

# The Freedom of the Woods: Antiquarian Landscapes and Politics

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## Introduction

Dark and deep mysterious woods or forests figure prominently in the works of the German Romantic School (ca. 1790–1840). The novellas, poems and novels of Josef von Eichendorff (1788–1857) and especially of Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) portray the “Loneliness of the woods” (*Waldeinsamkeit*) that can be both a threat to personal identity, and a refuge from the complications and ugliness of modern life, where the beginning of industrialization was endangering traditional social structures and changing urban and rural environments. Such dark and deep woods also figure prominently in Grimm’s fairy tales (first edition 1812–15) and, perhaps are best known, from the paintings of Caspar-David Friedrich (1744–1840). Descriptions of these landscapes, and especially of ‘majestic woodlands’ also appear in accounts of prehistoric monuments, and indeed, could be used to help in the discovery of these monuments (see below).

But are these Romantic woodlands just a new type of landscape, perceived for the first time because of a new aesthetic (Schama 1996)? Or do they also convey another meaning? In this article, I am going to look at the way in which the relations between humans and their environment were interpreted, and then how this was used in the interpretation of archaeological finds. In the early nineteenth century some antiquarian texts conspicuously used landscapes to convey political messages.

## Environment and Human Nature

The idea that the landscape that people lived in influenced their character and their physical appearance goes back to the ancient Greeks.

In “Politics” (Book VII, 7) Aristotle explains how:

Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill: and therefore they retain comparative freedom, but have no political organization and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent. Hence it continues free, and is the best-governed of any nation, and, if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the World (Book VII, 7).

It can also be found in “On Airs, Waters, and Places”, where the Hippocratic author sees climate as responsible for character differences:

...With regard to the pusillanimity and cowardice of the inhabitants, the principal reason the Asiatics are more unwarlike and of gentler disposition than the Europeans is, the nature of the seasons, which do not undergo any great changes either to heat or cold, or the like; for there is neither excitement of the understanding nor any strong change of the body whereby the temper might be ruffled and they be roused to inconsiderate emotion and passion, rather than living as they do always in the state. It is changes of all kinds which arouse the understanding of mankind, and do not allow them to get into a torpid condition. For these reasons, it appears to me, the Asiatic race is feeble, and further, owing to their laws; for monarchy prevails in the greater part of Asia, and where men are not their own masters nor independent, but are the slaves of others... (Adam 1881, part 16).

The author believed that acquired traits could be inherited, as is shown by his account of the macrocephali (Adam 1881, part 14). They deformed the head of newborns with the help of bandages in order to achieve an elongated shape, but “in the course of time” this became congenital:

If, then, children with bald heads are born to parents with bald heads; and children with blue eyes to parents who have blue eyes; and if the children of parents having distorted eyes squint also for the most part; and if the same may be said of other forms of the body, what is to prevent it from happening that a child with a long head should be produced by a parent having a long head?

A number of philosophers took the idea that ‘national character’ can be determined by environment further during the Enlightenment. Machiavelli (Discourses III, 43) claimed “...that men who are born in the same country display throughout the ages much the same characteristics”, and went on to describe how contemporary French people were as unreliable and treacherous as their ancestors the ancient Gauls, he thought this was mainly caused by education. It was the French humanist, lecturer and lawyer Jean Bodin (1529/30–1596) who re-introduced the idea of environmental determinism. In *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (The Method for the Easy Comprehension of History) in 1566, Bodin explained how national character was determined by climate and the soil conditions. In chapter five he described the eternal polarity in Europe, between weak southerners and doughty or robust northerners.

Bodin’s *Les six livres de la République* (Six Books of the Commonwealth) were published in 1576. In the section about the French wars of religion, Bodin described different forms of government, looking for a universal system of society and its development. In chapter five he examined the possibility and consequences of the universal adoption of the same system of government and launched into a lengthy discussion of the influence of the environment on human nature. For Bodin the main factor was latitude, followed by differences between east and west, but there is also a “...difference between those who inhabit mountainous country, and those who live on flat plains, or in marshy districts, or who are exposed to perpetual strong wind.” (Tooley 1955: 146).

