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Visions of the Teuton

Visions of the Teuton: Perceptions of Germany and the German in mid-nineteenth century England

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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis examines mid-nineteenth century perceptions of Germany in the minds of English thinkers, writers, and journalists. At the time, Germany received increasing attention from the English, in no small part due to an exploration of their own national character. This exploration led them to the shared Anglo-Saxon heritage in order to explain their own understanding of the peculiarities and nuances of the English national character. By examining reactions to the myriad events that took place in the burgeoning German nation, the thesis aims to provide insight into the role of national character in shaping perceptions of other nations. It will also observe the change in attitudes towards Germany as the nineteenth century progressed, and Germany became an ascendant Great Power, capable of challenging France in terms of military might, and England in terms of industrial capability. It further aims to demonstrate that the Anglo-German antagonism started some decades prior to the *fin de siècle*, but that, alongside a growing suspicion of German, and particularly Prussian, expansionism, there remained an admiration for German culture, in this thesis, focusing on the sphere of German literature. Via these observations, the thesis will aim to shed more light on the importance of national character and nationhood to mid-nineteenth century English thinkers.

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I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr James Thompson, and Professor Hugh Pemberton, whose kindness, guidance, and inexhaustible patience made this work possible. My parents, of course, for the unstinting encouragement they have given me. And lastly, my stepmother, who has been my example of what it means to be a good person.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

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Prior to 1848, it would not be inaccurate to say that there was no German nation-state. There had, of course, been manifestations of German nationalism, the first signs of which were seen after the defeat of Prussia and Austria at the Battles of Jena-Auerstedt, and physically manifested in the Hambach Festival in 1832. The *Zollverein* too, may be seen as an early manifestation of German unity. This custom union, formed with the intent of managing tariffs and economic policies, served as a means with which to bind the disparate German states to one another. Nonetheless, Germany the nation-state remained a dream of nationalists and patriots. Though the Frankfurt Assembly, and later the Frankfurt Parliament, established at *Paulskirche* during the revolution of 1848 claimed to be a federal government, it amounted to little, and the revolution was quickly stamped out by the pre-existing German governments. Some few decades later, the German Empire had emerged, from the moment of its inception, as one of the Great Powers of Europe. In 1866, under the Prussian lead, the North German states had excised the ancient Hapsburg Empire from German affairs, and creating the *Norddeustcher Bund*, the North German Confederation which was the German federal state. Four years later, Bismarck goaded France into war, and, in short order, Germany had beaten, and dispelled the illusion of, the military might of the French Empire, stunning foreign witnesses with its magnificent victory over Louis Napoleon, who proved himself unequal to his uncle at the Battle of Sedan. With the formation of the German Empire at Versailles, and the incorporation of those German states which had declined to join the preceding *Norddeutscher Bund*, the young nation took its place amongst the Great Powers, and set itself upon a course that would dramatically alter the next century.

Some miles away, England went from strength to strength, its colonial empire, particularly after the incorporation of British India, growing to titanic proportions. Its military might not have been on equal parity with those of the continental nations, but the Royal Navy

was indisputably the strongest. Industrially too, England was without equal, though, when the dust had settled after the American Civil War, the United States began to rapidly close the gap. This upstart nation, however, was on the far side of the Atlantic, and thus outside of immediate concern, if only by dint of its spatial distance. Though France would, after its defeat, turn most of its attention away from Europe towards its overseas possessions, and though Russia would, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, challenge English hegemony in the Near and Far East, the primary challenge to English supremacy came from the invigorated Germany; for the first time, England found its steel production and naval (in terms of sheer tonnage) lead seriously jeopardized. What effect these changed circumstances had on Anglo-German relations has been well documented; the general conclusion is that it led to increasing tension and 'antagonism'.[1] The tensions that arose during the *fin de siècle*, and the culmination of this antagonism, would colour opinions on Germany through the twentieth century.

However, for much of the period before German Unification, there existed a sort of paternal pride on the part of the English for their German cousins. The development of thoughts on what made a nation, and concepts of national character, in England, led many writers to think on their Anglo-Saxon heritage. Peter Mandler has written on this historical perspective to be in response to the fact that 'the agonized lubrications of the ethnologists and social scientists had only limited appeal; they offered few clear answers and little enlightenment.'[2] Indeed, Ulrike Kirchberger explained that the language of race was often employed by both English and German scholars to explain the nature of the Anglo-German

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[1] See for example, Paul M. Kennedy, *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism, 1860 – 1914* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1980); also, Richard Scully, *British Images of Germany: Admiration, Antagonism and Ambivalence, 1860 – 1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[2] Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: the History of an Idea, from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, 2006), p. 86 – 7.

collaboration that persisted from the Napoleonic Wars through the long nineteenth century.[3]

He explained that 'at a time when scholars were very interested in categorizing peoples

according to racial criteria,' constructing an idea of a 'brotherhood of the Anglo-Saxon

peoples' allowed these scholars to aid in establishing, and explaining the unique nature of the

Anglo-German relationship.[4] However, these racial theories and pseudo-science proved

unsatisfying, and unable to explain what the English perceived as the uniqueness of their own

national character, and thus, attempting to explain their own character, minds were cast back

to the misty forests of the ancient Teuton, from which the modern English derived their love

of liberty, and of the peculiarly Anglo-Saxon constitution.

This increasing fascination with Germany, particularly the shared historical past was

what Matthew Arnold described as, with no small amount of sardonicism, 'Teutomania.'[5]

Teutomania was essentially the reverence for the English past which could be traced back

through time to Tacitus' Germania and its ancient tribes. Apparently, these proud folk were

supposed to have embodied certain traits with which contemporary English were most

strongly identified: the 'Ancient Constitution' and a love of liberty. This trend was

manifested in writings on history; the most ambitious of these various projects was John

Mitchell Kemble's *The Saxons in England,* originally published in 1849.[6] He was not a lonely

figure, however; Thomas H. Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, the first volume of

which was published in 1857, but which he never completed, was another massive project,

and demonstrates not just the desire to investigate the English past, but an attempt to gain a

better understanding of the meaning of 'civilization'. In *A Liberal Descent*, Burrow explores

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[3] Ulricke Kirchberger, 'Introduction,' in eds. H. Ellis and U. Kirchberger, *Anglo-German Scholarly Networks in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Brill, 2014) p. 11.
[4] Ibid, p. 12.
[5] Quoted in Mandler, *The English National Character*, p. 86.
[6] John Mitchell Kemble, *The Saxons in England: a History of the English Commonwealth till the period of the Norman Conquest 2 Volumes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

further this preoccupation, studying as cases Freeman, Stubbs, Macaulay, and Froude.[7] One of the prevalent themes of this thesis will be the relationship between England and Germany, seeking to explore this sense of kinship.

As a counter to the stolidity of the reliable Teuton, are some observations on the Celt. The hedonistic sentimentality associated with the Celt, to some, implied an inability for the Frenchman to enjoy true liberty in the sense that an Englishman did. Instead, this over-sensuality would lead the country into degradation and anarchy. This is obviously some attempt at understanding why France, despite, or perhaps because of, her history of trial and error with governments, never seemed able to achieve the 'moderate liberty' that was supposedly best for 'moral and political stability.' In the fourth Chapter of *Victorian Political Thought*, Varouxakis includes a quote from Bagehot:

> The excitable and anxious French character, though not liable for all the errors
> which have been charged to it, was nevertheless a perpetual cause of evil,
> which aggravated every calamity and darkened every good future. [8]

Contrast this with a statement by Samuel Smith, the Liverpudlian politician:

> The Teutonic ideal of national greatness is something quite different from the
> Celtic. It is the moral, intellectual and political development of the nation;
> there is no lust of foreign conquest, but a fervent patriotism for Fatherland,
> and a readiness to make sacrifices in its defence that speaks of a national
> virtue of the highest order. [9]

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[7] John Wyon Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

[8] Georgios Varouxakis *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2002), p. 103 – 30.

[9] Samuel Smith, 'The Franco German War', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1870)

Blood and national character then were, at times, considered integral parts of a nation's success. Nowhere was this more evident than during the Franco-Prussian War in which France's stunning defeat by Germany was partially attributed to the differences between the Frenchman and the German, with Jan Rüger writing that

> Observers […] concluded that the Germans were more religious, better educated, larger and stronger, more honest and better disciplined. […] In contrast, the French were irreligious, physically inferior, ill-disciplined, poorly trained, and vainglorious.[10]

Thus, the German victory was not purely a result of superior strategies and tactics, and equipment. Indeed, the *Dreyse* needle rifle, which had completely outclassed the Austrian muskets in 1866, had in turn been surpassed by the French *chassepot*. It was the Teutonic character of masculine stolidity which had won out over the Celt's effete frivolity.

If one able were to boil down the various discussions on national character in some hypothetical superfluous exercise, it would essentially lead to a single question; were the people of a nation 'fit' for liberty? Earlier, there was some mention that the stability of England was attributed to its liberty. But this is really only half the story, for liberty without any appreciation for, nor understanding of it, amounts to not having any liberty. Samuel Laing, writes, for example that the German people were incapable of understanding 'true' liberty, and therefore would never be able to exercise their political role in the development of the nation. [11]

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[10] Jan Rüger, 'A Fallen Idol: The Impact of the Franco-Prussian War on the Perception of Germany byBritish Intellectuals', *The International History Review*, vol. 7, no 4 (Nov., 1985) p. 549 – 50.

[11] Samuel Laing, *Notes of a Traveller, on the social and political state of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy, and other parts of Europe during the present Century* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854), pp. 90 – 9.

Thinking on ideas of national character therefore served the purpose of explaining the state of Europe, situating England's uniqueness amongst the disquiet that ran through her neighbours. Therefore, in explaining themselves, Liberal figures like Bagehot found answers to questions on the 'Other.' Particularly relevant, is that national character could explain the state of 'Bureau and Barrack' which existed on the Continent. Bureau and Barrack, which we take to mean centralization and militarism, 'accounted for a lot of bad behaviour on the Continent.'[12] The role of institutions was an important one when considering what made a nation. We saw above that Laing felt Germans were incapable of comprehending true liberty. This, to him, was a result of 'functionarism' leading to 'political power of the state over private free agency.' Though he praised Germany as the 'prolific mother of theory and speculation,' the people themselves had had their independence of mind and thought crushed, looking to the government for 'bread and further advancement.' This, in turn, retarded the growth of moral judgement amongst the people.[13] This demonstrates the perceived interrelationship between institutions and national character in determining a nation. The national character of a people could be one worthy of great credit, as it was with the Prussians, but the high degree of government control in aspects of their lives, both political and social, rendered them overly-dependent on government aid, and unable to apply themselves in a meaningful fashion. Notice the contrast here with the English perception of themselves: strong, highly independent, unwilling to allow governments to interfere too closely in their lives and liberties; England may not have had the same level of education as Germany, but nonetheless, it was felt that education was not always the great benefit it may have appeared to have been. The aim of Chapter One, therefore, is twofold. The first is to explore opinions on German national character as a means of explaining the state of

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[12] Mandler, *English National Character*, p. 64.
[13] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, *p*p. 55 – 7.

Germany; the second, to understand the perceived kinship via historical roots, between the two nations and in what manner (intellectual, political, or merely popular) this manifested itself. The chapter will thus set the tone for the rest of the dissertation.

On the mid-Victorian preoccupation with Germany, John R. Davis has written that 'Of all the parts of the world the Victorians were interested in, it might reasonably be claimed, the area known to them as Germany was the most important,' further explaining that 'curiosity grew in British intellectual circles regarding German philosophy, literature and theology. […] by the 1840s this developed into a more widespread interest in German culture.[14] Davis further explained in *Anglo-German Scholarly Networks* that 'the German states […] provided the type of intellectual foodstuffs the Victorian liberals admired and desired, based as it was on rationalism and philosophical exploration.'[15] He also writes that due to the 'political fragmentation' of the German states, 'remained a somewhat nebulous, complicated and disconnected theme – especially outside the Foreign Office – until unification in 1871.'[16] While it is true that Germany in the early- and mid-nineteenth century was not of immediate concern to London, the government being more concerned with the threats of France and Russia, it is not entirely fair to say that Germany presented a 'disconnected theme,' even amongst foreign policy makers. As we shall see through this dissertation, German unity, and Prussian hegemony, in particular, provided attractive fodder for discussion.

As we shall see through this thesis, there exists a wealth of commentary on German affairs, from literary figures, to Germany's struggles for unification. Just as the English were concerned with their own national character, so too did they stop to examine that of the

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[14] John R. Davis, *The Victorians and Germany* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 9.
[15] Davis, J. 'A Fallen Idol: The Impact of the Franco-Prussian War on the Perception of Germany by British Intellectuals' in *Anglo-German Scholarly Networks* pp. 39 -40.
[16] Ibid, p. 39.

Germans, or at least, what they perceived it to be. In an increasingly industrialized age, as the conveniences of steam became increasingly available, tourism abroad became a viable form of recreation and education to the middle classes, and Germany, as to be expected, was a destination of some desirability.[17] Out of this sprang a species of travel writer, educating the masses via the publishing of their foreign experiences. One such figure whom we shall witness later on was Samuel Laing, whose *Notes of a Traveller* were popular during its time, and helpful to us now in understanding English perceptions of Germany. Other entrepreneurial figures were quick to capitalize on the growth of leisurely travel abroad. John Murray III, of the Murray publishing family, and whose work will also aid in informing us of English perceptions, published a series of guides for prospective English travellers, entitled *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent*. In the volume dealing with Germany, he described scenic routes that the English tourist might wish to take. More importantly, for our purposes, he explained various customs and peculiarities he perceived in the German, which he thought might have been important for his readers to know. That he chose to emphasize the particulars of these cultural differences will aid us in drawing further conclusions as to what English writers made of the German character.

With this increased thinking on the Anglo-German historical relationship, writers such as the Germanophilic Thomas Carlyle and even politicians like Palmerston, advocated the creation of a German nation state. The reasons were many and ranged from the political to the theoretical; on the one hand, for example, a strong united Germany could effectively stymy the machinations of autocratic, despotic Russia and hedonistic, republican France on the Continent,[18] serving as the great bulwark between two Great Powers with whom England

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[17] Ibid, pp. 303 – 9.
[18] Frank Lorenz Muller, *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform, 1830 – 63* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), chapters 3 and 4 are particularly relevant in the context of parliamentary foreign policy.

shared a somewhat contentious relationship. Close ties with a united Germany was thus a doubly pleasing prospect, for it emphasized the shared historical past, and also greatly secured England's security. On the other hand, were the writings of John Stuart Mill involving a theoretical exploration of the validity and criteria of unifying nations.[19] In an age where discussions on the sovereignty of nations were becoming frequent, the unification of Germany occupied much English considerations on German matters. Like the Italian *Risorgimento*,[20] there was a certain romance in the perceptions of the German struggling towards unity. After Unification, this wellspring of support for a strong Germany dried somewhat, though not completely, as the German Empire began to be viewed as expansionist, and belligerently militaristic, so much so that, on the eve of the Great War, John Morley cut a rather lonely figure in parliament in his support for Germany.

The antagonism between England and Germany at the close of the nineteenth century was therefore, by no means a foregone conclusion. Indeed, for the three decades between revolution and unification, there was considerable admiration for the German people, their character, and their culture. Rüger wrote that, even with the ascendancy of Bismarck, 'the relationship did not have to deteriorate […]. What took place in the second half of the nineteenth century was not an inevitable shift towards enmity, but an increase in both cooperation and conflict.'[21] Indeed, to Rüger, Bismarck's schemes of Prussian hegemony were possible because of English neutrality, and this neutrality spelled a 'tacit agreement to Prussian expansionism […] based on the hope that this would lead to a rebalancing of power in Europe which suited Britain's interests.'[22] Conversely, the Anglo-German antagonism of

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[19] John Stuart Mill, 'Considerations on Representative Government' in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. by John Gray (Oxford, 1991), p. 427 – 34.
[20] See Christopher Duggan, 'Giuseppe Mazzini in Britain and Italy: Divergent Legacies, 1837–1915' in eds. C. A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830 - 1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[21] Rüger, J., *Heligoland Britain, Germany, and the struggle for the North Sea* (Oxford, 2017), p. 57.
[22] Ibid, p. 56.

the late-nineteenth century had its roots much earlier on, with disapprobation for German

state institutions, particularly the authoritarian apparatus of the Prussian government. As the

middle decades of the century wore on, Prussia's ascendancy over the other German states

became undeniable, and with this ascendancy, so too did criticism of Prussian

authoritarianism increase, and accusations of Prussian self-aggrandisement emerge.

Underlying these thoughts on Germany were questions of national character, and the meaning

of nationhood, and what constituted good governance. Reflections on Germany and the

German people were prolific in the writings of intellectual elites, men such as Matthew

Arnold, and even amongst those who would perhaps not be considered of their intellectual

calibre, such as the travel writer Samuel Laing.[23] Political figures such as Palmerston,

Gladstone, and Cobden also had their share of observations to make on Germany.[24]

Objectives

The objective of this thesis is twofold: to gain a better understanding of English

opinions on Germany, before that nation became a Great Power and, in so doing, to expand

the view on mid-nineteenth century English thought on ideas of nation, and civilization. By

English opinions, we do not mean so much the parliamentary discussions, and the high

political debates on the emergence of the German nation. Rather, I will confine myself to the

realm of theorizing and intellectual thought. 'Intellectual' may be a somewhat broad and

ambiguous term, but here, we use it to encapsulate the various commentary and criticisms

that appeared in pamphlets, and periodical articles. Throughout the thesis, I have declined to

use the term 'Intellectual' to describe the authors and writers who form the source of the

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[23] It should be noted, however, that very few individuals wrote solely on a given nation, to the exclusion of all others. Laing, for example, as a travel writer, wrote extensively on his experiences in various European nations.
[24] William Ewart Gladstone, 'Germany, France, and England', *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 132 (1870) for example.

majority of our primary sources, firstly because it is a somewhat anachronistic term in that these writers neither described, nor viewed themselves, as Intellectuals, but rather as commentators and educators of their reading audience.[25] Secondly, because of the aforementioned ambiguity inherent in the term. What exactly is an Intellectual? An open-ended question, it would seem, that would needlessly mire us in a pointless exercise (for our purposes). The thesis will instead adopt terms such as 'thinkers,' 'writers,' 'commenters,' and 'commentators' to describe its subjects. On the topic of terminology, one will also notice that the word 'English' is used, rather than 'British.' This is simply because the thesis is primarily concerned with English attitudes towards Germany, and does not encompass the other constituent parts of Britain. That is not to say that it does not include, say, Scottish sources. Carlyle, for example, and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. However, they had a wide readership in England, and thus, there is justification in using them.

In order to fulfil the objectives of the thesis laid out above, a series of questions has been posed:

1. How was Germany represented in England in the mid-nineteenth century?
2. What was the role played by English intellectual trends, such as concepts of nation and national character, in understanding 'the foreign'?
3. What aspects of Germany were met with approval, or disapproval, by English observers?
4. How does the reception of ideas of Germany reflect upon the critics viewing them?

By answering these questions, the thesis will add, in some small way, to the existing historiography of mid-nineteenth century English thought on nationhood and civilization. A

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[25] A further and deeper understanding on their self-perceptions may be found in Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: political thought and intellectual life in Britain* (Clarendon Press, 1991).

study of Germany in the 'English mind' is of some value, particularly when its focus is upon the period extending from the end of *Vormärz* Germany (or Pre-March, as in prior to the March 1848 revolution) until Unification; much of the literature on Anglo-German relations deals with one of two areas: first, the 'Anglo-German antagonism', or the period from the founding of the German Empire until the First World War, and second, English foreign policy as regarding Germany. This thesis, however, deals with neither and is, at its core, a study on political thought with opinion on the formation of a German nation serving, essentially, as a case study.

That is not to say that no work exists on English opinion on Germany during the mid-nineteenth century; two studies which come to mind are Frank Lorenz Muller's *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform, 1830 – 63*, and Michael Ledger-Lomas' doctoral thesis *The Idea of 'Germany' in religious, educational and cultural thought in England, c. 1830 – 1865*.[26] There are, however, some rather key differences between these works and mine. Essentially, Muller focuses on the opinions of political elites and diplomats; as such, it is more a study on foreign policy than on intellectual thought. In the case of Lomas, his aim was to show how the English had appropriated aspects of German culture for their own in order to combat the utilitarian, material tradition of nineteenth century England. John R. Davis' *The Victorians and Germany* has been a valuable source, in that it explores the fascination that the English had with Germany. However, this thesis differs in from the aforementioned works in that it explores the relationship between England and Germany through the lens of thoughts on nation and civilization, and how, by understanding this relationship through such a perspective, a more cogent explanation of the mid-nineteenth century preoccupation with nation and character might be gained.

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[26] Michael Ledger-Lomas, *The Idea of 'Germany' in religious, educational and cultural thought in England, c. 1830 – 1865* (doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005)

On Structure

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first concerns perceptions of Germany during the mid-nineteenth century. Views on ideas of a German nation state, and the quest for German unification feature prominently. The second deals with receptions in England of the German literary world. It attempts to elucidate the importance of the cultural pillar of literature as a means by which English commenters envisioned the German national character by examining reactions to three German writers, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and Johann Paul Friedrich Richter. The third chapter is about reporting on the revolution of 1848, in particular, how reactions changed from an early optimism that the revolutionaries were attempting to establish a constitutionally liberal federal government, to a disapprobation to what was perceived as increasingly republican, French traits, as it progressed. The fourth chapter will explore attitudes towards Germany's wars of unification, namely the Second Schleswig War, the Austro-Prussian War, and the Franco-Prussian War. We will see how attitudes and opinions shifted, as over the 1860s, and '70s, Prussia came to be seen as a self-aggrandising, militaristic state, whose sole goal of the unification of Germany was to establish itself as hegemon over its cousins. The chapters have been laid out this way to provide a clear understanding of English perceptions of Germany. The first chapter lays the scene for the rest of the thesis, the second deals with a more 'intellectual' stance, while the last two are concerned with the changing state of Germany throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century, culminating in the formation of the German Empire.

Chapter One: The Uniqueness of Germany

The first chapter explores how Germany was conceived in the minds of English thinkers. Though Germany as a nation state did not exist until 1866, there was a propensity to

refer to Germany as such. The chapter will explore how visions of an as yet inexistent German nation were reconciled with ideas of a homogenous German people, detailing theories of nationhood, and national character. By inexistent, I mean that there was not no centralized government over the myriad German kingdoms, and that they existed rather as a loose conglomeration. Concepts of 'shared recollections,' history, and literature will be introduced, and we will see some of the limitations of those concepts in envisioning a German nation state. The chapter will further explore what I deem to be the 'Prussian Preoccupation,' that is, the propensity to dwell increasingly on Prussia, and its role in shaping Germany's development. We will see how Prussian authoritarianism was felt to have affected the rest of the German states, and the limitations of Prussian statism and functionarism. Elements such as the militaristic nature of Prussian society, and government-mandated, statewide, compulsory education, were widely criticised as being tools of despotism, and opinions on how these retarded the growth and development of the German national character are examined, in light of the context of civilizational progress. Thus, the importance of the role of institutions in the development of a nation, and the national character, become more readily apparent in the chapter.

Much of the commentary made on Germany through the course of the mid-nineteenth century deals with the question of unification: the 'German Question'. Because of its prominent role in German affairs, and the often controversial nature of its government,[27] Prussia features often in these sources; so much so, in fact, that by 1870 on the eve of Unification, Frederic Harrison the historian wrote of 'Prussianized Germany'.[28] This of some interest, for Harrison was not alone, especially after the 1850s, of speaking almost as if Prussia and Germany were one and the same. Lomas makes the distinction that, when

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[27] That is to say, highly authoritarian, as opposed to liberal.
[28] Frederic Harrison, *Bismarckism: Or the Policy of Blood and Iron* (1870), p. 8-9.

speaking of Prussia, English thinkers were usually referring to institutions and forms of government; in this sense, 'Prussia' carried some negative connotations with it. [29] German, on the other hand, he maintains was used to describe the cultural, especially musical and literary aspects which were, on the whole, positive. Perhaps from the perspective of a study of cultural transmission, this distinction may be accurate, but in a broader perspective, as this thesis hopes to achieve, it can prove, at times, limiting. In understanding how, in the minds of English commentators, Prussia came to be viewed as increasingly synonymous with Germany as a whole, a better understanding of how these English writers viewed issues of nationhood comes to the fore. Thus, the first chapter sets the tone for the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Two: English views of the German literary world

Chapter Two deals exclusively with a study on perceptions of the German sphere of literature. One of those institutional pillars which gave a people their identity, literature was, in the mid-nineteenth century, a valuable means with which to identify an agglomeration of individuals, along with history, and language. The chapter begins with an examination of how English writers viewed the field of German literature, in particular, negative criticisms of such, and also how this perceived lack of quality in German works was held to have been the result of authoritarian despotism. In so doing, we can explore further, the ill-effects that bad governance was perceived to impose upon a developing population. We will also see how notions of the German national character were thought to be present in the works of their authors. The Whig journalist Cyrus Redding, for example, wrote that 'the German imagination, fertile and active revels amidst the shadowy and obscure. […] Its wild theories and extensive dealings with unsubstantialities, render it unsatisfactory to those who are not

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[29] Lomas (2005), p. 23.

satisfied to take everything for granted.'[30] These criticisms of the German author as having a febrile imagination, one ungrounded in the practicalities of life, were also often applied to the German character as a whole. Many of these criticisms of authors bear similarity, in that they were also deemed to be flaws present in the rest of Germany. Thus, in examining receptions of German literature in England, we see a reflection of English opinions on Germany, highlighting the importance of literature as a tool of determining national character.

The chapter then progresses to looking at three issues: the idea of the writer as a transmitter of morals, or as a moral educator; the writer as a *zeitgeist* and symbolic of the issues faced in Germany at the time; and the writer as the personification of national character. Note that, though I refer to them as 'writers,' they were in fact much more, being dramatists, poets, and playwrights. 'Writer' here is used as a matter of convenience and clarity. In order to expound upon these ideas, I have selected three German literary figures: Goethe, Schiller, and a slightly lesser known individual, Jean Paul Frederick Richter. We will explore how, despite the infractions upon morality that were a deemed to be a constant part of Goethe's life, he escaped much chastisement. In itself, this was unusual, considering the pervading role of the public moralist, and that, in reviews on German works, one will tend to find that as much of the reviews were spent on examining the life of the author, as on reviewing the work itself. Though there were some criticisms of Goethe, which will be detailed, we find that the great poet was elevated to a universal literary figure, such as Shakespeare, and Dante, such that, perhaps, to English commenters, the follies of his personal life accounted for little.

On the contrary, the second subject, Schiller, was held in high esteem in England. Though it was accepted that he was perhaps slightly lesser than Goethe, in terms of his artistic genius, he was nonetheless widely lauded because he was seen to have been

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[30] Cyrus Redding, 'German Ideology,' *The New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 120, Issue 478 (Oct 1860) p. 211.

essentially a moral poet. Unlike Goethe, he was viewed as a patriot, striving to nourish the flames of German unification. His first published work *Die Räuber*, or *The Robbers*, was viewed in mid-nineteenth century England as a revolt against the authoritarianism in Germany. It was also seen through the lens of the 1848 revolutions, and lauded as more than just untrammelled nationalism, which was a criticism charged against those revolutionaries, but also of being a patriotic work, striving not just for unity, but for liberalism as well. Through Schiller, we come to see how English thinkers viewed the German struggle for nationhood, romanticizing his memory to fit their perceptions of Germany at the time.

Our last German poet is Jean Paul Richter. Less well-known in England than the previous two poets, he was nonetheless viewed as one of the great figures of German literature by those who read his works. Carlyle explained his lack of popularity to be the result of 'so fantastic, many-coloured, far-grasping, everyway perplexed and extraordinary, is his mode of writing, that […] these things have restricted his sphere of action […] to his own country.[31]' In reading reviews on his work, there is a palpable sense of smug satisfaction on the part of the reviewer that they, and they alone, were able to comprehend the genius of Richter. In terms of contributions to the idea of national character, his English admirers tended to view him as personifying German characteristics; humility, simplicity, domesticity, and a quiet, pious faith in line with German Protestantism, were appellations often affixed to his name. As the chapter will show, he came to represent, in the minds of English commenters, a personification of the values associated with *Vaterland*, as opposed to what was seen as Goethe's gauche desire for recognition at courtly, cosmopolitan Weimar. The purposes of this chapter are thus to show the value placed on individual representatives of culture by English writers. By examining receptions to these literary figures, we gain a better

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[31] Thomas Carlyle, 'Jean Paul Frederich Richter's Leben, nebst Characteristik seiner Werke; von Heinrich Doering', *The Edinburgh Review,* Vol, 46, Issue 91 (June 1827), pp. 179 – 80.

understanding of concepts of national character, and moral values important to mid-nineteenth century English thinkers.

Chapter Three: 1848, Germany, and the English Press

In Chapter three of the thesis, a greater point is made about the perceived failure of German liberals; explored in the contextual setting of this dissertation, is the fact that Prussian, and German, liberals, whilst having similar goals as English liberals, also possessed an additional agenda: that of nationalism, which became their foremost concern; the development of a state first, authoritarian if needs be, and a liberal constitution later. This is examined in the context of reporting on the 1848 revolution, and how reception to the revolutionaries changed from an early optimism that they sought to establish a constitutional federal government, in the Frankfurt Parliament, to a mood of stern disapproval as it became apparent that the German revolutionaries were rather more concerned with achieving unification, than with aping the English model of liberalism. Taking into consideration Celia Applegate's contention that at the heart of German liberalism lay a fear of the loss of German heritage to some foreign power,[32] one can see why the Prussian liberals were willing to sacrifice their liberal agenda to further the cause of German unification. This also explains why, when, later on in the century, Bismarck was able to achieve what the liberals had as their chief agenda, but were incapable of carrying out, they were willing to adjoin themselves to his policies.[33] In taking these facts under consideration, it becomes apparent that German liberals were not the ineffectual fops that newspapers such as *The Manchester Guardian* made them out to be, but rather figures who possessed a similar moderate agenda as their

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[32] Celia Applegate, 'Germany' in *Nations and Nationalism: a Global Overview, 1770 to 1880, Vol. 1*, ed. by Guntram H. Herb and David H. Kaplan (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2008), pp. 189 – 92.

[33] James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the nineteenth-century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 270 – 80.

English counterparts, but without the same institutional base and tradition, facing drastically different circumstances.

Examining reactions to the 1848 revolution also gives us the chance to fully grasp the spectre of France, and imagery of revolutionary mobs, that were a pervasive part of English reporting on the revolution. This is particularly evident as the revolution, which, though bloodless at first, became increasingly visceral as arms were resorted to, and chaos and anarchy threatened. The revolution in Austria was bad enough, for example, for the Hapsburgs to be driven out of their capital by revolutionary rabble.

As the revolution took an anarchic, and republican turn, we witness a swell of support for the governments of the German states, and their counter-revolutionary activities. The chapter makes the point that, behind support for Prussian authoritarianism lay an abject dislike of republicanism, on the part of English writers, who seemed to tend to equate any republicanism with full democracy and a descent into chaos. An article in the *Manchester Guardian* entitled 'The State of Prussia', though it was by no means complimentary to the Prussian King, noted that, had the representative assemblies at Frankfurt managed to usurp the powers of the executive, or if the authority of the government had been weakened in some way, 'Berlin, and probably every other German city of importance, would have become the theatres of fierce and bloody contests between the republican factions and the constituted authorities.'[34] Half a year later, the *Manchester Guardian* again ran an article, congratulatory in some respect that Germany had not descended into republican chaos, 'if German unity is to be arrived at only through German anarchy, it may, though a good thing in itself, be purchased at rather too high a price.'[35] Similarly, the *Annual Register* reported that revolution in Germany had progressed to the point where 'political institutions had been gradually

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[34] 'The State of Prussia', *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1848, p. 4.
[35] *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 May 1849, p. 4

undermined by an undercurrent of agitation, of which the tendency was to establish democracy in its most dangerous form.'[36] Thus, the chapter will show that, under certain circumstances, Prussian authoritarianism was deemed preferable to the tyranny of the majority, and republican cries of '*Egalité!*'

Chapter Four: Views on Germany's mid-nineteenth century wars

The fourth chapter examines receptions to Germany's three wars of unification, the Second Schleswig-Holstein War, the Austro-Prussian War, and the Franco-Prussian War. Note the names of the last two; Prussia, by the middle of the nineteenth century had taken lead in the road to German unification, and it was under the auspices of national unity that they found support in England. Through examination of reporting on these wars, trends emerge, namely, a growing mistrust in Prussia's claims to being ostensibly a defensive state, aiming to preserve the German people against the rapacity of France. Terms such as 'self-aggrandisement' begin to appear, as it became clearer that Prussia was attempting to establish a strong hegemony over its German neighbours, and apprehension about what this meant for European affairs, as it proved itself increasingly expansionist and militaristic. A short summary of these wars is first necessary.

The Second Schleswig-Holstein War was the result of the long-standing Schleswig-Holstein Question regarding the sovereignty of the regions of Schleswig and Holstein which had predominantly German populations, but which the King of Denmark wished to annex. Under this pretext, the German states, following Prussia's lead, engaged in two wars, the second of which is what is of concern here and which resulted in Denmark being forced to surrender Schleswig and Holstein to Austria and Prussia.[37] Two years later, in 1866, Austria

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[36] Quoted in Muller, *Britain and the German Question*, p. 60.
[37] Remember that, at this time, Austria had not yet been completely displaced from Germany.

and Prussia went to war, the result of tensions between the old, fading power of Austria, and the younger, rising power of Prussia. Arnold Ruge, the German philosopher delivering lectures in England, draped on Prussia the mantle of 'New Germany,' Protestant and progressive, as opposed to 'old Germany, or Jesuitic Austria.'[38] He also went on to state that Prussia had ascended to such a degree of importance amongst the various German states that 'speaking of Prussia, we speak of Germany.'[39] The result of the Prussian victory was the expulsion of Austria from Germany, and the formation of the North German Confederation. The Franco-Prussian War was the conflict between the North German Confederation and the Second French Empire. What should have been a relatively short and sharp conflict,[40] devolved into the lengthy Siege of Paris. It was resolved with the annexation of the German-speaking, French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and the incorporation of the rest of the German states which had been excluded from the North German Confederation in 1866.

Written during the Schleswig-Holstein War, a pamphlet entitled *An Old Englishman's Opinion on Schleswig-Holstein and Germany*[41] makes the claim that Germany was merely preserving her right as a nation to recapture Schleswig-Holstein, given that '*Schleswig*, having been for 500 years…amalgamated with a German province, is therefore to all intents and purposes *a part of Germany*.'[42] Hence, the war was simply a case of Germany exercising her sovereign right. In the pamphlet *France, Alsace, and Lorraine*, Germany was, once again seen to be exercising her right as a nation in demanding from France two provinces in which the population was largely German.[43] The point behind taking note of these two separate

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[38] Arnold Ruge, 'New Germany, its modern history, literature, philosophy, religion and art.', *Cowen Tracts*, (1854), p. 4

[39] Ibid, p. 10.

[40] A mere two months into the war, Napoleon III had been captured by the Prussians, along with a large portion of his army.

[41] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion on Schleswig-Holstein and Germany: being a Practical Evidence for the Justice of their Cause, Given after a 50 year's Residence in Germany', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1864), pp. 2 – 62.

[42] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion', p. 3 – 4.

[43] Charles Godfrey Leland, 'France, Alsace, and Lorraine', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1870), pp. 3 – 23.

pamphlets is to recognize the degree to which it was believed that Germany, even if it was not formalized as such until 1871, was, in the minds of many thinkers, to all intents and purposes a nation, and in possession of the rights which ought to be accorded one.

Support for Germany and Prussia was framed against the wider background of support for the concept of the Nation. This in itself was not new. Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Kossuth, for example, were all widely supported in England, though not enough to find any physical contributions to their revolutionary efforts. However, those three figures represented liberal ideals in some fashion. A united Germany, however, would, as it later did, surely have come under the dominance of Prussia which, with Bismarck securely ensconced at its head, would most decidedly be of the illiberal bent. Indeed, Duff, resorting to some slight hyperbole, described him as a man unlike 'whom no living politician of any importance has so blasphemed and outraged the name of liberty.'[44] Chapter four therefore deals with perceptions of these German wars, and the source of the approvals with which they were met. It also focuses on the negative implications German aggression reflected on the principle of nation.

Thus, while a strong, united Germany was to the benefit of a stable, peaceful Europe, unity, it was felt, should not have been undertaken at any price since, if the 1848 revolutionaries had seized power, the resultant united Germany would have been a menace to the idea of European peace.[45] There is an important point to be made here, and that is that to England, German unification was well and good, provided it was supported by the appropriate political ideological platform. A united Germany with constitutional liberty of the English variety was, obviously, the best example, but failing that, the firm guidance of Prussian state machinery would at least ensure a well-ordered nation. Republican Germany,

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[44] Mountstuart Ephinstone Grant Duff, 'A Glance over Europe', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1867), p. 27.
[45] Muller, *Britain and the German Question*, pp. 96 – 9.

united through revolutionary democracy evoked images of the French Revolution and a general state of jeopardy to Europe and 'any attempts to govern such a people by purely democratic institutions, would inevitably bring about the wildest anarchy and confusion.'[46]. It did not hurt, of course, that the growing presence of liberalism in Germany evoked a sense that Prussia was ripe for liberalism and at least a constitution.[47] Though, as mentioned, there was an increasing distrust as to Prussia's motives, they were, ostensibly, still defensible. When Prussia insisted on the continuance of war, despite the defeat of the French armies at Sedan, these motives came to be seen as a farce, designed to disguise German expansionism.

Some notes on sources

Given that this is primarily a study of trends of English thought, the primary sources will revolve around the written material of English critics and commentators, and not high political debate. The choice of primary material is rich, and the scope varied, too much so to be covered in their entirety here. The bulk of material is derived from the wealth of pamhplets and periodicals that were such a feature of mid-nineteenth century English reading. In attempting to understand English attitudes towards Germany, these articles possess certain advantages over newspapers, namely in their length. Because they did not face the same restrictions as a newspaper journalist, such as a lesser amount of words available to them, periodical contributors could explore, at greater length, the issues at hand, allowing them to go into greater depth and detail, and revealing to us their understanding and perspectives. They also make for much less disjointed reading and, frankly, are much easier to identify and situate within our context. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for example, was a conservative publication that had a wide reading audience, and printed many articles

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[46] *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1848, p. 4.
[47] Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism : English Liberalism, national identity and Europe, 1830 – 1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 282 – 3.

that are of use to us, explaining their writers' understanding of German affairs. The venerable *Edinburgh Review*, to which, it should be noted, *Blackwood's* was created as a conservative respons, also provides valuable insight in its publications. To an even greater extent, pamphlets also are of a great help in discerning attitudes. Even less restricted than the periodical articles, these little booklets provide an even more fertile source, from which information can be mined, particularly when considering the role of educator that their writers adopted.

This is, of course, not to say that newspapers are so much valueless fluff to us. Chapter three, for example, deals extensively with newspaper reporting on the 1848 revolution. Though the newspaper article could never match the pamphlet or periodical in terms of detail, they nonetheless reached a far wider reading audience,[48] particularly after the abolishment of stamp duty in 1834, and the reduction of newspaper duty in 1836. David Vincent details an increasing literacy, not just amongst the middle classes, but the working classes as well, in his book *Literacy and Popular Culture, England 1750 – 1914*.[49] This 'March of Mind' led to an increasing democratization of society, in that it exposed the working classes to ideas and opinions in an ever-increasing fashion. The newspaper medium is also valuable to us as it allows us to chart sequences of events, and, more importantly, changing attitudes towards those events. This play-by-play commentary is somewhat absent in pamphlet writing, as the bulk of the latter were written in retrospect, thus offering a different perspective. *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Morning Chronicle* form the core newspaper sources, partially because of their wide readership, and consequently their influence, but also because the articles provide good examples of personal views, as opposed

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[48] See Alan J. Lee, *Origins of the popular press in England, 1855 – 1914* (Croom Helm, 1976), and also, Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800 – 1900* 2nd Edition (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

[49] David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), with a helpful set of graphs on p. 27.

to merely dry, objective reporting. Along the way, there will also be use of some smaller publications, such as *The Rambler*, and the *Political Examiner*, because of articles in them relevant to the wider topic. Being reflections of both politics and popular opinion, the newspaper press provided a counter to the erudite considerations of the more highly educated pamphlet reader. The role of popular writers, to inform and entertain, makes their writing amenable to the reader and, in many cases, quite informative. The travel writer Samuel Laing is a particularly good example, not just because of his observations, but also because of his reflections on his observations.

On the Timeframe

The timeframe within which this study is set is from roughly the 1830s to 1871. Some of the reasons were mentioned in the opening sentences, but a more detailed explanation is warranted. Essentially, it was during the 1830s that thoughts on national character began to develop in England, thus providing the impetus for many of the sources which we shall need to call upon. Articles on ideas of what constituted Germany were published with increasing frequency, as their writers examined the nascent state through their own lens of nation, and national character. Progressing onwards we find that the revolution of 1848 is worthy of study for two main reasons. First, the near-Continental wide spread of uprisings and reactionary suppression led to an increased degree of thinking on concepts of identity in England. This was due, primarily, to the fact that England had escaped unscathed the anarchy and bloodshed that marked her neighbours. Paris, Berlin, Vienna all saw the spilling of blood and the triumph of reaction over liberty. The Chartist demonstrations in London were, however, marked by a relative degree of order and little violence; where government troops were deployed to suppress the populace on the Continent, in England, they were used to protect and uphold constitutional liberalism. This was, as Elie Halevy the French historian

wrote so succinctly, 'that great epoch during which the British people cherished the splendid illusion that they had discovered in a moderate liberty, and not for themselves alone but for every nation that would have the wisdom to follow their example, the secret of moral and of political stability.' Mandler has detailed how this 'splendid illusion' gave rise to an interest as to what had made England so unique as to have been able to escape the chaos that seemed to have infected Europe, [50] the 'secret of moral and of political stability', so to speak. Conversely, there was also much thought given over to attempting to understand why the European peoples were incapable of accepting what the English felt was a universally applicable constitutional liberty which they themselves had employed to such great effect. It is from these concerns that we find the beginnings of reflections on other nations and their 'character'.

Second, the 1848 Revolution in Germany climaxed with the establishment of the National Assembly and Constitution at Frankfurt. Though they were later suppressed, they were milestones in German history for the primary reason that the German states and people were united and enfranchised under a single representative body. Now, there is, by necessity, a brief explanation of what Germany was in the nineteenth century. There had, prior, been no German nation-state, and though the various kingdoms, principalities and duchies identified as being German, the ties were cultural and linguistic rather than institutional. Germany had never been united under a federal representative government, the population, though identifiable as German, was not homogenized, and there was no single executive body. There had been, over the centuries a variety of 'federative' (using the term loosely) bodies, none of which truly encompassed, or were necessarily the result of the desire of, the German people. The oldest was the Holy Roman Empire which, until its forced dissolution by Napoleon, was 'a product of historical accretion, loosely draped over an array of independent, highly diverse

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[50] Mandler, *English National Character*, p. 59.

territories.'[51] That the Holy Roman Empire had been suffixed with 'of the German Nation' meant little beyond providing a sham appearance of German nationhood.[52] Though Austria itself was f the leading German state, until its defeat by Prussia in 1866, the Austrian Empire, with its vast, multi-national territories, meant that it could not be truly said to be representative of Germany. The German Confederation,[53] whilst being a sort of loose association of the various German States was exactly that, an association rather than an active federal state in the same vein as, say, the United States of America. The non-existence of a German nation-state, however, did not equate to a non-recognition between the German peoples. As noted, there were cultural ties that bound them in an imagined community. A greater look at German nationalism is necessary, but that shall come in its own time. What is of greatest import here is that the parliament at *Paulskirche* was the first expression of national unity on a tangible, political platform.

