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GERMAN 276

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Cover Letter

Due to notes by both writing fellow and grader I attempted to make my thesis be more direct on the target of Hermann being negative. It previously was very broad and not direct on what my point of argument was. I also then went through and aimed to add a reason towards the bottom of 3rd paragraph for Kliest reasoning of how he portrayed Hermann. This was recommended to me by my writing fellow as for an argumentative paper it should contain a why towards the end instead of just breaking down what happened throughout the story.

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Writing Assignment 2

Heinrich von Kleist's portrayal of Hermann as a triumphant leader in the face of Roman oppression highlights the mixed feelings that accompany victory, showing that freedom often comes at a great cost. In "The Battle of Hermann," Kleist explores the complexities of conquest, nationalism, and sacrifice. Hermann's role as a symbol of resistance reveals the struggles endured by both individuals and communities in their fight for independence. While Hermann's win in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest is seen as a success, Kleist emphasizes the sacrifices made along the way. This essay will dive into Kleist's depiction of Hermann's leadership, the theme of sacrifice, and the portrayal of communal suffering. **Kleist's portrayal of Hermann as a victorious leader in the face of Roman oppression overshadows the bittersweet nature of triumph, Hiding the fact that Hermann was actually awful to his people and those around him.**

Heinrich von Kleist skillfully portrays Hermann as a triumphant leader who rises against Roman oppression in "The Battle of Hermann". Hermann emerges as a brave and strategic figure inspiring his people to resist Roman dominance and fight for their freedom. Kleist captures Hermann's leadership qualities depicting him as a symbol of national pride and defiance. His qualities begin to show during the play when he is able to influence Marbod to join him in the fight against Varus. This scene is highlighted after Marbod is presented with Hermann's children with the choice of joining the fight or

denying the request and killing them with a dagger provided by Hermann as well.

Hermann's influence is shown when Marbod states "Very well! Your office is complete. Take back The children, and your dagger"(Act 4 Scene 2) due to the fact that everything was planned accordingly by Hermann. He offered his children to seem very certain of his plans and not only that, but he had provided information that an attack would come their way otherwise. This strategic planning provided the idea to Marbod that Hermann was being smart, helpful, and brave, influencing him to join the fight. As the story progresses, Hermann's status as a leader grows, leading to his role as the leader of Germania. Through his courage and strategic skill, Hermann leads his people to victory in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, a crucial moment in their struggle against Roman rule. Kleist's portrayal of Hermann's rise to leadership showcases the power of resilience and determination in the face of oppression and the ability for him to rally those around him. This is shown when Marbod in the end hands the crown over to Hermann. Marbod announced "And I say: Hail to you, Herrmann, saviour of Germany! And if Germany will follow my" voice's lead, Hail to its great leader and king!"(Act 6, Scene 15) which was him passing his newly gained power of leadership to Hermann. This was done due to the fact that he believed Germany was saved by Hermann's plans and strategy to rally those of German tribes to get rid of the Romans saving all of their people. Hermann's journey from warrior to national hero overshadows the sacrifices and losses endured in the pursuit of liberation for his people. Kleist's story serves as a reflection on the complexities of warfare, nationalism, and the human spirit.

In the context of Kleist's portrayal of Hermann's leadership in "The Battle of Hermann," Krebs's observation about the fragmented legal systems in early 19th-century Germany resonates profoundly in his Chapter 6 of "A Most Dangerous Book". Just as the disparate legal systems failed to form a whole group, Hermann's leadership initially faced challenges in uniting the Germanic tribes against Roman oppression. The analogy of the broken kaleidoscope (Krebs 165) captures the broken nature of the Germanic tribes, each governed by its own legislation and priorities. However, Hermann's strategic prowess and determination gradually bridge these divisions to assembling the scattered pieces into a unified whole. His ability to influence Marbod, a key leader among the Germanic tribes, showcases his diplomatic skills in navigating the complexities of tribal alliances. Through meticulous planning and persuasion, Hermann combined the groups, transforming them into a formidable force against Roman aggression. Thus, while Kleist's narrative highlights the transformative power of leadership in overcoming fragmentation, Krebs's Chapter 6 continues after describing the fragmented Germany to highlight the fact that ancient Germans also defended their own freedom. As we learned in class this is shown during the time of Hermann because after being elected leader he was slain by those who gave him the position. Hermann blatantly overlooked the fact that to get to where he was he hurt those who supported him more than once.

Hermann's leadership, though successful in uniting the Germanic tribes against Roman oppression, was not flawless. Kleist portrays Hermann as a complex character who resorts to deceit and harm to achieve his goals. Despite his strategic brilliance Hermann's methods involve manipulation and betrayal. This is seen in his dealings with

Marbod and other tribal leaders. By using his own children as hostages and manipulating Marbod's emotions, Hermann shows he's willing to sacrifice even his own family for power. Furthermore, Hermann's rise to power as the leader of Germania involves violence and treacheries as he eliminates rivals and asserts his authority through force. In the play we can look towards Act 3 Scene 1 to understand how far Hermann was willing to go for power. While his 3 commanders were describing what the Romans were doing Hermann added false details for them to spread. This exaggerated and manipulated the German people to provide him more support on his journey to power. Not only did he create these lies and deceive his own people he sends a group with the Romans of his own people under orders to "Have them, I beg you, wherever they pass, Scorch, burn and plunder"(Kleist, Act 3 Scene 1). This creates chaos and pain for many German people as they are being attacked and killed by Hermann for him to create a reason to fight. Kleist's portrayal of Hermann's morally questionable actions reminds us of the ethical challenges of leadership and the sacrifices demanded for power. While Hermann's victory against Roman power in German territory is celebrated, it's crucial to recognize the moral compromises and human costs of his rise to leadership. Kleist's portrayal of Hermann's journey from warrior to hero is marked by questionable morals, prompting us to consider the true cost of liberation and the sacrifices made in pursuit of power and glory. He provided a great example of how those who argue for nationalism can be ignorant in their pursuit of power for their group. In his book he tried his best to paint a positive image of Hermann coming out on top and bringing people together. He however, hid in the background all the pain and suffering Germanic people had to go through which was ignored once we obtained the fact that

Hermann was victorious. This story in the end proved the point that winning at the cost of those around you never is actual triumph as you ruined the trust and faith people once had in you.

In conclusion, Heinrich von Kleist's "The Battle of Hermann" offers a deep look into leadership, sacrifice, and the struggle for freedom. Through Hermann's story, Kleist shows that victory often comes with a price. Hermann's journey from warrior to hero shows the sacrifices and tough choices leaders must make. While his win against the Romans is celebrated, we must also see the moral challenges and costs of his leadership. Kleist's tale makes us think about the true cost of freedom and the sacrifices leaders make. Krebs's analysis of Germany's fragmented legal systems adds to this, showing the challenges of uniting divided groups. Hermann's story reminds us of the human spirit's strength in tough times yet the pain that it can cause as well.

Word Count - 1359

Works Cited:

Kleist, Heinrich Von. *The Battle of Herrmann a Drama*. Königshausen & Neumann, 2008.

Krebs, Christopher B. *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's Germania From the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.