Soil fertility also played a role. People in the north were stronger and more vigorous, cruel and chaste, but less intelligent than those living in the south:

...People inhabiting the northern latitudes have a more vehement internal heat than those living in southern latitudes. This internal heat gives them much greater strength and natural vigor than the rest. The coldness of the climate, by conserving their natural heat, gives them a greater appetite, and they eat and drink more than others. In consequence when armies drawn from the more southerly regions invade the frigid zone, they become more vigorous and bold (ibid. 147).

While southerners excelled at occult sciences, philosophy and mathematics, “...political sciences, law, jurisprudence, rhetoric, and logic originated among the people of the middle regions...” (Ibid. 148). Bodin concluded that all in all, people from the middle regions, that is, from Greece to France, have the best characteristics, demonstrating some kind of golden middle between northern and southern extremes. These traits related to Hippocrates’ and Galen’s theories about bodily humors: that southerners were ruled by melancholy (black choler), while those near the poles are phlegmatic, and the people in the middle were more sanguine. This even influenced skin colour, as black skin indicated melancholy and yellow skin a choleric temperament (ibid. 150).

As a consequence, there were also differences in the nature of government. Southerners were more apt to put up with tyrants, while people in the middle regions were ruled by the law: “...for northern races, or those who live in mountainous regions, are proud and warlike, relying on their physical prowess, and so they prefer popular states, or at any rate elective monarchies, and will not endure to be ruled by pretentious boasters...” (ibid. 155).

A century later it was Charles Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), who took up this idea of environmental determinism. In his *magnum opus*, “The Spirit of the Laws”, Montesquieu believed in the same interpretation on the action of the climate as Bodin, although his interpretation

was based on scientific observations, such as the effects of cold on the papillae of a sheep's tongue under a microscope (Nugent 1949: 223). He similarly concluded that a cold climate, encourages the characteristic of courage and self-assurance, which in turn leads to the development of a number of other virtues such as frankness, trust and a reduced zest for revenge. In general Montesquieu regarded the south more negatively than Bodin. For Montesquieu southern people were timorous, had a high sensibility for pleasure and low morals, leading to a penchant for crime. He did not share Bodin's belief that temperate climates resulted in temperate people, in his opinion they created inconsistent manners, vices and virtues, as the climate did not influence character strongly enough. The size of a country also played a role. The large wide plains of Asia gave rise to despotic powers and servile spirits, while the moderately sized European plains fostered a "genius for liberty" (ibid. 269).

In contrast to Bodin and Montesquieu, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was interested in the fundamental principles of universal history and not just in systems of government. His *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas on the Philosophy of a History of Mankind) 1784–1791, followed the development of the cosmos and of mankind, from the most remote past until the present day. Herder claimed that mankind was shaped by environment, to which they had adapted over long periods of time (Book 8). Environment not only determined body shapes and skin colour, but also temperaments and economies. Herder did not define a hierarchy of different nations, but tried to show how wonderfully every nation was adapted to its specific environment, and that the people of the past had the same potential for happiness as people of present day (Schmidt 1995: 224): "...every human being is predestined for happiness, and this is the reason why nature has formed men in this plethora of diverse forms" (ibid).

He also believed that mankind in general was predetermined to be free, and was potentially the master of their own fate. All men without exception contained the divine spark: "the cannibals in New Zealand... and Newton are creatures of the same species" (Schmidt 1995: 120). It was that culture allowed mankind to overcome the restrictions of climate, but it still determined his character, and a sudden change of abode was normally detrimental (Schmidt 1995: 193–196). Herder characterizes different peoples of the earth and then presents a detailed study of their historical development, which also influenced their national character.

## Landscapes of Domination

As the American Geographer Gearóid Ó Tuathail has emphasized, neither the perception nor portrayal of a landscape, or its subsequent scientific description, are neutral. To describe, for example, the landscape of sixteenth century Ireland, and its wild woods and untamed nature, was not only to define it from a certain perspective, to put it into a definite context, but also to suggest or even to demand or justify certain actions, in this case, its conquest, assimilation and transformation into a more civilized, and in this case English, mould or shape. Because:

...Geography is about power. Although often assumed to be innocent, the geography of the world is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space (Ó Tuathail 1996: 1).