Concluding in 1871 also has its merits. The founding of the German Empire was the culmination of the struggle for national unity in Germany which had begun with the Battles of Jena and Auerstedt. These two battles which saw the complete defeat of the leading German states, Prussia and Austria respectively, by France, threatened the very idea of 'Germanhood' and manifested a fear of the loss of German identity, subsumed and displaced by the French.[54] Celia Applegate contends that it was this fear that most coloured the climate of German nationalism.[55] One may wonder, if German unification is an effective event with which to conclude the study, why not end with the defeat of Austria in the Austro-Prussian

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[51] David Blackbourn, *The Fontana History of Germany, 1780 – 1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 13.
[52] Applegate, 'Germany', p. 183.
[53] I do not consider the Confederation of the Rhine a manifestation of German nationhood as its existence was owed to a conquering power whose aims were not to unite, but to subjugate. Its importance, however, is that, in carving up and reapportioning German territories, it created a revolutionary, national impulse. See Blackbourn (1997), chapter one.
[54] Applegate 'Germany', pp. 183 – 6.
[55] Ibid, pp. 189 – 92.

War in 1866, and the founding of *kleindeutschland* or the North German Confederation. It is a relevant question considering that the North German Confederation established a constitution, extended the franchise and was, arguably, the first instance of a real, as opposed to imagined, German nation.

However, for two reasons, 1871 is more appropriate to this study. First, as the name implies, the North German Confederation did not include the southern German states. The full incorporation of what is recognizably Germany only occurred with the founding of the German Empire at Versailles. Second, as mentioned earlier, the years leading up to 1871 presented changing attitudes in English opinion on the German nation. Prior to that, much, though by no means all, opinion on Germany had been congenial, seen from the perspective of German nationhood, and the shared Anglo-Saxon heritage, and even the wars of aggression have been justified as wars of unification,[56] committed in the name of national sovereignty. From 1870 to 1871, however, the united Germany emerged very suddenly as a Great Power and, no longer a melange of petty states, could legitimately be seen as a looming threat, especially given the effectiveness of their military, demonstrated against the French Empire. Bernard Porter writes, for example, that before the Germans 'became united and strong, and a threat to Britain' they were seen as rather charming and quaint.[57] So, they may have been united in 1866, but their strength was not clearly demonstrated until 1871. Because English opinion turned sharply against Germany after 1871, the date becomes a valuable point with which to draw the boundaries of this study. The conclusion may then devote some time to examining the consequences and reasoning behind this change in thought. Thus, for the reasons above, 1848 to 1871 becomes the point around which this study revolves.

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[56] The Second-Schleswig-Holstein War (1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1871).
[57] Bernard Porter, ''Bureau and Barrack': Early Victorian Attitudes Towards the Continent', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1984), p. 420.

Having established the rationale behind the chosen timeframe of this study, there is some context which should be explored, in brief. These do not claim to be in-depth studies, but rather, narrative points of elucidation. Context here takes three forms: German nationalism, linked closely with German liberalism, and English thought on identity.

Some points of Context

On German Nationalism

Some mention was made earlier of the implausibility of situating a historic German nation-state, and the fallacy of naming the Holy Roman Empire as such. As noted, Germany existed as a cultural and linguistic expression. The idea of a German nation, therefore, was, by 1848, not a new one and at least some forty years old, coinciding with Jena and Austerlitz. It could possibly be traced even further back into the eighteenth century by considering the work of Johann Gottfried Herder,[58] but the Napoleonic Wars were really the impetus for a Germanic-wide national movement. German nationalism could be found in a wide array of events and individuals; the literary efforts of the Brothers Grimm, for example, represent a cataloguing of aspects of a pan-German culture, limited not to a sovereign state, but to a culturally-tied people. The *Hambach* Festival of 1832 drew participants from across the German states and aided in the promulgation of ideas of nationalism and liberty in *Vormarz* Germany.[59] Similarly institutions such as the *Zollverein* (Customs Union) embodied the connection between states. As late as the 1850s, writers still wrote urgently on the need for national unity; Gustav Diezel, for example, made a somewhat impassioned plea for German unity in *The Formation of a National Party in Germany*,[60] in which he argued that German

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[58] Mandler, *English National Character*, pp. 21 – 2.
[59] Applegate 'Germany', pp. 189 – 92.
[60] Gustav Diezel, 'The Formation of a national Party in Germany: a Necessity of the Present Crisis in Europe', *Knowsley Pamphlet Collection* (1855), pp. 1 – 37.

Unity was necessary for the continued survival of the German states. In the early-nineteenth century, it would therefore be fair to draw the conclusion that there existed a formative German national identity, mostly cultural, without a political counterpart to ground it in the reality of a nation-state; or, to put it another way, there was an *idea* of Germany without an actual geopolitical entity of such.

There is some detail above on the importance of the 1848 revolution and *Paulskirche* and so further examination of its importance will, for brevity's sake, be omitted here. The point to take here is that that it created, albeit briefly, the first instance of one of those features of the nation-state which Germany had previously lacked, that is, a form of centralized government and a constitution. If the revolution failed, if Frederick Wilhelm had refused to accept the Crown from the Frankfurt Assembly for fear of being rendered a 'serf of the Revolution', and if the revolution eventually came to a rather bloody halt at the hands of monarchical reactionaries,[61] there was, at least, an increased sense of national feeling, most clearly evinced in the fact that the Schleswig-Holstein Question thereafter became a national matter, as opposed to a regional one. However, Blackbourn is right in asserting that 'when a united Germany and a permanent national parliament came into being, they did so by sterner means, from above, not from below.'[62] The issue of a united Germany coming into being by 'sterner means' will be of some interest later on, as it provides an interesting dynamic of how English thinkers who supported the idea of national unity and liberalism in Germany, could nonetheless be hesitant about having that national unity imposed by Bismarck. Nationalism and Unification were therefore prevalent themes in nineteenth century Germany.

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[61] David E. Barclay, 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Prussia, 1840 – 1850' in *Modern Prussian History*, ed. by Philip G. Dwyer (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 83 – 5.
[62] Blackbourn (1997), p. 172 – 3.

On German Liberalism

It is impossible to talk of German nationalism without situating it alongside the context of German liberalism, simply because the one was so closely tied to the other. As Sheehan notes, 'by setting the search for national unity within a broader ideological context, liberals had given political meaning to the concept of nationality;…had provided nationalism with an institutional base.'[63] In other words, German liberals took the issue of national unity beyond a narrow cultural (and patriotic) platform into the realm of politics. And yet, as Mommsen writes,[64] conventionally, German liberalism is often cited as having been unable to fundamentally alter the existing authoritarian structure, which led Germany to become 'the breeding ground for extremist movements on the right.'[65] Whilst true in some ways, this is but one perspective, and severely limiting if it be the one chosen through which to understand German liberalism.

What was the German liberal agenda? In as concise a manner as possible, it was, the subjection of the government to the rule of law, equality of citizens regardless of class, and the destruction of arbitrariness. Governments were not to interfere with the lives of the citizenry, so long as the latter remained within the boundaries of the law, while the state was to manage public interests. Given the personal freedom of the individual, German society would mature and strengthen.[66] In this, the German liberal seems rather similar to the English. After all, one of the great aspects of English liberalism was the policy of self-determination and as little governmental interference as possible.

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[63] Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, pp. 272 – 4.
[64] Mommsen is writing here about the traditional view of liberalism in Germany, not his own.
[65] Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, ed. by Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge, 2011), p. 409.
[66] Ibid, p. 411 – 2.

There were, however, some very important differences. First, there was, by the mid-nineteenth century, no equivalent to the Whig tradition, and pre-industrial and conservative forces were altogether more dominant, providing a much more effective impediment to progressive circles.[67] This, however, is more a reflection on the nature of Germany's socio-economic structure rather than on the liberals, whose leadership came from educated elites, and who could draw on support from an urban middle class.[68] Second, there was no great hostility to the army, or to an empowered monarch, and no call to devolve power downwards to the people. Most liberals were prepared to (and did) accept the division of powers in the shape of a mixed constitution. In a word, German liberals were moderate in their goals.[69] This does not disqualify the presence of radical liberalism which, in the early years of liberalism in Germany (roughly in the (1820s and 30s) provided the nationalist platform with which German liberalism was so closely tied.[70] However, moderate liberals were much more closely tied to the systems of government, especially after 1848, and 1866. Third, and most importantly, was the assumption that national unity and political freedoms were but two sides to the same coin.[71] The almost overwhelming desire for, and urgency of, national unification would, following the defeat of Austria in 1866, lead to the 'capitulation' of German liberals to Bismarck and the reputation they ended up with mentioned in the first paragraph. Did the German liberals fail? If failure is taken to mean the establishment of an English-styled constitutional liberty, then yes. However, given that German liberals were concerned firstly with national unity, perhaps, after all, they were successful in some of their aims. Chapter

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[67] Ibid, p. 409 – 10.
[68] Sheehan *German Liberalism*, pp. 82 – 3.
[69] Gordon R. Mork, 'Bismarck and the 'Capitulation' of German Liberalism' in *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (March, 1971) p. 59 – 61.
[70] Mommsen, 'German Liberalism', pp. 415 – 16.
[71] Sheehan *German Liberalism*, p. 274.

two will examine this in greater detail, particularly the judgement passed over German liberals by their English counterparts.

On an English understanding of Identity

The last point of context which should be explored independently is that of how 'identity' was conceived in England. Peter Mandler has gone to some lengths to explain the overriding belief in a universal-civilizational perspective that pervaded English intellectualism in the mid-nineteenth century.[72] Essentially, it was the belief that humanity was travelling a single path towards an ultimate stage of civilization, the capability to reach it having been endowed upon by a Divine Providence; 'the ladder of civilisation, rather than the branching tree of peoples and nations, remained the dominant metaphor.'[73] Furthermore, he states that race and nation as thought were present but identified as being concepts both 'primitive' and 'atavistic', and also that 'for English observers unwilling to embrace a full democracy, it was almost impossible to imagine what an organic English nation could be.'[74] Nonetheless, Mandler seems to stress too heavily the dominance of this perspective, especially when he states that 'organic nationalism came most easily to those figures[75] sufficiently alienated from the English mainstream.'[76] The issue I wish to raise here is not so much that civilisation was foremost in intellectual thought, but rather that its prominence was not at the expense of other concepts of identification, and that by the mid-nineteenth century, nation already possessed validity as an argument of political thought. Moreover, the 'organic'

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[72] Mandler (2006), particularly chapters 2 and 3.

[73] Peter Mandler, ''Race' and 'Nation' in mid-Victorian Thought' in *History, Religion and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750 – 1950*, ed. by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young (Cambridge, 2000), p. 233.

[74] Here, Mandler was writing about the mid-Victorian century against the backdrop of empire, particularly the Indian Mutiny, and the Governor Eyre controversy

[75] By which he meant Carlyle, Mill, Kemble, and Freeman, amongst others.

[76] Mandler 'Race and Nation', p. 237.

nationalism Mandler refers to is one of a decidedly racial bent,[77] that is, nations defined by their constituent races and those races' characteristics. However, as Jones notes, though Mandler is correct in questioning the validity of racially driven ideas of nation, there were other conceptions of nation which were of significance in directing political thought.[78] These were useful in understanding European affairs, such as the Revolutions of 1848 and the Schleswig-Holstein Affair (and subsequent wars).[79]

A quick glance at some of Mill's writing will elucidate this point further. In Chapter 16 of *Considerations on Representative Government*,[80] Mill discussed the various ways in which nationalities could be brought together under a single government and welded, essentially into one nation. These scenarios are laid out in a sort of arithmetical fashion, noting the variables, and outcomes possible. Hence, when a larger, but 'civilisationally' inferior nation dominates a smaller, but more superior one, the result is 'a sheer mischief to the human race, and one which civilised humanity with one accord should rise in arms to prevent.'[81] Conversely, a smaller, but more advanced, nation able to subjugate a larger but more backward one results in 'a gain to civilisation; but the conquerors and the conquered cannot in this case live together under the same free institutions.'[82] The criteria for these divisions were based, not on any racially determined preconceptions, but rather upon states of progress, in a civilizational scheme, and the resultant effects they would have. Thus, nation, to Mill was not a racial issue,[83] but a community founded on 'common sympathies,' that is to

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[77] Ibid, pp. 224 – 5.
[78] H. S. Jones, 'The Idea of the National in Victorian Political Thought', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, (2006), p. 12 – 19.
[79] Simply, Schleswig-Holstein were duchies under the provenance of Denmark which Prussia laid claim to, based on the fact that, southern Schleswig and Holstein had predominantly German populations.
[80] Mill, 'Considerations', pp. 427 – 34.
[81] Ibid, p. 432.
[82] The examples Mill uses are, in the first equation, Macedonia (inferior but larger) and the Greek states (superior but smaller); in the second, India (inferior but larger) and England (superior but smaller).
[83] What Mill went some way to arguing against was not the role of race in the formation of national character, but rather its significance, and the idea of racial determinism. The case of Ireland being a pertinent example; that nation's flaws were more due to a history of misgovernment than to an inherent racial deficiency. Georgios Varouxakis, 'Mill on Race', *Utilitas*, 10 (1998), pp. 17 – 32; particularly pp. 21 – 4.

say, a determination by the people to live under and within a single State. Conversely, 'Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist.'[84] This could explain English support for, say, Italian Unification, and independence from Austria, and also demonstrates that the roles of civilisation and nation were by no means exclusive from one another. While not an explicit demonstration of the civilizational perspective, Mill's use of the term 'civilisation' denotes some envisioning of a common humanity.

Another source of some value to our purposes is a little pamphlet written by Matthew Arnold, *England and the Italian Question* which was, in essence, 'a rather naively hopeful attempt to convince the English governing class to take a more sympathetic view of France's intervention in Italy.'[85] Naiveté aside, Arnold makes some effort early on to prove that the principle of nationality was not chimerical, but straightforward fact. To Arnold, 'Everything depends on the merits of the particular case in which the principle of nationality is invoked.'[86] How does one determine, then, the merits by which the principle of nationality should be invoked? Arnold continues, 'It is clearly unreasonable to propose, on the ground of nationality, territorial changes *which no one calls for* [my emphasis] […] according to affinities of race and language.'[87] This is telling. The criterion then, for nationality, is not *necessarily* race or language. It is 'a national self-consciousness, strong, deep, susceptible,' perhaps sharing some parallels with Mill's 'common sympathies.'

This self-consciousness is brought on by Italy's rich cultural history of art and letters, and the impact of the Roman Empire whose citizens, to Arnold, the contemporary Italian

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[84] Mill 'Considerations', p. 428.
[85] Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 69 – 70.
[86] Matthew Arnold, 'England and the Italian Question', *Knowsley Pamphlet Collection* (1859), p. 10.
[87] Ibid, p. 10.

would always identify as their forebears 'were his *blood* [my emphasis] a thousand times more mixed than it really is.'[88] The term 'blood' is notable. Even making allowances for literary hyperbole, it is possible to make the conclusion that in the mind of Arnold, nationality and nation had rather less to do with biology than with cultural identification and history. To contrast his views on Italy's past majesty, he then provides the examples of Poland, Hungary, and Ireland, none of which are deserving of their own nationality or independence due to, what he considers, their ignominious pasts.[89]

These observations show the relationship between thoughts on nation and civilization, and how certain writers such as Mill and Arnold, could use these concepts to dissect the state of European affairs such as Hungarian or Italian Independence. In time, we shall see how the same was applied to Germany. There is one last concept involved in establishing identity that requires some explanation, and that is that of national character. Mentioned earlier was the fact that England conceived of itself as having discovered a constitutional liberty which guaranteed its political and moral stability. According to the civilizational perspective, this form of liberalism should have spread to the European continent. However, its failure to do so caused queries to be raised as to the validity of 'civilization'. The answer was not to disprove the civilizational perspective, or to create an alternative theory to it, but rather to attempt to distinguish between the orderly, moral English, and their Continental counterparts. By determining what characteristics the English possessed that were absent on the continent, one could then have discerned why liberalism had failed in Europe. Thus, began a search for national character.[90]

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[88] Ibid, p. 11 – 14.
[89] Ibid, p. 14.
[90] In truth, this search for character had begun with Burke, but never gained the traction with which to become an institutional intellectual trend; with the exception of Coleridge, it would not be until the 1848 revolutions when intellectual elites really began in earnest to develop ideas of character.

Looking at certain thinkers such as Mill reveals a great belief in the English character in narrow terms, and the notion that character made a nation what it was.[91] The English character, simply put, made it suitable for representative government which, Mill claims in the third chapter of *Considerations on Representative Government*,[92] is the best form of government. Collini notes that Mill was not alone in this sentiment of validation: 'Marshall […] who extended this analysis from political stability to economic prosperity.'[93] That is to say the English suitability for representative government, brought about by their superior moral and political attributes, was the reason for the nation's economic success. Mill sought understanding of foreign cultures and civilizations for the betterment of Britain, a commonality with Matthew Arnold, and something which they both felt did more to prove their own patriotism than bluff jingoism.[94] Varouxakis details this, along with the criticisms they faced from those other more ethnocentric thinkers in *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*.[95]

In *Victorian Political Thought*, Varouxakis treats the view of France through English lenses. Of value, in our context, is the discussion on French character, namely the usage of terms amongst Victorian thinkers such as Celt and Teutonic. The Frenchman having by process of osmosis and miscegenation, a mix of the romantic, temperamental nature of the Celt, and the sturdy, reliable stock of the Teuton. The gradual elimination of this Teutonic nature and thus the overwhelming of the French character by the Celtic heritage led to the

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[91] Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 107 – 8.

[92] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. By R.B. McCallum (Oxford, 1946), pp. 136 – 51.

[93] Collini *Public Moralists*, p. 108.

[94] Michael Ledger-Lomas investigated the appropriation by England of elements of German culture, particularly music in his doctoral thesis *The Idea of 'Germany' in religious, educational and cultural thought in England, c. 1830 – 1865* (Cambridge, 2005), chapters 5 and 6. His argument was essentially that the appropriation of German forms of choral and hymnal music enriched English culture and added a positive dimension to its utilitarian, materialistic reputation.

[95] Varouxakis *Victorian Political Thought*, pp. 1 – 30.

French degradation into over-sensuality and indulgence. This, in turn, led to the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War, according to Arnold.[96] Nor was Arnold alone in these pseudo-scientific proclamations. Bagehot believed the French 'unfit' for 'freedom,' because of their peculiar character.[97] This explains their failure to proceed beyond mere socio-political experimentation and into the realm of true self-governance.[98] In a similar vein, Parry notes that Monckton Milnes, the Tory, and later Whig, politician, used phraseology of a racial bent, 'German minority…representing a higher civilization,' crushed beneath the 'Slavonian heel.'[99] Parry then mentions that Gladstone had said 'Northern Italy had rebelled against the rule of those 'inferior in refinement' and 'intelligence.''[100] The perceived character of a nation, then, went some way in determining thought on, if not necessarily support for, a nation. Working alongside thoughts on 'nation' and 'civilization', national character was a justification for the uniqueness of England,[101] and why English liberalism did not quickly and organically spread to the continent as many hoped it would. It also shows that these ideas were not solely the provenance of intellectual thinkers, but could prove engaging to high politicians as well. By using Germany as a case study for thoughts on nation and national character, the thesis aims in some small way to broaden the scope of thoughts and consideration on the mid-nineteenth century English preoccupation with what made a nation a nation.

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[96] Ibid, pp. 107 – 9.
[97] Ibid, pp. 118 – 22.
[98] Ibid, pp. 120
[99] Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, pp. 197
[100] Ibid, pp. 223
[101] Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850 – 1986: Delusions of Grandeur, 2nd edition*, (London, 1987), pp. 1- 7.

Chapter One: The Uniqueness of Germany

On Ambiguities: an Introduction

What was Germany in the mid-nineteenth century? The question cannot be said to have overburdened those Englishmen who cared to comment on that country, despite the ambiguities inherent in considering Germany, particularly as a nation, at the time. What ambiguities, one might ask? The answer would be the non-existence of a German nation-state in practical reality, but the existence of a German 'consciousness' manifested in expressions of culture, linguistics, and political platforms. So, the ambiguity lies in the fact that there was, and there was not, a Germany, at least up until, at the very earliest, 1866.[102] And yet, even prior, many English commenters wrote of 'Germany' with great confidence, as if the existence of a German nation was axiomatic. As early as 1848, the industrialist, essayist, and commentator William Rathbone Greg, writing a little article in the *Economist*,[103] went to some length to explain that France was, politically, a bad debt, but then mentioned, in a rather off-handed manner, that he had much hope for Germany, especially for that country's 'constitutional *regeneration*'.[104] The terminology denotes a belief in a German nation for, if there was to be a regeneration of Germany, then it would be logical to assume that a German nation had existed in the first place. Though perhaps intended more as a reflection on the character of the German, rather than a discussion on the meaning of nations, Greg's easy use of terms such as 'constitutional' and 'Germany' implies his assumption of the presence of a united Germany. 'Constitutional' too, is a telling word, highlighting the hope that the renewed Germany would be one founded upon the ethos of social and political liberty prized

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[102] By which we take to mean the founding of the North German Confederation, or *Kleindeutschland*.

[103] William Rathbone Greg, 'The fermentation of Europe: why we have no hopes for France: why we have much hope for Germany and Italy: why we have no fears for England' in *Economist* (April, 1848); Greg harangues the French in pp. 3 – 13 and writes on Germany in p. 13.

[104] The emphasis is mine.

in England. It is of even greater importance when considering the date of Greg's article, 1848, when Europe was suffering from no shortage of revolution. As will be explored in more depth in the third chapter, there was a great degree of apprehension at the nationalist quality to many of these revolutions,[105] not that nationalism in itself was considered an evil, but that it often seemed to be coloured with the *tricolore* of France. The republican spirit of France, and its attendant anarchy and disorder, were viewed as contagious, and there were fears that this 'infection' had passed on to the revolutionary Frankfurt Assembly (later Parliament). Thus, the use of 'constitutional' by Greg relays the hopes he had that, if Germany was to be united in 1848, it would be under a constitutional, rather than democratic republican banner.

Returning to our topic of considerations on the meaning of Germany, a decade later, Matthew Arnold wrote on how it would have been 'fanciful and chimerical to propose to unite […] Alsace and Berne with Germany, merely because […] the Alsatian and Bernese [speak] German.'[106] So here, he made the distinction between Alsace and Berne as smaller units of society, to be merged with a greater one, Germany. In writing on this union, however, the implication is that Germany existed, not an idea of Germany expressed through cultural ties, but a Germany grounded in the principle of nationality, a tangible nation to which the smaller states could be attached, although, given the 'fanciful and chimerical' nature of such a scheme, Arnold was of course speaking out against such an annexation. Indeed, Arnold was noting that language was not the sole condition of nationhood. It was repellent to him to suggest the annexation of Alsace its inhabitants spoke German, when they

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[105] A greater reading of how nationalist ferment was viewed in England may be found in chapter 6 of Miles Taylor's *The Decline of British Radicalism, 1847 – 1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).
[106] Matthew Arnold, 'England and the Italian Question', p. 10.

had in fact been regarded as a province of France for some few centuries, and thus could reasonably be considered more French than German.

Concepts of a German people, and a German race were, as we shall see throughout the rest of this thesis, prevalent at the time. One should note that the term 'race' was not as charged as it would become in the twentieth century, and, when writing on the Germans, commentators generally used the term loosely to encapsulate their subjects without thought to some of the more sensitive connotations that would latterly come to be associated with the term. Writing on the Second Schleswig War in 1864,[107] the writer who had adopted the imaginative pen name An Old Englishman, presented similar assumptions as to the nature of Germany, making the claim that Germany was only preserving her sovereign right to incorporate the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.[108]

This is not to say that these figures wrote from a position of ignorance, oblivious to the absence of a German nation-state. Returning to Arnold's *England and the Italian Question*, some pages later, he wrote that 'at present there is a great German stock, but no great German state […] We [England] are the natural friends of Germany.'[109] Clearly, though he recognized that there existed a German nation, Arnold also acknowledged the absence of a German nation-state. And yet, he had identified a German 'stock,' a people with a shared language, culture, and history, with roots in the ancient tribe of Alemanni, from which was derived *Allemagne*. This, according to Arnold, was not enough to form a nation. In mentioning Austria in the same pamphlet, Arnold wrote of it as a clearly separate entity from his vision of Germany.[110] This is of some interest considering the pamphlet was published in

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[107] Bearing in mind that the Second Schleswig-Holstein War concluded in 1864, two years before the Austro-Prussian War and the founding of the North German Confederation.
[108] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion', pp. 2 – 62.
[109] Ibid, p. 43.
[110] Ibid, pp. 43 – 4.

1859, some seven years before that state was trounced and unceremoniously expelled from affairs Germanic by Prussia. The implication here is that Austria was its own state, independent from Germany, as was Prussia. It was perhaps easy to see Austria as demarcated from the rest of the German principalities. After all, Austria in the nineteenth century existed as the Austrian Empire, the populations of which were as much Slavic as they were German. The polyglot empire was also seen as having a somewhat different nature to the rest of the German states, particularly the North German Confederation, the predecessor to the German Empire; old, anachronistic, and Jesuitic Vienna compared to the young, dynamic, and Protestant Berlin. More detail on these distinctions between Germany and Austria will be explored later in this chapter.

An additional train of thought is to be found in *Considerations on Representative Government*, in which that giant of nineteenth century English thought, J. S. Mill, wrote that:

> Identity of language, literature, and to some extent, of race and recollections, have maintained the feeling of nationality in considerable strength among the different portions of the German name, though they have at no time been really united under the same government; but the feeling has never reached to making the same separate States desire to get rid of their autonomy.[111]

This paragraph is revealing to our purposes for a variety of reasons. First, it highlights the importance of 'cultural expressions' in the concept of nationality. A shared culture, and the means to express this culture, such as through the use of literature, were vital to Mill in determining a nation. 'Recollections' too is of import, in that it highlighted, to Mill, that a collective sense of their own history and experiences was vital in binding a people together into a nation. Furthermore, it aids us in identifying how Mill conceived of the ambiguous

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[111] John Stuart Mill, 'Considerations', pp. 428 – 9.

term 'people.' It was through this shared heritage that he was able to identify the German. As noted earlier, it was a feature of mid-nineteenth century English writings on nation to feature the term 'race' in an almost casual manner. The more loaded and charged connotations of ethnicities had not yet assumed the greater role they would in the next century. This, of course, is not to say that they did not exist at the time, but rather that they had not become quite as prevalent as they would. Second, it opens the possibility of the existence of a nation without the presence of a single government. This is perhaps the best explanation of how Germany was conceived prior to unification by English writers; though the various German kingdoms were autonomous from each other and possessed no central government, they were able to identify themselves as being of a shared cultural and historical stock. And third, it presents a falsity in stating that the various German states had never desired unification.

The first two points helps explain how Germany the nation could be conceived, that is, the value of looking at the concept of nation as something other than a geopolitical entity. In order for a nation to exist, it had to be united, not just in governance, but also in population. A shared identity amongst the populace gave the nation its own peculiar cast and character. The last, we consider not entirely accurate because, while unification had not yet reached Germany, Prussia and Austria, by the time *On Representative Government* was published, had been engaged in a struggle with each other for dominance over Germany for some decades. Furthermore, at the time of publication (1861), the theme of German unification had been well underway at least since the Napoleonic Wars.[112] The German defeats at Jena and Auerstedt by Napoleon, and the puppet Confederation of the Rhine were the motivators of German unification, and this early phase culminated in the Hambach

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[112] Applegate, 'Germany', pp. 183 – 6.

Festival of 1832. The *Zollverein*, the German Customs Union, formed in 1834, too, may be seen as an expression of unification between the disparate German states.

To add another factor into the mix of English conceptualizations of Germany, is what may be called the Prussian 'preoccupation.' This is the propensity amongst many English commentators to view Prussia almost as if it was the only one that mattered out of all the German states. It is easy to understand why this was so. Prussia, simply put, *was* the most important of all the Germanic states, from a geopolitical perspective. It led the way in creating the *Zollverein*,[113] was the instigator of all three Wars of German Unification, and was a rising power in Europe. Laing's *Notes of a Traveller* is emblematic of this: out of twenty-one chapters, six are devoted to Prussia, and nowhere is the rest of Germany mentioned, save in some relation to the former. From a political point of view, too, it made more sense to dwell on Prussia than, say, Baden, Bavaria, or one of the smaller states; the three options of German unification were *Großdeustchland* or Greater Germany incorporating Austria's German-speaking provinces, *Kleindeutschland* or Lesser Germany which excluded Austria, and the full incorporation of the entire Austrian Empire. The last option, which would have created a monstrously-proportioned empire in the heart of Europe, was, for power-balancing purposes, obviously untenable. Of the former two, *Großdeutschland* was rendered impossible by the intransigence of the Austrian Prime Minister, Schwarzenburg, and it was the idea of *Kleindeutschland* which was most skilfully applied under the Prussian lead.[114] The latter was also the idea of German unification most supported by Palmerston who, as Müller shows, stymied pretensions of Austrian hegemony

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[113] German Customs Union. An association of various German states to regulate economic policies and tariffs.
[114] Frank Lorenz Müller, 'Palmerston, Schwarzenburg and the struggle for a New German Order' in *Palmerston Studies,* ed. by David Brown and Miles Taylor, 2 vols (Hartley Institute: University of Southampton, 2007), II, pp. 100 – 3.

by Schwarzenburg, on numerous occasions.[115] So, for practical purposes, there was obviously reason to take especial note of Prussia's progress. However, it should be noted that the realm of intellectual theorizing need not necessarily be subject to political realities, and it is with this theorizing that we are most concerned. Nonetheless, it is impossible to completely divorce the realm of theorizing from that of *realpolitik*, and thus, even within the sphere of intellectual (to apply an anachronism) thought, Prussia was of greater concern than one of the less noteworthy states.

This sort of easy familiarity by English commenters as to the nature of Germany forms the main line of enquiry in this chapter. In order to streamline this broad question, it will examine primarily the focus on Prussia. Research shows that it was with that state that most political thinkers were concerned when it came to the matter of German unification, and the arguments they propounded are of some value in understanding the role of nations and institutions in mid-nineteenth century English socio-political thought. The tools with which an idea of Germany was carved in the English consciousness are vital in comprehending this chapter. Of these tools, the first is the 'civilizational perspective' of Mandler; its importance lies in the fact that it binds the other perspectives together. The second is that of nation; theorizing on nation will form a large part in understanding how Germany was conceived, and why Prussia received disproportionate representation in the primary literature. Third, separate, though quite related to thoughts on nation, is consideration on Varouxakis' concept of 'Great' and 'Small' nations.[116] This is a rather important area, for two reasons. The concept of civilization is in itself an abstract, and an incredibly vague one at that, with little means by which it can be effectively measured. Thinking on the 'Greatness' of a nation, and

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[115] Müller, *Britain and the German Question*, pp. 56 – 156. These two chapters demonstrates Palmerston's skilful meddling as Austria and Prussia vied for supremacy over Germany.

[116] Georgios Varouxakis, ''Great' versus 'small' nations: Size and national greatness in Victorian political thought', in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 136 – 58.

the conditions necessary to qualify as 'Great' provides some means by which an intangible may be made tangible. Additionally, measuring 'Greatness' aids in explaining the focus on Prussia. 'Greatness' is, of course, also loaded with ambiguities, but is a term easier to quantify, as we shall see presently. Fourth is the effect of authoritarian government on the population, and hence, the national character. Finally, the matter of centralization, functionarism, statism and 'Barrack', that is the over-militarization of Prussia; all told, this last point may be described as considerations on the limits of governmental authority.

The Prussian Preoccupation

English opinion on Prussia may generally be divided into two camps. On the one side, a general sense of support for that state, while on the other, apprehension and dislike. By this, I do not mean to say that *all* political thinkers were concerned with Germany, but rather that those who were, and who wrote on the subject, rarely did so from positions of neutral, detached objectivity. Furthermore, there were many who praised certain aspects of Prussia, such as its efficiency, or the industriousness of its population, while decrying the oppressiveness of the regime, and its blatant militarism. Nonetheless, to avoid becoming confounded by the morass of opinions, this delineation will serve adequately.

Reasoning for the former camp tended to gravitate towards the English mid-nineteenth century agenda of nation, within which we find sub-concepts of the 'greatness' of nations, the improvement of European stability (especially after the 1848 Revolutions), a counter to the European empires which were generally not well received in England, and the idea of nation itself, as a transmitter of civilization. In the court of the latter, was a disapprobation of those facets of Prussia which clashed most significantly with the English 'love of liberty.' It is perhaps worth stating that English liberty ought not to be confused with

French *Liberté*. The former was seen to have been centred around elite leadership, with civil liberties that encouraged the growth and industriousness of the individual, the latter evoked Robespierran images of revolutionary excess. As mentioned, these dealt mostly with the excessive powers of an authoritarian state; in the Prussian state authority maintaining an excess of power over the lives of its citizenry, it was felt to have suppressed individual civil liberties, rendered its populace over-reliant on the government, and was an all-around menace to the spread of the English variety of liberty. The method of this chapter is to analyse first the attitudes of English thinkers on the idea of Prussia within the context of German unification, and nationhood, and then to look at the limitations of Prussian statism and the ill-effects they were perceived to have had on Prussian society, and the development of Germany as a whole. It will then conclude with some observations on how these opinions reflected particularly on the ideas of Nation and Liberalism in England.

It is of little surprise that Prussia featured so prevalently in discussions on Germany, at least from the perspective of English foreign policy.[117] Certainly the idea of a strong Germany must have been comforting to those concerned with the security of England's shores, and the balance of power on the continent. The only other attempt at unification which seemed to be veering to success was the Italian *Risorgimento*, but Italy, by dint of her size, territory, and location, was unlikely to ever be capable of facing any of the Great Powers. Germany, in this respect, was much more promising. Perhaps just as importantly, in the quest for unification, Germany could, and seemed determined to, go it alone. Italy had needed French help to overthrow the Austrian yoke, and ended up being puppeteered by Napoleon III,[118] and Hungarian attempts at independence had failed after Palmerston shrewdly professed 'no knowledge of Hungary except as one of the component parts of the

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[117] See, for example, Müller, *Britain and the German Question*, particularly the third and fourth chapters.
[118] In 1860, for example, after the Second War of Italian Independence, France had managed to wrangle the provinces of Savoy and Nice away from Sardinia.

Austrian Empire.'[119] As popular figures as Lajos Kossuth and Giuseppe Mazzini were in England, their attempts to gain support there failed to gain any significant traction. Miles Taylor attributes this to the mainly nationalist cast of their appeals, and that 'British attitudes towards Europe remained Whiggish – that is, preoccupied with the legitimacy of political institutions rather than with the principle of nationality.'[120] To a nation unwilling to become embroiled in drawn out continental struggles, this independence would have made for an attractive proposition. By extension, the Prussian lead would have been the choice to support, given Austria's desire to extend the boundaries of the German nation to encompass the entirety of her territories. Foreign policy aside, however, the prominence of Prussia in the sphere of intellectual thought begs more attention. The former has been extensively covered, the latter, less so. The rationale for intellectual considerations on Prussia's role in German unification stems from much the same reason as political considerations: they were mostly grounded in ideas of liberalism and unification.

If Prussia had desired the attentions of scholarly English intellectuals, then it was singularly fortunate in that regard. Circumstances were such that, any discussion on Germany would have to include Prussia, no matter how theoretical. Prussia was, as mentioned, the leading German state, and though its government was as authoritarian as that of Austria, it did represent a certain vitality that was the antithesis of the decaying anachronism of Austria. Furthermore, Prussia could be said to be a truer representation of the German people as opposed to the polyglot Vienna. In addition to that, the agenda of nation attracted these intellectuals, particularly during and slightly after the 1848 Revolutions. Given earlier statements on the lack of support for Mazzini and Kossuth's platforms of nationalism, some comment on the difference between nation and nationalism ought to be made here. While the

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[119] At least until the Hungarian revolution had been safely suppressed. See Müller, 'Palmerston', p. 99.
[120] Taylor, *Decline of British Radicalism*, p. 191.

former could be said to be a natural extension of earlier atavistic agglomerations of people such as clan or tribe, the latter was much more tainted in English perceptions. Again, we see the spectre of Revolutionary France come to the fore, as the principles of nationalism often spoke to an abandonment of patriotic institutions such as civic and political liberties. Thus, nation was a useful way in which English thinkers explained why English constitutional liberalism had failed to take hold on the continent. Mandler contends that the revolutions of 1848 sparked a wide debate on concepts of nation, 'as great an effect, in many ways, in Britain as on the Continent.'[121] The general crux of Mandler's argument is that, upon viewing the carnage and bloodshed that swept across what had begun as a seemingly optimistic turn of events, English commenters began to doubt the universal applicability of their own brand of constitutional liberalism. Up to that point, they had entered with glee into

> that great epoch during which the British people cherished the splendid
> illusion that they had discovered in a moderate liberty, and not for themselves
> alone but for every nation that would have the wisdom to follow their
> example, the secret of moral and of political stability.[122]

Because their 'moderate liberty' had failed dramatically on the continent, those English commenters were forced to extend their vision beyond a limiting civilizational perspective in an attempt to understand this failure. The civilizational perspective did not account for the particularities associated with different peoples. Though 'the ladder of civilization, rather than the branching tree of peoples and nations, remained the dominant metaphor,'[123] one of the by-products was an increased amount of thinking on nations. The great benefit of doing so was that the concept of nation allowed humanity to come closer to

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[121] Mandler, *The English National Character*, p. 59.
[122] Elie Halevy, quoted in Georgios Varouxakis *Victorian Political Thought* p. 1.
[123] Mandler, ''Race' and 'Nation'', p. 233.

the universal of civilization, while still being particular enough to allow for differences between peoples and states, something which, theoretically, a universalist perspective could not. The idea of nation also made tangible the intangible abstract of civilization, making it easier to judge, and therefore explain, a nation's position on the 'ladder of civilization.' In so doing, the idea of nation added to, rather than detracted from an understanding of universal civilization. Some prose from the positivist philosopher Frederic Harrison encapsulates the perceived value of the national to humanity: 'how precious to the life of the world are these growing aggregates of people when the lofty conception of nation first comes to supersede the narrower idea of clan or tribe.'[124] Though Harrison wrote this during the *fin de siècle*, it was as apropos to the mid-nineteenth century as more thought was devoted to principles of nationhood. To Harrison, the 'conception of nation' added to the 'life of the world,' or universal civilization. Thus, we see how Prussia was understandably the main focus of attention in mid-nineteenth century English conceptions of Germany, and the German people. In the following section, we will examine how Prussia came to be viewed as being the German state which would lead the Germans from 'the narrower idea' of petty princedoms and duchies to a unified nation.

Prussia and a German nation

Support for Prussia was mostly founded on the concept of German unification, or, more particularly, the idea that Prussia was best suited to bring this about. So much so, in fact that from 1848 to 1871, Prussia gained an increasingly prominent position in thinking on Germany. Its dominance over the other German states meant that by 1870, Harrison deemed

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[124] Frederic Harrison, 'Empire and Humanity' in *National and Social Problems* (New York; 1908), p. 248.

it appropriate to write about 'Prussianised Germany.'[125] The tendency to refer to Prussia and Germany somewhat synonymously has two meanings which are rather distinct. The first is that Prussia, especially after 1866 when it defeated Austria in the Austro-Prussian War and formed the *Norddeutscher Bund* – the North German Confederation, had gained such prominence, that her role as the head of any form of German unity was unchallengeable. The second, drawing from Ledger-Lomas' thesis,[126] is that the term 'Prussia' had become associated with negative authoritarian aspects in Germany, but which need not necessarily have been applied solely to Prussia. Hence, for example, a 'Prussian' form of government meaning one of authoritarianism and, oftentimes, militarism. Often, however, these meanings were blurred. In referring to Prussianized Germany, Harrison was writing both of the deleterious effects of Prussian authoritarianism, and also referencing the fact that Germany, by 1870, was undeniably dominated by the Prussian will, manifested and personified in Bismarck.

In a collection of letters entitled *A Defence of the German Cause*, the German revolutionist and writer Karl Blind wrote of Germany, rather than locating any individual state, such as Prussia or Bavaria. This may seem insignificant but for the fact that he uses the term Germany not as a 'geographic expression,' but in recognition of the country as a united geopolitical entity, to wit 'As for us [the German people], we have, of course, to defend ourselves as a nation.'[127] In his article, Blind was replying to an increasing propensity in England to view Germany, particularly after 1864, as an aggressive and expansionist state. Further, Arnold Ruge, another German political philosopher delivering lectures in England, draped on Prussia the mantle of 'New Germany,' Protestant and progressive, as opposed to

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[125] Harrison, *Bismarckism*, pp. 8 – 9.
[126] Ledger-Lomas, *The idea of Germany*.
[127] Karl Blind, 'A Defence of the German Cause: containing letters addressed to Mr. M'Tear of Glasgow, and to the North British Daily Mail', *Cowen Tracts*, (1870) p. 3.

'old Germany, or Jesuitic Austria.'[128] By referring to Austria as 'Jesuitic,' Ruge hoped to evoke images of the pomp and pageantry associated with Roman Catholicism. Juxtaposing the popery of Austria with the Protestantism of Prussia indirectly evoked comparisons of Prussia with England, highlighting the ties between the two states.

He also went on to state that Prussia had ascended to such a degree of importance amongst the various German states that 'speaking of Prussia, we speak of Germany.'[129] Of some importance is the date of these lectures, published in 1854, and long before the Franco-Prussian War, and indeed, the Austro-Prussian War. Another, somewhat impassioned plea for German unity is found in *The Formation of a National Party in Germany*,[130] in which the German writer Gustav Diezel essentially made the case that German unity was necessary for the continued survival of the German states. Recalling the fate of Germany during the Napoleonic Wars, he wrote that

> During six years the whole German territory was conquered, and as good as directly ruled by a foreign power, […] This fact is the more remarkable, because constant endeavours were being made by England, and at times by Russia, those mighty enemies of France, to excite Germany against Napoleon, and because at one period one of the German powers even roused itself to a desperate effort.[131]

So here is some affirmation that there was a developed sense of German unity, and that Prussia was held to have some special place in that grand scheme. Diezel further explained that, despite being under the yoke of a foreign oppressor, the German governments were not

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[128] Arnold Ruge, 'New Germany, its modern history, literature, philosophy, religion and art.', *Cowen Tracts* (1854), p. 4
[129] Ibid, p. 10.
[130] Gustav Diezel, 'The Formation of a National Party in Germany: a Necessity of the Present Crisis in Europe', *Knowsley Pamphlet Collection* (1855), pp. 1 – 37.
[131] Ibid, p. 19.

particularly troubled by such a state of subjugation. 'It is a fact,' he continues, 'that the national German patriotism, evinced in the War of Liberation, bore an entirely idealistic character; that it originated with the enthusiastic, disinterested youth of the country, and not with the governing classes.'

