannsschlacht* is perhaps his most current and poignant work.

**Notes**

1 Alexander Kluge made a similar comparison in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* just one month after the 9/11 attack on the United States. Referencing *Die Hermannsschlacht*, he told his interviewer, «Zu jener Zeit spricht Heinrich von Kleist nicht wirklich anders als ein islamischer Fundamentalist.»

2 Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Hermannsschlacht*.

3 Schmitt notes that the term partisan derives from the term party, inexorably tying the term to a politically active group (21).

4 Sloterdijk says that this is particularly the case with Christianity, and points to the Judeo-Christian tradition of a vengeful god: «Vengeance is mine, I shall repay, saith the Lord» (Rom. 12:19). With the Enlightenment and the corresponding diminished influence of the Christian allegory, there opened up a space for immediate anger that was not transcended by God. As such, the elementary power of anger, and its offspring violence and revenge, becomes a central motif in the bourgeois culture of the eighteenth century (Sloterdijk, 80–81). This is reflected in the violence in Kleist’s writing, particularly that spurned by feelings of injustice, as in *Michael Kohlhaas, Der Findling, Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*, and *Die Hermannsschlacht*.

5 There are numerous Pashtun tribal confederations, among others the Ghilzai and Dur-rani in Afghanistan, or in Pakistan the Wazir or Mehsud. In the context of the Taliban resurgence, it is the Hotak tribe of the Ghilzai that is of most importance, as eight of its top ten senior leaders, including Mullah Muhammad Omar, stem from it (Johnson and Mason 78).

6 Dupree notes that acts of vengeance carried out against fellow Muslims, although explicitly prohibited by Islam (see Sura 4: 92–93), are demanded by pashtunwali under the institution of badal (104).

7 Al Qaeda and the Taliban are two very distinct groups, and should not be conflated. However, as the war in Afghanistan continues, their methods and end-goals have become less clearly differentiable. James Shinn, former assistant secretary of defense for Asia (2007–2008) and one of the authors of the Afghan Strategy Review under the Bush administration, recounts an interview with Mullah Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, a former secretary of Mullah Omar and foreign minister for the Taliban: «In response to my skeptical questions, he also drew a distinction between the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda. «But the longer this war drags on, the harder it is to separate our interests from theirs,» he said» (Shinn).
Inciting Rebellion

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