Medieval geography was linear, defined by itineraries (Sting 1991) and organized by religious hierarchies and interrelations. Rule and territories were defined and determined by genealogy and law. Space, as a category, was only introduced during the period of late royal absolutism, when the imposition of spatial order or the territorialization of space, became a technique of government control (Ó Tuathail 1996: 7).

This attempt at political and territorial control was not confined to geographical knowledge. Statistics, inventories and knowledge about population, economy and administration were the foundations of absolutist rule. History and folklore were part of this new governmental knowledge. The first university chair of history to be established in Saxony was held by Carl Heinrich Ludwig Pölitz (1772–1838) who was at the same time also the professor of statistics.



**Figure 1.** Postsäule in Bad Gottleuba.  
Source: de.wikipedia, Bild: Bad Gottleuba  
Postmeilensäule (5) 2006-03-24.jpg.

This appropriation of landscape and history, and of what was later to be called folklore also met with some resistance. In 1715, August the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland (1670–1733) ordered the vicar Adam Friedrich Zürner to produce a map of the Electorate of Saxony (*Atlas Augusteus*) for his private use, and also a chart for the Royal Mail (*Neue Chursächsische Post Charte*) to be displayed and sold in all coach-stations. The information for these maps was collected through the replies from questionnaires sent to all shire-administrators (*Amtsleute*) and comprised not only population statistics and economic details, but also local customs, regional costumes and folklore (Heise 1998). The resulting maps presented a unified state that did as such, not exist. It homogenized the territory of Saxony, ignoring political and administrative differences. Most of the local administrators had not completed questionnaires, and nor did they erect the magnificent pillars designed to serve both as milestones and prominent displays of the coat of arms of the elector (see Figure 1). When August died in 1733, only two thirds of these had been built, and by 1748 more than half of these had already fallen down or been damaged. “Zürner’s geographical investigations stood at the centre of what was quite literally a struggle between the sovereign and his subjects about who presided over the knowledge of the realm” (Heise 1998: 299).

### National Landscapes

Landscapes are a crucial element of the construction of identity, be it local, regional or national identity (Wodak et al. 1998). A British poster from the period of the Second World War by Frank Newbold shows a view of the South Downs, complete with sheep, shepherd and a farm in the fertile meadow. Its caption reads: “Your Britain, Fight For It Now!” In this context, this is a rare example of a specific landscape.

Normally national landscapes are depressingly stereotyped. They either tend to portray the idyllic: the classic *locus amoenus* with gamboling lambs, murmuring brooks and soft green hills; or the sublime:

with rugged mountains, tempestuous sea and deep gorges (Schama 1996). They are kept vague, so everybody can fill them with their own specific memories and images. “Landscape shares with the Royal Family, Motherhood and History a sanctity and an encapsulated charm which many, perhaps most, people do not wish to penetrate” (Goodey 1986: 86). Certain symbols of nature and landscape are identified almost automatically, even by city dwellers that rarely get to enjoy sweet meadows and bubbling brooks. In fact they may even be the ones who see them as landscapes, not as task-scapes or landscapes filled with working people as props, not the location of constant backbreaking labour.

How then, are specific landscapes connected to identity, be it national, regional or local? A branch of landscape psychology tries to convince us that we really enjoy and connect with landscapes similar to our “ancestral” African Savannahs (Orians and Heerwagen 1992). However, the majority of landscape stereotypes originate in the nineteenth century, from images and descriptions such as those of Britain popularized by Constable or Wordsworth (Johnson 2007: 18–33). Often, descriptions of landscapes by Classical authors were adapted in the course of inventing a national identity. German national identity relied on a single Latin text, Tacitus’ *De origine et situ Germanorum* (Germania), rediscovered ca. 1425 (Schnapp 1979). While Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini (*De ritu, situ, moribus et conditione Germaniae descriptio*, 1458) used the description of horrible deep and dark woods, disgusting swamps, and the crude customs of inhabitants to demonstrate the beneficial influence of (Catholic) religion on the present day inhabitants of Germany, these very features eventually became a source of national pride, from the time of Conrad Celtis (1459–1508) and Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523) onwards (Münkler and Grünberger 1994; Thom 1995: 212–221; Benario 2004).