> By far the greater number of the more powerful element in the nation were ranged unconditionally, and in some cases even enthusiastically, on the side of the oppressor, and this not only from low motives of self-interest, but from the conviction that the life infused by the conquest into petrified Germany was beneficial to the country. [132]

Essentially, Diezel's argument was that, because the individual states were petty and self-serving, they found the French implementation of the puppet Confederation of the Rhine a palatable solution. To Diezel, the lack of a unified German state rendered the German people vulnerable to the predations of greater powers. He had already explained how Germany fell prey to Napoleon, but went on to explain that it was from Russia that future threats to Germanic sovereignty were to be expected.[133] Delivering their lectures to an English audience, Blind, Diezel, and Ruge were making the case for the necessity of a unified Germany, capable of defending its sovereignty, for the continued survival of the Germanic people.

Blind, Diezel, and Ruge were, of course, Germans, and not the English political thinkers whose opinions form the core of this work, but the point in highlighting their arguments is to show the similarity they had with many English thinkers. The manner in which they framed their arguments is also telling, in that they were constructed to elicit the

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[132] Ibid, p. 20.
[133] Ibid, pp. 55 – 8, 63 – 4.

sympathy and support of their audience, particularly when it came to issues of national

sovereignty, and the patriotic foundations for German unification.

In her explanation of why Prussia made such an attractive proposition to lead the

German states to unification, Dora Neill Raymond shows the similarities between English

arguments and those cited above by Blind, Diezel, and Ruge. From her book *British Policy*

and Opinion during the Franco-Prussian War, we find the following passage:

> The beginning of the decade found her [Prussia] with a well-filled exchequer,
>
> a military system of great potentiality and a government possessed, seemingly,
>
> of liberal tendencies. Baden, like Austria, had sacrificed the love of her people
>
> for the protection of the Ultramontane. Prussia had not made such a mistake
>
> and she had matched her tolerance in religious matters with a regard for
>
> constitutional forms well pleasing to the English.[134]

We can see the similar features, particularly in the highlighting of the Catholicism of Austria,

and in the perception that Austria had placed Popery over the needs of its citizenry.

Conversely, Protestant Prussia was believed to be on the verge of adopting constitutional,

liberal government.

In *A Glance over Europe*,[135] an address delivered late in 1867, Mountstuart Grant

Duff, the liberal politician and essayist, asserted that Germany was 'now no longer part of a

loose and singularly clumsy federation of States, but a federative State,'[136] with a constitution

and well on its way to becoming a liberal and progressive nation. In the midst of all this

progress, Duff continued, Prussia was at the forefront with 'the reputation of the Crown

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[134] Dora Neill Raymond, *British Policy and Opinions during the Franco-Prussian War* (New York: Columbia University, 1921), p. 28.
[135] Duff, 'A Glance over Europe', pp. 26 – 31.
[136] Ibid, p. 26.

Prince […] growing steadily.'[137] His insistence that 'Prussia owes the position which she gained last year much more to the cultivation of the arts of peace than to mere military drill,' and 'the liberal influences which pervade society there (Northern Germany, with special reference to Prussia) have become far too strong to be much longer held in check,' is somewhat suspect[138] for, though there were indeed concessions made to Prussian liberals, Bismarck retained a large degree of control over the government and, despite their various victories, they were somewhat weaker than they appeared.[139] The accuracy of Duff's statements is not the issue here, however. Instead his review of Germany made clear that unification was seen as the result of Prussian impetus, and, in this respect, he had high praise for that state and the liberal elements he perceived to be gaining momentum there.

Samuel Smith, politician and social reformer, likewise made a similar argument that Prussia was largely responsible for safeguarding and unifying the German nation in his pamphlet *The Franco-German War*. Beginning by noting that 'the star of Hohenzollern was eclipsing the waning glory of Hapsburg […] Prussia was acknowledged to be the most rising power on the Continent,'[140] Smith detailed the travails faced by Germany from the French 'meretricious and Pagan appetite for military glory.'[141] We see again, further reference made to the decline of Austria contrasted with Prussia's rise to prominence. The success of Germany, he noted, was due to the fact that Germany had been united by Prussia. The act of engaging in war with Austria, he claimed, was perhaps of doubtful legitimacy, but in doing so, Prussia had acted out of patriotism: under the sovereignty of the heterogeneous Austrian Empire, Germany could never have been possessed of freedom and true nationality.[142] This

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[137] Ibid, pp. 27 – 8.
[138] The illiberalism of Bismarck and Prussia in Duff's work will be explored later in this chapter.
[139] Mommsen, 'German Liberalism', pp. 421 – 5.
[140] Smith, 'The Franco-German War', p. 6.
[141] Ibid, p. 10.
[142] Ibid, pp. 10 – 13.

last point is built upon Mill's work, chapter 16 in *On Representative Government*, entitled

'Of Nationality, as Connected with Representative Government.'[143] If Prussia had not struck

Germany free from the multi-national Austrian yoke, a true German nationality would have

been an impossibility; an admixture of differing nationalities, the people of whom had no

'common sympathy' with each other would have nulled any hope of free institutions and

representative government, which Mill held to be the best method of governance.

Exploring further the implications this utilitarian school of thought had on Prussia,

Mill discussed the various ways in which nationalities could be brought together under a

single government and welded, essentially into one nation. These scenarios are laid out in a

sort of arithmetical fashion, noting the variables, and outcomes possible. Hence, when a

larger, but 'civilisationally' inferior nation dominates a smaller, but more superior one, the

result is 'a sheer mischief to the human race, and one which civilised humanity with one

accord should rise in arms to prevent.'[144] Conversely, a smaller, but more advanced, nation

able to subjugate a larger but more backward one results in 'a gain to civilization; but the

conquerors and the conquered cannot in this case live together under the same free

institutions.'[145] It goes, of course, without saying, that to determine any nation's civilizational

superiority to another is a somewhat difficult task, predicated upon the reviewer's own

preconceptions. One would be hard pressed to find a nation admitting to the superiority of

another nation's civilization over its own.

The criteria for these divisions were based, not on any racially determined

preconceptions, but rather upon states of progress, in a civilizational scheme, and the

resultant effects they would have. Should Prussia, therefore, not have taken up the cause of

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[143] Mill, 'Considerations', pp. 427 – 34.
[144] Ibid, p. 432.
[145] The examples Mill uses are, in the first equation, Macedonia (inferior but larger) and the Greek states (superior but smaller); in the second, India (inferior but larger) and England (superior but smaller).

unification, Austria would have done so, leading to the loss of free institutions and the chance at a true German nation. The Austrian Empire, and later the Dual Monarchy, comprised as it was of Balkans, Germans, and Slavs, could not, by Mill's argument, engender a true German nationality, nor afford to its subjects free institutions, and representative government. This resultant 'mischief to the human race' was avoided by Prussian initiative; North Germany (under the leadership of Prussia), Smith maintained, 'had become the most highly educated and probably the most temperate and orderly country in Europe.'[146] One can imagine that the idea of an educated German people would have been attractive to Smith, given his works to increase accessibility to schools for children in England. Prussia's ascendancy allowed not just for an increase in Hohenzollern influence, but for a strengthening of the character of the German and of German nationality, given the increase in education, and order, and that Prussia was, ethnically, mostly German. The value placed on temperance and order was great, but has often been understated. In the third chapter on the German Revolution of 1848, we will examine this in greater detail. For now, however, it suffices to say that under Prussian leadership, Smith felt that the German people were greatly benefitted. Rising literacy, and a stable and moderate society were, to Smith, beneficial to the German state, and consequently, to the German people.

'Great' and 'Small' nations

The creation of a German nation under the auspices and guidance of the Prussian state raises the issue of 'Great' and 'Small' nations as studied by Varouxakis. He proposes that, beyond thought on civilized, Christian nations and uncivilized, usually Oriental ones, there

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[146] Smith 'The Franco-German War', pp. 11 – 12.

existed a further distinction. That is, between 'Great' and 'Small' nations within Europe, seen as either more, or less, advanced.[147]

Though the terms 'Great' and 'Small' carry spatial connotations, size was not always the determinant in evaluating a nation's 'greatness.' As we see from Mill above, there were additional criteria for passing judgement on a nation's worth, namely, culture, history, and civilizational advancement. His example was that the conquering Macedonia under Philip II was greater from a geographic point of view than any of the Hellenic *poleis*, but that these city-states were advanced in terms of cultural contributions and historical worth. Nonetheless, size was regarded, by men like Walter Bagehot, the political economist and commentator, and the historian John Seeley as,[148] more often than not, a necessity to national greatness which they had observed. Essentially, Bagehot argued, geographical size would stimulate a nation's ability to develop its greatness by allowing it 'diffused participation in elevating excitement.' Here Bagehot was writing in reference to the turmoil that had dogged Europe throughout the mid-nineteenth century; Germany had itself been through several of these conflicts which we may call the Wars of German Unification. To Bagehot, the fusing of various petty nations into a large, singular state renders it 'indestructible,' wherein, though it may engage in wars and hostilities with other such nations, it will never be annihilated.[149] This train of thought ought to be considered in concordance with Diezel's arguments for a unified German state discussed above. By binding the petty states into a singular whole, it not only excised the self-interestedness of the individual German rulers, but also created an entity

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[147] Varouxakis ''Great' versus 'small' nations', pp. 136 – 58.

[148] I choose not to explore J.R. Seeley's *Expansion of England* here as it was published somewhat after our timeframe, in 1883. However, briefly, it argues for the colonial empire, peopled by those of British descent, to be incorporated into a federal state. If it was not, Seeley maintained, the colonies would eventually form into independent states and Great Britain would be eclipsed by Russia and the Unites States.

[149] Walter Bagehot, 'The Meaning and the Value of the Limits of the Principle of Nationalities' (1864) in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, Volume VIII*, ed. by Norman St. John-Stevas (London, 1974), pp. 149 – 53; more specifically on issues of the size of nations, 'The Gains of the World by the Two Last Wars in Europe' (1866) in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, Volume VIII*, ed. by Norman St. John-Stevas (London, 1974), pp. 154 – 63.

that was immune to the predations of Russia and France. In addition, Bagehot contended, the removal of many small states dispensed with 'a needless mass of considerable minds, and their [the small states] concentration into one sets at liberty a large number of them [the considerable minds].' One can not help but imagine that Bagehot wrote this with the chaos that was a defining trait of the 1848 revolutions in mind. The Frankfurt Assembly, and later Parliament, for example, was seen in England to have ultimately achieved nothing, largely because it was comprised of representatives from the collection of petty states. We will examine these opinions in greater detail in the third chapter. Following Bagehot's reasoning, if these 'small' nations had been united under the 'greater' one of Prussia, these many inquisitive minds would have been 'set at liberty' and able to contribute more effectively to society. More politically, Bagehot assumed that the fusion of petty states into single large masses would create a more balanced Europe preventing dominance by any one state, returning to the old idea of the Concert of Europe.[150] Particular to England's concerns, this would have created a great bulwark between France and Russia.

The points Varouxakis makes in his observations on mid-Victorian thought on nations are a shift of emphasis on the role of small nations to large ones from the early- to mid-nineteenth century and that many 'saw nationalism as positive only when it led to larger units.'[151] As noted earlier though, this was not in itself enough to sway the support of England, which preferred to watch the attempts of Italy for unification, and Hungary for independence, from afar. These larger units had the opportunity, means, and responsibility to spread civilisation.[152] Common themes, then, in support of nation, rest around ideas of civilization and advancement. We will notice how Mill's equations on the absorptions of nations lead to the conclusion that they are of a public good when the result is the spread of

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[150] Ibid, p. 159.
[151] Varouxakis ''Great' versus 'small' nations', p. 154.
[152] Parry, P*olitics of Patriotism*, p. 21.

civilization. Likewise, to Bagehot, civilization was the determining factor of a nation's worth, a factor to which size was not a part of, but instrumental in attaining. This observation further validates Mandler's civilizational perspective, in that, the goal of absorption and annexation of the small, and petty nations, was ultimately to contribute to the progress of the human species as a whole.

Hobsbawm wrote on some of these nuances, of a 'threshold principle,' a determinant of whether the principle of nationality could be applied to a nation or not.[153] Nationalities which sought to be regarded as separate entities had to be of a certain size. Hence, the claims to nationality of, say, the English and French were valid ones, whereas those of, for example, the Welsh or Bretons were not. Thus, in nineteenth century Germany, the validity of claims to nationhood on the part of states such as Bremen or Thuringia would have been seen as less valid than that of Prussia or Bavaria. More importantly, Hobsbawm points out that 'Nations were therefore, as it were, in tune with historical evolution only insofar as they extended the scale of human society, other things being equal.'[154]

Nation, then, was the manner by which progress towards universal civilization was measured. Bagehot wrote,

> Politics, as centuries roll on, will probably fill less and less the energies of
>
> mankind, and so the size of your nation will come to matter less and less; but
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> in the present, and all the near future […] a great career will ennoble powerful
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> nations […] a petty life will render small nations more and more ignoble.[155]

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[153] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, 2ⁿᵈ edition*, (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 30 – 3.
[154] Ibid, pp. 32 – 3.
[155] Bagehot 'The Gains of the World', p. 156.

There is more to be read from this than commentary on the relation between the greatness and size of nations. Nation occupied the period and position in which universal civilisation had yet to be attained. Nation further served as a method to quantify the incalculable abstract of civilization; one may define what civilization is, albeit with some difficulty and never definitively, but there existed no real means with which to measure it. England, further along the path to civilization, was seen as having less of a need for a conceptualized understanding of the English nation, hence the prevalence of 'patriotic' rather than 'nationalistic,' during the mid-nineteenth century, as a much more suitable description of English character. Conversely, nations less mature had more reason to invoke imagery of nationalism, such as those sentimental favourites, the Hungarians and Poles. Germany to many English commentators were, as we have seen, making strides in the direction of nationhood. The will was already present in the German people, as described by Diezel, and Prussia seemed well on its way to achieving Unification by the 1860s.

And yet, as Mandler notes, continental nationalist uprisings were sometimes viewed romantically, not as attempts at advancing nationalism, but as movements for liberty, citing the *Daily News*,

> It speaks ill for the principle of 'nationality' that all the revolutions, or attempts at insurrection made in its name, have lamentably and ludicrously failed, whilst those on behalf of liberty, unblended with nationality, have succeeded, have imposed upon the strongest governments.[156]

Richard Smittenaar contends that this opposition to the principle of nationality was mainly a conservative agenda. According to Smittenaar, mid-nineteenth century conservatives 'spoke of the sentiment rather than the principle of nationality […] as not a trait of populations, but

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[156] Mandler, *Decline of British Radicalism*, p. 61.

as a flight of fancy of the masses and of particular classes of persons.' It is easy to see how this might have been seen to be the case in instances such as the German Revolution of 1848. As the revolution became steadily more chaotic, and republican in nature, observers cast about for reasons why the struggle, which had begun so promisingly with a liberal-tinge, devolved into such an anarchic affair. This shall be explore in greater detail in the third chapter, but here, it will suffice to say that one of the reasons that English critics of the revolution devised was that the German revolutionary was more concerned about the principle of nationality, rather than the principle of liberalism.[157]Parry provides further elucidation on the general disapproval of revolution founded purely on nationalist platforms: 'It was not the notion of ethnic nationalism but constitutional liberty […] that powered Liberal commitment to the struggles for Greek or Italian independence.'[158] Nonetheless, there was much more disapprobation for the distinctly nationalist cast to many of these revolutions and, as many of these revolutions ground on, it became harder to deny that they were mainly nationalist in type.

To qualify Parry's views, however, it must be understood that *Politics of Patriotism* deals rather more with parliamentary politics than with political thought. Parry further argues that hostility towards the Continent was directed not at a particular nation or race, but rather what was represented; an opposition to France or Russia would have been more the result of a general dislike of 'bureau and barrack,' that is centralisation and militarisation, than of Franco- or Russophobia. This was the reason why 'public opinion switched so rapidly from a neurotic obsession with the threat from Napoleonic France in 1852 to a virulent campaign against Russia in 1853 – 4.'[159]

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[157] Richard Smittenaar, '"Feelings of Alarm": Conservative Criticism of the Principle of Nationality in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Modern Intellectual History*, Volume 14 (August 2017) pp. 365 – 91.
[158] Parry *Politics of Patriotism*, pp. 14 – 15.
[159] Ibid, p. 14.

So what role did 'nation' play in the desire to spread liberalism to the Continent? As we saw above, nation could serve as a transition towards civilization; in the work of Mill, nation could be used to transmit civilizational benefits.[160] In much the same way, nationhood could serve to transmit liberalism. Mandler writes that, 'it was still possible to see their [Germany and Italy in 1848] nationalism (in the context of those revolutions) as the natural vehicle for liberalism.' He then goes on to state that the counter-revolutionary suppression that followed 'put a blight on the image of nationality as a transitional phase diffusing liberty and sociability among peoples advancing toward the civilized state.'[161] As we shall explore in the third chapter, it became increasingly difficult to deny the inherent nationalism of these revolutions, and, in reporting on Germany in particular, the English press often condemned the German revolutionaries for being so preoccupied with dreams of unification that they ignored the maintenance and development of liberalism.

There are some relevancies between the idea of 'Greatness' and Prussia which bear exploring. As we have seen, men such as Bagehot and Mill did not envisage the final medium of society as the nation. Nation, relative to a universal civilization, was too particularist and too narrow. However, until the bulk of humanity was sufficiently advanced, nation proved an effective vehicle of civilization. In order for a nation to do so, it had to be 'Great.' In the instance of Germany, prior to 1866, this had not been fulfilled. The glut of petty German states, if merged into a single, considerable nation, would 'set at liberty a large number' of 'considerable minds,' allowing for the advancement of humanity, as a whole. The Prussian hegemony was therefore made palatable in that it was the only German state with the will and

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[160] When he wrote, for example, on the 'gain to civilization' that comes from an advanced nation dominating a backward one.
[161] Mandler *English National Character*, p. 61.

the means to attain unification, though distaste for its form of authoritarian government remained a constant feature throughout the nineteenth century.

Having been rendered 'indestructible,' Germany would be able to resist what *The Times* termed France's 'power of assimilation.'[162] Though this was written in 1870, it was a real fear earlier in the century, particularly when the German revolution in 1848 came to be seen as coloured with the *tripartite*. Had Germany remained divided, its constituent states would have fallen easy prey to France's 'lust for military glory,' what was termed *la gloire*, and 'assimilationist' tendencies. The result? From a Mill-ish point of view, a 'mischief to the human race,' and, given the violation of his principle of nationalities, an inability to maintain free institutions in German. Parry writes that support for German nationalism came from the view that, 'Perhaps Germany was ripe for the triumph of Liberal values.'[163] This would have been impossible without Mill's free institutions. Again, we note that nationalism was only palatable to English commentators when it was seen to have been a facilitator for Liberalism. We see, therefore, that the idea of German unification in England was tied closely to aspects of the ideas of nation and civilizational advancement. Understanding the attention paid, not just to the idea of nation, but also on the quantifiable aspect, that is, the 'Great' and 'Small' differentiation, forms part of the reason why Prussia was featured so prominently in discussions on the 'German Question.' However, the liberal stance favoured by many of our English commenters would have been offended by the authoritarian nature of the Prussian government, and the deleterious effects this sort of governance was perceived to have upon the subjects, thus forming the basis of the next section.

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[162] *The Times*, 21 July 1870, p. 8.
[163] Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 286.

The Limitation of Statism

'Why, it is all Bureau and Barrack!' wrote the novelist Charles Lever on the state of continental Europe; Bureau referred to over-centralization, particularly in France, and Barrack to militarization, particularly in Germany.[164] While Lever was making note of English travellers' experiences on the continent, 'Bureau and Barrack' is an apt way to describe the means with which English thinkers tended to view other nations, that is, to see the effects brought about by bad government and institutions – a not unreasonable conclusion given the English propensity to praise their own institutions. Regardless, dwelling on the issues of bad government is what forms the second half of the discussion on the Prussian Preoccupation.

Though the issue of bad government could be applied to a fair few of the German states before Unification, it was the Prussian one which seemed the biggest culprit, being the most authoritarian, the most belligerent, the most illiberal, and possessing the most control over its population, and indeed being the most powerful of the various states. Things became even worse with the ascendancy of the menace Bismarck. In 1867, after both the Second Schleswig War, and the Austro-Prussian War, Duff, in *A Glance over Europe*, praised the *Norddeustcher Bund*, that is, the federated state of the North German Confederation, but made a point of referring to Bismarck as the man compared to 'whom no [other] living politician of any importance has so blasphemed and outraged the name of liberty.'[165] By the time of Duff's article, it was becoming increasingly difficult for English defenders of the Prussian cause to counter accusations of Prussia as being self-aggrandising and expansionist, instead of merely attempting to consolidate the German states into a single, indivisible whole. The focus on Prussia was further deepened when Wilhelm was named Emperor of Germany,

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[164] Charles Lever, *A Day's Ride* (1863), quoted in Mandler *Decline of British Radicalism*, p. 64
[165] Duff 'A Glance over Europe', p. 27.

and blasphemous Bismarck the Chancellor. This Bismarckian element was highlighted in the pamphlet *Teuton versus Gaul*, wherein the poorly disguised equivalent of Bismarck was responsible for instigating war between the two neighbours, Gaul and Teuton, which, to be fair, was not wholly inaccurate.[166] Harrison, in *Bismarckism*, makes a special point of iterating that he spoke 'of Prussia, and not of Germany; for it is Prussia alone which is regularly organized on a military basis.'[167] He was therefore making the distinction between Prussia as a militaristic, expansionist force, and Germany, as a cultural expression. Though, by 1870, and particularly after the Battle of Sedan, there was an increasing propensity to refer to Prussia and Germany synonymously, there was at times a further meaning in that, to refer to Prussia was to often state the increasing militarism of Germany, whilst to write of Germany was to describe the cultural, industrial, and scholastic progress of the nation as a whole, as evinced by Harrison.

A piece appearing in *The Manchester Guardian* entitled 'The State of Prussia'[168] details to some extent how various representative assemblies throughout Germany, not limited merely to Prussia, did not have 'any accurate perception of their own functions and powers or of the real nature of constitutional monarchy.' In the instance of Prussia, *The Manchester Guardian* reported, the assembly was merely prorogued and the deputies expelled from the hall in which they had assembled when it was felt that the assembly was 'gradually usurping the functions of the executive.' This article in itself did not necessarily accuse the Prussian sovereign of having violated any sort of constitutional right.

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[166] N.a., 'Teuton versus Gaul: impending action for assault and battery: Rumoured damages £400,000,000 sterling, two provinces, one colony, & 20 ships of war: Case to be tried in the high court of public opinion, unless the parties are able to come to terms ….', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1871)
[167] Harrison *Bismarckism.* p. 9.
[168] 'The State of Prussia', *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1848, p. 4.

However, the point behind the article seems to have been to indicate the large degree of political control possessed by the Prussian executive, an argument that may be found in a pamphlet written at a later date entitled *Who is the Real Enemy of Germany?*[169] Here, the criticism of Prussia with regard to her relations with the rest of Germany is much stronger. On the first few pages already, the author mentioned the 'spoliation committed, by the Chief of the House of Hohenzollern, upon sovereign German Princes.' Immediately after that, how the cry of German Unity had been used by the 'wily Minister,' Bismarck, to dupe the German people into subservience; essentially, according to the author, German Unity was a sham. The purpose of unification was identified to have been solely for the aggrandizement of Prussia, by which the author meant 'not the Prussian people who have only gained an augmentation of taxes, a deficit in the budget, a further restriction of the freedom of the press, and of personal liberties.' It is of some use to bear in mind that these were infringements upon what may justifiably be called aspects of Liberalism – that is a freedom from an overburdensome taxation, a freedom of the press, and civil, and political, liberty.

Rather, by Prussia, what was meant was the House of Hohenzollern just as, 'Count Bismarck means by German Unity, the subjugation of the best part of Germany by Prussia.'[170] The pamphlet *Prussian Wickedness and Austrian Weakness*[171] further detailed the hegemony Prussia had managed to attain over the rest of Germany, beginning with a short tale about the expulsion of the King and Queen of Hanover, identified as a result of Prussian machinations. In much the same vein as *Who is the Real Enemy of Germany?*, it went on to outline the suppression of the rest of the German states by Prussia under the guise of unification. As we shall see in chapter three, it was felt amongst sections of the English press, that the German obsession with unification often led the Germans to be willing to sacrifice

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[169] Otto Klop, 'Who is the Real Enemy of Germany?', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, (1868)
[170] Ibid, p. 1-5
[171] 'Prussian Wickedness and Austrian Weakness', *Foreign and Commonwealth Collection*, (1867), pp. 2-41.

their own liberties in advancement of the nationalist cause. Of importance in these articles is the point that there really was very little denunciation of the Prussian people, the *volk*, so to speak. Rather, it was the authoritarian government which came most under fire. Being in such a position of prominence and power, Bismarck came to represent these darker qualities. In the following pages, we will see how the corrupting element of such governance spread down the rungs of Prussian society, affecting the populace as a whole.

Such articles were not necessarily the most well-informed, or particularly objective. To accuse Bismarck and the Prussian executive of engaging in a conspiracy to subjugate the rest of the German states seems to be taking the Prussian role in unification down a more sinister path. However, they do reveal to us that there was a certain degree of apprehension regarding what shape the burgeoning nation would take once Prussia came to the helm. They also bring forth the point that Prussian despotism was the aspect of Germany viewed with the most critical of eyes in England; it is with this that we are most concerned.

Government and the national character

One of the dangers of 'bad' governments was that their deficiencies and flaws were impacted upon the population. As mentioned earlier, one of the results of the 1848 Revolutions was an increased degree of attention paid to the character of a nation's population. One of the tenets of liberalism in England was that of 'self-help and -determination', that is, for the individual to attain mastery over their own lives. This was, in many ways the rationale against having an overly strong, centralized government in England. Were an individual to be too greatly controlled by a central executive, regardless of that agency's benevolence (or otherwise), their ability to develop would be stymied; as Mill wrote, 'the mental and the moral, like the muscular, powers are improved only by being

used.'[172] However, though the individual had to master the circumstances of their environment, it was also recognised that the character of the individual could be determined by the atmosphere in which it was developed. Hence, if they were given ample room to learn self-reliance, then they would mature into ideal members of a nation.[173]

This attitude towards the autonomy of the individual played a large role in informing opinion on Prussian institutions. Unlike English institutions, Prussian ones were detrimental to the individual Prussian. By quelling the individualism and growth of the Prussian population, the government was held to have been culpable for the degradation of the national character.

Prussian over-centralization and militarism, it was felt, was enough to retard the growth of the Prussian subject. Samuel Laing, a travel writer who, as Peter Mandler notes, 'was one of several radical commentators on the English national character in this period to distance themselves from the Germans essentially on political ground,'[174] wrote extensively on his opinions on the effect of government upon the individual: *Notes of a Traveller, on the Social and Political State of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy, and other parts of Europe during the Present Century*,[175] and *Observations on the Social and Political State of the European People in 1848 and 1849*.[176] In both of these works, Laing was critical of Prussia and the Prussians. *Notes of a Traveller* details the necessity of the development of a science of 'social economy,' as he explained it, 'all that affects social prosperity, and the wellbeing, moral and physical of the individuals composing the social body of that country.'[177]

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[172] Mill 'Considerations', p. 65.
[173] Jones explores the relationship between the individual and the state in more detail in H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (Bassingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 30 – 40.
[174] Mandler*, The English National Character*, pp. 29 – 31.
[175] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller,*.
[176] Samuel Laing, *Observations on the Social and Political State of the European People in 1848 and 1849* (London, 1850).
[177] Laing *Notes of a Traveller*, pp. 44 – 5.

To Laing, Prussia was woefully bereft of both the study of, and, social economy itself. This, he attributed to a certain lack of liberalism within the country, as well as an over centralization of the state and its functions, leading to 'political power of the state over private free agency.' The consequence of this was that, though he praised Germany as the 'prolific mother of theory and speculation,' the people themselves had had their independence of mind and thought crushed, looking to the government for 'bread and further advancement.' This, in turn, retarded the growth of moral judgement amongst the people.[178]

The German people were essentially viewed as being speculative, and more apt to engage in pointless debate, than to apply themselves to practicalities. As noted earlier, this was one of the fatal flaws perceived in the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848. They were, furthermore, seemingly ignorant of the necessity of political and civil liberty. A good example of this perception of the German character may be found Rüger's *Heligoland* where he described the challenges met by Henry Berkeley Maxse, governor of the small English colony from 1863 to 1881. Rüger details how Maxse determined to provide a constitution to the Heligolander; 'introducing a modern, London-crafted constitution would assert British rule t the edge of the Continent at a time when the map of Europe was being rapidly redrawn.'[179] With the introduction of a constitution, came taxation, however, and the latter was a feature the locals could not abide. According to Rüger, the Heligolanders were 'less interested in political freedom than in avoiding taxation.'[180] This episode on Heligoland showed that the natives (of German stock) did not have the burning zeal for constitutional liberalism that Maxse envisioned they would. It also speaks to a misunderstanding of the 'German character' on the part of Maxse, and London.

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[178] Ibid, pp. 55 – 7.
[179] Rüger, *Heligoland*, p. 59 – 61.
[180] Ibid, p. 61.

Additionally, criticism levelled at German writers and poets by their English counterparts tended to centre around the aforementioned idea of the former as being a people unable to apply themselves to the practical. A deeper examination of this concept will be explored in greater detail in the second and third chapters. Here, it will suffice to note that the national character, the character of the German people, was seen as being unfavourably shaped by the effects of an authoritarian government which deprived them of civil liberties. Contrast this with Laing's depiction of the state of England where people strove for success independently from the government, a trait which was the 'great moral basis on which the national wealth, industry and the character of the English people rest,' and the 'only basis which can uphold real liberty in a country.'[181] To Laing 'national character' was therefore not a term to be loosely bandied about in theoretical debate. It was a force which could shape the progress of the nation. It was of such importance to him that he held it responsible for 'real liberty' in England. Conversely, it must have seemed to him that 'real liberty' in Prussia was a dimming dream, given that he saw the people to have been subservient and totally reliant upon the government.

In *Observations*, Laing elaborated further on the lack of civil liberty amongst the Continental people in general, and the Germans in particular.[182] Those Germans, he noted, who lived in the constitutional states of Germany (as opposed to a blatantly authoritarian one such as Prussia), were in reality little better off than if they had existed under an authoritarian regime. True, they had a legislative assembly, and were free to discuss matters political, but according to Laing, their freedom was belied by the fact that they were not completely free to act as they wished.[183] They needed, for example, passports to travel, and were not allowed to apply their labour or skills without some form of permission. The publisher, John Murray III,

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[181] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, p. 56.
[182] Laing, *Observations*, pp. 268 – 72.
[183] Ibid, pp. 270 – 71.

wrote also on the necessity of passports in Germany, and how this was a foreign concept to the English traveller, used to unrestricted travel, in his *Handbook for Travellers*

> On entering a frontier town of Prussia, or any other part of Germany […] the traveller is requested at the gate to produce his passport. […] in all probability the passport must be forwarded to the Police-bureau to be examined and counter-signed (visé). In which case he will receive in exchange a ticket or receipt (schein), enabling him to get his passport back. […] It generally happens, however, that the traveller is requested to name the inn at which e proposes to take up his residence […] he is glad to avoid unnecessary delay, and the gate-keeper to have an opportunity of receiving a gratuity for his trouble, in taking the passport to the inn. […] matters of this sort are totally foreign to English habits.[184]

In his writing, Murray gives us the impression that he believed the necessity of checking and counter-signing passports to be an unnecessary impediment, and a restriction on one's freedom; it benefitted none save the official at the Police-bureau to receive a 'gratuity.' While the series of *Handbook for Travellers* was intended by Murray to capitalize on the increasingly large number of English tourists taking advantage of steam development to visit the continent, the passage on passports highlights the contrast between the personal liberties between the Englishman, and the German.

On the issue of the lack of personal and civil liberties, Laing and Murray were not alone, and in the third chapter, we will see explore how censorship of the German press was decried in England as an infringement upon said liberties. Laing then went on to write, in a

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[184] John Murray, *a Handbook for Travellers on the Continent: Being a Guide through Holland, Beligum, Prussia, and Northern Germany* (London: John Murray and Son, 1836), p. 183.

somewhat patronising fashion, that it was 'amusing' that the German would discuss how free he was, in a constitutional sense, but then remain unable to travel without having worked himself into a frenzy over the rules and regulations he would have had to abide by during his sojourn. This lack of self-awareness that he identified in the German was a product of the government's oppression, and the people's character of 'theory and speculation,' with little devoted to practicalities and action. Laing ended his piece on political and civil liberty by writing 'the forms of a free constitution are attained for a short time; but the servile nature remains […] Such a people cannot be free, even with freedom pressed upon them.'[185]

There is a tragic tone to these words, that, Laing believes, the German people were so stunted in their development that the ignorance and servility stamped upon them by their deleterious government would continue to exist even beyond the limits of that same government. This was in reference to the 1848 revolution wherein, after having attained a degree of political freedom via revolution, the Germans were, by dint of their character, unable to enforce appropriate constitutional measures which would have safeguarded those freedoms. The result of this was that they fell easily again to the counter-revolutionary forces of the authoritarian governments.

In reflecting on Laing's *Observations*, it seems that his point was more than merely describing Prussian authoritarianism, but also to highlight the negative effects that that authoritarianism would have on the populace, that is to say, he wrote at some length on how the population could not truly comprehend liberty because they had been oppressed. This is further propounded by looking at another piece, this one from *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*.[186] In this article, it was observed that the authority of the Prussian king was inadvertently enforced by the actions of the Prussian Liberals. In particular, 'politically

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[185] Laing *Observations*, p. 272.
[186] 'Prussia and Germany', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 21 January 1865, p. 3.

they [the Liberals] cut their own throat and he [the Prussian King] now has the power to say [...] 'you agreed to the object, I insisted on the means; [...] but my means have proved successful [...] therefore what I proposed was right, and you are now bound to agree to it.'' Further down the article, 'the Prussian liberals were not heartily sincere. They weakly, if not corruptly, took up what was fraudulently uttered as a public cry.'[187]

Regardless of the actual machinations which ended with the Prussian Liberals unintentionally granting some moral ground to the Prussian king, we see here that there was some general feeling, at least on the part of the editors, that Liberalism was weak in Prussia because it was not a genuine form of liberty, which was what Laing meant when he wrote of the Prussians not understanding that they were not truly a free people. Rather than take this as a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of German Liberalism, here, it is more indicative of the ill effects of a heavy-handed government having quashed the independent-mindedness of its subjects. English Liberalism worked so efficiently because English institutions gave the citizenry the right to exercise that liberty. Furthermore, English liberalism worked because the population was *able* to take advantage of it, having developed a character of self-reliance. Conversely, Prussian liberals failed not only because the Prussian government had failed to allow them to employ their capacity for liberty, but also because the character of the Prussian was one of servility and subservience to the government. Indeed, as we shall see in the third chapter, what was seen in England to be a major failing of German liberals was that they tended to be so enamoured with notions of unification, that they were willing to sacrifice the tenets of liberalism upon the altar of nationalism. We have already seen how nationalism could elicit sympathy, but untampered and unmingled with liberal precepts, it became merely distasteful to the English public.

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[187] Ibid, p. 3.

The role of institutions, therefore, was an important one when considering what made a nation. We saw above that Laing felt Germans were incapable of comprehending true liberty. This deficiency was attributed, in large part, to the Prussian system of primary education. Whereas state mandated, compulsory education was in nineteenth century England still somewhat of a contentious issue, in Germany, with especial reference in our context to Prussia, was not, and had been fully implemented. However, this educational system was seen to have had a severely detrimental effect on the growth of the Prussian citizen. *Prussian Wickedness and Austrian Weakness* noted that 'The boasted universality of education […] has rather fostered than prevented […] that selfish, sordid and demoralizing principle […] which causes them to overlook […] the violation, for Prussian purposes, of the rights of the weak.'[188] Similarly, Harrison wrote that state education had aided in the suppression of the individual liberty of the Prussian and that, as such, there was 'more true public life in Russia itself.'[189] Laing argued, in *Notes of a Traveller*, that the Prussian system of education was but despotism under another name:

> Much humbug has been played off by literary men – unwittingly, no doubt, for
> they themselves were sincere dupes – upon the pious and benevolent feelings
> of the European public, with regard to the excellence of the Prussian
> educational system. They have only looked at the obvious, almost mechanical
> means of diffusing instruction. In their admiration of the wheels and
> machinery, these literary men have forgotten *to look under the table, and see
> what kind of web all this was producing.*[190]

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[188] 'Prussian Wickedness', pp. 4 – 8.
[189] Harrison *Bismarckism*, p. 13.
[190] Quoted in Davis, *Victorians and Germany*, p. 282.

Here, Prussian education takes on a much more sinister cast, as a disguised tool of authoritarian rulers to keep the populace docile and in check. Furthering his argument, he continued that

> If the ultimate object of all education and knowledge be to raise man to the feeling of his own moral worth, to a sense of his responsibility to his Creator and to his conscience for every act, to the dignity of a reflecting, self-guiding, virtuous, religious member of society, then the Prussian educational system is a failure. It is only a training from childhood in the conventional discipline and submission of mind, which the state exacts from its subjects. It is not a training or education which has raised, but which has lowered, the human character.[191]

To Laing, the goal of education was therefore, to raise the individual in such a way that they may become a useful, contributing member of society. The Prussian model, in his view, was a horrible facsimile of true education, in that he held it to be a means by which the Prussian government could turn its subjects into unthinking cogs in its machinery.

The pamphlet *Prussian primary education, its organization and results* provided some insight into the offense rendered by the Prussian system of primary education upon English Liberal values. [192] First, that system suppressed the individuality of the population, rendering them incapable of developing their own independence. Second, and consequent upon the first, it placed too much power in the hands of a central executive. Furthermore, the method of education provided nothing in the way of moral development. It was noted, on the inapplicability of adopting the Prussian system of education in England that

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[191] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, p. 92.
[192] n.a., 'Prussian primary education, its organization and results', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1857), pp. 15 – 21

Its leading feature is the direct contradictory of the fundamental *political*

feature of our English national life. It is an organization for enabling a

Government to mould at pleasure the thought and life of a people, and not an

organization for helping a people to qualify itself, by inward spontaneous

growth, for producing for and out of itself a higher and nobler Government; it

is an organization which […] makes people reflect the life and theories of

Governments, and not make of Governments the real reflection of the life and

tendencies of the people.[193]

Combined, these traits made for a society docile, lacking initiative and cowed by, and overly

reliant on, an authoritarian, over-centralized government. The results were thus offensive to

English liberal virtues, and reflected a predominant opinion that the Prussian people were

deprived off of their liberties by their government.

The clergyman and theologian, Edward Bouverie Pusey too, decried the German

system of education decried the English admiration for German university scholarship. John

Davis explains that Pusey saw German professors as more 'given to displaying their own

prowess, rather than educating […] it encouraged research conducted merely for show,'

which in turn, led to, 'scholarship which was imitative, and fundamentally unhealthy.

Professors had been allowed too much to say, and students had been pushed into a situation

of slavish obedience to them.'[194] Whilst Pusey was criticising the German university system,

and we are dealing exclusively with primary education, some salient points may be made

from these observations. The first is the idea that German professors were viewed by Pusey

as more keen to 'display their own prowess,' than educating their charges. This superficial

boasting was, as we shall see slightly later, not just held to have been a feature of German

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[193] Ibid, p. 15.
[194] Davis, *Victorians and* Germany, pp. 267 – 8.

professors, but of everyday life. The second point is the reinforcement of the idea that education was more a propagator of conformity and quiescence than it was of a 'truer' form of education involving the uplifting of the student's moral awareness. The purpose of including Pusey's views here is to show that criticisms of German education was not solely relegated to the sphere of primary tutelage, but could be seen to extend up to a university level.

These conclusions were very much in line with the opinions of Laing, who wrote in *Notes of a Traveller* that 'reading and writing are […] widely diffused […] in Prussia […] but the people are not moral, nor religious, nor enlightened, nor free […] not of educated mind *in any true sense*.'[195] The phrasing of Laing is important, for education to him at least, meant more than simply attending school and reading out of a book, of which the Prussians had aplenty. Rather, it was the social and moral development that distinguished the value of the individual. 'In any true sense' reveals to us that Laing considered the Prussians as living with the fallacy of education. Neither their moral, nor liberal sensibilities were developed by this form of education.

A reference may be drawn here to our earlier discussion on the progress from nationhood to universal civilisation. The simple, base nature of the educational system thought to have been mandated in Prussia did nothing for the spiritual and moral development of the population. This perceived inability to uplift the German national character would mire the nation in decrepitude and prevent it from furthering itself down the civilizational path. Distinguishing English values becomes quite clear, therefore, when we see the judgement impressed upon the Prussian system of education in both of the pamphlets mentioned. There was not necessarily any disapproval of a standardized, state-mandated education, but rather

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[195] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, p. 90; the emphasis is mine.

the detrimental effects that such a system was feared to cause: a concentration of power in the hands of a central executive, and moral stagnation amongst the populace.

A Prussian Caesar

Having taken a look at the perceived effects of authoritarian government upon the national character, it behoves us to examine further what over-centralization of governance was seen to have on a nation's development. Bagehot helps us to discern some of these thoughts. Writing on Caesarism in France, he felt that the 'Benthamite Despot' Napoleon III and his Bonapartist bureaucracy would ultimately lead to the detriment of France for though it was 'an admirable government for present and coarse purposes,' it was 'a detestable government for future and refined purposes.'[196] According to Bagehot, Caesarism would render intellectual thought in France impotent, unable to transmit its capabilities to the masses; so 'France, as it is, may be happier because of the Empire, but France in the future will be more ignorant because of the Empire.'[197] The second, and more immediate, ill of Caesarism, according to Bagehot, was the corruption of French society. The idea behind this was that France was so heavily centralized that the general populace were hobbled and incapable of growth, relying, as it did, almost entirely upon the bureaucracy. This massive concentration of power in the hands of a few inevitably leads to corruption.[198] Note also, Bagehot's claim that the Bonapartist government was unsuited for 'future and refined purposes.' Here we have further reference to a more developed and advanced state of society, closer to the goal of universal civilisation.

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[196] Bagehot, W., 'Caesarism as it now exists' (March 1865) in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, Volume IV*, ed. by Norman St. John-Stevas (London, 1974), p. 113.
[197] Ibid, p. 114.
[198] Ibid, pp. 114 – 5.

Bagehot also insisted that the entirety of responsibility for the French loss in the Franco-Prussian War was down to the 'marvellous failure of the French imperial system.'[199] His rationale was that, having been elected emperor by plebiscite, Napoleon III was bound to the masses, which were unversed and uneducated. Therefore, in attempting to appease the masses, on which the basis of his sovereignty was founded, he ignored those in a better position to advise in the running of a nation.[200] The criticism of an overly centralized, bureaucratic state is quite evident. However, there is also a strong sense that Bagehot held democracy somewhat culpable, as well, for the failure of France. Having resorted through democratic means to attain power, Napoleon was hobbled because he could no longer make decisions which required him to 'offend' the masses. The most glaring example of this is when Bagehot notes Napoleon could not enforce his conscription laws as they were unpopular amongst the people he relied on for sovereignty.[201] Bagehot's view is unsurprising given the English focus on elite leadership and resistance to democracy.[202]

Just as Napoleon was held responsible for the detriment of France, so too was Prussia for the moral stagnation of Germany, by dint of its influence over the other states. Therefore, any criticism of statism in Germany was, in essence, a charge levelled against Prussia. This goes some way in explaining the propensity to dwell on the flaws of the Prussian state, rather than examining Germany as a whole. Just as threatening, however, as Prussian over-centralization, was Prussian militarism. Perhaps because of Bismarck having been quite candid about how Prussia intended to conduct itself:

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[199] Bagehot, W., 'The Collapse of Caesarism' (August, 1870) in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot, Volume IV*, ed. by Norman St. John-Stevas (London, 1974, p. 155.
[200] Ibid, pp. 155 – 9.
[201] Ibid, p. 159.
[202] See James Thompson's chapter 'Democracy' in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History, 1800 – 2000* eds. By David Brown, Gordon Pentland, and Robert Crowcroft (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2018).