Barbarians turned into noble savages, and Tacitus’ statement that nobody would settle in this inhospitable place voluntarily (Germania I, 1) gave way to a pride in the Germans as the “first people” of the nation, and to German autochthony. “Germanic wildwoods” became a source of national pride. Tacitus’ description forms part of many historical and antiquarian treatises. Their description in the *Short History of the Electorate and Kingdom of Saxony* in 1836 by Carl Wilhelm Böttiger (1790–1862) is typical of this usage. In the first chapter, Böttiger depicts the “home of our old tribal ancestors”, the Hermundurii in pre-Roman times, as comprising wildwoods on the mountains, swamps in the valleys, and untamed rivers and brooks. The only resources were wild fruits and roots, wild animals, geese, cattle and horses, some mineral wells and ores that outcropped near the surface. He goes on:

But the hardy German settles down with his family and his tribe, and the faithful animals that had been following him. With mace and bow he protects them against elk, wild cattle, bear and wolf. His first abode is a tent, then a semi-subterranean hut, and he is nourished and clothed by his cattle. Nearby, he begins to dig the swamp and soon enjoys a fenced-in meadow, and he multiplies his corn, grinding it to flour, he mixes it with water and honey, or boils bitter herbs and grain to an ale-like drink (1836, 1).

While Böttiger uses the wilderness “topos” (as in literary theme or formula) he emphasizes – in contrast to Tacitus – the cultivation of the land introduced by its first inhabitants’ initiatives. This was a common subject in Saxony where numerous authors set out to prove that the “Old Germans” were not quite as uncouth as Tacitus’ description implies. In the next paragraph, Böttiger describes the political system of the Hermunduri, mainly based on accounts by Tacitus, but again with the emphasis on historical development. With the growing number of inhabitants, Böttiger describes how the rivers are regulated and the first villages appear, which are then organized into shires. These are headed by counts who are elected according to their age, courage, experience and wealth, but who remain “free among the freeborn”. Fights with neighbours create slaves (captives) and military leaders (dukes). Natural forces are adored as gods and receive bloody sacrifices in holy groves. Later on, the first priests appear.

Böttiger compares this original society with present day Saxony – intensively cultivated into the very last corner, filled with lush fields and forests, gardens and vineyards, tidy villages and towns, with regulated and navigable rivers, well constructed busy roads, orderly parishes (1836: 2) – and explains that it is history’s task to describe and explain these changes (ibid. 3).

## Antiquarian Landscapes

The Romantic era witnessed the discovery of landscape (Schama 1996). Nature changed from an inherent threat, from the place where dragons lived and which had to be contained and tamed, to a place of refuge for the human spirit and soul. In Germany, places that encapsulated ‘wild’ nature became especially important during the era of political oppression that followed Napoleon’s defeat (*Vormärz*) and the political reorganization of Europe.

There was also a relationship between landscapes and archaeological finds, based on ideas about the nature of the landscape and notions of ritual continuity. Deep, dark and dense woodlands and inaccessible mountains were regarded as places of refuge for the original defeated population, and consequently could be expected to contain Celtic, Germanic and Slavonic remains (Preusker 1846: 20). Churches and chapels were assumed to be built on earlier pagan sanctuaries or fortifications: “... wherever Christian churches have been built on ditches, mountains, rock-outcrops, springs, roads or rivers or are connected to folktales of treasure, it is seldom wrong to look for ancient pagan sacrificial sites...” (Ibid. 18). Royal Forests (*Bannforste*) were seen as the remains of sacred groves (Ibid. 19). The antiquarian Benjamin Preusker expected folktales to be the result of their place of origin, even if there was a change of population (Ibid. 19). Thus for him, tales of dwarfs related to the remains of a previous population, and tales of cauldrons used for brewing ale reliably indicated sacrificial sites.

For some individuals of more highly developed sensibilities, the very atmosphere of the landscape could indicate the presence of prehistoric relics. In 1830, Friedrich Wilhelm Huscher, theological student, visited an area near Großhadernsdorf, where Bavarian Councilor Regnitzsch had discovered pagan graves, but had never published them. Huscher gives a lengthy description of his itinerary in the style of Ludwig Tieck (almost three pages long), and his emotions when he approached the site:

...never have such feelings trembled in my breast, such foreboding, such thoughts borne my spirit over the clouds as were overwhelming my heart when I first perceived this lonely, unembellished barrow... (Huscher 1830: 6).

The “holy gravity” of the location imbued “each swaying stem of grass in the moss, even the fluttering shadows with elated meaning”.

Unfortunately, this early attempt at phenomenology was ruined by the fact that the pagan remains were the rather free-form reconstructions of the earlier excavator; and the runic inscription that was Huscher’s main discovery had been composed by Regnitzsch to mark this reconstruction.

The nature of the landscape could also be used to ascribe ethnicity. Thus, the nomadic way of life of the Semnonii described by Strabo (*Geographica* VII, 1, 3) was evidence that all prehistoric finds were Slavonic, as the vagrant Germani had left no traces (Sommer 2000). It was commonly assumed that Germanic tribes lived in wooded mountainous regions, while the Slavs lived on the well-watered plains (Preusker 1841: 61), and thus archaeological finds were attributed accordingly (Sommer in print).

When the Hohenleuben antiquarian Johann Julius Schmidt (1829) discussed finds from the excavations of some barrows in Collis near Gera, he used the material of the finds, their location and the methods of burial in his arguments. The existence of an iron arrowhead argued against a German attribution, but then it might have got into the graves accidentally. Burial cremations were practiced by both Germans and Slavs, but as the barrows were located on the top of a hill, providing “a very extended and pleasing view”, and it was well known that Germans preferred hills for their cemeteries (ibid. 28), Schmidt was left in no doubt that the site must indeed be Germanic.

## Preusker’s Views

Karl Benjamin Preusker (1786–1851) was one of the best-known Saxon antiquarians of his time. He trained as bookseller and was an apprentice in Campe’s Bookshop in Brunswick between 1809–11.

He became a volunteer in the Saxon Army in 1811 during the Napoleonic wars, then worked as quartermaster until he left the army in 1824 to study at Leipzig University. In his later years, he was a Prussian bailiff (*Rentmeister*) in Großenhain.

He was interested in antiquarian studies, and also took a very active role in public education, founding, along with others, a primary school, a reading circle, a public library and a savings-society (Hohendorf 1986; Coblenz 1986).

His seminal work *Blicke in die vaterländische Vorzeit* (Glimpses into the Patriotic Past, 1841–46) was addressed both to his fellow antiquarians and to the general “educated” public, and was intended to raise interest in the remote past, and to provide alternatives areas for the recreational interest of those people who idly perused deleterious popular literature found in journals and novels.

The book starts with the simile of a mountain panorama. The recent past is clearly visible, actors in it, and the fine detail of the landscape can be made out. Further away, only general cycles can be discerned, such as sowing and harvest. The pagan period is hidden “as in a fine mist”, where only the history of whole nations can be guessed at (1841: iii–iv).

The landscape is also of value in itself. Preusker invites his readers to stroll through their native fields and simply enjoy their ambience:

For even the poor can enjoy them and feel uplifted by the view of beautiful works of art and the romantic landscape, and gain renewed courage to face life when oppressed by mundane powers and oppressive want. In nature and art the immortal ideas of beauty and the sublime are realized (Preusker 1841: 209).

Preusker had been greatly influenced by Herder, but he developed Herder’s ideas further:

In historical contemplations in relation to a country or its particular regions, it is extremely important to take into regard its natural conditions, as they are in various ways connected to the inhabitants who, in former times more than at present, lived with and in nature. It was nature they had to adapt to, and which heavily influenced their physical and spiritual character through the course of centuries (Preusker 1841: 58).