Germany is not looking to Prussia's liberalism, but to its power; Bavaria,

Württemberg, Baden may indulge liberalism, and yet no one will assign them

Prussia's role; Prussia has to coalesce and concentrate its power for the

opportune moment […] it is not by speeches and majority resolutions that the

great questions of the time are decided – that was the big mistake of 1848 and

1849 – but by iron and blood.

Scorning liberalism as an 'indulgence,' stating that Prussia was waiting for the 'opportune moment,' disdaining healthy debate, and threatening war were not ways to endear oneself to constitutional, liberal-minded English thinkers. Bismarck, and by extension Prussia, would have to bear the brunt of an intellectual attack on militarism.

Harrison, in a scathing attack on Prussian militarism or, Bismarckism as he put it, declared that 'In Prussia the professional soldier makes less noise – not because the professional soldier is so alien to the rest of society but because he is so much akin to it.'[203] In his pamphlet, Harrison describes the militarism, not of the Prussian army, but of Prussian society as a whole, brought about by the policies of Bismarck, 'politically, Prussia is a camp, and the Prussian is a conscript […] the individual Prussian […] has been ground down by drill and bureaucracy.'[204] The implication is that Bismarck had quashed the high minded instincts of the Teuton from the Prussian, and consequently, German, mind, replacing it with militancy and servile obedience, a sort of mass brainwashing.

It is of some interest to note that the perceived ill-effects of Prussian militarism were much the same as other aspects of the Prussian state machinery, such as compulsory education. It was deemed that the Prussian system of governance produced a servile, amoral

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[203] Harrison *Bismarckism*, p. 8.
[204] Ibid, p. 14.

society, and empowered a central government. The former, lacking in independence and incapable of initiative, would be unable to present any opposition to the latter. Laing too, had much to say on what he saw as the overtly militaristic nature of Prussian society, writing

> This want of self-respect in the German character, produced by the educational and social system, and the undue importance in the German mind of rank, office, and conventional distinction, and the undue weight of these in the social economy of Germany, are strongly marked by the profusion of orders, stars, crosses, ribbons, and empty titles, with which the people, both of civil and military station, adorn and gratify themselves.[205]

The German, to Laing, had been so deprived of the 'self-respect' that may have come about via initiative, and personal industriousness, that he sought used a proliferation of sham titles and awards as an ersatz means of pride. Comparing the Englishman to his Teutonic cousin, Laing continued

> The feeling of personal worth – the pride, it may be – seems unknown to them, which leads the British nobleman, gentleman of high station, or military officer, who may have been honoured with a British or foreign order, to wear it only on particular parade occasions. He feels that he is something without the external testimonial of it: the German takes the emblem for the thing itself. The English gentleman would think it quite as inconsistent with his personal dignity to walk about on ordinary occasions […] with his stars, crosses, and ribbons plastered on his breast […] The German, again, ties his bit of red ribbon even to the button-hole of his dressing gown.[206]

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[205] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller* (1854), p. 96.
[206] Ibid, pp. 96 – 7.

Laing drew stark differences between what he perceived to be traits of the Englishman, and the German. Though he lay these charges at the door of the Prussian educational and social system, the militaristic overtones in both these areas was clear, with what he saw as an epidemic of orders, and 'empty titles,' without which the German's 'want of self-respect' would be laid bare.

Murray too, was quick to point out the German lust for medals and trinkets denoting some form of worth in his *Handbook for Travellers*, under a section entitled *Some peculiarities of German manners*:

> A fondness for titles, orders, and high-sounding forms of address, which was ever the characteristic of the Germans, though perhaps less intense than formerly, has by no means yet disappeared. The German is scarcely happy until he can hang a little bit of striped riband from his button-hole, and every effort of interest and exertion is made to increase the number of them, and of the crosses and stars which dangle from them.[207]

The language is strikingly similar to that of Laing, in that it revealed the perception that the German needed, almost desperately, the constant validation that might have been found in the display of his medals. It was not only in the visible display of these honours, that Murray saw the German as seeking praise:

> One habit of German society […] is the necessity of addressing everybody […] not by their own name, but by the titles of the office which they hold. […] The commonest title to which everybody aspires is that of Councillor (Rath), which is modified and extended by various affixes and prefixes […] 'Every

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[207] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, p. 195.

man who holds an public office, should it be merely that on an under-clerk,

with a paltry salary of 40*l.* a year must be gratified by hearing his title, not his

name.[208]

Laing's and Murray's observations may seem somewhat petty, a foreigner's distaste for local

customs, ascribed an undue importance, but for our purposes, they are quite revealing in

showing what English commentators thought of society in Germany. The constant use of

titles, medals, and other such awards does not overtly paint a picture of a militaristic state, but

it does allow for the existence of imagery of a militarily hierarchy.

Coupled with a growing distrust that Prussia engaged in its mid-nineteenth century

wars out of a sense of defensive nationality, rather than expansionism and self-

aggrandisement, we see the path English thinkers such as Harrison may have taken to arrive

at the conclusion that 'Prussia was a camp, and the Prussian is a conscript.' Even before the

Second Schleswig War of 1864, writers such as Laing had come to view the Prussian

educational system with suspicion, more a tool of a despotic government to render its

subjects docile and quiescent, than a means with which to improve the populace.

On a more international level, even those not overtly hostile to Germany bore some

traces of mistrust, such as *The Times* warning 'the new state to be content with the position it

had now attained' and refrain from any ambition to 'menace the freedom of the Continent.'[209]

Writing in 1870, the writer John Ross Dix, going by the pseudonym 'Cosmopolitan' decried

Prussian falsity, claiming that Prussia had engineered falsehoods as a pretext for attacking

France, Austria, and Denmark.[210] Prussia, it seemed, had become the embodiment of a very

menacing form of Bureau and Barrack, and its pretence of unification had been revealed as

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[208] Ibid, pp. 195 – 6.
[209] Kennedy *Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, pp. 91 – 5.
[210] Cosmopolitan, 'Prussian Honesty: a Few Words on the Raison d'etre of the war of 1870', *Foreign and commonwealth Office Collection* (1870), pp. 1 – 22.

blatant militarism and expansionism. A deeper exploration of these attitudes will be conducted in the fourth chapter, contrasting them with English support for Germany's mid-nineteenth century wars.

Prussianism; the lesser of evils?

As we have seen, there were a great many aspects of the Prussian state which were viewed gimlet-eyed by English commentators who wrote increasingly on how this statism would stymy the growth and maturity of the German. Were it not for the 'Bureaus' and 'Barracks' which pervaded Prussia, there would, in fact, have been little to criticise that state for, for the Prussian government brought about an undeniable degree of dynamism and industrial improvement, though this was seen as coming often at the expense of the individual, who was subsumed into the whole. However, there were instances where this same authoritarianism was seen as, if not a positive, then certainly the lesser of evils. It should be noted that these instances were very specific and narrow, and said rather more about a fear of full democracy[211] than any sort of approval of authoritarianism. This was particularly evident during the 1848 Revolutions which, though at first bloodless and highly lauded, became increasingly visceral as arms were resorted to, and chaos loomed large. The revolution in Austria, for example, was bad enough for the Hapsburgs to be driven out of Vienna by revolutionary rabble.

The rationale behind support for Prussian authoritarianism lay in an abject dislike of republicanism on the part of many English commenters, who tended to associate republicanism with full democracy and a descent into anarchy, *vis-ā-vis* the chaos and

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[211] Bearing in mind that the early- and mid-Victorian idea of democracy was much different than that of the late Victorians.

bloodshed which pervaded the first French Revolution. The article in the *Manchester Guardian* cited above is demonstrative of this, noting that, had the representative assemblies at Frankfurt managed to usurp the powers of the executive, or if the authority of the government had been weakened in some way, 'Berlin, and probably every other German city of importance, would have become the theatres of fierce and bloody contests between the republican factions and the constituted authorities.'[212] Half a year later, the *Manchester Guardian* again ran an article, congratulatory in some respects, that Germany had not descended into republican chaos, noting that 'if German unity is to be arrived at through German anarchy, it may, though a good thing in itself, be purchased at rather too high a price.'[213] Similarly, the *Annual Register* reported that revolution in Germany had progressed to the point where 'political institutions had been gradually undermined by an undercurrent of agitation, of which the tendency was to establish democracy in its most dangerous form.'[214]

This attitude is interesting in that it demonstrates a resistance to democratic institutions and is complemented by the works of men such as Bagehot,[215] and a trust in the role of elite leadership rather than a distribution of power amongst the masses. Nonetheless, as mentioned, it should be taken as more a commentary on democracy rather than an implicit approval for authoritarianism, which was still viewed with some abhorrence as being incompatible with constitutional liberalism. Furthermore, after the events of 1848 had died down, there is little evidence to suggest that the idea of authoritarianism as something to be admired remained. It therefore stands out as somewhat of an anomaly, demonstrative of the lasting impact of the French Revolution in the English consciousness (with which the idea of a full democracy was most closely associated), and not necessarily indicative of liberal

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[212] *Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1848, p. 4.
[213] *Manchester Guardian*, 16 May 1849, p. 4.
[214] Quoted in Müller *Britain and the German Question*, p. 60.
[215] Ibid, pp. 19 – 20, and 39 – 40.

opinions. It does, however, inform us that the limitations of statism were fluid boundaries which, while ideologically grounded, could be made to encapsulate events of the day.

Looking at the various debates on Prussia, some conclusion can be drawn as to why Prussia featured so heavily in considerations, not only on Germany, but also on reflections on nationhood, national character, and the role of institutions. There was so much disapproval of the Prussian manner of governance because, in many ways, it provided a somewhat darker reflection of Liberal England's own values. Take, for example, the role of institutions, on which so much value was placed. Institutions used correctly in, say, the Mill-ian fashion, which could contribute to the development of a representative form of government, would foster and engender within a society great liberal values: independence, an inquisitiveness of mind tempered by moral restraint. Self-reliance would render an individual free from tyrannical government, as was the case in England.

The Prussian mirror of these free English institutions was seen to have had the diametrically opposite effect on the Prussian, and consequently German, people. The vaunted Prussian educational system, it was felt, had brought about a population whose own sense of individuality had been suppressed and who relied overly much on its government. Education, in turn, was but one aspect of the authoritarian Prussian system of governance. While it was symptomatic of this illiberalism, its greatest impairment was perceived to be that it created a society politically immature and thus incapable of establishing the roots for a future shift towards a more liberal state. In this manner, perhaps, debate on Prussian institutions was as much about the condemnation of Prussian illiberalism as it was about the validation of England's own liberal institutions and consequent superiority of populace. The illiberalism of the Prussian state raised further concerns for the national character of Germany and the Teuton. As noted earlier, the perceived suppression of the German's development boded ill for the long-term development of the nation. Thoughts on the plight of the individual German

toiling under the yoke of an oppressive government must have been galling to English critics when one considers the rise in English thinking on the shared Anglo-Saxon past between the two nations, a feature so prevalent in nineteenth century writing. Taking a grander view, it could be further argued that this would hamper the progress of Germany up the ladder of civilization.

And yet, for all the condemnation of Prussian institutions, it was impossible, in the middle of the century, for many commenters to make out that Prussia was simply some dark, distant threat. As we have seen, the majority of support for Prussia stemmed from its efforts to establish a German nation. Granted, Austria too was, before 1866, paving the way towards German Unification. But the proposal of Austria, to incorporate fully the extent of its territories, including those non-German ones with the German states was both politically and intellectually, an impossibility. Austria the state as part of a German nation would have been comprehensible. There would, however, have been no grounds for grafting Hungary or any of Austria's other non-German territories to Germany. Doing so would have run contrary to all opinions on what made a nation a nation. Furthermore, Austria had been represented as decaying, Jesuitic, and somewhat of an anachronism. Thus, to admit to Austrian leadership of Germany would have been to accept a violation of Mill's principles of nationality.

Prussia provided a much more attractive scheme, within the context of debates on nationhood. Prussia certainly fulfilled the idea of a 'Great' nation,[216] and her incorporation of the smaller German states would have been feasible to ideas of national sovereignty. In so doing, Germany was preserved against the predations of her neighbours, particularly against France with its incredible 'powers of assimilation.' Smaller and weaker states along the Rhine would have been rendered immune to the French influence. Such a benefit would have found

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[216] By which we make reference to the concept of the 'Greatness' of nations, as opposed to Great Powers, that group to which Prussia would rapidly gain admission.

much traction in the works of men such as Bagehot, writing as he did, about the benefits of larger nations, and the disadvantages of many petty ones. So, if there was a preoccupation with Prussia in the debates on Germany, then it was because Prussia provided such attractive fodder. The machinery of its government, its institutions, and its role at the head of the German states all dealt with the broader idea of Liberalism in England, providing stimulation via comparison. As we progress through the thesis, we will examine more deeply the various features we have just explored. However, what this chapter has sought to do is to aid in the understanding of how Germany was conceptualized during the nineteenth century in England. By identifying why precisely Prussia came to be synonymous with Germany, we can better understand contemporary views on Germany as a whole. Furthermore, the chapter has laid out the key issues of nationhood, national character, and changing perceptions of Germany, that form the basis for the thesis.

Chapter Two: English views of the German literary world

We have just observed how the idea of a German nation state was conceived in the minds of certain English commenters. Though such a state had never truly existed before 1866, it was possible to envision such a construct. The thirty nine German states shared a historical, cultural, and to a degree, ethnic, background. It should be noted that, in the last instance, some of the states incorporated other ethnicities into their populations. Schleswig, for example, was comprised partially of Danes, which would lead to the obliqueness of English debate on the Schleswig-Holstein War. Ethnicities, of course, is a somewhat murky word, highly dependent on context. The various upheavals of the twentieth century have attached to it some unpleasant connotations. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, there was far less aversion to the term, and though men such as Arthur de Gobineau propounded racial theories and anti-Semitism, and indeed, Englishmen such as Thomas Nicholas who collated characteristics he associated with certain races,[217] there was oftentimes little reticence in describing a certain demographic with a shared cultural and historical background as being of a specific 'race,' or its members a certain 'people.' To unpack the term 'race' in all its depths and subtleties here seems to be a great folly. It would better suit our purposes to adopt the same loose, and somewhat careless meaning used by that of our English commenters, namely, that of a select group of people who shared a unique cultural, historical, and linguistic heritage. This is best explained before delving any deeper, as we shall see over the coming pages how 'race' and 'people' were often used with little cognizance of the myriad issues we may associate with them today.

In this chapter, we shall observe those opinions which lie more closely with our overarching themes of nation, and national character. In order to do this, the chapter is

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[217] Mandler, *The English National Character,* p. 100.

divided into four parts. The first deals with some negative perceptions of German writers, and the effects that a despotic government could have on a nation's lettered classes. The second is concerned with the idea of a writer being held up to his critics' notions of morality. The third details the notion of the writer as *zeitgeist,* that is, as emblematic of the times. The fourth explores how writers were viewed as the embodiment of national character. While the first section is somewhat broad, the second and third confine themselves to a small and select group of writers, Goethe, Schiller, and Richter. These three figures are chosen because of how highly regarded they were in England. Schiller's *Die Räuber* (The Robbers) and *Wallenstein*, for example, were influential pieces and, indeed, Coleridge's translation of *Wallenstein* was one of his seminal works. Goethe came, as we shall see, to be regarded by various nineteenth century English critics as an Olympian figure who had transcended beyond 'national' forms of literature, and was held in the company of Dante and Shakespeare. Richter forms part of our sample as he was a perceived rarity amongst the Germans: a humourist amongst the dourness and sentimentalism that was seen to be pervasive in German literature. Just as importantly, he was held by English critics who read his works as an essentially moral being, representative of the finer qualities of the perceived Teutonic character. These writers also provide some interesting contrasts with each other and, in sum, best demonstrate how writers were held up to moral standards by their English critics.

Der Dichter in England: Receptions of the German literati

The mid-nineteenth century English interest in German literature was strong and deeply-rooted. This was due in large part to the growing trend of Anglo-Saxonism, the tendency to think of the shared historical roots between England and Germany, which was a

prevalent feature of the mid-Victorian decades.[218] This, in turn, was born out of an increasing tendency to think on what made a nation and a people. The idea of a *Kulturtransfer* was strong, and certain writers, notably Carlyle, lauded what they perceived as the inquisitiveness and speculation of their German counterparts. Rosemary Ashton has explored the impact German literature had on English writers in her book *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860*.[219] She explains, for example, that the poet and critic Samuel Coleridge, in his desire to understand the works of Schiller, immersed himself in Kantian philosophy.[220] However, because of the nature of the book, it serves to emphasize the impact German writing had on her four chosen subjects, and thus, does not cover the wider transfer of ideas between the literary spheres of England and Germany.

John R. Davis' *The Victorians and Germany* gives us a broader view of the impact German works had upon English readers, tracing this impact back into the late eighteenth century.[221] He explains the German influence on Walter Scott:

> The Gothic elements of *Lenore*, for example, are replicated for example in ghostly midnight scenes in *The Antiquary* (1816) and Rob Roy (1817). Schiller's *Die Räuber*, seen as both Gothic and *Sturm und Drang* in its wildness and passion, and Goethe's famous and disturbing poem *Der Erlkönig* are echoed in the satanic horse-ride at the start of *Rob Roy*, as well as in its story-line about a wild but noble band of outlaws.[222]

More significantly, he notes Scott's influence on Thomas Carlyle who 'was drawn to Scott due to the latter's knowledge of German culture recognising Scott's importance

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[218] Ibid, pp. 59 – 105.
[219] Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
[220] Ibid, Chapter 1.
[221] Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, chapter two.
[222] Ibid, p. 48.

as a conduit of German thought'.[223] Davis explains that Carlyle 'turned to Germany as an antidote to Utilitarianism and materialism, using *Sartor Resartus* as 'a forcible argument for the value of free intellectual and philosophical speculation.[224]

Similarly, Gisela Argyle makes the point that the German literary trends of speculation, sentimentality and romance were used by English writers such as Matthew Arnold, and Carlyle, as 'a German whip for British Vices.'[225] Particularly in the case of Arnold, the 'German whip' was intended as a teaching exercise, to elucidate the follies of philistinism and secularisation that seemed to rise in conjunction with increasing industrialisation. It is perhaps worth noting that Arnold was just as quick to apply the 'French whip' to 'British vices,' and could hardly be considered the arch-Germanophile that was Carlyle. It is also of some interest to note, as we shall explore presently, that antipathetic English commentators held these self-same traits to be debilitating aspects of German literature and, indeed, of the German national character as a whole.

The third chapter will explore in more detail that the German desire for unification and nationhood was perceived, in England, to have debilitating effects. In particular, it left the Germans vulnerable to the encroachment of French ideals of republicanism, and the associated anarchy that would follow. In such an instance, English patriotism was bested by French nationalism, a very unsavoury prospect from the point of view of English critics. Furthermore, the backlash of the revolutions led to the strengthening of authoritarian and despotic government, and the subordination of civil and political liberties to state authority. As with any perspective, this was not universal. Some, most notably the Germanophilic

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[223] Ibid, p. 49.
[224] Ibid, pp. 69 – 74.
[225] Gisela Argyle, *German Elements in the Fiction of George Eliot, Gissing, and Meredith* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1972) p. 11.

Carlyle, were quick to point out the inherent, burgeoning greatness of the Teutonic race. Carlyle wrote, for example

> A rapidly growing favour for German Literature comes to light […] within the
> last ten years, independent readers of German have multiplied perhaps a
> hundred fold. […] As to German Literature, in particular, which professes to
> be not only new, but rich in curious information for us […], we are gratified to
> see that such claims can no longer be resisted. […] In the middle of the last
> century, from among Parisian Erotics, rickety Sentimentalism, Court aperies,
> and hollow Dullness, […] we behold the giant spirit of Germany awaken as
> from long slumber; […] by its Lessings and Klopstocks, announce in true
> German dialect, that the Germans are also men.[226]

We see here Carlyle's opinion that German writers were an enlivening force on a complacent literary world. The idea of a 'giant spirit' beginning to 'awaken' coincides with a greater degree of attention being paid to the German quest for unification that was a by-product of the Prussian defeat at Jena. Note also the implied degeneracy of France in the 'Parisian Erotics,' and how Carlyle contrasts this with the Germans as being 'men,' juxtaposing the national character with literature. To Carlyle, France may have allowed itself to slide into hedonism, but the energetic Germany, rising 'from long slumber' is in possession of 'manly' virtues.

Also of note is that Carlyle has identified some figures as national writers, representative of their people, namely Klopstock and Lessing. This is of some importance as it speaks to the idea of the German people being viewed as a single people, rather than as a

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[226] Thomas Carlyle, 'Historic Survey of German Poetry, interspersed with various translations,' *Edinburgh Review*, Vol 53, Issue 105 (March 1831) pp. 151 – 80

collection of disparate states. This single people were bound by their shared cultural and linguistic background, unique to themselves, and shaped by their collective history.[227] Thus, whilst there was much rumination on the shared ancestral Anglo-Saxon past between England and Germany, the two nations and their inhabitants were clearly delineated from each other, not just by language, but also by their experiences. The last sentence of the above passage, that 'Germans are also men' further emphasizes that the Germans were a collective race, a unified society bound by cultural institutions such as literature.

Similarly, the travel writer Samuel Laing, wrote 'their great original authors, Goethe, Schiller, or Richter, or our great authors, Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, give the tunes which the German writers are whistling through the streets.'[228] The contrast is an interesting one. First, that Laing saw the Germans as being capable of producing their own *original* authors who he saw as being on equal parity with English notables. Second, that he was not making a comparison on the artistic merits of the German authors and their English counterparts, but rather, was identifying them as exemplars of literature in their country. To Laing, just as Shakespearean prose and Byronic romanticism were uniquely English, so too was the Goethean epic or Richter's humour peculiarly German. It was from these worthies that the rest of the German literati sprung. Thus, in Laing's eyes, they were part of the foundation of the literary institutions of their respective peoples.

These positive criticisms are apparent in many English periodicals of the nineteenth century, highlighting the constructed mythos of an Anglo-Saxon past and, particularly in the case of studies of Jean Paul Richter's works, there exists a palpable sense of superiority that the author could comprehend his true genius, beyond the grasp of so many others. There was, nonetheless, a large degree of disapprobation also present. The classical scholar, John Stuart

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[227] Refer to chapter 1.
[228] Samuel Laing, *Notes of a Traveller* p. 129.

Blackie noted that 'to have made Goethe a great man, as he undoubtedly was a great poet, there was only wanting one circumstance: that he should have been born a Briton, and not a German.'[229] He further described him as ' "Painted Egotism" and "Unpainted Scepticism" – the French Voltaire in a German Avatar […] calm, cold artistical contemplativeness.'[230] In the two articles, Blackie was writing in reference to Goethe's less than Puritanical life. By labelling him 'the French Voltaire,' Blackie drew reference to the perceived immorality of Goethe. Other sources allow us to tease this out further by examining the perceived qualities of the German writer.

The Whig journalist, Cyrus Redding, viewed the German author as thoughtful and speculative, recalling the 'Unpainted Scepticism' evoked by Blackie, but wanting in action and practicality, somewhat, it should be noted, in opposition to English ideas of masculinity and self-reliance. He wrote that 'the German imagination, fertile and active revels amidst the shadowy and obscure. […] Its wild theories and extensive dealings with unsubstantialities, render it unsatisfactory to those who are not satisfied to take everything for granted.'[231] Taking pleasure in the 'shadowy and obscure,' it would seem to Redding, allowed the 'German imagination' to avoid practical matters, indulging in speculating on the unknown rather than solving the problems of reality. He further noted that this lack of discipline made for somewhat unrealistic writing, 'in dramatic writing, for example, the characters are often strained and out of nature […] The authors do not appear content with the mere delineation of men and things as they are […] they aim to create novelties that are to outvie existing nature.'[232]

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[229] Blackie, John Stuart, 'Politics and Poetry,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magzine*, Vol 4, Issue 39 (March 1837), p. 162.
[230] Blackie, 'Life of Jean Paul Frederick Richter,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 62, Issue 381 (July 1847), p. 41.
[231] Redding, 'German Ideology', p. 211.
[232] Ibid, p. 211.

The overemphasis on thought rather than action, and speculation rather than practicalities, had bled over from the life of the German writer into his work. '"Our rulers may take the real, give us the realm of the ideal," was the essence of Germanism.'[233] This last sentence is of vast significance. It signifies that Redding believed the German people had surrendered their rights to their rulers willingly, trading away their civic and public responsibilities so that they may dally away writing increasingly fantastic literature that, because it was so out of step with 'existing nature,' could serve no practical purpose. If we may recall the first chapter, Laing too took care to point out this lack of determination on the part of the German, in his *Notes of a Traveller*. Blackie, far less hostile than Redding, wrote that 'the manner in which German minds allow themselves to be blindly lorded over by a succession of literary absolutists, appears to us, unequivocally, as one of the most unfavourable traits in the national character.'[234] It is telling that, just as Laing and Redding felt that the German people were content to be deprived off of their civil rights by a domineering government, so long as their immediate needs were addressed, so too did Blackie feel that the ordinary German were content to have their minds shaped by 'literary absolutists.'

The idea that 'its wild theories and extensive dealings with unsubstantialities, render it unsatisfactory to those who are not satisfied to take everything for granted,' meant that to Redding, it served the practical English people no purpose. The German desire, however, for the 'realm of the ideal' allowed them to 'take everything for granted.' From Redding's work, we thus see his delineation between the Englishman and the German. For the former, practicality, civil rights and responsibilities, and action were important. The latter prized wild theories, and the 'realm of the ideal.' Taking a broader view, this is commentary on the

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[233] Ibid, pp. 212 – 3.
[234] Blackie, *Politics and Poetry*, p. 162

German struggle for unification, and helped to explain the success of Prussian authoritarianism because of the complacency of the German. As we shall see in the following chapter, a large part of the chaos in Germany during 1848 was attributed to wild schemes cast about by various members of the Frankfurt Assembly, and later Parliament, who, it was felt in England, were so fixated on German Unification, that they had neglected completely any development of plans on how to attain such. Casting about with febrile imagination, it was thought, they had little ability to proceed with any solid, practical plan of action.

It was similarly noted in the *New Quarterly Review*, that the Germans were 'crude in politics, crude in their social state, and crude in literature […] the modern Germans, like the Roman Catholics, believe in a superabundance of grace.' The 'superabundance of grace,' it is implied, was to compensate for a fundamental lack of ability, with '4,000 to 5,000 volumes have been thrown on the bookseller's shelves during the last quarter – of these but very few deserve any notice, and these few ought to be mentioned rather as things to be avoided than otherwise.'[235] It is also worth noting the comparison to Roman Catholicism, in that the view was that the Germans used pomp and ritual to disguise the lack of credibility in their works, trading the former for the purity of faith and, in the context of literature, artistry.

Their crudity in politics is attributable to the lack of a developed form of constitutional, representative government as was present in England, whilst the crudity of their social state was reference to the perceived lack of, and desire for, civil and political liberties. The crudity in literature is, of course, about the inferiority of German literature. Even the fair-minded, and well-travelled, Laing espoused the same thoughts when he wrote that

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[235] N.a., 'Retrospect of German Literature for the Quarter,' *The New Quarterly Review and Digest of current literature, British, American, French, and German*, Vol. 1, Issue 3 (July 1852), p. 326.

This imitative turn, and the excess of literary production, influence even the

material interests and character of the German people. In politics, in social

economy, in religion, and perhaps even in morals […] principles and opinions

seem to have no time to take root, and to influence the actual doings of men –

conviction is but loosely connected with action. […] All is speculation, not

reality. Every German seems to have two worlds for himself – a world of idea,

and a world of reality.[236]

Laing was writing on the epidemic of writers that seemed to have sprung up in Germany in

the nineteenth century, the 'imitative turn' referencing what he believed was the tendency of

German writers to ape Goethe, Lessing, and other luminaries. Note also, how the words of

Laing mirrored those of Redding and Blackie, particularly how it was felt that German

writers were too quick to engage in fantasy and too slow to deal with practicalities, and that

they had generally divorced the world of the speculative from the world of reality. Given

what was seen to be the German tendency to the speculative, this rendered them ill-suited to

practical action. This appears to have been seen as a very real flaw in German writers, and, as

we shall see later in the chapter, indicative of a flaw within the German character as a whole.

By immersing themselves in the speculative, it was felt, the Germans rendered themselves

unable to plan and follow the courses of action that would allow their nation to progress

along the ladder of civilization. It is worth remembering here that this civilizational

perspective is a retrospective view developed by Mandler, and none of our subjects referred

to national progress as such.

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[236] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller,* pp. 161 – 63.

Furthering the themes of an 'imitative turn' and 'superabundance of grace' is an article entitled *A Discourse of Goethe and the Germans*[237] by the writer James White, when he wrote that

> Now, the fact is […] that the Germans have neither morals nor literature. […] the weakest of mortals, […] the most miserable of pedant, John Christoph Gottshed […] was looked up to by the whole German nation, as an honour to the human race. […] Why do I lay such stress on poor old buried and forgotten John Christoph? […] I want to find out some excuse for the Germans having formed such an exaggerated estimate of their present school. […] People in a coal-pit see the smaller stars at mid-day as if each of them were of the first magnitude. […] so that when the Leipsic public had fallen into the depths of Gottshedism, no wonder that […] then shone Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe forming – as seen from that subterranean level – a whole planetary system.[238]

White further noted that his criticisms towards the Germans was directed solely at their literary figures, 'there are not six of them authors worth reading, in what is properly called literature. […] They are industrious moles, and grub exceedingly well – and yet it will take many millions of moles to make a Bentley.'[239]

It would be disingenuous not to highlight that White' article was somewhat of an outlier, in that, while other periodicals on the same topic were often critical, White's was remarkably vitriolic and prejudiced, completely decrying the possibility of any artistic merit on the part of its subjects. Goethe, Schiller, and other German luminaries, were, according to

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[237] James White, 'A Discourse of Goethe and the Germans,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 45, Issue 280 (February 1839).
[238] Ibid, pp. 247 – 8.
[239] Ibid, p. 249; this appears to be in reference to the late eighteenth century poet Elizabeth Bentley.

White, only seen as brilliant by the German people because their predecessor, Gottshed was seen as a failure of a writer. Nonetheless, in consulting such an obviously jaundiced and prejudiced article, we are able to see similarities with our other periodical samples, namely that, though White perceived that there were 'millions' of 'industrious moles,' there were, by his estimation, only six who could be deemed authors worthy of attention. Furthermore, like *Notes of a Traveller*, *A Discourse* highlights the belief that the 'industrious moles' were poor facsimiles of true German literary talent, grasping desperately for fame and recognition, which, as we shall see in our discussion on Schiller, was held to be a particularly unsavoury quality.

Having seen some of the perceived failures of German writers, it is of some further interest to note that English commenters seemed unable to divorce German literature from the wider world of German nationhood and politics. In each of the sources, German literary figures were seen as locums for the nascent German nation. Indeed, literature served as a microcosm to its development. Whether it was Carlyle writing of the growing popularity of German literature as a parallel to the growth of Germany, or Redding explained the attitude of German writers of 'Our rulers may take the real, give us the realm of the ideal,' was, as he put it, 'the essence of Germanism,' literature seemed to be seen as much a part of Germany's development as it was a topic of study or recreation in itself. This indivisibility may speak to the importance that literature in particular, and culture as a whole, bore in conceiving of a nation. Given the ongoing discussions on the nature of nationhood, national characteristics, and civilization that dominated much of the nineteenth century, it seems probable that literature was another one of those institutional pillars which helped define a nation in the eyes of English intellectuals, providing as it did, a binding agent in the form of 'national' works and authors, such as *Die Rauber*, or Goethe.

Understanding the problems some English critics associated with German writers, allows us to turn our attention to the cause, for the flaws discussed were seen as merely symptomatic of the greater issue of the authoritarian governance practiced by many of the German states. The somewhat staid and impractical nature of the German literati was laid out by Blackie when he wrote that 'the style of German writers is not dramatic; […] the acknowledged inferiority of the German drama […] is to be attributed […] to the same cause that gives their literature […] a university rather than a popular cast.' By 'university' Blackie meant the highly theoretical and speculative nature of German writing. Because the German writer was perceived to be ungrounded in reality, Blackie felt, he could not write in a realistic and relatable manner. Thus, the 'popular cast' which was to Blackie a requisite for a good drama was absent. Further elucidation comes from the following passage:

> To write drama well, a people must live dramatically. […] Now, not only is there a manifest want of popular activity and energy in Germany, caused by the organizing principle of the Court, that the people shall be allowed to do nothing for themselves, but unfortunately, there is no German nation in any shape, no grand German interest to create a grand German stage.[240]

Blackie associates the failure of Germany to produce worthwhile drama to the German inability to live 'dramatically;' perhaps 'freely' would be more apropos, considering what we have already seen as to the perceived inability of the German to live with true liberty. As has been explained, there was a perception amongst English commentators that the German were not truly in possession of liberties, given the dominance of the state over the individual. Here, the cultural by-product of such subjugation is brought to the fore. Hearkening back to Redding's work cited earlier, the German dramatist is able to create only a feeble work as he

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[240] Blackie, 'Traits and Tendencies of German Literature,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 50, Issue 310 (August 1841), p. 150.

lacked experience, and thus was forced to rely on a febrile, but unrealistic, imagination. Furthermore, the German nation, when Blackie wrote his article in 1841, was still very much an imaginary construct, and although one could argue that any nation state exists as an imaginary construct, Germany at the time did not possess such institutions that allowed it to manifest itself in reality.

Reading Laing's *Notes of a Traveller* serves to inform us that this was not an isolated opinion:

> […] a good social economy would imply social arrangements altogether adverse, both in principle and in operation, to the political power of the state over private free agency, which is the basis of all social institutions in Germany. The mind, too, bred amidst these slavish institutions of Germany, is itself slavish. The political conceptions of the German mind, as expressed at least in writings […] are […] either abject to the last degree, or extravagant to the last degree […]; both equally distant from the sober, rational speculations and conclusions of free men.[241]

To Laing, private free agency was necessary for 'sober, rational speculations,' but in Germany, this was an impossibility, due to 'slavish institutions.' This would account for the view that German literature was comprised of febrile imaginings lacking in pragmatism or any sense of realism. Because the Germans were, as Blackie claimed, 'allowed to do nothing for themselves,' and were subjugated by the various German states, they were incapable of engaging in worthwhile political and civil discussions, as was the case in England.

This was further illustrated in the German revolutions of 1848 when 'the late efforts to obtain free institutions in Germany were undertaken in perfect harmony with the character

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[241] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, pp. 44 – 5.

of the people. Constitutions were sketched and promulgated by idealists, and changes were proposed before they could possibly have been worked out.'[242] We find, therefore, that the ill-effects of authoritarian government on the people were seen to be reflected in literary individuals. The criticisms levelled at the efforts of the members of the Frankfurt Parliament were, in essence, the same as those with which German writers were charged, namely that their methods were fevered, and devoid of any practical quality, crafted by those who lacked the private free agency necessary for sober, rational speculations.

On these literary figures, Blackie explained that 'their "aesthetical" discussions are a sort of parliamentary debates […] to compensate for newspapers and a house of commons, which Prince Metternich and the King of Prussia […] are agreed they are not entitled to,' and 'their discussions are so completely […] a substitute for native newspapers and parliamentary debates.'[243] Hence, because the local press was so heavily censored by the government, German writers and poets became a form of ersatz journalist. Devoted to the reporting of matters politic, the German writers were seen as being unable to focus on the more artistic side of their craft. Redding further explained the impact of overt government control on the world of literature, stating that 'the range of German investigation is confined by the nature of the governments under which the literary men of that country live. Those governments, narrowing the studies of men of literature through their political apprehensions […] lead them to expatiate wider, and in a bolder way, upon those subjects which are tolerated.'[244] In the context of the views we have already observed on opinions of German writers, 'wider, and in a bolder way,' seems rather more derogatory than otherwise. It hearkens us to the belief amongst English critics that, constrained in what they could write about, the German

[242] Redding, 'German Ideology', p. 212.
[243] Blackie, *Traits and Tendencies*, p. 145
[244] Redding, 'German Idealogy,' *The New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 121, Issue 481 (January 1861), p. 90 – 1.

writers instead showed little restraint in their efforts, producing work that was both febrile and illogical.

In *Politics and Poetry*, Blackie expounded on the degrading nature of politics upon the poet by comparing Goethe's earlier work to his later contributions when he had taken up residence at the court in Weimar:

> They (Goethe's hosts) belonged to the order of princes and it has always been our opinion that a prince is not the highest order of men […] So long as we hold this opinion, we cannot but lament deeply that Goethe ever went to Weimar. […] there was something sound and healthy, and essentially *human*, in his […] early works, which gave promise of better things than the "West-Eastern Divan," and the second part of "Faust." […] in these works we seek in vain for anything strong – anything energetic – anything by which the whole active man may be steeled against […] the hard duties of life.[245]

Thus, by surrounding himself in courtly and political life, Goethe had allowed himself to fall under the malign influences of 'not the highest order of men.' Consequently, his later works held little value. Note the language Blackie used to describe Goethe's earlier work: 'something sound and healthy, and essentially *human*.' These were works of quality which could contribute meaningfully to the development of German culture, something which Goethe's later works lacked. The latter, according to Blackie, offered little to their readers by way of development. Furthermore, Blackie held the writer to have an ethical responsibility in educating the reader, and preparing them for the travails of life, by way of moral instruction through his works. Blackie charged Goethe with having fallen under the malign influences of effete aristocrats who, though they may have been in possession of wealth, were not of 'the

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[245] Blackie, *Politics and Poetry*, pp. 162 – 3.

highest order of men.' To Blackie, this moral corruption was evident as he noted the decline

of quality in Goethe's work. It is, of course, worth noting that Blackie was not commenting

on the quality of Goethe's prose, but rather the lack of a moralising message in the latter's

later work.

Blackie further described the ill-effects of Goethe's involvement in political circles by

writing that

> 'As soon as a poet becomes a politician, he must necessarily throw himself
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> into the arms of a party; and as soon as he does this, he is lost for ever as a
>
> poet; he must forego for ever his fine bird's eye view of human affairs, and
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> draw over head and ears, the cap of narrowness and of blind party hate. […]
>
> We find that Goethe, though he constantly gave himself out as a man of no
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> political party, was nevertheless […] a Conservative.'[246]

It is of some interest to note Blackie's view that a poet ought not to have been involved in

politics as this would impede his development in artistic endeavours. Goethe apparently had

squandered his gifts by engaging in such, surrendering himself to petty affairs when, as a

poet, he should have had a higher responsibility. This 'fine bird's eye view of human affairs'

is in itself interesting, in that it highlights the notion that the poet's purpose was not to

concern himself with minutiae and mundanity, but with observing the progress of his

countrymen. The purpose of literature we have posited earlier, as a means by which a race

could move further along a civilizational path, was subverted, failing to provide any manna to

the reader against 'the hard duties of life.' Taking this conclusion further, it is possible to

imagine that Blackie saw the authoritarianism, and aristocracy, of Germany as anathema to

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[246] Ibid, p. 164.

the progress of civilisation. We will take a closer look at this perceived failing on Goethe's part later in the chapter.

Goethe, however, was an exception both in how he was received by the German governments, and in how he was perceived by English critics, as we shall explore later in the chapter. German writers, it was felt, were, as a class, subject to plentiful ill-treatment by the German states. Indeed, in an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, it was noted that

'the powers that were and be […] in Germany have always shown the greatest contempt for public writers, while they secretly feared and hated them. […] To this very day the laws of Germany affect a total ignorance of the profession of an author or writer for the daily or periodical press.'[247]

This train of thought is expounded upon in the somewhat conservative *New Monthly Magazine* (to which, it should be noted, the critical Redding was also a contributor) which noted that 'that profession, as such, is not even acknowledged by the laws of a nation […] in Germany, professional writers are classed with vagabonds and street beggars.' The result of this was that 'their professional writers are by no means numerous, but the number of their amateur writers is legion.'[248]

Here, of course, is the reasoning that Germany was infested by a plethora of 'industrious moles,' but faced with a dearth of worthy authors. The amateur writer, the industrious mole, 'addresses a wretched, brutish, and ignorant mob, which he despises, while he yearns for its applause. […] If these things be well considered, […] it is a matter of wonder not that German literature is bad, but that it is not infinitely worse.'[249] This rather

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[247] N.a. 'Heine, His Works and Times,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol 18, Issue 215 (November 1851), p. 682.
[248] *Retrospect of German Literature for the Quarter*, pp. 326 – 7.
[249] Ibid, p. 327.

backhanded compliment explains that, by denigrating the professional writer at an institutional level, the German governments inadvertently created a species of amateur writer, the members of whom did not possess adequate talent, and wrote because they craved adulation. Furthermore, because the profession of writing was so ostracised by the state, and its members reduced to 'vagabonds and beggars,' the role of literature in developing a people's culture was further stymied. Worse yet, the burial of the professional writer by an avalanche of unworthy amateurs who sought only adulation and praise would result not in the stagnation of German literature, but its regression. The amateur writer, by his own lack of talent, was unable to raise the 'wretched, brutish, and ignorant mob' to a higher state of being; the professional writer too, is unable to do so, not by lack of talent, but by dint of being rendered an outcast by the state. The desire for public recognition and adulation would have only made the amateur German writer doubly repellent to the English author, still used to his periodical articles printed in anonymity.

The effects of the principles of absolutism upon literature in Germany were highlighted in an article in *Fraser's Magazine* which explored the persecution of Heinrich Heine there, and his eventual flight to France:

> 'For some time Heine had felt uncomfortable in Germany. The severe censorship of the press, the suspicion with which […] he was looked upon by the government, all made a change very desirable. The news of the revolution of July […] determined him to go to Paris, whither he had been preceded by Ludwig Borne. The latter sarcastically remarked, that the two […] were then the only Germans in Paris, who were not under the sentence of death or imprisonment.'[250]

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[250] N.a., 'Heinrich Heine,' *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol. 74, Issue 443 (November 1866), pp. 598 – 9.

The paranoid authoritarianism of the government therefore drove a prominent member of the German literati out of the country in the hopes of silencing his criticism. According to a crafty writer in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'a wise despot would have kept him in the country, to temper the ardour of his patriotism by his fears for his personal safety.' Heine, exiled and beyond the reach of the government, had his popularity and visibility increased, and continued in defiance of their authority.[251] Authoritarianism, in addition to its other ills, therefore created a loss in the development of the people it purported to protect by driving away one of those members of its literary institutions. Given the prominence and popularity of refugees from despotic persecution such as Lajos Kossuth and Giuseppe Garibaldi in England during the 1850s, Heine's exile would have had resonance with the periodical's readers, and further emphasized the damage authoritarianism could have on a nation.