He goes on to describe how mountainous regions housed hardy hunters, while meadows and fertile hillsides encouraged pastoralism, and large lakes and rivers made for fishers and boatmen. The nature of the landscape, climate and topography even influenced the development of language and dialects (ibid. 60). The “spiritual and moral” traits of people were especially influenced by topography. Mountain-dwellers were merry and fiercely loved and defended liberty, which made them warlike. They were normally organized into small groups, as people are more difficult to vanquish and to unite under one leader than those in larger groups on the plains. “Fantasy even created gods and ghosts in the mountains that are different from those of the plains, of woody swamps, of the seacoast or of lonely islands” (ibid. 60).

Preusker saw the influence of the natural environment on human nature as a dynamic process. Immigrants would choose the districts most suitable to their established occupations and needs and then try to improve them by cultivation. “The history of the formation of a nation is thus closely related to the original properties and the gradual change of the natural environment...” (Ibid. 58), independent of modern political borders which were changed by the luck of war and by politics (Ibid. 59).

For Preusker, the antiquarian’s task was to elucidate the history of this changing environment, from the original wildwoods, to the first cultivations, to show how wild animals were restricted to the dense woodlands, and finally crowded out, while other animals were domesticated. Slowly, trees would be cleared, swamps drained, rivers regulated or even shifted in their course, and the nature of the woodlands changed. Even the climate got milder, which was not, as Preusker remarks, wholly advantageous for human nature (Ibid. 59).

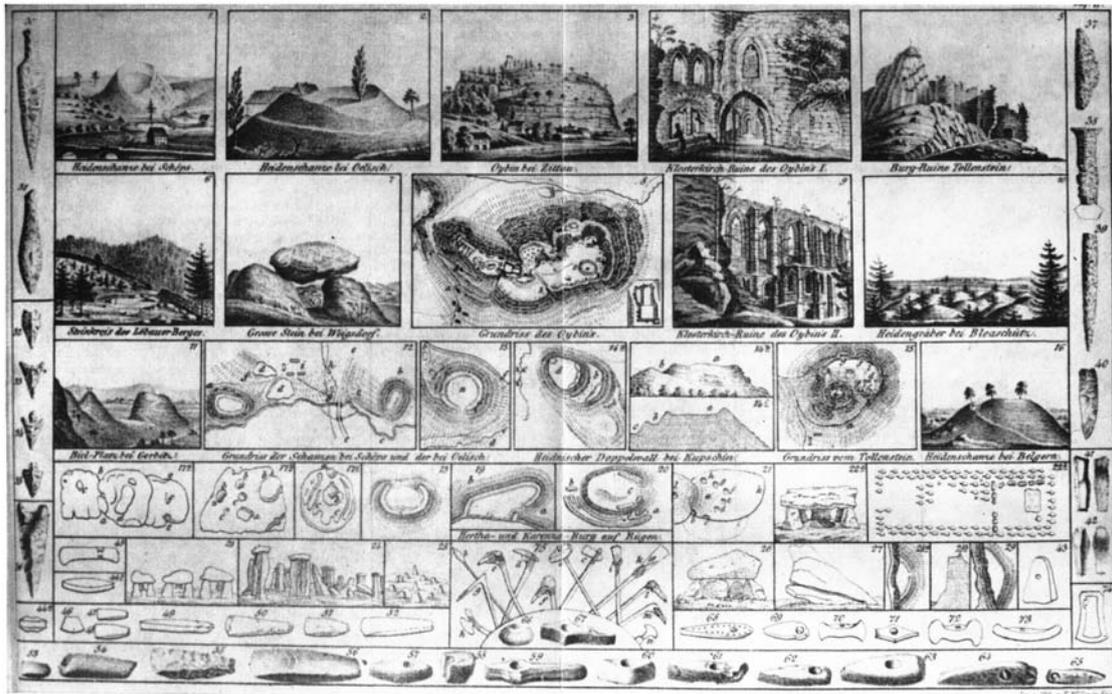


Figure 2. Preusker 1842, fig. 2.