The perceived failings of German literary figures were thus readily apparent to English commentators. A degree of smugness pervades these articles, best encapsulated in a few lines from White's article: 'Contrast them, - Klopstock – Milton; Schiller – Shakespeare; Lessing – Dryden; Goethe – Walter Scott; and as to their small fry, Sam Johnson would have swallowed them all.'[252] White, as mentioned, was certainly more jaundiced in his views than many other critics, and it was not often that German writers were compared unfavourably to their English counterparts. In fact, as we shall see in later sections, certain poets such as Goethe were seen as literary equals to men like Shakespeare and Milton.

Nonetheless, the quote from White suggests that such comparisons did exist, and that many English critics did view German writers and poets as being inferior in quality. There was a definite sense of pride in English poets given that, as we have seen, the institution of literature was in a way held to have been a reflection of civilisation at large. To a certain

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[251] N.a. *Heine, His Works and Times*, p. 692.
[252] White, *A Discourse on Goethe and the Germans*, pp. 248 – 9.

section of English critics, doubtless no foreign man of letters could compare to their own. In the case of Germany, however, this was due in large part to the strictures and oppression of the German governments which rendered the German mind unable to produce works which were pragmatic and grounded in reality. The opinions we have explored above serve as a microcosm to attitudes towards the broader picture of the development of Germany which occupied such a large space in nineteenth century English thought. These in turn highlight the devotion amongst English intellectuals to grander ideas of nationhood and civilisation. As such, we have seen how many commenters were unable to view German literature as a field of purely academic study, seeing it instead as part of the ongoing commentary on issues of despotism, and authoritarianism. In a sense, therefore, English critics used their study of German literature to divine the ongoing state of German development, and the nature of the German national character.

In their reception of German literary figures, English writers were generally positive in their criticisms, and effusive in their praise as noted earlier. Arnold and Carlyle come to mind as citing the speculative and romantic nature of German literature as worth reflecting upon, particularly in the face on an increasingly materialistic and mercantile society. George Eliot, and George Lewes too, were admirers on the philosophising and inquisitiveness present in German works. This was not universal, and some elements of negativity will be explored as a matter of course. However, in examining the landscape of English literary criticism on German authorship, one finds an almost optimistic attitude. Perhaps to be expected is the focus on certain individuals: Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Klopstock, and Heine all feature heavily, and reviews of their works tend to dwell just as, and in many cases more, heavily on their lives. Reading Collini's *Public Moralists*, we realise that this is not unusual. To the English commenters of the mid-nineteenth century, to whom 'public morals' was an integral part of their writing, the character of the author was as essential as the work itself, and thus,

many reviews did not examine these works in a vacuum. Exceptions did exist, particularly in the more literary publications, but set within the broader context of this thesis, it makes more sense to study those articles which provided commentary on the lives and characters of the writer as much as literary criticism.

The Poet as Moralist: Goethe, Schiller, and civic duty

Thus, the primary question set out in this section is, 'to what extent were German authors viewed by English commenters as exemplars of morality?' To examine the myriad attitudes held towards all the German authors would be a somewhat Sisyphean task, and so, by necessity, we limit ourselves to three authors: Goethe, Schiller, and a somewhat lesser known poet named Johann Paul Richter. The rationale behind these three figures is the contrast they provide in their lives, whilst still being viewed with esteem by their English critics. Goethe, less than half a century after his death, was held as a universal figure on par with a Homer, or a Virgil. Schiller, whilst not universally viewed as quite the equal of Goethe, was nonetheless, a fine figure of German authorship, and highly regarded in England. Richter, though not having attained quite the level of renown as the prior two, was highly lauded by those who claimed to understand his life and work. Whilst occasional reference may be made here and there to reviews of other authors, the reception towards these three forms the basis of our examination.

In studying the idea of the writer as a transmitter of morals, Goethe makes an interesting study. As noted earlier, though he died in 1832, by the mid-nineteenth century, he

had already been enshrined in the pantheon of great literary figures.[253] He also, as Reed noted, had a 'reputation among the less open-minded for blasphemy and immorality.'[254]

In the article *Characteristics of Goethe*, the lawyer and literary scholar John Herman Merivale gave some explanation as to Goethe's perceived failings:[255]

> The effect of perpetual contact with the world,[256] in blunting the acuteness of genius, seems much more insidious and impalpably progressive. He who devotes himself to society, and has already attained its highest honours, must be constantly thinking of self, of the place which he occupies, and the means of best securing that place; which he soon finds to consist in avoiding all provocations to vehement controversy, and acting quietly and constantly on the defensive.

Merivale thus believed that Goethe had been seduced by the opulence of courtly life and though he was careful to state that Goethe 'was not liable to fall into that intentional obsequiousness which degrades the writers who traffic for the favour of greater princes,' this was due more to the 'honest, straightforward, benevolent Duke of Weimar'[257] rather than any moral courage on the part of Goethe.

The effects of this lust for princely favour which Merivale believed to have infected Goethe were that 'he systematically averted his regards from all the great questions which agitate society. He refused alike to meddle with the petty discussions of the day.'[258] This rebuke was indicative of the expectations placed on Goethe in particular, and literary figures

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[253] See the introduction of T. J. Reed, *Goethe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 1 – 7
[254] Ibid, p. 1
[255] John Merivale Herman, 'Characteristics of Goethe. From the German of Falk, von Müller, & c. with notes, original and translated, illustrative of German Literature,' *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 57, Issue 116 (July 1833), pp. 380 – 1.
[256] By which Merivale meant courtly life in Weimar, into which Goethe had been inducted.
[257] Merivale, *Characteristics of Goethe*, p. 380.
[258] Ibid, pp. 381 – 2.

more broadly. Merivale clearly believed that Goethe, in his role of doyen of German literature, had a duty to ask those 'questions which agitate society.' Here, it behoves us to clarify that this was not a desire for Goethe to have incited any sort of revolutionary fervour. In fact, recalling prior chapters, we have seen a general distaste for revolution and its associated anarchy. Rather, Goethe, vaunted as he was, could have provided instruction via the asking of 'great questions,' spurring on the creation of dialectic forums. Merivale further wrote that

> If there be any moral purport to be arrived at by a general comparison of his (Goethe's) works, it amounts to this: that the highest aim of man is to accommodate himself to the circumstances in which he is placed with relation to the natural world […] and to leave both social and supernatural interests to take care of themselves. [259]

In accordance with his perceived desire to retain the favours of the Duke of Weimar leading to Goethe's ambivalence to the state of developing Germany, the above passage, in which he was held to have confined himself to his own personal development, Merivale painted Goethe as a somewhat selfish individual who failed to engage with his audience to develop them, a failing in his role as a 'public moralist.' These criticisms are strikingly similar to the ones issued by Blackie,[260] when he noted that it was Goethe's infatuation with courtly life that had led to the degradation of the latter's literary talent.

In reinforcing his point, Blackie highlighted some small sections of Goethe's writing which are of pertinence.

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[259] Ibid, p. 383.
[260] Blackie, *Politics and Poetry*.

'Look at the Titan! With what unbending force of moral energy, he stands

alone against the whole host of despot gods, nursing a hate of tyranny too deep

to be spoken! […] Look now at Faust! Here you have neither clear intellect

nor decided will. You see a creature of groping speculation and dreaming

mysticism, […] a base and degraded sensualist, as irresolute in active life as

he was confused and sceptical in theoretical.'[261]

It seems probable that Blackie may well have intended the Titan and the 'creature of groping speculation' to have been allegories for the earlier and later Goethe. The importance Blackie places on the role of the Titan striving against despotism and tyranny is especially pertinent given attitudes explored in previous chapters towards the same. We see that Blackie had envisioned a role for Goethe but was disappointed when it transpired that it was rather Goethe the 'degraded sensualist' rather than Goethe the Titan that he found. Furthermore, Blackie writes of the Titan as possessing moral energy, highlighting the notion that there were certain expectations placed upon writers by their English critics to act as promulgators of morals and ethics. The 'base and degraded sensualist' too is telling, in that it extrapolates a certain 'French-ness' upon Goethe, combined with 'mysticism' and 'irresolution.'

Further highlighting this perception of Goethe's moral turpitude may be found in the critic and lawyer George Moir's article on Friedrich Schiller in which Moir contrasted Schiller and Goethe

One remark is forced upon us by the association of their names – the moral

influence of Schiller has always been […] far greater and more beneficial than

that of Goethe. […] Perhaps Goethe's devotion to literature was as lofty and

disinterested as that of Schiller, […] but he imparts little of his pure and

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[261] Ibid, p. 163.

elevated feeling to his works. In them, he rarely seeks to enlist our sympathies

on the side of virtue or moral courage.[262]

Here, we have a contrast between two of our subjects, both of them highly regarded as writers, though Goethe a little more so, but with their moral contributions highlighted. By 'enlisting' the sympathies of the reader on the 'side of virtue or moral courage,' Schiller was stimulating that dialectic discourse which Merivale and Blackie both found so wanting in the works of Goethe. The importance, of course, lies in 'virtue' and 'moral courage,' for in absenting them from his works, Goethe was failing in the role of a public moralist.

Furthering this theme of the writer having a moral responsibility, an article taken from *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* notes that

Schiller's great aim is to show that the natural and necessary course of

humanity is to rise from the physical or untutored state, through the aesthetical

or contemplative, to the moral or free state. In the due subjection of the

physical to the moral […] beauty is evolved and manifested. [… The

realisation of this ideal beauty is the attainment of truth – the ultimate object

of pursuit, and the good of human destiny.[263]

Here, if ever, is the clearest example of Mandler's civilizational perspective at work. The goal of humanity was to strive towards 'the attainment of truth,' which would allow the species to move beyond the petty and atavistic divisions of tribe, clan, and eventually, nations, to form a universal civilisation. The poet, as the personification of the cultural institution of literature, was meant to help shepherd his fellows towards this goal, and to

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[262] George Moir, 'Schiller's Leben, Geistesentwickelung, und Werke in Zusammenhang', *The Edinburgh Review* Volume 73, Issue 147 (April 1841), p. 188

[263] N.a., 'Frederick Schiller,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1857), p. 170 – 1.

elevate them above their 'untutored state.' The article ascribed to Schiller this 'great aim,' and, in another article, it was written that

> [His lectures as Professor in History at Jena] were animated by the finest philosophical spirit, and admirably calculated to awaken the interest and the sympathies of the young […] With the students of Jena, indeed, Schiller was almost an object of adoration.[264]

Here we have a palpable admiration for Schiller's rousing of the youth of Jena during his tenure there in 1789. It was felt that his teachings would manifest themselves in the later German attempts to overthrow the Napoleonic yoke. Indeed, Theodore Korner, another celebrated poet, but also a soldier who died fighting against France in the Napoleonic Wars, was a frequent correspondent with Schiller.

Schiller's poetry therefore had an effect beyond effete salons, and musty scholastic halls.

> Germany at this moment [i.e. Schiller's lifetime], although her position among the nations of the world is still far below her mental, industrial, and mercantile capacity, numbers not one state without a representative and (at least nominally) constitutional government. At such at time it was no longer the task of a great poet to complain of internal evils: the danger now came from without; and Schiller, […] at once perceived that his patriotism had to face another enemy. Germany had fallen under French influence. […] It now became the task of a national poet to rally his brethren […] and to show, […] that nationalities cannot be lost when they resolve to fight for their own.[265]

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[264] Moir, *Schiller's Leben*, p. 179.
[265] N.a., 'Why Germany glories in the memory of Schiller,' *London society : an illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (Feb 1862), p. 57.

Note that this passage identifies the role of a national poet. This poet, by being dint of being 'national' is representative, not only of literature in his nation, but also of his people, and his people's liberty. It therefore fell upon his shoulders to guide and teach his brethren to value their own independence against the foreign oppressor. As we shall see in the last section of this chapter, this was indeed what Schiller did, and thus came to be viewed as the conscience of late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century Germany. Conversely, Goethe was conspicuous in his complete abandonment of the moral responsibility of the poet. It is for this that his 'moral courage' was found wanting. He had shirked his duties as public moralist. Furthermore, as we shall see presently, Goethe had succumbed to the temptations of courtly life in Weimar, and, more damning, to the attentions of Napoleon, the foreign oppressor.

Blackie further lambasted Goethe for his 'political indifference, or what is the same thing, his indolent Conservatism,' by explaining that

> 'Poetry, indeed, is no separate profession, like law, theology, medicine, or
> soldiership. Its voice is neither the voice of the bar, nor the voice of the pulpit,
> nor the voice of the cannon; but it is emphatically the voice of man. […] If,
> indeed, it were the sole province of the artist to decorate the palaces of the
> great with the playful sports of a trifling fancy […] in this case, poetry might
> be looked upon as a separate profession, living apart from the serious interests,
> from the stirring hopes and fears of human life.[266]

To Blackie, the 'true artist is a patriot, […] by feeling, and acting, and writing, as a patriot ought to feel, and to write, and to act. […] He is not allowed to be the "impartial spectator".'[267] Blackie was therefore somewhat angered at Goethe's indifference to the 'great

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[266] Blackie, 'Politics and Poetry', p. 164.
[267] Ibid, p. 164.

questions of the day' as Merivale was, particularly in his belief that the 'true artist' ought to shepherd his people towards a greater state of being. In bending himself to the will of princes, and demagogues, Goethe was, in essence, betraying the principles of patriotism so cherished in England, as well as what were seen to be the duties of as public a figure as Goethe.

A rather damning testimony of this comes from the writer Sarah Austin, associate of both Bentham and the younger Mill, in her *Life and Works of Goethe* in which she wrote

> Goethe was […] intoxicated by the flattery of the enemy, the spoiler, and the insolent oppressor of his country and its crowned heads; […] this is the true, and we fear unanswerable charge against Goethe. […] but even this triumph of imagination over patriotism and duty seems to us to detract less from Goethe's value as a man, than his cool determination to take no part […] in the effort of Germany to shake off her intolerable yoke.[268]

The 'enemy' here is Napoleon who, having beaten Prussia and Austria at Jena and Austerlitz, made overtures towards Goethe, who as the passage indicates, succumbed to them. The betrayal of patriotic ideals in exchange for the glamour of Napoleon's imperial flattery is explicitly stated, as is the contempt for Goethe's unwillingness to aid his country for the sake of his principles of political indifference. As noted above, there was a perception that the artist could not exist in a vacuum, and that the works of the artist were also the works of a civilisation.

A further contrast between Schiller and Goethe deals with the idea that a poet ought to maintain some distance from the petty concerns of politics. From *Politics and Poetry*, Blackie quoted Goethe himself, when the latter wrote that the poet ought to abstain from political

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[268] Sarah Taylor Austin, 'The Life and Works of Goethe, with Sketches of his Age and Contemporaries', *The Edinburgh Review*, Volume 106, Issue 215 (July 1857), pp. 214 – 9.

parties as, in doing so, he surrendered his 'fine bird's eye view of human affairs,' and became too heavily influenced by partisanship.[269] However, Blackie noted Goethe's hypocrisy when he wrote that, 'We find that Goethe, though he constantly gave himself out as a man of no political party, was nevertheless […] a Conservative.'[270] He then went on to explain that

> Our object, on the present occasion, has been to shake ourselves free, in some
> measure, from the choking atmosphere of Toryism that pervades the works of
> Germany's greatest poet, and to warn our philo-Teutonic youth against that
> cold indifference to the progress of human society […] which too long a
> sojourn in the region of Goetheism is apt to engender.[271]

Blackie was a strong detractor of Goethe and decried what he perceived to be the unquestioning and universal adulation of the poet, going on to write of what he saw as the blind worship of a 'succession of literary absolutists.'[272] We will notice that his criticisms of Goethe in these passages had less to do with the quality of Goethe's work, and more to do with Goethe's 'cold indifference to the progress of human society.' Goethe, to Blackie was a failure in terms of his role as public moralist. Because critics such as Blackie did not seem to be able to clearly delineate the poet from the moralist, their views of the artistic merits of figures such as Goethe were skewed toward the negative. This, of course, speaks to the values of literature as a cultural institution contributing to the development of a nation.

As a counterpoint to the view of Goethe as failing in the role of public moralist, a contrast to those words on Goethe with these about Schiller serves well:

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[269] Blackie, *Politics and Poetry*, p. 163.
[270] Ibid, p. 164.
[271] Ibid, p. 167.
[272] Ibid, p. 167.

The study of a character so simply great as that of Schiller would be a useful one; but the union of genius and high principle which it exhibits, the lessons of self-reliance and self-respect which it impresses upon us, are of peculiar value in a period like the present, when talent and principle are so often found disassociated; when literature, like everything else, has assumed so much of a mechanical aspect; and genius is so frequently regarded simply as so much exchangeable value, to be bartered for fame and fortune. Schiller was one who invested the literary character with its highest dignity; he entered on it as a vocation, not a profession: like our own Milton.[273]

Of great interest is the 'disassociation' between 'talent and principle,' which we have shown was prevalent in nineteenth century English retrospectives on Goethe. In the case of Schiller, however, such a disassociation did not occur, for Moir saw in him a 'union of genius and high principle,' comparing him to Milton. This comparison is noteworthy in itself, for Moir placed Schiller on equal footing as the English luminary. By associating the two poets, Moir drew comparisons to not only their artistic merits but also, as we shall see shortly, to the manner in which they approached their craft. Furthermore, ascribing to Schiller the trait of 'self-reliance,' Moir gave him a notably English cast. One cannot help but see the association between Moir's distaste for the bartering of genius for 'fame and fortune,' and Goethe's lust for adulation and recognition. The language also is of some interest, when Moir wrote that 'literature, like everything else, has assumed so much of a mechanical aspect; and genius is so frequently regarded simply as so much exchangeable value.' This statement brings to mind Matthew Arnold's criticisms of what he saw as the increasing utilitarianism of English society, by ascribing to literature a 'mechanical aspect,' and genius as a tradeable commodity.

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[273] Moir, *Schiller's Leben*, pp. 151 – 2.

Furthermore, according to Moir, unlike Goethe, and much like Milton, Schiller engaged his field as a 'vocation,' and not a 'profession.' Not for him, Moir wrote, fame and fortune in exchange for his work. Schiller, because of his high principle, would not betray the ideals found in his writing for wealth or status, as Goethe had done when he fell prey to courtly life. Nor was Moir alone in thinking this.

> We have a high sense of the inherent nobility of the literary character. The man of letters, if he has *attained to the right idea of his calling*[274], is […] an apostle of the beautiful and the true. […] Genius has been too frequently narrowed and debased by paltry motives and low aims. […] In Frederick Schiller, we have a writer of the noblest type. Richly endowed, cultured, enthusiastic, devoted, aspiring ever after a higher excellence […] by his high-toned sentiments and immortal creations has added largely to the world's intellectual wealth and made mankind his debtors.[275]

The same arguments are made here, namely that if the poet has 'attained the right idea of his calling,' then his work becomes something transcendent. Schiller's work was not 'debased by paltry motives and low aims,' and thus was a benefit to not only his nation, but universal civilisation as a whole. It is not hard to imagine that these writers would question the value of Goethe's work, not in its literary merits, but in its contribution to the progress of the human species. Goethe, as we have explored, was certainly seen by some to have pursued 'paltry motives and low aims.' Though he protested his innocence, Goethe had, as Blackie noted, surrendered himself to the pettiness of politics, surrendering his 'fine, bird's eye view of human nature.'

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[274] The emphasis is mine.
[275] N.a., *Frederick Schiller*, pp. 167 – 8.

We have seen thus far, what Goethe's detractors had to write about him. 'Blasphemy and immorality' as cited by Reed are somewhat ambiguous terms, that do not adequately situate these criticisms within the broader context of English intellectual life. Rather, it was the perception of Goethe's susceptibility to flattery and the advances of court opulence that damned him in the eyes of his critics. His indifference to the socio-political development of Germany was a further cause of disapprobation. Viewed through the lens of Mandler's civilizational perspective, Goethe's unwillingness to embroil himself in the affairs of the day, and his perceived insistence on crafting his art within a vacuum contributed nothing to furthering the cause of German civilization, though doubtless, Goethe would argue otherwise, and that, by remaining aloof from politics, he could better serve his art. As Blackie wrote, poetry could not exist as 'a separate profession, living apart from the serious interests, from the stirring hopes and fears of human life.' Because poetry was 'the voice of man,' Goethe was seen to have had a moral responsibility to engage with the pressing concerns of the developing nation of Germany.[276] This, as shown, he was believed to have failed to do.

Furthermore, in Austin's eyes, his indulgence of Napoleon's flattery was intolerable. Consorting with the Duke of Weimar may have blunted his literary ability, as Merivale wrote. At the very least, however, Weimar was still a German state, whereas Napoleon had conquered Germany and established the puppet Confederation of the Rhine, imposing despotism upon the liberties of the German people. In this instance, Goethe was no longer a passive spectator, but a supporter of his countrymen's oppressor. This betrayal of patriotic ideals, understandably, would have been fit for condemnation in England.

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[276] For context, the spark of German nationhood was started after the Battles of Jena and Austerlitz, in 1806 and 1805 respectively. The Hambach Festival of 1832, the first manifest expression of a desire for German unity, took place months after Goethe's death. He would therefore have borne witness to the spread of German nationalism.

It is interesting to note, however, that these detractors were rather in the minority of commenters on Goethe, and speak of a divorce between the qualities of 'Talent' and 'Morality.' Most periodical articles on Goethe tend to gloss over, or ignore, his 'transgressions,' focusing on his literary merits. There is of course, a sensible explanation for this, in that a review of Goethe's works ought to be about precisely that. However, given that there was a propensity to explore the life and character of the author, as well as his work, in these reviews, some further exploration is required.

In order to understand why the issue of Goethe's morality was often overlooked, it is necessary to grasp the place which he occupied in the English literary world. As mentioned in the opening paragraphs, he had, by the mid-nineteenth century, and indeed, even earlier, come to be viewed as an Olympian figure, on par with Shakespeare, and other such luminaries. In an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, the young Goethe is described as

> the literary lion of his native city, sought and admired by all the notabilities of
> the day, and standing out in strong contrast with most of them. Klopstock,
> Lavater, Basedow, Jacobi, and the Stolbergs, eagerly cultivated his
> acquaintance. […] Heine […] describes him at this period: "[…] I know of no
> man in the whole history of literature who at such an age can be compared to
> him in fulness and completeness of genius."[277]

This is high and effusive praise, especially the quote from Heine, himself a celebrated writer. Of particular note is that the author of the article emphasized the admiration of Goethe's fellow German literati, many of them also older than Goethe, whilst noting that they sought him out, and that even in his youth, Goethe stood above them.

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[277] N.a., 'Goethe: His Life and Character', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1856), pp. 139 – 40.

Even Merivale, in spite of his distaste for Goethe's supplication to courtly life, wrote that 'great as the musical flexibility of the German language is, no one had imagined before his appearance that it could be employed in such various forms of harmony, each equally consummate and faultless. […] his command over the rugged joints and sinews of language […] is equally perfect and inexplicable.'[278] This may or may not be hyperbole, but the intention here is not to demonstrate the veracity of these claims, but rather to examine how they identified the place Goethe held in the literary world. In the quote, Goethe is a revolutionizing force and a literary Midas, able to employ lyrics and prose in such a manner as had never before been done. This revolutionary quality is of some importance, as it marks Goethe out as a high watermark of German literature, and sets him apart from others.

In *Goethe and His Critics*, Goethe's 'name has acquired a singular sort of omnipresence,' and was 'a transcendent mind […] who, though but recently dead, may be deemed the patriarch of German literature.'[279] These words, 'transcendent,' 'patriarch,' and 'omnipresent,' mirror the sentiments above. It was not merely that he was a great writer, but that he had *transcended* his contemporaries who came to him in supplication. In answer to the charges that, due to his indifference to socio-political affairs, Goethe was effectively ignoring the development of culture and civilization, the writer wrote that

> We have asserted that the encouragement and example of Goethe sufficed to
> create and send forth an ardent and indefatigable band of youthful adventurers,
> and to turn their energies and talents to the best account. Two great branches
> of literature, two new realms of thought – the works of the Germano-British
> and of the Indo-Germanic poet – of Shakespeare and Kalidasa, were

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[278] Merivale, 'Characteristics of Goethe', p. 373
[279] N.a., 'Goethe and His Critics', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Volume 36, Issue 214 (October 1847), pp. 481 – 3.

conquered, were appropriated to, were amalgamated with, and engrafted upon

the German mind.[280]

Thus, the answer to critics who highlighted Goethe's betrayal of patriotic ideals was simply

that, by existing, and writing, emanations of Goethe's greatness would inspire others. This

seems rather facetious, but nonetheless, it aids in understanding how Goethe had been

elevated to a state of near-veneration by some English commenters.

The connection to Shakespeare is also of interest, for the writer of the article believed

that it was Goethe who popularized the Bard in Germany:

Any recommendation from Lessing would not make Shakespeare beloved.

Goethe […] whilst he was by no means the first of German writers who

discovered the transcendent excellency of our bard, […] was the man whose

admiration of Shakespeare made the bard popular.[281]

Here, we see two points of note. The first, that Lessing, though a highly regarded writer and

dramatist in his own right, was not so well thought of that he could, by his own preferences,

stir the public imagination towards a liking for Shakespeare. Goethe, however, could do so

merely by his admiration. Once again, this speaks to the higher role Goethe was perceived to

have occupied.

The second is the connection to Shakespeare; the article does not explicitly compare

the two greats, but note once again the use of language such as 'transcendent.' In *The London

Review*, a more direct comparison is made: 'Towering like intellectual giants above the rest

of men – at least, above all men of modern times – and characterized alike by insight into

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[280] Ibid, p. 492.
[281] Ibid, p. 492.

human nature, they themselves, their works, and their lives, are rich in contrast.'[282] It is worth

noting here, the phrase 'of modern times.' Thus, it is possible to conceive that Goethe and

Shakespeare were seen to have been surpassed by, or perhaps equal to, only the great

classical writers, a Homer, an Aristotle, or an Aurelius. Similarly, in *The National Review*, it

was written that 'Goethe is almost unrivalled in the literary world in the degree in which he

combines these qualities. Shakespeare may have had them equally, but his dramas are too

impersonal to tell us clearly what kind of individual influence he put forth.'[283]

An article in *Dublin University Magazine* provides a further paragraph regarding the

connection between Goethe and Shakespeare:

> The exquisite love-scenes between Faust and Marguerite […] need no
>
> allusion. For nature, simplicity, and beauty, they have few parallels; Dante's
>
> "Francesca," and the scenes between Ferdinand and Miranda, in the
>
> "Tempest," bear the nearest parallel. The cathedral scene […] as a scene of
>
> dramatic power and tragic depth […] is certainly equal to any in Shakespeare.
>
> […] In a word, there is hardly a scene in the work which Shakespeare might
>
> not have written.[284]

Thus, we see that not only has the writer constructed a parallel between Shakespeare and

Goethe, but with Dante as well.

In reading these comparisons between Shakespeare and Goethe, it is important to

highlight the fact that Shakespeare, while pre-eminent in his own day, had a further two

centuries in which his popularity grew in England. The articles quoted above were written

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[282] N.a., 'Goethe's "Faust"', *The London Review of politics, society, literature, art, and science*, Volume 8, Issue 207 (18 June, 1864), p. 660.
[283] N.a., 'Characteristics of Goethe', *The National Review*, Issue 4 (April 1856), p. 242
[284] N.a., 'Glimpses of Goethe, His Genius, His Theories, and His Works', *Dublin University Magazine*, Volume 60, Issue 360 (December 1862), p. 676.

mere decades after the death of Goethe and speak to the regard in which he was held in England. That English commenters saw fit to equate him to their foremost literary figure denotes the degree of admiration for his work and allows us to return to the idea of a divorce between 'Talent' and 'Morality.' Though there were those who decried certain aspects of Goethe's life, these were in a minority, and as shown by example of Merivale, were still laudatory towards Goethe's literary ability and worth. It is not unreasonable to propose that, by the mid-nineteenth century, Goethe's reputation and stature had assumed mythic proportions and that, to many, he ceased to be seen as merely a writer, and more of an almost elemental figure, representative of literature as a whole.

That he was deemed by some as 'immoral' or 'blasphemous' would have been irrelevant, and therefore such aspects of his life were glossed over, or ignored in periodical reviews. The fact that he fell prey to Napoleon's overtures, and that, besides in Austin's work, this was rarely mentioned is perhaps the clearest example of this. At the same time, one ought to be wary of placing undue gravity on this, as it was hardly a case of collaboration in the vein of a Quisling, or a Benedict Arnold. Nonetheless, given the close proximity between the collapse of Napoleon's empire, and the death of Goethe, it seems likely that this was purposefully disregarded.

It seems, therefore, that for the most part, English commentators held German writers to have had a moral responsibility, to educate and uplift the reading public and to 'steel them against the hard duties of life.' The perceived role of writers and poets was therefore an extremely important one. It was upon their shoulders that the burden of shaping their society fell, at least partially, and even writers widely (but not universally) acknowledged as being superb at their craft, such as Goethe, were taken to task by English critics. It was seen by those critics, that writers had entered into a form of social contract in which they were obligated to the moral education of society. Furthermore, it was expected that they abstain

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from partaking in 'low and paltry aims,' such as on the part of Schiller. What is of interest is that Goethe, though he received chastisement from a few dissenting voices, was held in higher regard than Schiller as a purely literary force. As noted, there is a definite tone throughout many of the articles on his life and works of his transcendence beyond a merely German writer, into a universal one. It is perhaps for this reason that criticisms of his life amongst mid-nineteenth century English commentators were relatively few. Nonetheless, for a writer to have achieved the degree of fame and veneration that Goethe did in England was a rare occurrence. Even one as superbly talented as Schiller was not held to the same level of reverence. To English critics, the lives and morality of these 'lesser' writers was as important as the quality of their works, inferring a moral driver behind the former, and how they viewed their counterparts.

The Poet as *Zeitgeist*: Schiller, Liberty, and Germany

Thus far, we have seen some of the problems English critics discerned were at the heart of German literature, particularly the stultifying effects of despotism upon, not only artistic endeavours, but also the development and growth of the artists and poets engaged in such. We have also looked at the idea of the poet held up as an exemplar of morals, and how a transcendent figure such as Goethe may have been placed above such mortal, petty concerns by English writers. In this section, the focus is upon views of the poet as an embodiment of national characteristics, and a sort of *zeitgeist*, representative of the German quest for liberty. We shall see, for example, how English critics associated Schiller's *The Robbers* with their own disapprobation on statism and autocracy, and how it was felt that the failings of the chief characters were analogous to the perceived failings in the German national character, resultant from the degenerative effects of oppressive German

governments. In order to do this, we shall look closely at two of our previous subjects, Frederick Schiller, and Jean Paul Richter. As discussed earlier, neither were seen as the artistic equals of Goethe, but were held in high esteem for being more moral, and therefore possessing more admirable qualities. By examining some English publications on the lives of these two poets, further insight will be gained as to what was thought of Germany and the Germans during the nineteenth century.

Most periodical articles dealing with Schiller tend to emphasize strongly his unhappiness during his early life under the patronage of the Duke of Wurttemberg, and his residence at the *Karlsschule Stuttgart*, where his days were regimented, and he was forced into the study of law, and later, medicine. In an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, it was written that 'five dreary years of disgust and irritation were passed in the Stuttgart School, and Schiller had reached his nineteenth year. At this age he began in secret to compose his celebrated play, the "Robbers".'[285] However, it notes that the play itself was crude and unfinished because Schiller, 'secluded as he had been, could know little of the actual world of mankind.'[286] Youth and inexperience on his part played a role in this, but it seems not unlikely that the oppression and rigidity of educational life in Wurttemberg was therefore held to have been responsible for Schiller's early incomprehension as to the realities of life. We will recall our earlier discussions on how the unwillingness of the German governments to allow its subjects civil liberty engendered a lack of self-reliance and inability to engage with the realities of life amongst the population. Furthermore, consider also the perception of the German character as being one of a naturally speculative nature, more given to dreams than practicalities. All these traits led to the view of *Die Räuber* as being crude and unpolished, although the paramount seems to have been Schiller's own inexperience.

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[285] N.a., 'Frederick Schiller,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1857), p. 168.
[286] Ibid, p. 168.

The article highlights the main character of the play, 'In Karl von Moor, the robber chief, we have a being endowed with a noble, generous spirit, but at war with the conventional forms and the petty meannesses of society.'[287] Furthermore, it notes that, 'The soliloquy of Karl […] is a plaint which could proceed only from a noble and generous nature, lost through crime. […] it thrills by its intensity, and touches by its pathos.' It was this sympathy elicited for the struggles of a 'noble and generous nature' beaten by the petty 'meannesses' of (German) society that created 'the sensation produced throughout Germany […] Even France and England were stirred. […] and arbitrary power, in the person of the Grand Duke, frowned displeasure.'[288]

This last sentence is of some importance to us. Arbitrary Power, as we will explore in more detail in the third chapter, was a great danger to a nation, and was held to be partially responsible for the revolutions of 1848. The writer of the article in *Tait's* personifies that in the Grand Duke. His patronage, and the *Karlsschule*, were therefore means of control on his part, and it was these two institutions that had served to quash Schiller's artistry. In defiance of this, Schiller had produced a play in which one of the central characters was 'at war with the conventional forms […] of society.' Additionally, the article goes on, 'The ideas of his Highness as to the literary proprieties had been formed according to the improved standard of the French school. We may, therefore, conceive his astonishment and disgust at the extraordinary production which had emerged from his own model Academy.'[289] Here we have the spectre of France looming over the natural expression of Germanism represented by Schiller. What is implied in these passages was an attack upon the natural character of the individual by the machinery of an onerous state. In this sense, there was a perception of Schiller as representative of the individual, whose character could only further be developed

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[287] Ibid, p. 168.
[288] Ibid, p. 168
[289] Ibid, p. 168.

once it had obtained liberty from the state, represented by the Grand Duke, but who, until then, was doomed to subjugation and a lack of awareness of practical realities.

Left to his own devices, able to develop himself according to his personal sensibilities, Schiller, it was noted, became much loved in Germany, establishing himself as, not only one of their pre-eminent writers, but also, unlike Goethe, as a figure revered for his character:

> The Schiller festival was not considered as a mere artistic and literary commemoration, but rather in the light of a great national and political demonstration. This was shown still more strongly, when one compared the general and spontaneous interest evidenced on this occasion with the signal indifference under which […] had passed the centenary commemoration of another German star, the great Goethe. […] Thus it was evident that in Schiller, Germany wanted to do homage to something more than the poetical genius. And what this was, we may express at once by the few noble words which Goethe himself spoke of Schiller, […] "Schiller," says Goethe, "was essentially *the poet of Liberty.*"[290]

We see here, the perceived difference in the reception between Goethe and Schiller amongst Germans. The former, as observed earlier in this chapter, was a titan of the literary world, a transcendent figure who had come to embody Literature. Schiller, however, remained in the realm of humanity, and invested in mortal concerns, and it was this, according to the article above that caused the ebullience during the centennial celebration of his birth.

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[290] N.a., 'Why Germany glories in the memory of Schiller', London society : an illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (February 1862), p. 55.

It was principally because Schiller was 'the poet of Liberty,' that the esteem in which he was held in Germany was deemed to have been so high. In the article, *Schiller and his Times*, it was written that

> The most cordial unanimity prevailed among Germans, and every town in
> which they dwell (and where do they not?) gave honest testimony of their
> loving admiration for the poet. […] After the completion of "Wallenstein" he
> was considered by the masses the greatest poet of Germany. This veneration
> was […] finally raised to intensity by the patriotic song-writers, who, during
> the War of Liberation, summoned the youth of Germany to arms by imitation
> of the Horseman's song in "Wallenstein."[291]

Thus, it was acknowledged that by his work, Schiller had stimulated the Germans in their fight against Napoleon's subjugation. Continuing on, the author wrote that

> The very things for which Schiller had formerly been reproached, now became
> the foundation of his fame. Authors of the most various hues […] were at
> length forced into the belief that Schiller was the poet of liberty, virtue, and
> the fatherland.[292]

Because much of his work protested the institutions of a heavy-handed government, and paralleled the struggles that took place, first against Napoleon, and later in the century, in the revolutions of 1848, he was in many ways, an embodiment of the pervasive German desire for unification. An interesting contrast, if we recall, to Goethe who was criticised by some English commenters for falling prey to Napoleon's tender solicitations. Note also two of the appellations above, 'liberty' and 'virtue.' Schiller was not, according to the author, a

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[291] n.a., 'Schiller and His Times', *The New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 117, Issue 468 (Dec 1859), pp. 446 – 51.
[292] Ibid, p. 451.

nationalist populist willing to sacrifice all merely for the sake of 'fatherland,' and unification, as was the case with so many during 1848. He represented the better qualities of this desire in also striving for liberty and virtue, qualities much more appreciable to English critics than mere nationhood. As our next chapter will explore in greater detail, rabid nationalism, untempered by ideals of patriotism and liberty, was highly sinister, and evoked images of French republicanism and *la Terreur*.

The English perception of French influence in Germany certainly helped to contribute to the critics' views of Schiller. Bonapartism and Caesarism, as we explored in the first chapter, were still dangers in the minds of many English critics during the mid-nineteenth century, and would continue to be such until the third Napoleon succumbed to Germany and Bismarck. The wave of revolutions which swept across Europe, and the decidedly French cast to many of them would only have reinforced this to English writers watching events unfold on the continent. Many English commenters on Schiller saw fit to highlight this to their readers, and also to note Schiller's role in fighting against despotism. The issue of whether Schiller truly was a staunch opponent to despotism seems best set aside for the present. What is of greatest relevance is that English critics saw him as such, and because of this, he came to represent, in their eyes, the German desire for independence and unification.

As we saw in the previous section, a perceived lust for adulation, though it might come at the hands of Bonaparte, was a terrible flaw many English critics perceived in Goethe. Indeed, though it may be said with some degree of certainty that none saw Goethe as a mere amateur, this desire for public recognition was, as noted in the first section of the chapter, a trait most associated with the class of 'industrious moles' who possessed little to no talent. Schiller, however, was free of this due to his high-minded adherence to principle. It was perhaps easy to romanticise the figure of the young Schiller ruining his health and nerves by writing *The Robbers* by candlelight, forever fearful of the Duke of Wurttemberg's

authoritarian scrutiny. Certainly, the robber Karl's defiance of accepted norms and oppressive society would have drawn parallels to German society in the eyes of mid-nineteenth century English critics. For all the reasons above, it was Schiller, and not Goethe, who came to be viewed as the spirit of the nineteenth century German desire for liberty.

Most German of all Germans: Richter and the German national character

If Schiller could be said to represent German patriotism, then certainly, from the perspective of English commenters, Jean Paul Frederick Richter embodied the essence of the characteristics and qualities of the German which English critics found so laudable, with the philosopher, William Henry Smith, labelling Richter as 'this most German of all Germans.'[293] Writing effusively, our classical scholar Blackie exclaimed

> A genuine German! […] A German in imagination – […] a German for
> kindliness and simplicity and true-heartedness […] a German for devoutness
> of heart, and purity of unadulterated evangelic feeling. […] A German further
> is Richter […] in the profoundness of his philosophy and the subtlety of his
> speculation […] A German further, and specially in this man, in his vast and
> various erudition, and in that quality without which learning was never
> achieved, hard laboriousness and indefatigable perseverance.[294]

This litany of qualities Blackie identified as belonging to the German race, was distilled in the form of Richter. It is worth noting the sweeping view he took of the Germans, that they all were in possession to some greater or lesser extent of these characteristics. It was not uncommon for many English commenters to adopt such language, as we shall see, though

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[293] William Henry Smith, 'Jean Paul Richter', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 94, Issue 575 (September 1863), p. 311.
[294] Blackie, 'Life of Jean Paul Frederick Richter', p. 34.

differences in geography and culture were sometimes noted, such as between Weimar, and the rest of Germany. It is also worth noting that many of those qualities might also fit mid-nineteenth century English perceptions of their own national character, namely honesty in 'true-heartedness' and also hard work, and perseverance. Furthermore, 'devoutness of heart, and […] unadulterated evangelical feeling' brings to mind a more direct and simple faith, devoid of the pomp and ritual of Roman Popery.

Nor was Blackie above noting what he deemed to be faults in the German character, going on to explain

> Then his faults, also – […] how German are they! His want of taste, his mingled homeliness and sublimity, his unpruned luxuriance, his sentimental wantonness! But let these pass; he who notices them seriously is not fit to read Richter. […] John Bull especially, with his stone and lime church, his statutable religion, and his direct railroad understanding, is very apt to be exasperated by the capricious, jerking electric points of such a genuine German genius as Richter.[295]

It should be said that, though he labelled them faults, judging by the tone of his writing, Blackie considered them anything but. They may have seemed to him peculiarities to the English public, but he felt that if there was offense taken to these characteristics, then it was an offense at the foreign, and not an issue of morality. We see from the passage above, how Blackie perceived that John Bull, with customary straightforwardness, the 'direct railroad understanding,' could be frustrated by the nuances and subtleties of the German character exemplified in Richter. Carlyle too, seemed to have been quite taken with Richter's character, describing him to be 'full of fire, strength and impetuosity […] at the same time […] in the

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[295] Ibid, pp. 34 – 5.

highest degree, mild, simple-hearted, humane. […] A man of quiet tastes, and warm, compassionate affections!'[296] The particular traits that Blackie and Carlyle singled out for praise are worth noting; 'humane,' 'simple-hearted,' 'want of taste,' 'homeliness.' These traits of simple domesticity were to be found in general descriptions of the German people at large.

To elucidate this point further, we may take a look at our travel writer, Samuel Laing, in his *Notes of a Traveller*. Commenting on what he believed to be the seemingly inimical relationship between the German people and the Prussian government, he wrote

> It is a struggle of contradictions. A rigid censorship of the press, and a general
>
> education of the people; a religious population, and an interference of
>
> government with, and a subversion by its edicts of, the religious observances,
>
> forms, and prayers of a church […]; a moral people, and an intermeddling of
>
> the hand of government in free action of man as a moral agent.[297]

Laing's criticisms of the Prussian government, here, are of only marginal interest. It is with his descriptors of the German people that we are most concerned. An essentially moral people, possessing of simple faith, the Germans of Laing's observations bear striking similarity to the Richter of Blackie and Carlyle.

Similarly, John Murray III, of the Murray publishing family, wrote in his *Handbook for Travellers on the Continent* of what he perceived to be the domesticity and lack of pretension on the part of the German people

> The Germans are not ashamed of being pleased with trifles, nor of being
>
> pleased in very humble company: they think only whether they enjoy; and, if

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[296] Thomas Carlyle, 'Jean Paul Frederich Richter', p. 181.
[297] Laing, *Notes of a Traveller*, pp. 100 – 1.

their enjoyment costs little money and little trouble, so much the better. They

love their old customs and traditional festivals much better than we do, and

keep to them more faithfully.[298]

Murray's commentary was of course a simple descriptor for the discerning English tourist

who had purchased the *Handbook*, but it also serves as further commentary on the perception

that the average German was one who lived with some degree of humility, being 'pleased

with trifles,' and in 'humble company.' Murray then goes on to quote a pastoral scene of

German festivity:

> I have nothing to tell you about the beauty and grace (of the rustic dancer),
>
> except that they had none; they had, however, cheerfulness and *perfect*
>
> *absence of affectation*,[299] which are always agreeable. The kind and familiar
>
> deportment of their superiors inspires them with such confidence that they
>
> never seem to conceive that their innocent pleasures can excite disgust or
>
> ridicule. […] The above accurate and pleasing account […] is inserted here,
>
> both because it describes a scene which travellers may meet with at every step
>
> all over Germany, and also with a belief that the customs of Germany are, in
>
> this respect worthy of imitation, to a certain extent, in England.[300]

We see again the image of a 'rustic' German, affable and without apprehensions to societal

strictures. The phrase 'absence of affectation' is important in this regard, implying the

domesticity and simplicity perceived to be a major part of the German character.

We have already seen how there was some admiration for Richter's 'quiet tastes, and

warm, compassionate affections.' There is a further comparison to be drawn between

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[298] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, p. 198.
[299] The emphasis is mine.
[300] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, p. 199.

Murray's picture of 'rustic dancers' unconscious to their own lack of 'beauty and grace,' and Richter's 'want of taste, his mingled homeliness and sublimity, his unpruned luxuriance.' A further source of admiration for Richter is to be found in Blackie's description of his snubbing of the societal norms of 'cultured' society seen in the manner in which he dressed:

> Richer chose to go with his throat bare, *a la Hamlet*, and cut off his *queue*. It is noticeable that this cutting off the *queue* – an appendage which we now hold in the same profound respect as we do the tattooing of savages – was looked upon as rather the greater enormity of the two, This deviance of the custom or fashion of society may well be excused in one who felt that, if he could not defy society in these her petty tyrannies, society would trample upon him.[301]

Similarly, Blackie noted that 'Among the good Burghers in Hof, the scandal of an unpowdered pate and a bare throat was intolerable,' but that 'Paul[302] was determined to vindicate his poetical liberty in this matter; however small in itself, there was a principle [...] of the utmost consequence in social life.[303]' This is of some consequence, remembering that, in the prior chapter we have seen how the German was viewed to have had little in the way of civil liberties. Now, there is, of course, a difference between living under an authoritarian government without those liberties enjoyed in England, and being somewhat underdressed, but one ought also to remember that the press in Germany during the mid-nineteenth century came under heavy scrutiny and censorship, so that Richter's determination to maintain his 'poetical liberties' may have been regarded as a matter of some significance, especially when contrasted with Goethe, and what was perceived to be the latter's desire to be accepted by the courtly life of Weimar. Whilst the former was seen to represent the simplicity, domesticity,

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[301] Smith, 'Jean Paul Richter', p. 317.
[302] Colloquially referring to Jean Paul Frederick Richter.
[303] Blackie, 'Life of Jean Paul Richter', p. 35

and rural charms of *Vaterland*, the latter was embodied as the cosmopolitanism, and gauche courtliness of Weimar.

Richter was further lauded for what was seen as his inherent religiosity and faith, 'a deep instinct, a God-given intuition of universal brotherhood.' [304] In *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, it was further noted that Richter was 'in spirit the most catholic and large-hearted of the "cosmopolitcan" Germans. […] decidedly the most evangelical (in the true ancient sense) and Christian,' as opposed to Goethe, described in the same passage as a 'heathen of the heathens.'[305] Great emphasis was placed on his pietism:

> With so much magnificent prate about a mainly external catholicity in Oxford,
>
> it is of the highest importance that the religious mind of England should be
>
> supplied from other sources with that internal, emotional, universally human,
>
> and Christian (not theological or sacerdotal) nourishment, which alone is
>
> worthy to be called, because it alone really is Catholic.[306]

The emphasis, therefore, seems to be on individual character, rather than an attraction to societal norms, similar to the issue of dress seen above. Catholicism here refers more to the Oxford Movement and the roots of what was to become Anglo-Catholicism, rather than the Roman counterpart, which evoked imagery of popery, pomp, and ritual. Indeed, Davis writes of an increasing interest in German theology and scholarship during the nineteenth century,[307] during which English writers attempted to reconcile German Protestantism with religious issues in England, such as the Emancipation of the Catholics, abolishment of the Test Acts,

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[304] George Irvine, 'Jean Paul Friederich Richter. Ein Biographischer Commentar zu dessen Werken,' *The Dublin Review*, Vol. 9, Issue 17 (August 1840), pp. 156 – 70.
[305] 'The Life of Jean Paul Richter,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 12, Issue 140 (August 1845), p. 517.
[306] Ibid, p. 518.
[307] Davis, *Victorians and Germany*, chapter 3, particularly pp. 107 – 43.

and the aforementioned Oxford Movement. Richter's own 'unadulterated, evangelic feeling,'

was therefore of some interest to English critics of German literature.

This fascination with Richter's faith and religiosity was expounded upon by Carlyle,

when he wrote that

Richter's Philosophy, a matter of no ordinary interest, both as it agrees with

the common philosophy of Germany, and disagrees with it, must not be

touched on for the present. One only observation we shall make: it is not

mechanical, or sceptical; it springs […] from the depths of the human spirit;

and yields […] a noble system of Morality, and the firmest conviction of

Religion.

Carlyle reveals to us, therefore, the importance he placed on what he saw as the essential

character of Richter. He carried on writing that

To a careless reader he might seem the wildest of infidels; for nothing can

exceed the freedom with which he bandies to and fro the dogmas of religion,

nay, sometimes the highest objects of Christian reverence. […] Yet,

independently of all dogmas, nay, perhaps in spite of many, Richter is in the

highest sense of the word religious. A reverence, not a self-interested fear, but

a noble reverence for the spirit of all goodness, forms the crown and glory of

his culture.[308]

In these passages, there is doubtless much which is fawning and sentimental, yet, Carlyle has

identified the salient points of what he believed to be Richter's faith. We see once again, a

return to the constant themes that was common in writing on Richter, namely, humility and

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[308] Carlyle, 'Jean Paul Frederich Richter', pp. 192 – 3.

simplicity, with a quiet virtue, themselves features of what was believed to be the German national character.

Richter, it was acknowledged, was not a writer who would have found a wide reading audience in England, unlike his contemporaries. 'Not in England, most assuredly, could Jean Paul Richter have found favour with the multitude – with the multitude, we mean, of that middle class which supplies the great mass of readers; not in England could he have ever been a popular writer,' wrote William Henry Smith, explaining that, 'the more general prosecution of science, the more definite aims in politics, and the theological debates […] are the causes to which we allude.[309]' Carlyle explained that, 'so fantastic, many-coloured, far-grasping, everyway perplexed and extraordinary, is his mode of writing, that […] these things have restricted his sphere of action […] to his own country.[310]' The contrast is somewhat interesting: whereas Smith implies that Richter received little attention in England because his writings were not in line with popular genres, Carlyle's stance was that Richter's works were simply too complex to be effectively translated. This latter view is more often espoused than the former. For example, George Irvine explained that

> We must object, however, to the long-winded disquisitions on the several
> productions of Richter's genius […] To this objection it may be added, that the
> stule too frequently runs into an enervated amplification, is too diffuse and
> flowery, and is plenteously besprinkled with long compound words […] which
> do not enhance the grace or perspicuity of the periods. The lengthiness
> objected to […] is a habit, we may say a defect, of the German pen.[311]

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[309] Smith, 'Jean Paul Richter', p. 310.
[310] Carlyle, 'Jean Paul Frederich Richter', 179 – 80.
[311] George Irvine, 'Jean Paul Friedrich Richter', pp. 159 – 60.

It is important to note that Irvine's criticism of Richter's work was not exclusive to that poet, the former having described it as symptomatic of German literature. Irvine does note, however, that Richter derived much of his inspiration from 'the living world of his own experience,' which allowed Richter to create a work 'of great merit and lasting value.'[312]

The lack of widespread interest in Richter was further explained by Blackie who was careful to explain the disproportionate interest in Goethe had left English views on Germany somewhat skewed, 'We have now almost to satiety made a survey of the neat classical Weimar, and we are plunging at once […] into the very centre of the Fatherland.'[313] Here, 'neat, classical Weimar' represents the more cosmopolitan Goethe, whereas Richter is the embodiment of the 'Fatherland.'[314] Thus, to Blackie, Goethe belonged to the school of princes and courtly life which, as we may recall, were not to him 'of the highest order of men.'[315] In his opinion, Richter was much more emblematic of the German character, than Goethe, the latter being insulated by the courtly life of Weimar. To these English critics, Richter seems to have been, not only a source of admiration, but also a lesson of sorts to their reading audience. They were as quick to extol their perception of his virtues as they were to write of his literary genius. To authors like Arnold, the lessons of Richter's life would serve as a tempering force against England's increasing mercantilism and industrialisation. This also served the further purpose of discerning the characteristics of the German, exemplified in that 'most German of all Germans.'

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[312] Ibid, p. 159.
[313] Blackie, *Life of Jean Paul Frederick Richter*, p. 34.
[314] A good read on classical Weimar may be found in T.J. Reed, *The classical centre: Goethe and Weimar* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1980).
[315] Blackie, *Politics and Poetry*, pp. 162.

Conclusion

Mid-nineteenth century English thought on national character was hardly an exact science. There was no basis by which 'character' could be empirically judged, and no means with which to discern the peculiarities of a nation's population. Certainly, some made the attempt. Thomas Nicholas and his table outlining, and delineating, the characteristics and qualities of the 'Celtic,' 'English,' and 'German' peoples comes to mind.[316] Yet, these failed to gain much traction, perhaps because of their inherently racial foundations. What was more common to explorers of national character, was to focus on England's history of Anglo-Saxonism. This, naturally, led to an interest in the shared heritage with Germany, culminating in what Matthew Arnold labelled 'Teutomania.'[317] Inevitably, attention was paid to those institutions which formed the pillars of Germany. Of these various pillars, the literary one is what we have attempted to explore here, particularly in the ways in which they contributed to thought on the German national character.

Schiller, as we discussed, was the 'poet of liberty,' the clearest example to English commenters, of the German desire for Nationhood. However, it is important to note that to these English critics, what made Schiller so attractive was that they felt him to have a blend of both patriotism and nationalism, and thus not liable to fall into the traps of a blatant focus on the latter quality, which will be covered more extensively in the following chapter. In fact, Schiller's reputation in England was greatly enhanced because of this. His adolescence spent at the *Karlsschule*, and his determination to compose *Die Räuber* in defiance of the restrictions placed upon him by his patron, the Duke of Wurttemberg was seen, in retrospect, not as a sign of youthful rebelliousness, but of a fervent love of liberty, not only in the action of writing the play, but also in its content. Through a romantic lens, and divided by nearly a

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[316] See Thomas Nicholas, *The Pedigree of the English People* (1868).
[317] Cited in Mandler, *The English National Character*, p. 59

half century, English commentators ascribed meanings and subtexts to Schiller's early life that may have been anachronisms. The veracity of these subtexts is here an interesting, but frankly, irrelevant, quandary. What is of greater importance is that, in constructing an image of Schiller as the 'poet of liberty,' our English writers were describing what they saw as the German quest for nationhood that had arisen with the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire by Napoleon. In Schiller, they found the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times, so to speak, of the German states. Unlike Goethe, Schiller remained essentially human, and as a public moralist, was much more important. That we see descriptors of him as 'patriotic,' and 'liberty' speaks as much to the thinkers who applied such appellations to him, for it was in their own preoccupation on liberty and patriotism, particularly in the continental upheavals that were a feature of the mid-nineteenth century, that he was viewed.

While Schiller was viewed as the personification of Germany's struggle for nationhood, Richter was endowed with the qualities perceived as making up the character of the Teuton. We have seen how, above all things, even the genius of his prose, Richter was most venerated by his English admirers for his personal qualities, his personal and quiet piety, his humility, and without condescension, his appreciation for the simpler pleasures of life – much like the rustic dancers described by Murray. His apparent lack of pretensions and the shunning of societal strictures in the way he dressed contrasted sharply with what we have seen of opinions on Goethe's desire to be accepted at Weimar. As noted, this was held to be a truer representation of of *Vaterland*, as opposed to the cosmopolitan circles of Weimar. His faith too, was of interest to English writers, as they noted its parallels with German Protestantism, in that it was without pomp or ritual, and quietly personal. Particularly in the case of Matthew Arnold who was not above applying a 'German whip for British Vices,' Richter served as a valuable antidote for the rapid encroachment of over-Utilitarianism in the protean society of mid-nineteenth century England. In Richter, it was

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felt, was to be found the best aspects of the German national character, and thus, as Schiller served to represent the *zeitgeist* of nineteenth century Germany, so did Richter come to embody the Teuton. The attention paid to both of these poets by English thinkers aids us in understanding an often understated importance in the value of cultural institutions, such as the arts, when thinking on concepts of nation and nationhood. There is further understanding to be gained in this respect, by acknowledging that both Schiller and Richter were regarded as national writers by English commentators; they were viewed as having reached such levels of literary excellence and merit that their work was seen to be partially representative of Germany's culture. There is importance, therefore, in understanding that when our nineteenth century thinkers ruminated on ideas of nationhood, these cultural pillars were as responsible as other factors like a shared history, or language, in aiding them in conceiving what differentiated a nation from a mere agglomeration of people.

But what of Goethe? It was without doubt that he too was regarded in England as a national poet, perhaps even *the* national poet of Germany. And yet, it is hard to say that he was seen in the same light as our two other German literati. Without resorting to hyperbole, he had, by the nineteenth century, been enshrined as one of the great figures of literature, elevated to the ranks of Shakespeare and Dante. Few, however, amongst our English writers, would have attached to him the description of what Collini has termed 'public moralist.' In fact, he was held by many to have singularly failed at this task. His consorting with Napoleon who had recently subjugated his country, his perceived apathy towards guiding and educating his countrymen, and the replacement of Goethe the 'Titan' with Goethe the 'creature of groping speculation' were particular flaws we have identified as him being charged with. Yet, for the most part, English writers and critics were willing to overlook this perceived absence of any desire to civic and moral responsibility on Goethe's part. A quick glance at many of the reviews on German literary works that appear in nineteenth century English periodicals

reveals that as much time was spent in considerations of the author as was spent on the works themselves. Though Goethe was unpalatable to certain thinkers, they were, by and large, what Reed called 'the less open-minded.'[318] To most, Goethe's seeming failure as a public moralist was for the most part, ignored. My consideration on this is that, because he had become almost deified as a literary figure, he was seen to have transcended these mortal (and moral) concerns. It is also worth noting that Goethe may have had a slightly looser grip on moral strictures, but that there was no criminality on his part.

Ultimately, this chapter has attempted to show the relationship between literature, and the development of thought on nations. While it has taken a look, and only briefly at that, at receptions of three German poets, this has been due more to limitations, rather than Carlylean hero-worship. By examining the views held on these poets by English thinkers, there has been gained some further understanding on how Germany, and the German character was viewed in mid-nineteenth century England. Furthermore, it has highlighted the importance of thinking on how the individual could be seen as representative of wider society, particularly if said individual happened to be a figure of talent, such as ours have been.

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[318] Reed, *The Classical Centre*, in the introduction.

Chapter Three: 1848, Germany, and the English Press

      1848 provided ample fodder for the world of English journalism. The spread of

continental upheavals threatened pre-existing social orders and a carefully orchestrated

balance of power. Worse still, it seemed that many of these upheavals had a certain French

flavour to them; the spread of democratic and republican ideals evoked the spectre of the first

French Revolution. At home, the Chartist demonstrations, though we know of its ultimate

failure, and their democratic nature, must have seemed more menacing to its opponents given

what was occurring on the continent. As Miles Taylor wrote, 'During 1848, many argued that

the reform movement itself had been hijacked by a set of *arriviste* demagogues who had

whipped up the excitement of the London crowd, transforming a legitimate moral movement

into a threat to public order.'[319] Taylor explains that these demagogues were roundly

condemned as self-serving adventurists even by the Chartists and reformers who were

'Overly sensitive to the charge of reckless agitation.[320] However, the presence of

republicanism and socialism in the language of Chartism[321] was, in many ways, reminiscent

of the tenets propounded by continental revolutionaries. Of the perception of continental

influences on the Chartist movement, Rob Saunders writes that, 'though they disclaimed any

revolutionary intentions, both their programme and their methods invited foreign

comparisons. […] The hysteria evoked […] owed a considerable debt to the Continent.'[322]

There was, in short, plenty of riveting writing to be done. The mass of reporting on the 1848

revolutions will go some way in providing a depth of insight into the English conception of

Europe in general, and Germany in particular, as well as England's own place in that web.

More particularly, it demonstrates the dichotomy between English liberalism, and French

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[319] Taylor, *Decline of British Radicalism*, p. 108.
[320] Ibid, p. 109.
[321] Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848 – 1874* (Cambridge, 1993), chapter 2.
[322] Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848 – 1867*, pp. 27 – 8.

democracy, and the perception that the latter was an insidious plague which could easily be spread. In order to understand these constructs, this chapter will focus on reporting on the German Revolution, and how events in that nation came to be viewed through the lens of Francophobia.

The English Press in 1848

When looking at opinions of the Press, it would serve no small benefit to understand the importance of that institution. Its influence, and ability to shape the impressions of the reading public should be taken into account in order to understand the benefits of looking at reporting on the Revolution. By the mid-nineteenth century, the English Press had changed and expanded rapidly from its state in the preceding century. Technological developments facilitated this remarkable transformation, and further, the impetus for change was in response to the growth of the reading public. Kellett gives us a concise picture of this; by 1845, illiteracy rates amongst men was calculated to be at only thirty three percent, amongst women, at forty nine percent.[323] Similarly, David Vincent paints a picture of rapidly rising literacy rates during the mid-nineteenth century, 'literate and illiterate England were almost exactly balanced at the end of the 1830s. During the subsequent seventy-five years, illiteracy fell to 1 per cent, leaving an average for the period of 25 per cent.'[324] Thus, we see a steady and remarkable increase in the reading public through the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The middle classes grew increasingly interested in the political and social questions of the day. Heyck attributes this desire to the middle class being a relatively new social order, lacking the traditions which would have provided some form of self-affirmation present in,

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[323] E. E. Kellett, 'The Press', in *Early Victorian England, 1830 – 1865, Volume II*, ed. by G. M. Young (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 3.
[324] David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 22.

say, the aristocracy. In this way, the middle classes were the primary market, and stimulus, for a growing number of publications.[325]

Nor was the middle class the sole social stratum seeking improvement through literature. The working classes, too, sought material which would stimulate the mind, this coming to be known as the 'March of the Mind,' or of 'Intellect.' Jonathan Rose explains that 'their motives were various, but their primary objective was intellectual independence. […] There is nothing distinctively 'bourgeois' in this desire for intellectual freedom. […] it may have been strongest in people who had spent their lives following orders and wanted to change that.'[326] He further contends that 'economic inequality rested on inequality of education: hence, monopolies on knowledge had to be broken by any means necessary.'[327] Altick writes that 'if millions [of the working classes] read nothing but trash, scores of thousands, no wealthier and with no more formal schooling, devoured serious fiction […] these were the people who proved that the March of Mind, though overpublicized, was no mere slogan.'[328]

The desire for material to stimulate the mind, and a growing availability of resources with which to do so, therefore, could be regarded as, as Linley put it, a democracy, but one intellectual as well as cultural, and recognizably so, though still in its infancy.[329] And if it was a democracy, then it came with the dangers mid-nineteenth century thinkers associated with that form of governance. In 1855, Bagehot wrote:

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[325] T. W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 26 – 8.
[326] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 12 – 13.
[327] Ibid, p. 24.
[328] Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800 – 1900* 2nd Edition (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998); pp. 240 – 2. Chapters 6 and 9 give some idea of the hopes of Reformers for an educated working class, and the failure of such.
[329] Margaret Linley, 'A Centre that would not hold: Annuals and Cultural Democracy', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. by Laurel Blake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 54 – 5.

'It is indeed a peculiarity of our times, that we must instruct so many persons.

On politics, on religion, on all less important topics still more, every one

thinks himself competent to think […] rightly. […] It is of no use addressing

them with the forms of science, or the rigour of accuracy, or the tedium of

exhaustive discussion. The multitude are impatient of system, desirous of

brevity, puzzled by formality.'[330]

The danger was that, faced with a wealth of material from which to read and learn, the 'multitude' could easily pick up some form of unwholesome literature, whether moral, political, or otherwise. This danger was compounded by the fact that Bagehot's multitude lacked judgement. As his last sentence indicated, its lack of patience and understanding of 'formality' made it unable to effectively decide what literature was improving, and what was not.

David Craig explains that 'Bagehot was opposed to both federalism – because it diluted sovereignty – and to the presidential system. The advantage of a parliamentary system was that because it was made up of people with education, status and political knowledge, it was better suited to choosing the government.'[331] Craig further explained the dangers of a presidential system to Bagehot by noting, 'the president was elected by the people, who rarely had a full understanding of what they were doing, were prone to manipulation by professional electioneers, and had no means of knowing or testing the qualities of the candidate.'[332] This tyranny of the masses, and its applicability to Germany was explored in the first chapter. Here though, democracy is meant, not as a political system, but as a cultural

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[330] Quoted in Walter E. Houghton, 'Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes', in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. by Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), p. 5.
[331] David Craig, 'Bagehot's Republicanism' in, *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present*, ed. by Andrzej Olechnowicz (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 146.
[332] Ibid, p. 147.

one, that is, the democratization of knowledge. Nonetheless, the dangers it presented were similar, involving an uneducated and gullible multitude, that had the power to effect change, but not the judgement or wisdom to prevent itself falling prey to 'professional electioneers,' or some other species of manipulator. That this danger of a cultural democracy could very well be applied to a socio-political one as well will be a common theme throughout this chapter; the dangers of the multitude, and the tyranny of the majority shaped impressions on the German Revolution. The desire for all to have their own say, an inability to grasp the importance of tradition and institutions, and a severe myopia brought about by impatience were believed to have severely hampered the German revolutionaries' ability to effect a sincere constitutional change.

This wariness of bad literature, and its deleterious effects on an overeager class manifested itself in a desire amongst writers and publishers to take upon themselves a paternal role. Quoting Arnold, Houghton writes 'the judgement which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus […] the critic will generally do most good to his readers.'[333] In emphasizing how prevalent a train of thought this was, Houghton further observes that, but for the phrasing, the words could easily have been Mill's, Bagehot's, or even an early Carlyle's.

Understanding the nature of journalistic agendas therefore provides us with some important context when considering reports on the German Revolution; by adopting the role of teacher, publishers sought not just to inform their readership of events objectively, but further to show the dangers involved in ways they considered contrary to their own. As the chapter progresses, we will see how the Press came to assign words alternative meanings and representations: republican, barricades, democracy, were all associated with France, and were

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[333] Houghton, *Periodical Literature*, p. 10.

used to great effect to imply, or outrightly state, an inherent distaste for the anarchy that was believed to be symbolic of revolutionary France. The Chartist movement, at its peak in 1848, was likewise compared to the European revolutions, and indeed, on at least one instance, revolutionaries in Berlin were even labelled as Chartists.[334]

<u>Responses to the Revolution: a brief overview</u>

Reactions to the Revolution in its earliest weeks seemed positive enough. Perhaps this was because of the contrast provided by Revolutionary France, at the time more advanced with its own internal struggle than was Germany:

> 'On the one hand […] the firm disavowal of all the traditional institutions and
> policy of France, and a Republic established by the *extempore* dictatorship of
> a central authority. On the other hand, we see Germany intent with far more
> real energy and unanimity on the great work of restoring the proportions of her
> Imperial dignity.' [335]

The criticisms of France are telling: the failure of the revolutionaries to respect institutions, the extemporaneous nature of the revolutionary government, and an overly strong central authority.

The respect for traditional institutions as pillars of state order, particularly, would come to be an important determinant of attitudes towards the German revolutionaries. Indeed, just four days prior, *The Times*' leader observed that any 'agitation' in Germany had merely been a demand for the fulfilment of liberal guarantees promised in 1815, and that the

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[334] 'Germany', *The Aberdeen Journal*, 10 May 1848
[335] *The Times*, 17 March 1848, p. 4.

agitation had 'nowhere assumed a revolutionary character.'[336] *The Economist* described the revolutionary spirit in Germany as having been somewhat more evident, compared to *The Times*, but nonetheless maintained that 'For them [the German revolutionaries] the preservation of peace is essential to their progress in political improvement.'[337] The conclusion that was drawn was that the earliest stages of the German Revolution, in direct contrast to France, were peaceful, justified by earlier promises for liberal and constitutional reform. The German revolution, it was imagined, considered the maintenance of peace to be a foremost principle, and necessary for the development of its political agenda. It is of some interest to note that, without any interview, correspondence, or interaction with the German revolutionaries, *The Economist* had claimed understanding of their principles of peace. This speaks more to an imposition of the author's own values upon the matter, than of any special knowledge of the revolutionary. France, meanwhile, fell victim to bloodshed, anarchy, and rabid, unchecked democracy. Furthermore, *The Economist* identified the German revolution as being a purely political affair, for liberty and constitution. Thus far, it had avoided being tarred with the brush of nationalism. The failings and disorder of the French Revolution are important only inasmuch as they were the same failings that came to be associated with the German Revolution after the initial stages of optimism.

From this brief observation, therefore, we see that initial hopes for Germany were high. It seemed that the German revolutionaries were in favour of a spread of an English-styled constitutional liberalism. These constitutional freedoms were supposed to be nothing more than what had already been promised during the creation of the German Confederation, and which had been withheld by the governments. Thus, revolution was justified in coercing the German executives to bestow such freedoms upon the citizenry. As we will see in greater

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[336] *The Times*, 13 March 1848, p. 4.
[337] 'The Revolutionary Spirit in Europe', *The Economist* 11 March 1848, p. 284.

detail in the last chapter, a liberal Germany would provide England, not only with a strong ally on the Continent, but would also act as a bulwark against the expansionism of republican France and autocratic Russia. The spread of English values of liberalism to the continent would have been doubly attractive given the perception of close ties between the two peoples, as well as reinforcing the belief that English constitutional liberalism was the supreme form of good governance, and one which all other nations ought to adopt. This positivity changed when it began to appear that Germany was moving rather more in the direction of France than England; republicanism and full democracy became the revolutionary bywords, rather than constitution and a limited franchise.

Thematically, this chapter will seek to explore the reasons behind this change in attitude. It will look at the perceived failures of the German revolutionaries both in their nature, and their actions. Furthermore, it will examine the belief held that Germany was attempting to emulate the French example of revolution, and the implications of this apish behaviour. It will also include a section on responses by republican publications in England to events in Germany. Additionally, it will explain how autocracy and the centralization of power in Germany came to be justified in the face of anarchic revolution. Criticisms of the German desire for unification will feature heavily as well. While the previous chapter explored support shown for German nationalism, what will be scrutinised here is a fear that Germany would be united as a democratic republic. By examining these various aspects of the revolution, we will observe how the German Revolution came to be seen as a clash between French and English values, almost a proxy war of ideology between English constitutional virtue, and French democratic anarchy.

The Gallic Contagion: revolution by example

One of the most prominent themes in reporting on the German Revolution was the impression that the German revolutionaries were attempting to imitate their French counterparts. This manifested itself in two distinct but similar, and often overlapping, shapes. The first was that revolution had merely spread to Germany from France; the second, that Germany was actively engaged in imitating, poorly, their French neighbours. Articles following the first train of thought were not necessarily hostile, though what positive encouragement found its way on to print was only in that extremely limited period of the first few weeks of revolution, when it could still be argued that constitutionalism, rather than republicanism was the goal. Those in the second were unanimously harsh and critical.

To begin with the first, it was noted that the French Revolution had acted as 'an electric shock wherever it has become known in Germany […] by stimulating the people to demand those concessions which have so long been withheld.'[338] The demands of the people, therefore, were for those benefits which were their natural rights. In this, the *Examiner* was not alone: 'If the French Revolution be productive of no other good, it will at least have roused their neighbours to energy and action,'[339] contended *The Satirist*, going on to explain its hopes for the Germans, because, 'unlike the French, there is no black page in their history that makes even *memory* turn pale.' In essence, the optimism was partially founded upon the belief that Germany, as far as revolution and reform went, was as yet a blank state, without the history of chaotic anarchy that seemed to be an inevitable result of French revolutionising.

Similarly, William Rathbone Greg, in an article entitled *The Fermentation of Europe*, explained that France, being the 'unlearning and impure country' that it was, was unready for

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[338] 'Effect of the French Revolution on the Continent', *The Examiner*, p. 171.
[339] 'The Revolutions in Germany', *The Satirist; or the True Censor of the Times*, March 26 1848, p. 100.

progressive regeneration; the overthrown monarch, Louis Philippe, and the revolutionaries, were both incapable of steering the country in a direction appropriate to English tastes. The latter would end up as oppressive as the former. The German struggle, on the other hand, was more appropriate because the people sought only 'to extort concessions from their rulers, not to supersede them,' and also because 'intellectually and morally […] they are a far finer race of men that the French.'[340] Here again, we see the confident belief that the author understood the hearts and minds of the German people. Additionally, the issue of national character arises. Because the German was believed to have been possessed of a character 'far finer' than that of the Frenchman, he could be trusted to take the reins of a revolution, without allowing it to devolve into anarchy. The character of the German revolutionary meant that the demands placed upon their rulers would be moderate and just, enough to allow the progress of their society.

These sentiments, however, dissipated quickly, and, by May, instead of an 'electric shock' rousing the Germans to 'energy and action,' the French revolution was instead 'the contagion of example.'[341] To the editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the French revolution, and its consequent 'contagion' took apocalyptic form: ''Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' are in every mouth, 'tyranny, rapacity, enmity' are in every heart. A legion of demons seem to have been let loose upon the world […] the great parent republic took the lead in this demoniac race.'[342] The problem was not that Germany was incapable of progress, 'Prussia is capable, in good time […] of working out the elements of constitutional freedom.' Rather it was the fact that the Germans had adopted the French model: 'we distrust all revolutions brought about by example. Contagion never yet spread the spirit of real

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[340] Greg, *The Fermentation of Europe*, pp. 365 – 8.
[341] 'The Revolutions in Europe', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, May 1848, p. 638
[342] Ibid p. 638 – 42.

freedom.'[343] One should note that 'by example,' what *Blackwood's* meant was an example that did not correspond with English values. As we shall see, various publications lamented the fact that Germany was not following an English system of constitutionalism. Likewise, in an article entitled 'The New Order of Politics', it was reported that 'a lively spirit of Gallicism manifested itself all along the banks of the Rhine, and stirred up the malcontents in all the provinces of the Rhenish Confederation.'[344] The Gallic propensity for revolution was thus ascribed both an epidemic, and apocalyptic, nature.

In this first sentiment, therefore, it would appear that aside from the weakness of the Germans in allowing this Gallic contagion to affect them, the fault lay rather more with the French for having spread their revolution across the Rhine. In the second, however, Germany becomes much more complicit, an active, rather than passive, participant. In this instance, the Germans, particularly at the Frankfurt Assembly, were held to have adopted the French manner of conducting their government. *Bentley's Miscellany* demonstrated this in an article, 'A Morning in the German Assembly': 'we shall find the Germans treading, as nearly as they can, in the very steps of their still more unquiet neighbours beyond the Rhine and imitating them closely […] in their parliamentary manoeuvres and political career.' It was further explained that the Frankfurt liberals bore 'a great resemblance to their ultra-liberal brethren in the French Assembly,' and that they possessed 'a close affinity to the French ultra-republicans,' so much so that 'the entire German National Assembly may be said to be cousin-german to the French.'[345]

Once again, the conservative *Blackwood's* proved a harsh judge: 'in imitation of that distracted city of Paris – so worthy of imitation, forsooth! – they got up revolutions, and tried

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[343] Ibid, p. 649.
[344] N.a., 'The New Order of Politics', *New Monthly Magazine and Humourist*, May 1848, pp. 108 – 9.
[345] The Flaneur, 'A Morning in the German Assembly', *Bentley's Miscellany*, July 1848, pp. 332 – 4.

their hands at building barricades,' and that the Frankfurt Assembly was 'completely French also […] its various elements, has a strong affinity to that of the present French National Assembly.'[346] The phrase 'tried their hands at building barricades' is an interesting one. It implies a significant amateurishness on the part of the Germans. The idea of revolutionary as amateur, that the German was merely playing at revolution, was believed to be partially responsible for the failures of the revolution. Two months later, *Blackwood's* came to the conclusion that this apish behaviour was due to the fact that Germany had never managed to purge itself off of the French influences which were a holdover from the Napoleonic Confederation on the Rhine,[347] and thus, 'each fresh insurrectionary leap in Paris has been followed by a convulsive movement in the western Germanic princedoms.'[348] And a year later, it had been given little cause to change its mind, noting in retrospect that Germany, 'very young in its revolutionary career […] tried to imitate the frantic caperings of its fellow-revolutioniser in the next paddock.' The editor's opinions of Germany's success in this manner are indicated in the statement that Germany did so 'in so clumsy a fashion, that it might have been very aptly compared to the ass in the fable.'[349] The amateurish German was believed to be acting only in imitation of France, revealing that they did not even particularly know for what reason they had instigated revolution in the first place.

Likewise, *The Times* reported the similarities between the French and German revolutions:

'What is liberty? […] in France, since February last, it has consisted in the planting of trees and the erection of barricades […] Berlin […] and the

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[346] 'What would Revolutionising Germany be at?', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1848, pp. 373 – 86.

[347] A puppet confederation formed of German states by Napoleon after his victory at Jean-Auerstedt, and which essentially brought about the end of the Holy Roman Empire, the previous incarnation of German nationhood.

[348] 'A Glimpse at Germany and its Parliament', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, November 1848, pp. 516 – 17.

[349] 'What has Revolutionising Germany attained?', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1848, p. 424.

German states would return much the same answer to the question as Paris.

Every man is to do what he likes.'[350]

The revolutions were seen, therefore, as mere exercises in anarchy; barricades, in particular, came to be associated with the excesses of democratic revolution. That 'every man is to do what he likes,' is perhaps the distillation of the worst aspects of democracy, evoking imagery of a capering mob carried to and fro by its own whims and fancies, with little idea of an even general direction. *The Times* went further, however, in explaining that, not only were Germany and France alike in their action, but also in that they both had a poor understanding of what liberty truly meant:

> 'We are forced to the conclusion that of real practical liberty, Frenchmen are
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> utterly regardless. They will erect barricades and fight behind them for
>
> fighting's sake […] The French – and we include the Germans in the same
>
> reproach, for all their musketry and speechification – do not care for liberty.
>
> They must be ruled and governed from above. Equality is the idol, liberty –
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> the name!'[351]

Thus, we see that the German revolutionaries had become the equivalent of their French counterparts: despite their propensity to violent bloodshed,[352] and endless discussions, neither group could fathom true liberty, confusing, instead, equality for liberty. They were seen to have substituted an understanding of liberty with endless violence, and 'speechification.' This provides a stark contrast with early attitudes towards the German revolution, and demonstrates the 'taint' of 'Frenchness.' From positivity and optimism in the German character, opinion had changed into explaining that the German was a cretin, merely

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[350] *The Times*, 17 November 1848, p. 4
[351] Ibid, p. 4
[352] 'Fight for fighting's sake' brings to mind the nineteenth century theory that an indispensable part of the Celtic character was a lust for military glory.

attempting to mimic his Gallic neighbour. Furthermore, the passage implies the need for an authoritarian leadership to control the whims and impulses of its people. Such a government world be able to curb its subjects' excesses. Though authoritarianism ran contrary to English liberal tenets, it appears that *The Times* considered the Germans unready for an enlightened government.

The *Economist* further questioned the wisdom of imitating the French in the German quest for unity, wondering 'is German unity to be Germany one and indivisible? […] obedient to the central authority at Frankfort,' after explaining that France, though it was firmly united, 'one and indivisible,' was a slave to the Parisian central executive. If this were to be so, Germany would become what France had been under the Napoleon, 'a very great power but a nuisance and a plague.' The juxtaposition between two Germanys, one following the French system, and the other English, is afforded some treatment here. The former is a 'plague,' while the latter, a safeguard of European peace and prosperity. In their emulation of France, it contended, the Germans sought 'political unity which appears a republican or Bonapartean dream,' the result of 'Bonapartean philosophers at Frankfort [who] have plunged their country into confusion.'[353]

There are some comments to be made on the manner in which the German Revolution was reported. First, the majority of the blame was levelled at Frankfurt, which was seen as the hotbed for revolution. Though revolution and insurrection happened across the sovereign states of Prussia, Austria and Baden, particularly, republicanism did not find institutional form as it was perceived to have done in Frankfurt. This could be attributed to the somewhat authoritarian nature of the pre-existing governments. Note the comparisons in political alignment made between the French and German national assemblies, whereas in Prussia,

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[353] 'What is German Unity?', *The Economist*, 19 May 1849, pp. 544 – 5.

republicanism existed less in the Diet, and more in the streets, barricades, and democratic clubs.

The Times, however, reported that 'the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly [in Prussia] had been […] subjected to the gross intimidation of the democratic clubs in Berlin […] the laws which were hereafter to determine the liberties of Prussia could not be voted under a system of terrorism.'[354] Nor was this the only occasion where the democratic clubs were associated with 'terrorism':

> 'the German press was to a great extent under the control of that democratic terrorism which had gone to such lengths as to make men almost despair of the safety of their country, and distrust that lawful authority of the Crown and the army which was exerted in behalf of the real liberties of the nation.'[355]

While France itself is not mentioned in these reports, it is important to remember the associations made between that nation, and democracy. The 'great parent republic' was believed to have influenced the German revolution; democratic chaos and 'terrorism' were the results of the Gallic influence. It is of further importance to note that The Times identified the monarchy and the military, those two traditional sources of disapprobation with Prussia, as representing legal authority, and acting to preserve 'the real liberties of the nation.' It is interesting to see that, in the face of impending democracy, recourse was made to the pillars of Prussian despotism.

Second, is the implication that Germany was not altogether sincere in its revolutionary efforts, in effect attempting, and failing, to produce a facsimile of France. The manner in which German 'revolutionising' was framed in Blackwood's, gives enough of an

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[354] The Times, 15 November 1848, p. 4
[355] The Times, 6 December 1848, p. 4

impression that France, for better or worse, was at least achieving something by its 'frantic caperings,' whereas the German ass was rather less successful. In their disingenuity, the revolutionaries were dooming the revolution to failure because they had no true political agenda of their own, beyond an imitation of France. Third, is an issue raised from the last article from the *Economist* on the 'republican or Bonapartean dream.' It is the usage of 'dream' that is most revelatory; reporting on the German revolution tended to highlight an unhealthy German fixation on schemes of unity. This obsession was seen to have rendered a committed struggle for liberalism and constitutional values impotent. Both of these last two points will be looked at in greater detail in the proceeding sections. 'Dream' is of further interest when taken into consideration alongside perceptions of the German national character. As we saw in the prior chapter, a flaw identified with the German was his predilection to engage in mental meanderings, with little in the way of active, practical action.

Unity before Liberty in Germany

This section on German unity takes place in two parts. The first is on the role of Germany in ensuring the European peace, while the second is on unity seen as an overly-prevalent and detrimental part of German thinking. German unification as a concept, by 1848, had been recognized in England as having existed since the Napoleonic Wars, catalysed particularly by the Prussian and Austrian defeats at Jena and Auserstedt, respectively. It was also a notion that was not entirely unpleasant to England. Commenting on the revolution, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* was quick to point out that in Germany, 'amid the struggling voices […] we discern above the rest, pre-eminent, these two – CONSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM *for the several members*; NATIONAL UNITY *for the whole body.*' There was,

however, a condition, 'the desire of the Germans for constitutional monarchies, in the members of the confederation, and for effective unity in the whole, is, in their position, natural and noble.' This last address is important: resistance to German unification did not stem from unification itself, but rather the vehicle with which it would be carried forth. Constitutionalism was considered paramount, but so too was preserving the institutions of monarchy. In the previous section, we detailed how fears of France and republicanism coloured attitudes towards the Revolution. *Tait's* further noted the greatest benefit of unity: 'For the maintenance of the peace of Europe and the quieting of restless France, Britain has nothing better to wish than a strong and a united Germany.'[356]

The Rambler commented upon German unification in similar terms: 'To Germany, and Germany alone, we must look for the continental check upon French military fanaticism. The chivalrous Gaul will smite in vain against the stubborn mass of *united* Germans.' This empire was envisioned to be 'erected in the centre of Europe […] vast, populous […] animated by one common patriotism, and united under one imperial chief, without the destruction of the independence of the pettiest duchy.'[357] German unity, then, was a great boon. Doubtless written with some degree of hyperbole, the image of Gallic fanatics attempting to run rampant over Europe, and halted by stout Teutons was a powerful one, presenting as it did, visions of a check on French hegemony on the continent, thereby preserving the balance of power. Just as powerful, in our context, is the importance placed upon the legally-founded, executive institutions, with *The Times* noting that 'nothing would be better than a complete victory of the legal powers over the shameless intrigues of anarchy.'[358] These executives were held to be responsible for the maintenance of order, and constitutionalism; being legal in nature, and vital to the order of the imagined nation, they

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[356] 'Political Fly leaves from Germany', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1848, pp. 594 – 9.
[357] 'European Prospects', *The Rambler*, 13 May 1848, pp. 25 – 6.
[358] 'The State of Germany', *The Times*, 21 October 1848, p. 4

were essential and could not be destroyed. That the German empire was to be founded without impugning the sovereignty of the individual states was problematic, which the *Rambler*, demonstrating a lack of understanding of federalism, admitted some three months later:

> the members of a heterogeneous Parliament, united in one aim […] are toiling at the Herculean task of turning a score of independent states into one empire, without the destruction of one of them. […] kings are to be at once sovereigns and subjects, and nations to rule themselves and to be ruled by others.[359]

Nonetheless, the members at Frankfort were seen to have set themselves at this daunting task and, *if* Germany was united by constitutional means, and without having violated the rules of sovereignty, then it would be better, on the whole, for Europe, and would relieve England of its self-appointed burden of mediator and peacekeeper. This trend would remain remarkably similar for the rest of the mid- and late-nineteenth century.

It became quite evident, however, that the Frankfurt Assembly was stubbornly determined, in the eyes of the English, to follow the republican path of France, as we saw earlier. Not only that, but some English commenters were of the belief that the continuing demands from Frankfort were beyond what was reasonable; an article was published in *Fraser's Magazine* commenting on the nature of the Frankfurt Assembly:

> It is difficult for any one with sound English feelings to enter into the grievances of a people which […] enjoyed a great exempt from taxation, a flourishing commerce, an incorrupt administration of justice, and perfect freedom of religious opinion […] Little, therefore, as one can sympathise with,

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[359] "The State of Europe", *The Rambler*, 12 August 1848, 2., pp. 337 – 8.

or trust the proceedings of a body of men, who […] have begun an unjust war, and persist in continuing it.[360]

It is apparent that political participation for the masses was something *Fraser's* did not deem a necessity for a free and united people. The idea that this people, who enjoyed luxuriances such as a fair justice system, freedom of religion, and low taxes, would resort to violence confounded the author. Similarly, *Blackwood's* professed itself unimpressed with the continuing desire for further concessions:

If the Germans had merely desired freedom of the press, trial by jury, burgher-guards, and the repeal of exceptional laws, the gift was ready for them; but they wanted something more, which the separate sovereigns could not give.[361]

Clearly these two conservative magazines failed to see the need for the Frankfurt Assembly to demand further concessions from the German sovereigns who, having already surrendered to the more reasonable demands, found themselves presented with unreasonable erosions of their authority. What is quite clear is that the Germans were a people considered free in the civil and religious sense, if not necessarily the political. They may not have had full suffrage and enfranchisement, but that would not have been deemed an ill by the conservative *Fraser's* and *Blackwood's.* That their press was to have been uncensored, and the legal system made truly just, seemed, to the author, to be great strides towards a liberal constitution. Fears of the erosion of the legal executives by the unruly, and uneducated mob is highlighted by taking into account Bagehot's views on republicanism and democracy, briefly explored earlier in the chapter. It is also important to observe that both *Fraser's* and *Blackwood's* pointed out that the German sovereigns were more than willing to bestow these rights upon their subjects, acting rather more progressively than the stereotype of Prussian

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[360] 'Modern Frankfort', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, September 1848, pp. 334 – 44.
[361] 'A Glimpse at Germany and its Parliament', p. 518.

despotism. Having been granted such freedoms, with which the Germans ought to have been content, the only further demand that could reasonably have been made was for a constitution. However, the revolutionaries entered into the dangerous territory of universal suffrage, and full democracy.