In the very first chapter of his book, Preusker described a so-called “sacrificial rock” near Weigsdorf (see Figure 2), in present-day Wigancice Zytawskie in Poland. The site has now been destroyed by open cast mining, but it was almost certainly originally a natural rock-formation. Sacrificial rocks or pagan shrines were very popular in the early and middle nineteenth century and were identified all over Central Europe (Sklenar 1983: 74, cf. Adler 1836; Kefenstein 1846; von Jäthenstein 1836). Preusker introduced the site by describing the possible experiences of a Roman traveller arriving there for celebrations of the solstice. He combines elements from Tacitus with his own historical deductions (distant memories of the Celts who had emigrated to the West) and with descriptions of actual weapons and ornaments found in archaeological sites.

The gods are revered under the naked sky, without any idols, while bards play their harps, and a virgin predicts the future – common fare. Other narrative details seem quite benign to us, but must have been quite politically sensitive at the time, such as: there is a religion common to all the areas settled by Germans, all free Germans bear weapons, they freely elect their leaders – for settlements, shires and tribal areas, and the “warlike final song” of the ceremony praises German unity, German liberty, German honour and German “customs”, while the chief priest calls for “unity and noble customs, as is meet for the German nation” (Preusker 1841: 13).

This sounds harmless enough today. But after Napoleon’s defeat there was a short period of patriotic enthusiasm that entailed hopes for a united and democratic Germany. These hopes were soon squashed with the political restoration of Europe, which also entailed the ongoing fragmentation of various German states, under Count Metternich, known as “the jailer of Europe”. After the murder of August Kotzebue by a nationalist fraternity student, the Carlsbad decrees of 1819 introduced general censorship. All printed matter of less than twenty sheets (normally 320 pages) had to be officially approved before being printed. Any books could be seized and destroyed if they were thought to endanger the dignity of the German Federation, security and public order in individual states, or peace in Germany in general (Ziegler 1983: 8–11). After the July Revolution in France, and political uprisings in some German states such as Saxony, censors were instructed to suppress any news about “unrest” and in 1832 the importation of any printed material of less than 20 sheets had to be officially approved. In 1834, a central censor for the whole German Federation was appointed, which

guaranteed total control of newspapers (Ziegler 1983; Breuer 1983). While lengthy scholarly studies were not as strictly controlled as periodicals, Metternich was especially distrustful of historians (Jacobeit 1965), and their books were subjected to censorship after publication. Censorship in this case meant that the whole print run of the book would be confiscated, incurring financial ruin for both author and publisher.

At the same time universities were placed under direct government control, and any university teachers "...who, by obvious deviation from their duty, or by exceeding the limits of their functions, or by the abuse of their legitimate influence over youthful minds, or by propagating harmful doctrines hostile to public order or subversive of existing governmental institutions..." were removed and not employed by any other German government ever after.

A number of university teachers were dismissed, but there were no antiquarians among them. The first and only professor of the chair for Germanic antiquities in Breslau, Johann Gustav Gottlieb Büsching died in 1829 (Sommer and Struve 2005). His successor, Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798–1874), who specialized in Germanic languages, was removed from office in 1842 because of the publication of his anthology of "apolitical poems", which were not apolitical at all, and in 1843 he was evicted from Prussia (Fallersleben 1843; Ziegler 1983: 165 f.).

However the example of the treatment of Heinrich von Kleist's (1777–1811) "Battle of Hermann", which described the defeat of the Roman General Varus by the Cheruscan Arminius in AD 9, in a jingoistic and Francophobic manner, demonstrates that prehistoric subjects were not considered