A pamphlet, *Sketches of the progress of civilisation and public liberty*, gives some indication as to why political freedom, under a republican system with widespread suffrage, was considered both unhealthy and unnecessary. 'Self-discipline, and virtue, must necessarily accompany and direct this progress: the result of which is civilisation.'[362] By dint of observing the various French revolutions and the dominating republican elements within, it would have seemed self-discipline and republicanism were an impossible blend. This being the case, republican governments could not possibly progress further towards the ultimate goal of civilisation. The civil servant and free-trader, John Macgregor further explained that:

> communities, in which the greatest happiness is attained […] can only exist when the people are so well educated, in moral and political science, and of such wise judgment, as to appreciate so thoroughly, the blessings of civil liberty and religious freedom, that they […] consent to, the regulations which restrain one man from perverting that liberty […] that is freedom without anarchy: constituting *society*, or a *people*, whose affairs are administered by a wise, equal, just, mild, yet energetic government.[363]

The Germans had civil liberty and religious freedom. It must have seemed, therefore, that in demanding untimely and excessive concessions, they were demonstrating a marked lack of wise judgment and political education, for the revolutionaries were purposefully confounding

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[362] John Macgregor, 'Sketches of the progress of civilisation and public liberty: with a view of the political conditions of Europe and America 1848', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1848), p. 6.
[363] Ibid, p. 5 – 7.

the efforts of governments which imposed 'the regulations which restrain one man from perverting that liberty;' their goal must have been seen to have been the establishment of freedom with anarchy, rather than without, demonstrating that they were unready for the 'blessings of civil liberty.'

A further point of some interest is the mocking tone adopted in articles commenting on the German desire for unity. In the article from *Fraser's* above,[364] is a further explanation of what the revolutionaries were demanding, and why they were spurred on to do so, with the author claiming that 'in the right of public discussion, in universal suffrage, and in the uncontrolled liberty of the press, will be found the panacea for all such evils as they may, nevertheless, have to suffer.' Furthermore, it was the unwavering desire for German nationality that was 'their chief dream, and the war with Denmark the rash consequence.'[365] By allowing themselves to become swayed by dreams of nationalism, the revolutionaries had entered into the First Schleswig War. This spoke ill of the principles of nationalism, untempered by liberalism. It was, perhaps, the idea of universal suffrage which was most unnerving, emblematic, as it was in the minds of many, the excesses of republicanism and full democracy. It was with some trepidation that *Blackwood's* noted that 'Prussia […] is to plunge at once into *universal suffrage*, equal electoral districts, and a deputy for every 50,000 souls! England, with its centuries of freedom […] could not withstand such a constitution.'[366] Like *Fraser's*, *Blackwood's* noted that unification was to Germany 'the greatest fancied panacea for all evils.'[367] The contrast is of some importance: England, despite its wisdom, and experience of good government, would not attempt a deed as foolish as universal suffrage. Germany, and therefore, by extension France, would, proving their folly. The use of

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[364] 'Modern Frankfort'.
[365] Ibid, p. 335.
[366] 'The Revolutions in Europe", p. 650.
[367] 'What would Revolutionising Germany be at?', p 374.

'panacea' in both magazines is telling, indicating the perception that the German revolutionaries were foolish in believing in universal suffrage, and a lifting of governmental restrictions, to be a mythical cure-all.

Blackwood's most damning article came late in 1849, in a retrospective piece which questioned the ultimate result of the German Revolution.[368] Looking back over the previous two years, it determined that 'Germany, then confused and staggering […] but loudly vaunting that its strong dose of revolution […] was about to work out of its troubled brains a wondrous system of German unity, which was to bring it infinite and permanent happiness.' And what was the result of these German efforts? 'Nothing but a phantom of a central power […] the 'shadow of a shade.''[369] Thus, the vaunted German hope of unification amounted to precisely nothing. The revolution was pointless 'musketry and speechification,' which did little to advance the people down the road to unification. The article goes on at some length, and, it ought to be said, with some relish, as to the failure of the revolutionaries to achieve their desire of unification. It also makes a point of noting that, even in this failure, German unity was still the great, quixotic hope, 'But ask no more […] into the "how," the "when," the "where," the answer will be […] incomprehensible and still more impractical rhapsody – visionary […] but purposeless as before.'[370] This quotation should be taken into consideration alongside what we have explored in the previous chapter, namely the belief that the German national character was one given over to pointless rumination, and speculative dreaming, but having little skill in matters requiring practical action. To the author, the German revolutionaries had proclaimed loudly their intention to unite the country into a single nation state, but beyond haranguing and preaching, could do little to bring the dream to fruition.

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[368] 'What has Revolutionisng Germany attained', 424 – 36
[369] Ibid, p. 426
[370] Ibid, p. 427 – 8.

In fact, *Blackwood's* conclusion as to the result of revolution was that, all Germany had attained was a 'constitution – a rickety child, but fully expected […] to grow into a giant […] it proved but a changeling.' That the constitution was described as a changeling implies the belief that it was farcical, resembling perhaps, a true constitution, like that of England, but only superficially. More than that, though, this changeling was described as having been cursed by anarchy and subversion, embodied in the 'Red Republic, and the beast on which she rode was Self-interest.'[371] These last few excerpts are most relevant, in that they demonstrate an aversion, not to unification, but to a united Germany under a republican government. Consider earlier excerpts showing support for the unification of Germany when it appeared to be following a constitutional path. The terminology is indicative of a general dislike of the French system exported; 'Red Republic,' 'anarchy,' 'subversion,' and 'self-interest' were anathema to a good English styled government, and they were terms which English journalists, regardless of political leaning, were quick to attribute to France. That the 'Red Republic' was founded on self-interest meant that there could be no expectation of qualified leadership, or a fair and just constitution. The use of 'panacea' is also of some interest; the German revolutionaries sought a cure-all for the evils which plagued Germany: anarchy, loss of life and property, and general disorder. Ironically, these very evils were the ones they themselves had brought about.

German Revolutionary Disingenuity

The issue with German unification in 1848 was not so much the idea of a strong, federated German nation, but rather that visions of a united Germany began to look increasingly republican. An abject problem here then, was that even the members of the

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[371] Ibid, p. 428 .

German revolution most likely to agitate for an English-styled constitution, the liberals, were willing to sacrifice liberalism for the sake of the ultimate goal of nationalism. *The Times* noted, quite accurately, that the German Liberals' main goal was the Unification of Germany, and not the promulgation of liberal values, 'The great aim of the Liberal Party throughout Germany is to fuse her into one great nation.'[372] As explained in the introduction, Celia Applegate's contention is that 'at the heart of German liberalism lay a fear of the loss of German heritage to some foreign power.'[373] There is some validity to this notion, in that the memories of the Napoleonic Wars were still relatively recent. That few English commenters took this into account, simply writing off the German desire for unification as romantic exuberance speaks to the lack of understanding and consideration of the German struggle. Rather, it was taken for granted that attempts at unification should be seen through the perspective of English constitutional liberalism. This is in line with the earlier observation made that English writers presupposed knowledge of German affairs.

This commitment to unification first, and liberalism second, was noted to have had possibly detrimental results in that the German Liberals would have had their judgment severely impaired when faced with the temptation of schemes of unification, 'There is, however, one rock upon which Germany is but too likely to be dashed and to be wrecked. This is the exuberant desire of German liberals to attempt something or anything in which the Germans can show themselves united.'[374] Note that the German liberals were specifically singled out from the myriad groups of revolutionaries. Considering the presupposition of knowledge on German affairs, English writers tended to assume that the German liberal values were in line with their own. They did not, of course, take into account that Germany had had a rather different history, absent of a single, unifying government, and a Whig

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[372] *The Times*, 6 March 1848, p. 5.
[373] Applegate, 'Germany', pp. 189 – 92.
[374] *Daily News*, 8 September 1848, p. 2.

tradition. Thus, what English critics of the revolution saw was simply the betrayal of liberal values by self-professed liberals. If they could not be trusted to safeguard liberal ideals, what hope existed for the revolution's other members?

This desire for unification seems to have been part of a larger impression that the German liberals possessed selfish and vested interests, as opposed to the disinterested nature of liberalism in England. Both the *Daily News* and the *Political Examiner* published articles to this effect. On the 16th of August, 1848, the *Daily News* reported that because they did not trust the Prussian King, the Prussian Liberals refused to partake in electing the Prussian representatives to the Frankfurt Assembly. This petulance was believed to have exposed German liberalism to the predations of autocratic Austria and Russia, and the *Daily News* observed that 'in such a state of things one may conceive it to be good policy and expediency to affect and wear a more ultra-monarchic colour, that can harmonise with German opinion.'[375]

Likewise, the *Political Examiner* noted that the German Liberals had concocted the scheme that if they were 'persecuted by Prussia, they will find support from the unscrupulous statesmen of Austria. Even now, the Left of the German Parliament votes with the Austrians, who shot Blum.'[376] *The Times* too, raised some questions on whether the German Liberal Party was in the vein of the 'practical liberties of Great Britain' or a 'servile imitation of revolutionary France.' While not in itself a condemnation, the article did go on to write that:

> The revolutionary party are contending not for liberty but for the sake of strife, and because in this chaos of ignorant frenzy they know not what to secure and

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[375] *Daily News*, 16 August 1849, p. 4.
[376] *Political Examiner*, 27 January 1849. Robert Blum who was a member of the National Assembly and took part in the uprising in Vienna, for which he was executed by the Austrian authorities.

what to renounce, they will at length render the reaction really formidable.

Their absurdity and extravagance would destroy the best cause in the world.[377]

This is further commentary on the overly-speculative character of the German, who did not understand what liberty meant. Additionally, by provoking the German governments, they were giving grounds for a harsher and more severe reaction. The impression these reports give therefore, is the opinion that German liberals were insincere in their commitment to the 'practical liberties', much rather favouring a 'servile imitation of France.' This was an impression doubtless formed by the German liberal commitment to unification first and their association with a revolutionary mob, drawing the parallels with revolutionary France.

Beyond taking note of the German liberals' obsession with unity, some comment should be made on the impression that the Germans were failing to attain it due to the falsity of the revolutionaries. *Blackwood's* noted the seeming hypocrisy of the German revolution:

> the usual manoeuvres of the anarchical leaders of the day who, while denouncing Jesuitism […] as the great evil and anti-popular influence [….] evidently adopt the supposed and most denounced principle of Jesuitism – the 'the ends justify the means' […] and use every species of treachery, deceit, falsehood, and delusion, as holy and righteous weapons in the sacred cause of liberty, or of that idol of their worship which they choose to nickname liberty.[378]

The anti-Catholicism is clear; a distaste for what was regarded as the pomp and ritual of Roman popery was associated with the revolutionaries. Nor was this the only mention of religion having a detrimental effect on the revolution:

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[377] *The Times*, 22 November 1848, p. 4.
[378] Ibid, p. 428 – 9.

Ever since the revolution has begun its dubious and unsteady course

throughout Germany, it has been, invariably and everywhere, the Jews who

have displayed the strongest revolutionary spirit, the most decided republican

tendencies, the most acrimonious hatred against the 'powers that be,' and the

most virulent efforts towards the *subversion*[379] of the existing state of

things.[380]

'Subversion' is an interesting word to have been used. Through it, the revolutionary, it is

made clear, is unwilling to work with any pre-existing state of authority. Rather, attempts are

made to undermine all institutions of state and order, recalling images of the French

Revolution sweeping away tradition and institutions. This disturbing trait is explained as

being a 'most decided republican tendency.' An element of anti-Semitism further enflamed

the matter, evoking additional long-standing prejudices.

The German revolutionary, then, was seen as a man who, not only employed devious

and sinister means, but was also unaware of the meaning of true liberty, in the English sense,

in a way fooling himself into believing that his goal was liberty, rather than the anarchy he

brought about, or, worse yet, being completely aware of his own purposeful deception.

Liberté, it appears, was rather different than liberty, and much more appealing to the German

revolutionary. And it was not just the virulent *Blackwood's* making the claim. *The Economist*

stated that the idea of unity 'conceived at Frankfort […] is a dangerous dream […] it is a

scandal to them all that their unity should be nothing but civil war and anarchy.' Consider

again the use of the term anarchy as evoking France. The proposal of unification developed at

Frankfurt was endowed with a Gallic quality in *The Economist*.

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[379] The emphasis is mine.
[380] 'What would Revolutionising Germany be at?', p. 376.

The reasoning behind this abject failure to establish a truly liberal and efficacious government was that the revolutionaries were considered rank amateurs, students, particularly, who had grand dreams but little practical sense, and whose romantic and fanciful ideas forbade any effective result. Highlighting the importance of the student-revolutionary, *The Satirist* had noted at the beginning of the revolution that the students were 'the very soul and essence of the German revolutions,'[381] although, at that point of time, there was, as yet, no hint of republicanism, and thus they were seen as rather more patriots, full of fervent loyalty, than rabid revolutionaries baying for unification at any cost.

However, by the end of the year, the German student had 'collected a set of fellow fancied enthusiasts around the beer jugs, imagined this species of club to be a wonderful conspiracy because he designated it by the forbidden name of '*Burschenschaft,*' and deemed himself a notable and formidable conspirator.'[382] This species of student, it was felt, gave itself romantic airs as liberators and patriots, forming their secret liberal-nationalist societies in defiance of the tyrannical Metternich, who had outlawed the *Burschenschaften* in 1819. These students were 'utterly rampant […] a race to be eschewed by all who had a wholesome reverence for soap and a horror for Kantean philosophy.' The student-conspirator was therefore endowed with the further characteristics of being unhygienic, as well as philosophizers, more given to discussing *ad nauseam*, philosophy over his beer jugs, than attempting any serious action. Furthermore, they, *Blackwood's* having been quite specific as to the nature of the German student-revolutionary, 'have long been haunted by some such ideas […] dreaming of doublets, boors, and spurs.' [383] In essence, the student-revolutionary was a creature to be held in contempt, more given to talk than practical action, dreaming,

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[381] 'The Revolutions in Germany', p. 100.
[382] 'What would Revolutionising Germany be at?', p. 374; *Burschenschaften* were university student associations given to liberal and national ideals.
[383] 'A Glimpse at Germany', p. 515 – 16.

perhaps, of themselves as some sort of robber-patriot, hence the 'doublets, boors, and spurs,' evoking the German writers whose work had become symbolic of the German struggle for nationalism, such as Goethe and Schiller.[384] And if this fanciful menace was the 'soul and essence' of the revolution, then the revolution would doubtless be tainted for, built upon the shoulders of these unreliable, extravagant, and overly-sentimental individuals, it would have a shaky foundation indeed.

Aside from the toxic influence of the students, the *Vorparlement*[385] was also held accountable by the conservative periodicals, with *Fraser's* noting that they had sat for a month conducting 'mischief' before they were absorbed into the Assembly proper where many of them retained their offices as members of Parliament, eventually comprising the bulk of the left and far-left wings, and spreading further their dreams of unity, republicanism, and radicalism, and prolonging the Schleswig War.[386] These were the men *The Economist*, in the article *What is German Unity?* cited earlier, labelled as 'Bonapartean philosophers' who plunged the country into chaos. *Blackwood's* maintained that the preliminary Parliament was illegal, having emanated from a 'club of revolutionary spirits at Heidelberg.'[387] More harshly, it further reported that:

> supreme authority had fallen into the hands of men utterly incapable of
>
> discharging the duty of legislators […] here is a nation […] about to be
>
> plunged into irretrievable misery and ruin, by a set of selfish hounds who look
>
> to nothing beyond their stipend of five florins a day! Heaven help the idiots![388]

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[384] *Götz von Berlichingen* on the robber-patriot of the same name, and *Die Räuber*, both come to mind as literary expressions of nationalism in Germany.
[385] The Vorparlement (pre-parliament) was a committee of fifty members who assembled at Frankfort before elections for the full Assembly was passed.
[386] 'Modern Frankfort', p. 334 – 50.
[387] 'What would Revolutionisng Germany be at?', p. 375.
[388] 'A Glimpse at Germany', p. 530 – 3.

Hence, the German revolutionary at Frankfort was not a statesman, equipped to adequately meet the challenges of running a country, and creating a united nation. He was, as were the students, an amateur with little conception of effective politics and who sought more to fulfil his own selfish interests – for his daily allowance of five florins, it was surmised, the revolutionary would lead Germany down a disastrous path. Further blame was lain upon the virulence of democracy:

> This same democratic terrorism […] powerfully affected the […] Assembly. It
> is not improbable that this very Assembly, ill chosen as it is, would […] have
> shown very little of a revolutionary spirit.[389]

Both *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's* provide insight into what they considered aspects needed to effect the running of a constitutional and liberal nation. *Blackwood's* explained that England, too, was affected by strife, by the Chartists and Repealers:

> What a contrast […] does the aspect of Great Britain afford? We, too, have our
> dangers: we have our Chartists and our Repealers […] England […] saved by
> the unbought loyalty of her people and the free independence of her Press […]
> Europe, which had expected to see the treason of the Chartists triumphant on
> the 10th of April, and another republic proclaimed on the banks of the
> Thames.[390]

England was not full of student-revolutionaries, and its citizens were rather much more patriotic than nationalistic, than was seen in Germany. Thus, while England too had its share of 'revolutionaries' in the Chartists,[391] the nation did not devolve into the anarchic chaos of

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[389] *The Times*, 6 December, p. 4
[390] 'Revolutions in Europe', p. 640 – 52.
[391] Though equating the Chartists to the revolutionaries of France and Germany was neither fair, nor accurate.

revolutionary France because its citizens were patriotic, and its Press not terrorized by democratic clubs.

The use of the Chartists as a mechanism to describe revolutionaries is of some interest. *The Aberdeen Journal*, for example, detailed that 'the attempted Chartist demonstration at Berlin' was formed of 'democrats who, under pretence of aspirations after political freedom, aim at the eventual establishment of communism.'[392] This was a means of both discrediting the Chartist movement, which could hardly be labelled communist, as well as further highlighting the dangers of republicanism, at home, and abroad. Notice how the excerpt from *Blackwood's* implies that, had the Chartists triumphed, England would have been transformed into a republic. The usage of the term 'treason' is also indicative, for it would have taken either a rather large degree of licentious misinterpretation, or of animosity to translate attempts at reform into treason, though one should take into account that *Blackwood's* was, as stated earlier, notably conservative, and could be savage in its articles on those with whom its writers did not agree.

Fraser's gave an insightful view into the advantage the English government had over the German in that Germany lacked an effective middle class.

> This false system it is which has deprived Germany of that class, formed by the junction of the nobility with those next below them in wealth and intelligence, which in England supplies the body of gentry who can afford to be and are fit to be the legislators of the people; and it is this also which has placed the German people in that wretched state of isolation.[393]

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[392] 'Germany', *The Aberdeen Journal*, 10 May 1848
[393] 'Modern Frankfort', p. 342 – 3.

The Germans lacked a counterpart, a successful middle-class independent of the nobility, which could represent constitutional liberty and oppose absolutism, regardless of whether that absolutism was concentrated in the hands of a single figure, or in the tyranny of the majority. Without such a moderating element, Germany was thus vulnerable to the predations of those whose interests were regarded as selfish. Whether or not, however, the German revolutionaries were selfish does not seem to have been a quandary over which conservative editors bothered themselves. The assumption made was that, where republicanism went, selfish interests were bound to follow, and as shown earlier, there was a presumption on the parts of some writers, that professed to understand the motives of the German revolutionaries, while in fact, lacking sufficient understanding of the socio-political contexts which led to 1848. Furthermore, lacking a class steeped in patriotism, and endowed with the abilities of statesmanship, governance would devolve into the hands of a selection of individuals who were not just possessed of vested interests, but who were also incompetent, the dangers of which were explored in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter.

The Importance of State Order and Institutions

Whereas on the 17th of March, *The Times* had written of a 'confident hope that the national movement of that great people will not degenerate into democratic revolution,'[394] eight days later, it was forced to report that 'In truth, democratic feeling is fast spreading […] people feel that they have conquered their liberties.'[395] Likewise *The Economist* prophesized that 'intense darkness and doubts […] now hang over the future.'[396] However, this was prefaced by hope that the propensity for self-government that was to be found in the German

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[394] *The Times*, 17 March 1848, p. 4.
[395] 'The State of Germany', *The Times*, 25 March 1848, p. 6.
[396] 'Progress of Revolution in Germany', *The Economist* 25 March 1848, p. 339.

character (unlike the French), would moderate, and perhaps even allow Germany to circumvent, this grim future. What is most telling is *The Times*' statement that the German revolutionaries felt that they had 'conquered their liberties,' or rather seized them by force from the established governments. This idea of an imagined show of force by the masses was symptomatic of a wider-ranging apprehension of a democracy and authority devolving into the hands of those incapable of commanding a central authority with any degree of political sagacity. One should note, that in earlier weeks, *The Times* had reported that the revolutionaries had 'extorted' concessions from their rulers in a positive light.[397] This was, however, before the republican spectre appeared, and so was deemed just.

On the 18th of April, *The Times* reported that Germany 'continues to exhibit a perplexing and lamentable scene of anarchy and confusion.' This was the result of the government having failed to arrest the 'ridiculous impatience' of the people. Highlighting the dangers of allowing authority to devolve into the hands of a plebeian mob, it was further reported that a 'self-elected club, from which all the known statesmen of the nation were *de facto* excluded' assembled in Frankfurt to begin deliberations on legislation of the country, overreaching any authority with which they had been invested, and divesting itself of any individual with an expertise of statecraft.[398] Looking back in August, *The Times* reported that 'governments were overthrown, laws were suspended, traditions were broken, and a dynasty expelled […] Four months have now elapsed […] and, instead of creating Governments fit to deal with the affairs of Europe, these assemblies have attempted to carry on a species of clumsy administration.'[399] The revolutionaries were therefore seen as, not only being unable to develop policy, but also being inept at administration.

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[397] See page 7.
[398] *The Times*, 18 April 1848, p. 4.
[399] *The Times*, 16 August 1848, p. 4

Exploring further the ills brought about by democracy:

Of all governments this rule of large assemblies is worst. Their time and

energy are wasted in debates, which suspend the action of authority; their

decrees are irresponsible, because they are clothed at once with the

omnipotence of a majority composed of fluctuating elements; and these

decisions of men in the mass are apt to want the forethought, the

conscientiousness, and the retribution which control the measures of a

competent stateseman.[400]

These fears of democracy are once again tied to an opposition towards French values. The rulership of the plebeian mob was impossible because, first, they were unskilled and uneducated at governance, and second, were all invested with their own self-interests. The result was a machine that simply refused to work. Here, however, we can further juxtapose perceptions of them with the English system of elite and professional leadership, governed by a few educated and trained individuals, devoid of vested interests. Thus, while the former leads to 'a species of clumsy administration,' the latter allows for 'forethought, conscientiousness, and retribution.'

Furthermore, republicanism, or rather its adherents were held by the English press to have been involved in sinister schemes aimed at destabilizing any system of coherent governance. The 'Frankfort fifty-headed incubus,' the *Morning Chronicle* reported, held the Prussian government 'under the influence of a sort of moral terrorism which induces them to throw the burden of all decision upon the [Frankfurt] Diet.'[401] In the meanwhile, this self-same 'incubus' had 'its hands and mouth fully employed in destroying all the sovereigns of Germany,' whilst 'straining every possible nerve to influence and terrorise the electors of

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[400] Ibid, p. 4
[401] "Germany and the Northern States", *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 May 1848, p. 8

deputies.'[402] The republican element at Frankfurt was attempting to usurp the power of the state monarchies; once again, the tool of 'terror' has been assigned to the republicans.

The deleterious effects of popular rule were reflected upon further in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*: 'It is the irresistible strength of a democratic government which is its greatest evil [...] Property is soon swept away by it, but liberty is swept away still more quickly.' This sweeping is then followed by the rise of a dictator and 'ages of servitude succeed one terrible and unforgotten period of popular license.'[403] The article details how these terrible results are effected by popular revolution:

> Already all the usual and well-known effects of successful revolution are to be seen in Berlin. Extravagant ideas among the working classes […] expectations inconsistent with the first laws of society […] It is in the midst of this danger, excitement, and tribulation, that Prussia […] is to plunge at once into *universal suffrage*. [404]

The Manchester Guardian as well expressed some distress at the thought of republican government replacing the established ones in Germany, believing that such a government would possess neither the means nor the facility to manage effectively a country such as Germany with its diverse peoples.[405]

Conclusion

We have seen that the great fear held by the English press was not of revolution, but rather of republicanism and democracy because of the disorder and anarchy that was held to

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[402] "Ibid, p. 6
[403] 'The Revolutions in Europe', p. 638.
[404] Ibid, p. 649 – 50.
[405] 'The State of Germany', *The Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1849, p. 4.

have been a natural result of these socio-political forms. Though democracy was somewhat ill-defined during the mid-nineteenth century, and possessed different meanings to different people, in our context of commentary and reporting on the German revolution, we can take it to mean the worst excesses of democracy associated with the French Revolution, evoking imagery of guillotines, *sans-culottes*, and a bloodthirsty mob. When there seemed little danger of the German Revolution being driven by themes of such a democracy, there was some admiration for the aims and goals of the revolutionaries, this 'confident hope' extending even to the ideas of nationalism, as opposed to simply constitutional liberalism. This admiration was due in large part to a lack of awareness on the part of the newspaper journalist, as to his own ignorance regarding the workings of the revolution, and how the German people had even come to the point of revolution in the first place. This is nowhere more evident than in the accusations that Germany was either 'infected' by French revolutionary fervour, or that it was merely aping its Gallic neighbour.

However, the presence of democratic aims and universal suffrage sparked apprehension. The Press held a great deal of misgivings about the ability of the masses to effectively govern Germany without giving way to anarchy. There was also an objection raised to the benefits of liberal policies forced out of a government. *The Times* noted that in Baden and Saxony, the liberal concessions frequently made did little to stave off the rabid democratic element, against which neither minor state had had the means to defend itself. In fact, having felt that they could bend the executives to their will, the revolutionaries were emboldened. This was compared to Prussia, where, in 1849, the orderly, loyal, and disciplined army conducted itself with great efficacy in upholding order and the institutions

of government.[406] Its success was described in terms that ran contrary to those usually associated in English commentary on Prussian authoritarianism.

This brings us to our next point that an authoritarian, monarchic government was preferable to republicanism. On the first of April, just after the democratic nature of the German Revolution became evident, *The Times* made mention that 'though there can be order without liberty; no true liberty can exist without order.'[407] It seems more than probable that this was the attitude taken towards the German Revolution and the various German governments' role within that event, for the great opposition to republican chaos was that it would likely terminate in a return to despotism, after having caused much misfortune, without any gains made in creating a liberal state.

Reporting on the reactionary movements and the employment of the army to maintain central authority and order in Prussia, *The Times* stated that:

> If reaction meant the restoration of the discredited and rejected past, men
> might reasonably object to it. But when a country is sunk into a revolution
> [and by association anarchy], […] reaction means no more than the restoration
> of peace, order, and real freedom – it is a resistance […] to those fatal abuses
> which make liberal institutions impracticable and even odious.[408]

So here are the extenuating circumstances under which reactionism may be permitted to exist. Though the author does not explicitly make clear, Prussian despotism is here preferable to the extremities brought about by revolution and 'the slavery of mob-government.' Of course, the forces of reaction are permissible only under these strict circumstances, and furthermore, they exist only insofar as they may allow the burgeoning of liberalism. The implication is that

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[406] *The Times*, 24 May 1849, p. 4
[407] *The Times*, 1 April 1848, p.4
[408] *The Times*, 23 June 1848, p. 6

order, rather than freedom was a necessary, and preferable, precursor to the establishment of liberty.[409] *The Morning Chronicle*, too, detailed the importance of a strong central executive, rather than a government which, while claiming to represent popular opinions and liberties, was unable to operate with any degree of efficacy: 'And we are much more desirous of seeing a vigorous Executive established at Berlin, than a feeble one, under however majestic a title, installed at Frankfurt.'[410]

Indeed, such was the importance of order held by the elements of the Press that we have observed, that repression was deemed a suitable and appropriate response to revolutionary rabble: 'If the Austrian and Prussian armies have intervened to restore the balance of power in their respective capitals, that result is attributable [...] to the popular excesses which provoked and demanded energetic repression.'[411] It is worth bearing in mind that there was little approval for repression as a means with which an authoritarian government could keep itself in power. Rather, the great benefit of repression was to allow a ground, stable and fertile, for the promulgation of liberalism, as paradoxical as that may seem. The conditions for the development of liberalism were impossible when the nation was rocked by revolutionary turmoil. At the start of 1850, after the revolutions had been ended, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* offered some explanation:

> Is it that freedom has been extinguished in Prussia, that liberty has sunk under
>
> the pressure of tyrannic power [...]? Quite the reverse: anarchy has been
>
> extinguished in Prussia only to make room for the fair forms of order and
>
> liberty [...] Liberty is never so safe as where anarchy is most thoroughly

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[409] Perhaps this is why there was little regard paid to German Liberals in the Press: the assumption that liberalism could not exist in the anarchical conditions that permeated Revolutionary Germany.
[410] *The Morning Chronicle*, 4 July 1848
[411] *The Times*, 22 November 1848, p. 4.

repressed; despotism is never so near at hand as immediately after the great triumphs of revolution.[412]

Three observations are worth making here. First is the duality of order and liberty which seems to have been a constant trend in commentary on the German Revolution. Order was regarded as necessary for the growth of liberalism, and therefore, the maintenance, or achievement of order was of great importance. During 1848, this order could only be maintained by the pre-existing governments, and thus, though some, such as Prussia, were authoritarian, they were preferable to revolutionary excesses. Furthermore, order was regarded as particularly English, noting how the English equivalent of the various Continental revolutions were the Chartists; though there was some mild disorder, it was held that the loyalty of its citizenry ensured England never devolved into democratic anarchy. Conversely, disorder and anarchy became bywords for Gallic revolution. Hence, the chaos of the German revolution came to be seen through a French lens.

The second is the idea that despotism was not necessarily applicable exclusively to an authoritarian government, but also to one which possessed no legal validity. In the passage from *Blackwood's* above, it is not the authoritarian Prussian government which is noted as being repressive, but the revolutionary mob-government. By subverting statesmanship, and allowing for the domination of a popular assembly, 'the responsibility of political actions and the stress of public engagements must give way to the impulse given to a fluctuating assembly by some *audacious or impertinent demagogue*.'[413] The popular assembly, full of amateurs as it was, would first, be unable to properly manage a nation, and second, would fall prey to the machinations of a demagogue, a Bonaparte, if you would.

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[412] N.a., 'The Year of Reaction', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 67 (January 1850), p. 6 – 7.
[413] *The Times*, 11 September 1848, p. 4; the emphases are mine.

Third is the support shown to the pre-revolutionary governments, not because of a perceived hope that they would give way to liberal values, although it was felt, at the time, that the Prussian Crown Prince was promising as a future bearer of Liberalism, but because they maintained good order, with *The Times* writing that, 'Whilst the conduct of the German Popular Assemblies has been childish, and their efforts abortive, the German governments have displayed the utmost good sense and tact whenever they have acted from their own convictions, and not under the direct or supposed pressure of popular agitation.'[414] Once again, there is some disdain for rights and liberties having been wrung out of a central executive under duress from a mob. To allow the mob to compel concessions, would be to embolden them to venture closer to extremism. Needlessly empowering 'Bonapartean philosophers' and similar revolutionaries was detrimental to pre-existing structures of state order and thus, to the promulgation of liberty. Having seen the ill-effects of republican revolution, *The Times* became much more sympathetic of the German sovereigns. In fact, it was believed that the Prussian government, having been successful in putting down revolution had no intention of 're-establishing either the ancient forms of absolute power or a more novel species of military despotism,' having instead exhorted the citizen to 'meet them on the fair ground of constitutional monarchy,' and emphasizing that 'permanent freedom is, after all, not to be won by a battle between a mob and an army.'[415]

This chapter has attempted to show that fears of a Gallic-styled republicanism were very present in 1848, emphasized by the fact that Louis Phillipe had been overthrown early in that year, and replaced with a republican government. In descriptions and reporting, the language used was even more evocative than was the norm for the mid-nineteenth century. Instilling in the reading audience imagery of barricades, disorganized, mob violence,

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[414] *The Times*, 31 January 1849, p. 4.
[415] *The Times*, 21 November 1848, p. 4

reporting on the revolution made clear the lens through which journalists viewed it were tinged by fears of France influence spreading. The presence of 'democratic clubs' inducing a moral terror upon the legal executives only served to emphasize the dangers that came with investing a tyrannical mob with power. The fact that 'terrorism' was often affixed to descriptions of the revolutionaries speaks volumes in itself, particularly the means with which English journalists perceived those revolutionaries to have attained their illegitimate power, usurped from the legally appointed executives of state. These ill-effects were perceived to be the results of untrammelled nationalism on the part of the Frankfurt Parliament. Its members were seen as willing to sacrifice the institutions of liberty and constitutionalism, in an attempt to expedite the unification of Germany, and in so doing, exposed themselves to the French influence. As noted, however, there exists a definite sense of presumption on the part of our newspaper and periodical writers, that they understood completely what stimulated the German people to revolution. Their ignorance in this regard led them to quickly condemn the German liberals as disingenuous, and willing to sacrifice liberalism for nationalism. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any awareness as to why exactly the German desire for nationhood was so fervent. Rather, it was put down to the speculative nature of the German character, dreaming of romantic ideas of nation, without any thought as to how to practically achieve such a goal. Thus, did the German revolution come to be viewed in the English press, as the ass in the fable.

Chapter Four: Views on Germany's mid-nineteenth century wars

Unification or Expansionism?

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the German states engaged in three continental conflicts, the Second Schleswig, Austro-Prussian, and Franco-Prussian wars. The rationale for these acts of aggression was that they were necessary evils in the journey towards German Unification. German writers and philosophers such as Karl Blind, and Adolph Stahr, often addressing English audiences, explained that, without unification, the German states would fall to the predations of the voracious Second French Empire. In England, these wars, and the German reasoning for them, were often met with scepticism and hostility, though there remained a sizable degree of support for Germany. Bagehot, for example, wrote of the benefits of 'larger' nations,[416] explaining, with regard to the creation of the North German Confederation, at the expense of Austria, that such a unified entity, a 'great' nation, was a boon to civilization.[417]

During this period, from 1864 to 1871, the idea of Prussianism began to take hold; by the end of the Franco-Prussian War, Prussia had essentially become synonymous with Germany, with the Prussian Chancellor, Bismarck, the personification of the woes of Prussianism; to speak of the German Empire was to speak of the successes of Prussia. While the concept of Prussianism had existed prior to the Second Schleswig War, it was seen merely as the means with which Prussia was governed, in that the Prussian executive was authoritarian, and somewhat despotic, as opposed to say, the more liberally governed Baden. It had never been viewed in England as a threat to European stability, and while the Prussian desire to extend its influence over the other German states was generally accepted, this was regarded as contained within the boundaries of Germany. Germany had been too fractured

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[416] Which we explored in Chapter 1.
[417] Bagehot, 'The Gains of the World', pp. 154 – 60.

and was not seen as having the expansionist designs of Russia and France. Indeed, a united Germany would halt the plans of these two nations and, as seen in Chapter One, provide a bulwark which would alleviate England's burden of having to moderate them.

However, once the German states had annexed the twin Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, and after Prussia successfully expelled Austria from Germany, expansionism and Prussian aggrandizement came to be the primary lens through which German affairs were seen. Thus, while it had been viewed prior to the 1860s as somewhat of a distasteful nuisance, Prussianism, over the course of these three wars, was transformed into a growing menace to the European balance of power. This chapter will explore how the English idea of Prussianism was changed between 1864 and 1871, and also how, by the end of this period, 'Germany' and 'Prussia' had become interchangeable.

Before beginning this exploration, it makes some sense to recall one of the essential themes in the previous chapter, that is, the Gallic nature of the 1848 revolutions in Germany, as it gives some indication of how Germany, and Prussia, were viewed in the first half of the nineteenth century. In March of 1848, news of the German Revolution had been met with no small positivity, and revolutionaries such as Blum, and the Austrian archduke John, had been lauded for their attempts to establish a more liberal system of governance. This, however, had changed when the revolution descended into democratic anarchy. Proposals of universal suffrage in Germany were met with scorn in England, and the more the revolution seemed to be taking on a French hue, the more English commenters were united in the belief that perhaps the revolution was not quite what was best for Germany, so much so that the subsequent counterrevolutions of 1849 were seen as positive, on the whole, for German stability and improvement. The point of this brief recollection is to note that during this earlier period, German nationalism was generally applauded, and that English commenters essentially espoused the benefits of authoritarian despotism in the face of democratic

anarchy.[418] The threat to European stability, in the late 1840s, was seen not to have come from any form of German aggression, but rather from the insidious spread of French democracy and republicanism.

Hence, views on German Unification then were highly coloured by preconceived notions of a French menace. The German revolution had meaning only inasmuch as it could be framed along the lines of either an English-styled quest for constitutional liberalism, or a drive for French democratic anarchy. In a trend that would remain in place for much of the nineteenth century, there was great admiration for facets of German culture, such as education, scholarship and the arts, but politically, the German states, and people, were considered bankrupt.[419] Kennedy explains this dichotomy, noting, with particular reference to Prussia, that the English felt tied to the Germans via a catalogue of German qualities[420]: Protestantism as a unifying force, the *waffenbrüderschaft[421]* between Blücher and Wellington, the Teutonic heritage, and German culture.

By the 1860s, however, this was no longer necessarily the case. German aggression and expansionism had become ideas in and of themselves, with little relation to stereotypes of France.[422] The terms of 'aggrandizement,' and 'perfidy'[423] regarding Prussia came to appear in periodicals with ever greater regularity, and it was during this period that the wealth of English literature on Bismarck began to appear, as it became increasingly evident that it was

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[418] Recalling, of course, that order and stability made it possible for the eventual promulgation of liberalism, whereas a full democracy rendered that an impossibility. Prussian authoritarianism, viewed in a vacuum was still regarded as unsavoury; see Chapter 2 on why the perceived democratic flavour of the Germany Revolutions of 1848 was viewed negatively in England.

[419] See Parry,*The Politics of Patriotism,* pp. 244 – 5, for how this was still trend was still alive in the 1860s.

[420] Paul Kennedy., 'Idealists and Realists: British Views of Germany, 1864 – 1939', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol 25 (1975), pp. 139 – 40.

[421] Literally translated as a 'brotherhood of arms.'

[422] Save, perhaps, in the early weeks of the Franco-Prussian War, during which France, and Napoleon in particular, had been held responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. Parry (2006), pp. 277 – 8, 282 – 3.

[423] The meanings of these terms will be further fleshed out in the Chapter. Essentially, however, what they meant were, the desire for Prussia to improve its military, and geopolitical stature, often at the expense of other German states, and the propensity for Prussia, and Bismarck in particular, to act in an underhanded and manipulative manner.

under the stewardship of the great statesman that the course of Germany, and by extension the future of Europe, would be steered. And yet, even as Prussian aggression was becoming more evident, 'the faith that Englishmen placed in the pacific nature of Germany […] is a measure of the extent to which Englishmen had cultivated an idealized image of their Teutonic cousins.'[424] Opinion on German aggression during the 1860s was therefore somewhat nebulous, with some such as Sarah Austin lamenting 'the misfortune of ustria, the insolent triumphs of Prussia, […] that destruction of dear old Germany who has given us so much that is beautiful and so many profound thoughts,'[425] and others who were becoming increasingly wary of Bismarckian foreign policy. Even then, there was still a general distrust of Napoleon III, described as 'universally declared to be a man without loyalty or good faith.'[426]

As we navigate these turbulent, and formative eight years, the focus will primarily lie, as mentioned, on the development of Prussianism as a symbol of authoritarianism and militarism that threatened to both encompass the smaller states, as well as spill over the borders of a revitalised Germany. However, certain themes will be observable which tie in to the previous chapters, namely the ideas of nation, and national sovereignty and self-determination, useful in determining English opinions on German actions. Though the sources do provide other useful elements, such as that of national character, and the culture of the Teuton, they are of somewhat marginal value in understanding English perceptions of the German wars.

In order to best demonstrate the development of English thought on Prussianism, we will treat the three wars in chronological order, exploring the means employed with which

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[424] Rüger, 'A Fallen Idol', p. 545.
[425] Quoted in Rüger, 'A Fallen Idol, p. 546.
[426] Raymond, *British Opinion*, p. 18.

commenters justified, or condemned them, and how these arguments relate to the wider nineteenth century concepts of nation, and civilization. There exists some secondary material concerning views on the development of Prussia, and how these could exist alongside an English fondness for Germany, notably, Mandler's *Our German Cousins,*[427] and Kennedy's *Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*,[428] the latter of which presents a good juxtaposition of English and German views on the other. Kennedy, however, does not trace a growing idea of 'Prussianism' from 1864 to 1871, and concludes that, though there was some wariness at the growth of Germany, particularly after unification, this in itself was not enough to give rise to an 'antagonism.' This hostility, he writes, was the result of the 1880s, and he concludes that

> Unless the Germans surrendered their desire – and their inherent capacity to alter the existing order in Europe and overseas; or unless the British were prepared voluntarily to accept a great change in that order, then their vital interests remained diametrically opposed.[429]

Thus, to Kennedy, English wariness of Germany was a consequence of the latter's increasing growth, both domestically, and in terms of the creation of an overseas empire.

This is supported in other works, such as Muller's *Britain and the German Question*, where he writes that

> British perceptions of the German Question […] revolved around two core problems: Germany's internal development towards liberal, parliamentary government and her compatibility with the European system. […] the spectre

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[427] John Mander, *Our German Cousins: Anglo-German relations in the 19th and 20th centuries* (London: J. Murray, 1974).

[428] Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860 – 1914*.

[429] Ibid, p. 470.

of German hegemony meant that the latter problem dominated British perceptions of Germany during the decades after 1871.[430]

The purposes of this chapter are therefore, not to disprove these assertions, that the *fin de siècle* saw a developing 'antagonism' between England, and an increasingly powerful Germany, but to contend that there was a nascent fear of Prussianism forming in the 1860s, where previously, it had been seen rather more as an unsavoury element of Germany, but one which was internalized and domestic. The chapter further proposes that in England, German Unification was seen by many, not so much as the formation of a German state under Prussian leadership, but of Germany becoming Prussia, that is that Prussia attained such a position of strength and influence, particularly after its victory over Austria in 1866, that Germany took on a distinctly Prussian character.

Furthermore, it demonstrates that while Prussian expansionism was feared by some elements of English society, there were yet others who viewed it in a more positive light. Here, we do not refer to the Germanophiles who held in high regard Handel, Goethe, and the University of Göttingen, the cultural debt owed to Germany by England.[431] Instead, we mean those proponents of national self-determination,[432] nation, and the civilizational perspective, expounded upon by Mandler.[433] These themes, in relation to English opinions of Germany, are somewhat overlooked, important as they are, and therefore deserve further treatment. As noted earlier, we will explore attitudes towards Germany's wars of unification in chronological order, beginning with the Second Schleswig War.