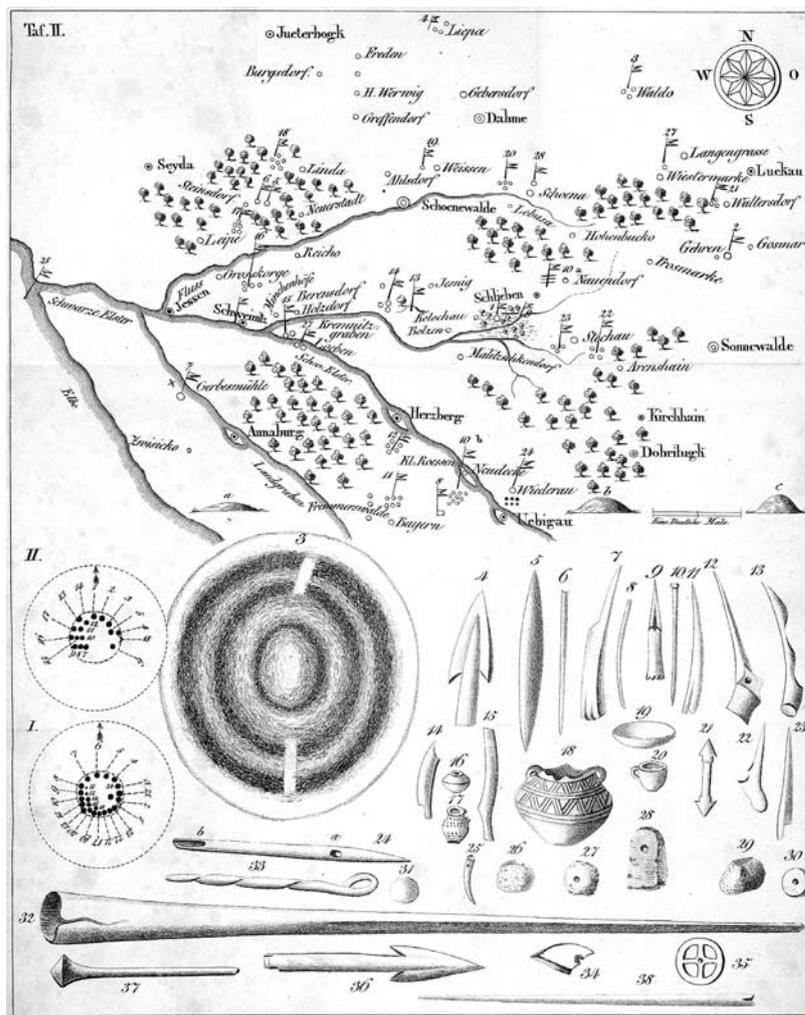


Figure 3. Wagner 1826, The temple at Schlieben.

harmless. The play was banned in 1811, presumably in the interests of amicable relations with France. Its first, and only, public performance took place in Dresden in 1861, and immediately afterwards it was banned again (Breuer 1983: 151).

## Landscape and Politics

Montesquieu had claimed that freedom had been invented in the Germanic woodlands (Book XI: 3). English authors in turn adopted this claim as evidence that the love of freedom was something inherent in the “Anglo-Saxon Race”. Of course, Montesquieu’s freedom was not democracy or the political freedom of the Third Estate, but rather the freedom of the aristocracy to hold their own against the king – thus to more effectively to exploit their peasants (cf. Thom 1996 on the dispute between the “Thèse Royale” of Abbé Dubos and the “Thèse Nobilitaire” of Count Boulainvilliers). However, the ‘topos’ (or literary theme or formula) of the “freedom of the woods” became popular both in England and Germany (Schama 1996: 135–184), although Karl Marx inquired in 1844, in his famous ‘Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law’ (MEW 1: 380): just what was the difference between this celebrated Germanic freedom and the freedom of a wild boar?

After 1819 the political climate made it impossible to openly lobby for democracy, German unity or a free press. Even the discussion of ancient Germanic institutions was seen as (and often intended as) a political statement, and was accordingly suppressed. Both historical societies and historians in general were placed under strict censorship and police-control, and were even systematically spied on. But, as we know now from more contemporary politically oppressive contexts, there are ways to circumnavigate such censorship and surveillance. The general public can become adept at decoding hidden meanings, at recognizing metaphors and innocuous descriptions as criticisms, or calls for action (e. g. Brohm 2005). Without primary sources, it is impossible to decide whether every antiquarian description of a sacrificial stone, a temple under the open sky (Wagner 1828: Figure 3), an enclosure on a mountaintop, or in the deep, dark, wildwoods, contained political messages. They certainly had political connotations for their contemporary readers. Landscape was not yet something to be mapped, but something to be experienced.

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