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[430] Muller, *Britain and the German Question,* p. 208.
[431] The study of English opinions of German culture is vast, and best left for another occasion.
[432] Though the concept of self-determination was expounded upon, the actual term does not appear with regularity in the primary sources.
[433] See Mandler, *The English National Character* pp. 59 – 86.

The Second Schleswig War – Big and Small nations, and the legality of war

On the 1st of February 1864, German troops under the command of Austria and Prussia crossed the Danish-German border, initiating a war that was to last until the end of October that same year. Against these two mighty powers, Denmark held out for a surprising amount of time. The ostensible reason for the war was that the new Danish king, Christian IX, had felt compelled to sign the November Constitution, which would merge the Duchy of Schleswig with the Kingdom of Denmark constitutionally, in what was interpreted as a violation of the London Protocols,[434] particularly the terms which specified that, though Schleswig would be joined in personal union with Denmark under the King of the latter, who would also serve as Duke of the former, the two states would essentially remain politically independent from each other. Given that the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein shared historically closer ties than Schleswig and Denmark, to encroach on the independence of one was to attack the autonomy of the other. The large German populations in both Duchies, but particularly Holstein, were abjectly opposed to the passing of the Constitution, a feeling which was largely supported in Germany. The defence of German aggression therefore lay largely in the perceived notion there that Denmark was attempting to absorb the Duchies, transforming them from mostly ethnically German, to Danish territories. German victory was somewhat of a foregone conclusion, though the Danes fought stubbornly, the ancient defensive perimeter known as the *Danewerk* becoming symbolic of this perceived bravery.

In England, the newspaper press almost unanimously condemned Germany, and Prussia and Austria in particular, ignoring the legalities of the matter. Denmark was presented as a heroic, and valiant defender against Teutonic aggression, with *The Times* stating that

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[434] The treaty which concluded the First Schleswig War in 1853.

No doubt the sympathies of this country are very strongly enlisted in favour of the gallant stand which a small nation, with nothing to rely on but its good right and its steady courage, has opposed to the overpowering of two of the great military States of Europe […] It is because our sympathies are entirely with the Danes that we rejoice at the termination of a cruel and useless slaughter.[435]

The language itself gives us some indication, not just of the sympathy the *Times* purported to have had for Denmark, but also how it viewed the actions of Germany. Juxtaposing 'good right' and 'steady courage' with 'cruel and useless slaughter' provides a clear picture. The Second Schleswig War was not some gentlemanly settlement of disputes, but rather a barbaric atrocity committed against a weaker, but braver and nobler neighbour.

The *Daily News* used similar terms, describing German action as a 'crusade against Denmark in a spirit of fanaticism which defies all reason,'[436] and that 'by this act of unreasoning violence […] these powers […] justly forfeit the sympathy and respect of other nations.' In the same article, Denmark was noted as being 'fair and pacific,'[437] thereby essentially placing the entirety of the blame for the war upon Germany. This sort of evocative language was a common occurrence and certain words were featured with great regularity. 'Patriotism and valour, heroism and self-sacrifice have all alike failed to stop the bullets and the military tyrannies of Germany,' is another particularly dramatic example.[438]

Germany was thus viewed in the newspaper press as particularly monstrous, because of the natural material and geographical advantages it enjoyed over Denmark. These advantages played no small role in colouring opinions on the former. However, beyond mere

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[435] *The Times*, February 8 1864, Issue 24789.
[436] *Daily News*, February 1 1864, Issue 5533.
[437] *Daily News*, February 2 1864, Issue 5534.
[438] 'The Conquest of Denmark', *Bradford Observer*, February 18 1864, Issue 1567.

size, the newspapers tended to also accuse Germany, Prussia and Austria in particular, of great disingenuity, that they had orchestrated the war in order to humble Denmark, and annex the Duchies. In some more extreme cases, it was written that the ultimate German ambition was to conquer the entirety of Denmark. The *Morning Post* wrote that 'the most authoritative organs of political opinion in Germany,' argued that

> 'Denmark possesses Holstein, but the possession of Holstein is rather a danger than otherwise, […] why, it is merely granting some possible future enemy the means of supporting his troops in the Jutland plains. Therefore all the Danish mainland must belong to Germany.'[439]

The idea of a German-conquered Denmark seems fanciful and extreme, and was hardly mentioned at all, but it does give some idea of the views held about Germany. A more common argument made by the newspapers was that Germany had purposefully manipulated Denmark into being unable to accept terms of peace, as a means of prolonging the war.

The *Daily News* reported early in the war on the Prussian 'desire to outrun all possible action on the part of the Danish Government, and so to preclude any transaction which might take away the pretext for the invasion of Sleswig,'[440] and a day later, that there was 'no longer even a pretext for their invasion of Danish territory […] have hurried forward their troops to the Danish frontier as though resolved to precipitate a conflict, and thus destroy as far as possible all chances of a peaceable settlement.'[441] The *Times*, too, highlighted this perceived conspiracy, explaining that 'Austria and Prussia refused the time which was necessary for compliance with their request […] vigour must be shown, blood must be shed.'[442] Here, the *Times* not only explained German perfidy, but went further. By reporting

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[439] 'Germany and Denmark', *Morning Post*, July 13 1864, Issue 28260.
[440] *Daily News*, February 1 1864, Issue 5533; the spelling of Schleswig adopted.
[441] *Daily News*, February 2 1864, Issue 5534.
[442] *The Times*, February 8 1864, Issue 24789.

that the Germans were desirous of showing their 'vigour,' and engaging in war, the *Times* associated with Germany what had, until then, been a exclusively French trait, that is, as seen in previous chapters, a lust for military glory and decidedly martial spirit.

Besides this warlike attitude, there was, the *Times* claimed, another reason for German aggression:

> If we are to believe the declaration of the invading Powers, it is nothing more than to enforce the revocation of the Constitution by the temporary occupation of the province. Will this turn out to be true? Does nothing lurk behind the suspicious eagerness with which the two Powers pounced upon Schleswig after they had been offered the most ample security for the attainment of the object for which they profess to hold it?[443]

Followed by:

> The object of the two Powers has been notoriously to conciliate that revolutionary opinion the recent outburst of which has shaken the foundations of government and order in Germany […] They have shown what lengths they were prepared to go in their reckless race for popularity among the small German States.

Thus, by engaging in war, Austria and Prussia were simultaneously hoping to stave off revolutionary feeling on the home front, as well as outmanoeuvre each other in gaining the support of the lesser German states. There is some merit to these statements, given what we know now, that two years after the Second Schleswig War, Prussia would oust Austria and replace it as the dominant German power.

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[443] Ibid.

Though blame was most attributed to the two great German powers, the *Times* was also quick to lambast the smaller states noting that,

> the minor Sovereigns are now beginning to understand the fable of the horse
>
> and the stag […] these petty potentates forced the two great Powers to act in
>
> the name of Germany, and they now find that Austria and Prussia, and they
>
> alone, are Germany.[444]

The *Morning Post* likewise espoused this view, on the foolishness and pettiness of the German courts, 'whose ambition is only equalled by their jealousy […] it can only be imagined what sort of men German princes and statesmen are, of whom so few are above mediocrity.'[445]

One of the very few newspapers which professed a contrarian opinion was the *Leeds Mercury:* 'The natural sympathies of Englishmen naturally gravitate towards the weaker side in a quarrel, but […] it is absolutely necessary that sentiment should be kept sternly under control.'[446] However, despite noting that the Press had allowed itself to become influenced by sentimentality, the *Leeds Mercury* still maintained that:

> Of course, we have not the slightest faith in the enthusiasm of Austria and
>
> Prussia on behalf of the German Schleswigers. They are themselves the most
>
> eminent oppressors of nationalities in the world.[447]

These articles on the German invasion of Denmark therefore provide some insight into the beginnings of a 'new' Germany, one preoccupied with expansionism. Of some interest is the idea that Prussia had purposefully made any hope of an early peace impossible,

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[444] *The Times*, February 19 1864, Issue 24799.
[445] 'Germany', *Morning Post*, October 13 1864, Issue 28339.
[446] 'England and the Danish War', *Leeds Mercury*, March 4 1864, Issue 8079.
[447] Ibid.

denying the overtures of the Danish government, while falsely maintaining the pretence of a desire for peace. In 1848, there had been much support for German unification,[448] and even the First Schleswig War had been discussed in terms of nationalism, rather than of expansionism.

Further enforcing this evolving view of Germany between 1848, and 1864, was the theory of German, or rather, Prussian perfidy. While the Germans of 1848 had been seen as somewhat naïve in allowing themselves to be blinded by the attractiveness of unification, by 1864, the perception of naiveté had been replaced by that of base cunning. The newspapers explained that delays in the peace settlements were committed by Germany with the express intention of purchasing more time for the preparations of an invasion. Similarly, the legality of the German invasion was essentially ignored in the press, with the war being attributed to some greater, sinister conspiracy between Austria and Prussia.[449] Thus, the central issues behind the Second Schleswig War to the press, and in popular opinion, were not ones of nationality, as they had been in 1848, but rather of the rapaciousness of the great German Powers. But why was this so? It appears, in large part, to have been because the position of Denmark had been heavily romanticised, noting some of the language used to describe the conflict; Denmark, a small, but brave and courageous nation, battled against two bullying, aggressive neighbours. There was perhaps, some empathy to be found, in the position of England.

This observation, that sentimentality had swept away opinions on the logic and legality of the affair, was observed in pamphlet writers commenting on the war. It was, in fact, amongst pamphlets, that the more detailed justifications for the war was laid out, with

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[448] Though this was often moderated by the belief that the Germans placed greater importance on nationalism than they did on liberalism.
[449] *The Times*, February 8 1864

the writers being keen to emphasize that they viewed it with an impartial eye, as good Englishmen ought to do, rather than through romantic and sentimental perspectives. Although these writers were possessed of their own particular biases and political views, the nature of the pamphlet allowed them to espouse, at length, their explanations, as opposed to the medium of the newspaper article which was limited by the space allocated to it.

In his pamphlet *Schleswig-Holstein*, the social reformer Patrick Matthew presented the typical argument of the various pamphlet writers, explaining that, though Schleswig had a sizable Danish minority, it was inextricably linked to Holstein[450] and therefore, the twin duchies reserved the right of independence from Denmark.[451] The German philosopher, Karl Blind too, explained that 'German in its political aspirations, Schleswig-Holstein is German also in its language.'[452] Language was thus established as a determinant of nationality and though Blind noted that while nationality could not be based solely on language, in Schleswig-Holstein, German was used so overwhelmingly that it marked the duchies as rather more German than Danish.[453] As a result of this conclusion, the fault of the conflict between Germany and Denmark was laid at the feet of the latter. Germany was 'fulfilling one part of their national rights, by protecting their own,' whereas Denmark was 'tyrannising' the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein.[454] The 'tyrannical Danish' would form a large part of the arguments employed in pamphleteering against Denmark. The role of Germany as the defender of Schleswig-Holstein, however, bears some merit, as relating to the idea of nations.

As noted, Germany's role in the war was conceived as one of protector and though it was vilified in the newspaper press, it was often observed in pamphlets that while there was a

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[450] n.a., 'Germany, Denmark and the Scandinavian Question', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1861), p. 7 – 8.

[451] Patrick Matthew, 'Schleswig-Holstein', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1864), pp. 7 – 9.

[452] Karl Blind, 'They shall remain together: an outline of the state of things in Schleswig-Holstein.', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1861), p. 7.

[453] Ibid, pp. 7 – 9.

[454] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion', p. 4.

marked tendency in England to favour the smaller Denmark, a presumption that 'the smaller combatant has always the best, because the most interesting cause,'[455] there were problems in applying this theory universally. Matthew wrote that though the conflict was presented as one of 'poor, brave Denmark' fighting off Germany, it was more a case of Germany interfering to 'rescue poor, brave Schleswig-Holstein from the thrall of aggressive rapacious Denmark.'[456] In another pamphlet it was written that the Germans were merely attempting to protect their own countrymen, drawing parallels with England which was, 'for the sake of one or two individuals prepared to go to war,'[457] while Germany did so for nine hundred thousand of them; 'the violations of right on the side of Denmark have given new confirmation to the righteous cause of Germany.'[458] Similarly, it was noted in *Schleswig-Holstein, and the Treaty of 1852* that it was 'fashionable' to 'attribute German antagonism towards the Danes to the selfish ambition of appropriating that port,' but that this sort of argument was *ad hominem* and puerile – the German 'antagonism,' it was explained was founded from the 'intimate conviction that they (the Schleswig-Holsteiners) have been oppressed and wronged.'[459] Compare these descriptions of German loyalty to remarks on the Danish equivalent[460]:

> When this feeling of nationality, as is the case in Denmark, degenerates into aggressions against another nationality; when it allows itself to be led into adopting violent measures against that other nationality […] this feeling of nationality becomes a caricature of the worst kind, especially when founded upon a nationality *of one million and directed against a nationality of forty millions*.

[455] n.a., 'Schleswig-Holstein, and the Treaty of 1852.', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1864), p. 7 – 8.
[456] Matthew, 'Schleswig-Holstein', pp.39 – 40.
[457] Don Pacifico, for example.
[458] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion', pp. 24 – 6.
[459] 'Schleswig-Holstein, and the Treaty of 1852', pp. 5 – 7.
[460] 'Germany, Denmark and the Scandinavian Question', p. 15.

Thus, according to these pamphlets, while Germany exhibited the best points of the concept of nationalism, Denmark allowed it to degenerate into vanity and a lust for dominance, traits more commonly associated with France.

These points were the general defence employed in the pamphlets for Germany's participation in the Second Schleswig War: that, its entry was under duress and merely to maintain the rights of Germans in Holstein; their close geographical and political proximity, and the large proportion of Germans that made up the population of Holstein, necessitated intervention in Schleswig as well. However, beyond active support for Germany's position, there was further rationale to be found in the treatment of the population of Schleswig-Holstein by the Danish that seen to be abhorrent. These concerned what Mill would describe as the loss of free institutions under a foreign and alien government, for though it was true that the duke of Schleswig was traditionally also the king of Denmark, he was not to have ruled them as one body politic. Outrage at the suppression of the twin duchies formed a large part of commentary on the war, and was at times likened to both the partition of Poland, and the institution of slavery in the United States. Examining the arguments and statements made shows the value of nations, the idea of civilizational progress, and the importance placed upon the role of free institutions.

In the pamphlet, *Schleswig-Holstein a second Poland: an appeal to the British nation*, the author wrote of the suffering wrought upon the hapless duchies in an effort by Denmark to absorb them: 'every Nationality is best governed by itself, but it will never tend to good, if it undertakes in the meantime to govern another, equally entitled and protected by its own precise and clear laws in an unjust and oppressing manner.'[461] This bears some similarity to a statement made by an Old Englishman as to the nature of oppressed and conquered nations,

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[461] n.a., 'Schleswig-Holstein a second Poland: an appeal to the British nation', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1864), p. 12.

citing the cases of Greece, Italy, and Poland, in various states of rebellion. To afford a better contrast, he explained that 'England could not *conquer* the Scotch, and yet they are the most loyal people of the island. How different the case with conquered Ireland!'[462]

The point behind arguments such as these, it would seem, was the importance placed on the integrity and sovereignty of nationalities which ought not to be violated; doing so resulted invariably in turmoil and strife for both the conqueror and the conquered, what Mill might describe as a 'mischief to the human race.' In fact, two of the points of a petition from the Schleswig Diet presented to the king of Denmark (in his capacity as duke of Schleswig) in 1860, are particularly relevant.[463] First, is of the invalidity of the common Constitution in regard to Schleswig that is, that Schleswig, while having the same ruler as Denmark, legally was to have been ruled separately. Second, was the forcible dissolution of all ties of a non-political kind between Holstein and Schleswig. This dissolution was designed to essentially sever the two close duchies. In these two points are seen the erosion of the autonomy of Schleswig-Holstein. Further similarities to the partitions of Poland may be found in descriptions in the pamphlets of the oppression suffered by the Schleswig-Holsteiners, which were presented in such a manner as to demonstrate an orchestrated Danish attempt to not only absorb the duchies, but also to remove their German identity.

Blind explained how the Danish tyranny imposed itself on the free institutions of Schleswig-Holstein by highlighting three areas of concern: fiscal, the Press, and language. [464] In the first instance, he wrote that taxes were levied in the duchies to be paid into the Danish exchequer 'to provide for the means of their (the Schleswig-Holsteiners) own oppression.' In the case of the Press, he noted that 'the Press in Schleswig-Holstein is kept in a state of

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[462] 'An Old Englishman's Opinion', pp. 4 – 5.
[463] Francis Prange, 'German versus Denmark: being a short account of the Schleswig-Holstein question', (1864), pp. 19 – 21.
[464] Blind, 'They shall remain together', pp. 13 – 15.

bondage […] in such a way as Louis Napoleon only knows so well to gag.' The suppression

of the Press was seen as a particularly heavy blow at free institutions. It is possible that Blind,

writing for an English audience, purposefully evoked the French spectre. In another

pamphlet, the Press had been noted as 'this grand bulwark of national freedom.'[465] The

importance of the sanctity of the Press is better recalled by reporting on the German

Revolution: one of the major causes of outrage had been the democratic attacks on the

German Press. The comparison to Louis Napoleon is also pertinent in that it evoked ideas of

despotism and over-centralisation on the part of Denmark.

Third, Blind wrote of the 'tyranny over the language of the German-speaking

Schleswigers […] Denmark […] considers it useful […] to *Danicize* the rising generation.'[466]

Here, Blind is most explicit in his assumption that Denmark sought to supplant the German

identity with the Danish in Schleswig-Holstein, as had been the case in Poland. In *Schleswig-

Holstein a second Poland*, it was written that 'all institutions […] even the supreme court

[…], the societies for art and literature […] were altered or dissolved.'[467] Given that an

important condition of nationality was language, it is reasonable to conclude how these

actions must have appeared to spectators, else Schleswig-Holstein would likely not have been

compared to Poland. A last area of discontent could be found in the importation of Danes to

replace native officials: the expulsion of the latter from their posts and 'wholesale

immigration of *employés* from the kingdom and the islands, who were seen, for the most part,

from ignorance of the country, to be totally unfit for their posts.'[468] In *A second Poland*, it

was revealed that of the nine hundred higher appointments in Schleswig, eight hundred had

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[465] n.a., 'Schleswig-Holstein a second Poland' (1864), p. 21; it ought to be noted that somewhat ironically, the writer of this pamphlet failed to address the fact that Prussia and Austria were two of the three nations involved in the Partitions of Poland.
[466] Blind, 'They shall remain together', p. 15.
[467] 'Schleswig-Holstein a second Poland', p. 21
[468] 'Germany versus Denmark', p. 21.

been filled by Danes.[469] Thus, even those institutions native to Schleswig had been appropriated by Denmark.

Studying these pamphlets shows that opinion against Germany did not represent a sea change in attitudes towards that nation. While the newspaper press, and certainly popular opinion, may have viewed the war with a certain degree of disapprobation, they did not represent the sum total of English thought on the war. It is also notable that the pamphlets engaged in a somewhat more 'intellectual' view, explaining the intricacies and nuances that had made the war inevitable, rather than espousing theories of a grand Teutonic conspiracy, or relying on sentimental romanticism. There was some notable scorn for the sentimentality of the newspapers, particularly in the pamphlets of Matthew and an Old Englishman.

Nonetheless, the fact that these views were hardly present in newspapers meant that the majority of the English population were not exposed to them. If one was to believe Bulwer-Lytton's claim that newspapers were a 'mere mercantile speculation,'[470] more given to being an indicator, than a shaper, of public opinion, then the reputation of Germany dipped sharply as a result of the Second Schleswig War, beginning to be seen as an expansionist power, in the same way as France, or Russia. One last point has to be made in these observations, and that is, in 1864, the term 'Prussianism' did not appear with overwhelming regularity in the articles. This could be attributed to the fact that it was perceived that both of the great German Powers bore an equal share of complicity in instigating the war. The mantle of expansionist therefore rested on both their shoulders, rather than solely on Prussia. In the following section, it will be shown how this attitude changed, and Prussia began to be seen by

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[469] 'Schleswig-Holstein a second Poland', 21 – 2.
[470] Bulwer-Lytton, quoted in Stephen Koss, *The rise and fall of the political press in Britain. Vol. 1, The nineteenth century* (London: H. Hamilton, 1981), p. 49. Aspinall, Arthur, *Politics and the press, c. 1780 – 1850* (London: Home and Van Thal, 1949) further explores the newspaper press as a carrier, rather than director, of public opinion.

some English commentators as the greatest source of mischief and aggression in the nascent German nation; retroactively, Bismarck was seen to have manipulated Austria into following Prussia into war with Denmark.

The Austro-Prussian War – the emergence of *das Perfide Preußen*

The Second Schleswig War concluded with the Treaty of Vienna. Having been beaten into submission by Germany, Denmark ceded control of the twin Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia and Austria. While Prussia aimed to absorb the duchies, Austria sought their incorporation into the German Confederation, or *Deutscher Bund*. This friction soon became untenable, and hostilities broke out in June of 1866. Arrayed against each other were two coalitions comprised of various German states, at the head of one Prussia, and at the other, Austria. There was a general, though certainly not overwhelming, belief in England that Austria would have little trouble in disposing of Prussia, given the former's size and reputation as the premier German Power, a position which Prussia had only begun to challenge relatively recently. This, however, proved not to be the case, seven weeks being all it took for Prussia to achieve victory. Though not quite the one-sided trouncing Prussia handed to France in 1870, battles such as that of Sadowa proved decisively Prussian military superiority, and were of great humiliation to Austria. The result was the dissolution of the *Deustcher Bund*, and its replacement with the North German Confederation. Furthermore, the expulsion of Austria left Prussia as the definitive power in Germany.

Unlike the case of the Second Schleswig War, the Austro-Prussian War was reported under somewhat different circumstances. Unlike the Second Schleswig War, there appears to have been little confusion regarding the Austro-Prussian War. As we have seen, the Schleswig Question was opaque, and apparently quite byzantine to English commenters,

which led to a wealth of pamphlet writers attempting to explain the nuances to the common reader who, the former felt, had been badly misinformed by a sensationalist Press. Thus, it may be said, with some appropriateness, that reporting on the Schleswig War was a conflict between the high-minded intellectualism of the pamphlet, and the sentimentality of the popular Press.

The Austro-Prussian war, however, was a much more clear-cut issue, and though some reporters decried the sentimentalism of others in ignoring the validity of Prussian claims to the twin duchies, the intellectual divide between the different forms of literature are nowhere near as evident. This may account for the smaller pool of pamphlets, a surprising enough fact, given that the conclusion of the war significantly altered the balance of power in Europe. A further reason for this dearth of material was that the Austro-Prussian War was concluded in seven weeks, as opposed to the Second Schleswig War which stretched for the better part of 1864. It may also well be said that there was less room for the romance of the small, courageous nation. Prussia had proven itself a considerable military power, and Austria had already been recognized as such. There was also no attack on foreign sovereignties, and the war was one of internal consolidation, rather than external expansion.[471]

This being said, however, English reporting highlighted the growing apprehension towards Prussian aggrandizement, as distinct from German nationalism. As noted earlier in the chapter, it was during the Second Schleswig War that initial fears of German aggression began to surface, namely in its desire to expand and subsume the independent duchies, at the expense of the sovereign state of Denmark. However, at that point, this disapprobation was levelled at both Austria, and Prussia, the two great Powers of Germany. In the Austro-

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[471] Although, as we will see, expansionism came to be viewed as a consequence.

Prussian War, focus on this aggression began to be directed at Prussia, solely, rather than both of the German Powers. Explaining this sentiment, is the following paragraph from the *Examiner*:

> Austria always has been, and in the nature of things always must be, a Conservative power rather than otherwise, sluggish in commencing war, and more often condemned to defend herself than to attack others.[472]

Though some identification had been made of 'Prussianism' in prior decades, with Austria expelled from Germany, militarism in the latter could be placed squarely on the shoulders of Prussia.

Rightly, or wrongly, this sentiment was given credence by the circumstances in which the war came about. Prussia had sought to absorb Schleswig-Holstein, whereas the goal of Austria was to incorporate the duchies into the German Confederation. The former could, and indeed was, easily perceived by English commenters as an attempt at self-aggrandizement, whilst the latter could be seen as a step towards German unification. Given the reasons for invading Schleswig-Holstein two years prior, the Austrian case looked rather more honest and credible than the Prussian. Nonetheless, there were commenters who highlighted the benefits of Prussian victory and dominance over the German states, and for whom the difference between Prussian aggrandizement and Germany unity was one of nomenclature, rather than substance. The politician and author, Mountstuart Duff, for example, writing before the severance of Austria from Germany explained his preference that

> We should prefer to see Austria altogether divorced from her connection with the Bund,[473] although we are, of course, not insensible to the grand features of

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[472] 'Count Bismarck', *Examiner*, 30 June 1866, p. 410.
[473] Referencing the German Confederation

the so-called Gross-Deutsch idea[474] […] Looking, however not to what is

abstractedly impossible, but to what is not wholly impossible, we pronounce

for the view which finds favour in Prussia.[475]

Duff was explaining the difficulties that were to be found in uniting the German states under

the headship of Austria, when that great power was insistent on the incorporation into

Germany of its non-German territories. His point, therefore, was that, though there was

obviously a case to be made for Austria's plans, Prussia's was proving to be the more logical,

and indeed, more 'possible' one. A return to these benefits of *Kleindeutschland* will be

featured later, to provide some additional context on views of Prussia.

A common feature to appear in the greater context of Prussian aggression during

1866, was that state's history of martial fervour, as a means of expanding its influence over

Germany. Take, for example, the following excerpt in which The *Edinburgh Review*,

lamenting what it viewed as an inherently Prussian characteristic, stated that

> The acts of the Prussian Government for the last hundred and fifty years
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> *transcend even the language of her rulers*. No other Government has laid it
>
> down as an avowed principle that self-aggrandisement justifies the breach of
>
> every engagement and the partition or seizure of unoffending neighbours.
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> Prussia alone, since the fall of Napoleon, has done more than proclaim these
>
> principles, she has given effect to them.[476]

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[474] Austria's proposal to unite the entirety of its multi-national empire with the German states under the banner of a 'Greater Germany.'

[475] Mounstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, *Studies in European Politics* (1866), p. 197; the 'view which finds favour in Prussia' was that of *Kleindeutschland*, which became a reality with the creation of the North German Confederation.

[476] N.a., 'International Policy. Essays on the Foreign Relations of England,' *The Edinburgh Review*, (July 1866), p. 280; my emphasis.

What is pertinent is the highlighted statement. Prussian aggression and greed for territory was, as mentioned, an inherent characteristic more of that state, and less of the individuals who ran it, though they too had to have been held accountable. This was mirrored some ninety odd years later in the Allied dissolution of Prussia in the aftermath of World War Two. In essence, the character of Prussia was one given over to war, expansionism, and aggrandisement, which equalled that of the first Napoleon. Contrast this with the earlier statement on the character of Austria being essentially a defensive state, little given to invading others.[477]

The *Edinburgh Review* further explored this notion in an article entitled *The Military Growth of Prussia* wherein, as the name implies, it traced what it deemed the warmongering of the Prussian state and its rulers from the reign of the Great Elector. It was written that, though the ostensible purposes of Bismarck and Prussia was for the unity of Germany, the *Review* was 'not so sanguine […] there are signs […] which may well make the greatest lover of the doctrine of nationalities doubt whether the new empire […] will of necessity stay its bounds where the German tongue ceases to be spoken.' It contended, that there was 'a great military conspiracy against the existence of her own confederates and allies.'[478]

Though one ought not to place undue importance on the opinions of one periodical which, though highly regarded, was also whiggish in its political tendencies, the emergence of articles explaining the contemporary conflicts in terms of Prussia's history is telling. According to these articles, it was almost impossible for Prussia, in that context, to avoid instigating hostilities. Also of some further importance, is the belief that Prussia had no intention of respecting the principles of nationalities and that its expansionist ideals would not cease once it had united Germany under its aegis. In an age where ideas of nation and

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[477] See p. 17.
[478] 'The Military Growth of Prussia,' *The Edinburgh Review* (October 1866), p. 593 – 4.

nationality were being explored in more detail, the notion of an expansionist Prussia believed to hold the sovereignty of others in scorn was doubtless alarming to many commentators.

This form of argument against Prussia, that it had little respect for national sovereignty, was doubtless stimulated by the still-recent Second Schleswig War in which, as we saw, many felt that Prussia had pilfered Danish territory.[479] The Austro-Prussian War was merely a continuation of the former, designed purposefully, by Bismarck, to draw Austria into a conflict which would end in its defeat. Thus, the two wars, according to the *Edinburgh Review*, become episodic in nature, a plan not of German unification, but of Prussian dominance. Austria is additionally depicted as a sympathetic partner in the earlier conflict, a catspaw of Prussia: 'She (Austria) reluctantly consented to take part in that infamous campaign against a small and gallant monarchy […] The result of the war placed […] Austria herself, in Bismarck's grasp – for if the Duchies were his spoil, Austria was his accomplice.'[480] This, of course, subscribes to the view that Bismarck was a far-seeing manipulator, rather than a very canny politician, an argument which is superfluous to our needs here.

The notion of Austria being made a puppet of, forced into a partnership of complicity, and therefore placed at the mercy of Prussia is of some interest. In reading reports on the Second Schleswig War, there were scarcely any which made Austria out to be an unwilling partner. In fact, recalling the articles on that war, Austria was depicted as being just as rapacious and expansionist as Prussia, an equal in the sinister partnership to subsume chunks of Denmark, rather than a reluctant compatriot dragged along against its will. The Bismarckian element is also important. There has been, as mentioned, much discussion as to whether Bismarck had envisioned a grand scheme to place Prussia at the headship of

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[479] On their part, it should be noted, ignoring the largely German population of Holstein.
[480] Ibid, p. 281.

Germany, or simply reacted very adroitly to shifting circumstances. Nonetheless, he began to appear with ever greater regularity in reports on Prussian falsity, often implied, or outright accused of being the mastermind behind this expansionism.

This sentiment is espoused in the *Examiner* in the article on Bismarck cited earlier: 'He never lost any opportunity of declaring […] that Austria was not only the hereditary foe of Prussia, but was a common source of danger to Germany, and disquiet and uneasiness to the whole of Europe.'[481] The manipulative nature of Bismarck here, was seen to extend beyond the borders of Germany. In Prussian friction with Austria, the *Examiner* maintained that Bismarck had made it a Continental issue; Austria, Bismarck argued, was the menace, rather than Prussia. Prussia's goal was merely to unify, and strengthen Germany. Additionally, the success of Bismarck was partially attributed to a theme we have seen prior to this, that is, the falsity of the Prussian Liberals who 'did, indeed dislike M. Bismarck, but […] they detested Austria more […] and contributed largely to the exclusion of Austria from the *Zollverein*.'[482]

Recalling journalistic reflections on the Revolution of 1848, one of the bitter complaints levelled against *Paulskirche* was that, because the Liberals were myopically concerned with unification, they had allowed themselves to degenerate into Gallic Republicans. Here, once again, was the press' testament to their blinkered nature.[483] For the *Examiner*, they were so blinded by their revulsion for Austria that they were willing to throw in their lot with Bismarck. The man himself was further described as 'utterly reckless of principle, faith, and honour […] this Mephistopheles, or madman.'[484] *The Economist*

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[481] 'Count Bismarck,' p. 410

[482] The German Customs Union, and an early manifestation of German unity.

[483] Duff seems to have been one of the very few commenters who appreciated that the Prussian Liberals faced very different challenges than their English counterparts, and were unjustly vilified by the English Press. See Duff, *Studies*, p. 242 – 3 for an explanation of these differing circumstances.

[484] 'The German Quarrel,' *The London review of politics, society, literature, art, and science*, ed. by Charles Mackay (14 April 1866), p. 410.

described him in much the same way, comparing him to two other statesmen, Cavour,[485] and

Louis Napoleon, as an unscrupulous purveyor of intrigue. It explained why he was the lesser

of the three: 'Cavour showed and justified his trust in popular institutions; Louis Napoleon

has worked out the notion of a truly representative despot […] but Count Bismark has as yet

shown no sympathy with any political idea: except that of Prussian territorial

aggrandisement.'[486] Duff too, described Bismack as being 'half French-Imperialist, half

disciple of M. Gerlach,[487]' a man who had more in common with autocratic Russia, than with

Germany, and whose 'action upon the affairs of Europe has hitherto been simply evil.'[488]

This vision of Bismarckian manipulation was further expressed in *The London Review*:

> By what arts and promises Count Bismarck lulled the suspicions or kept alive
>
> the hopes of the Emperor Napoleon until the moment was past for any
>
> effective interference on his part, we may never know; but nothing could be
>
> more adroit than the manner in which Austria was gradually placed in the
>
> wrong in reference to the Danish duchies […] and at last provoked into
>
> declaring war while still only half prepared for the conflict.[489]

We see that there was a general belief in Bismarck as a sort of puppet master, pulling both the

emperors of France and Austria's strings, eventually rendering Napoleon impotent, and

having so carefully shifted the burden of guilt on to Austria that the latter was essentially

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[485] Cavour who was a politician involved heavily in the *Risorgimento*.

[486] n.a., 'Count Bismarck,' *The Economist* (21 July 1866), p. 849.

[487] Possibly the Prussian Conservative Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach, who opposed Bismarck's plans for unification, or the Prussian general Ludwig von Gerlach.

[488] Duff, *Studies*, pp. 233 – 5.

[489] N.a., 'Count Bismarck on Prussian Policy,' *The London review of politics, society, literature, art, and science*, (29 December 1866), p. 698.

unable to follow any option but a declaration of war. This manipulation would be brought to the fore some four years later at the outset of the Franco-Prussian War.[490]

Additionally, with regard to Prussian ambitions, *The London Review* pointed out that, 'throughout the whole of the Slesvig-Holstein[491] business the Germans have shown a grasping, unscrupulous greed of territory, and a perfect insensibility to anything but the promptings of their own ambition.'[492] Returning to the *Examiner*, and with regard to the Prussian annexation of Hanover in September 1866, the Prussians were likened to a wolf, and Hanover to a lamb. The wolf 'could not continue to exist and develop himself prosperously without swallowing the Lamb.' This rationale was seen as morally dubious as 'the King of Prussia did not recognize the force of this, his own principle, when he flatly refused the demand of France for the rectification of her frontier.'[493]

Perhaps in response to arguments that a unified Germany was better than a splintered one, it was further written that 'it seems advantageous to get rid of petty sovereignties and to make a compact united Northern Germany, but in the means to this end there is an example which may warrant any invasion of national rights.'[494] The Prussian argument therefore, was seen by the *Examiner* and other papers, as a dangerous one which gave validity to an invasion of an independent state's sovereignty. It was, however, a pretty weak one; expressed the way it was, it implied that the right to incorporate smaller states rested solely on Prussia's strength. While this was true to an extent, it exposed a failure to understand Germany's position, on the part of the English press. Reading Bismarck's 'Blood and Iron' speech, gives us some insight into the Chancellor's perspective: while Bavaria and Baden may have

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[490] The Ems Telegram, in which although worded politely by Wilhelm, was edited slightly so as to appear to give some offence to France, bait which Napoleon took, thus commencing the war.
[491] This is the spelling of Schleswig used in several articles at the time.
[492] Ibid, p. 699.
[493] n.a., 'New Version of the Wolf and the Lamb,' *Examiner*, 15 September 1866, p. 577.
[494] Ibid, p. 577

possessed liberal charters, they were never called upon to take the lead in German unification. Indeed, too many speeches and majority resolutions and not enough practical action were, in Bismarck's opinion, the failures of 1848 and 1849. Ironically, as we have seen in chapter three, this was also the reason to many in the English press, as to why the revolution failed. To Bismarck, prospects for a united Germany depended upon the strength of Prussia, and its ability to weld the often disparate states into a homogenous whole.

In looking at these reports on the Austro-Prussian War, certain trends which would shape the English perception of Germany become apparent. The first of these, was that Prussia, under the stewardship of Bismarck, was at best, keen to meddle in, and manipulate the affairs of its neighbours. At worst, Prussian aggression would result in a continental conflagration:

> 'What is her (Prussia's) miserable pretext? That Austria mobilized […] in
> answer to Prussia's menace of seizing Holstein. For this the continent of
> Europe is to be plunged in the formalized anarchy of martial […] law.[495]

And from the same article:

> If the invocation of Peace with all her graces […] would not hold the hand of
> the reckless Powers; if they refused to look at the picture of war, with all his
> horrors, about to desolate their own […] we would conjure from the abyss of
> the future […] the appalling shape of the great Demogorgon – Revolution

It is interesting to note that, as in the Revolution of 1848, the aspect of international conflict was presented as a rather French one, recalling here the apocalyptic and diabolic imagery evoked concerning a contagious Gallic-styled democracy.[496]

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[495] 'Great Demogorgon,' *Examiner*, 12 May 1866, p. 291 – 2.
[496] Which we explored in Chapter 3.

In the case of the Austro-Prussian War, the spectre of a continental war was laid at the feet of the Prussia, who was deemed the aggressor. Little blame was place on Austria whose fault was depicted in the press, as being one of weakness, rather than aggression.[497] Thus, in the two years since the Second Schleswig War, perceptions of Austria had shifted from being a conspiratorial partner, to an unwilling catspaw, manipulated by a statesman far more capable than its own. Meanwhile, the notion of German aggression had taken more solid form in the shape of Prussianism. It was felt that the defence of German nationality which Prussia had often invoked, was one which was seen to be hardly valid in 1866. To those who espoused this sentiment, the Austro-Prussian War was only a herald to Prussia's conflict with France some four years later.

The Franco-Prussian War – *Revanche*, and the German Empire

In early 1870, a Hohenzollern candidate, Leopold, had been put forward to fill the vacant throne of Spain. France, fearing the implications of Hohenzollern-ruled lands on either side of its boundaries, compelled Leopold to forego his candidature. Seeking further reassurances of Prussian neutrality, the ambassador to Prussia, Count Benedetti, had requested of Wilhelm that Prussia abstain from meddling in Spanish affairs, at the spa town of Bad Ems. Though they had interacted civilly, Wilhelm had refused to acquiesce to these requests, before having a telegram sent off to Bismarck detailing the conversation that had taken place. Bismarck had then reworded this telegram to appear that both parties involved had given offense to one another, before publicly releasing it. When news of *die Emser Depesche*, as it became known, reached France, the French parliament voted to declare war on the 16th of July, 1870. Three days later, the French armies crossed the German border.

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[497] 'Prussian Wickedness and Austrian Weakness'.

What followed was a remarkable spectacle. Though France, since the Napoleonic Wars had been perceived as the supreme military power on the continent, by the first of September, its emperor, along with two of its armies, had been forced into capitulation, and captured at the Battle of Sedan. This loss led to the collapse of the Second French Empire, and the creation of the Third French Republic. Furthermore, it rendered France practically defenceless, though the Republic refused to capitulate. The German armies then marched into France, and laid siege to Paris until the end of January in 1871. The formation of a German Empire followed directly thereafter, along with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. Carlyle's 'Queen of the Continent' had, at last, been realized.

In England, the Franco-Prussian War was viewed, and commented upon, as an extension of Germany's two preceding conflicts, by both its detractors and supporters. On the one hand, it was a further reminder of Prussian aggression, militarism, and the Prussian desire for self-aggrandizement. One of the themes which became evident in 1866, and only grew in 1870, was the perception of Prussia's desire for unification, not for the good of Germany, but rather for its own territorial expansion. On the other hand, the Franco-Prussian War was seen as the culmination of the seeds of nationalism and unification that had been planted at Jena-Auerstädt in 1806. Before exploring how the Franco-Prussian War further defined the notion of Prussianism, these arguments on the side of Germany are worth attention, providing context, as well as bearing some good information on ideas of nationhood, national self-determination, and indeed, ideas of national character.

Like the revolutions of 1848, the Franco-Prussian War was often seen through the lens of pre-existing stereotypes of France, particularly the lust for *la gloire*, the French desire for military glory. Furthermore, as we explore the defence of the German cause, a notable theme becomes apparent: the perception that the German character had much in common with England, in terms of its domesticity, peaceableness, and respect for territorial

boundaries.[498] These observations make it apparent that, despite an increasingly negative backlash against Prussianism during the 1860s and 1870s, and an apprehension at the perceived expansionism of Germany, there was still a sizeable portion of English society which maintained the old observations on the German character, and the sympathies they felt one ought to have had with the German. They also highlight the large degree of distrust felt towards the French by England, with Rüger explaining that 'many Englishmen believed that the Franco-Prussian War resulted largely from Napoleon's jealousy […] Great Britain's ablest thinkers forgot or explained away Prussia's recent acts of aggression and looked upon the war with France as inevitable and even desirable.'[499]

The chief argument of those who espoused the German cause was essentially that France was the aggressor, the result of the latter being endowed with a desire for war in the pursuit of glory. This aggression, the German philosopher Karl Blind noted, was nothing new, a historical trend: 'Since the sixteenth century, Germany has incessantly been attacked and encroached upon on her western frontier by France, monarchical as well as republican.'[500] Neither, it seemed, was there to be a change in the French attitude towards war. The politician and philanthropist, Samuel Smith explained that, 'All nations have ideals […] the ideal of France has been martial glory. […] other countries were fast coming to look upon war as a great calamity, […] but France persisted in throwing a halo of renown about the trade of the soldier.'[501] Thus, in an age where ideas of national character, and civilizational progress were still relatively strong, Smith indicted the French ideal as being atavistic, and primitive, one suited more to an earlier age of conquest. Additionally, one of the themes explored in the first chapter was the right of nations to self-determination, and the

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[498] Rüger, 'A Fallen Idol, p. 548.
[499] Ibid, p. 546.
[500] Blind, 'A defence of the German cause', p. 9.
[501] Smith, 'The Franco-German War', p. 7.

preservation of their territorial integrity, and free institutions. The threat of French

expansionism to these indicators of civilization doubtless engendered much sympathy for

Germany, even more so because, ostensibly, France had begun the war.

Furthermore, he stated, 'Paris has become the head quarters of a rank sensuous

civilization […] that mocked at purity, humility and self-denial.'[502] Contrast this with his

analysis of the German character: 'The Teutonic ideal of national greatness is something

quite different from the Celtic. It is the moral, intellectual and political development of the

nation; there is no lust of foreign conquest, but a fervent patriotism for Fatherland.'[503]

According to Smith then, the English ideal had far closer parallels with the German, as

opposed to the hedonistic French. The issue of national character as having some

responsibility in the outbreak of war was also noted by A Member of the British Legislature:

> It was her flattering histories, and lying press, that brought upon France her
>
> present humiliation, by leading her to think that the exceptional victories of
>
> the First Emperor were due, not to his exceptional genius, but to the inherent
>
> superiority of Frenchmen […] It is time that the peace of Europe should no
>
> longer depend upon this military vanity run mad, or upon the humour of the
>
> least stable and contented people of the Continent.[504]

Being representative of other works on the French lust for *la gloire*, these several passages

show that preconceived notions of France, and the idea of national character, were still very

much present, and powerful directors of opinion. As in 1848, France was described here as a

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[502] Ibid, pp. 7 – 8.
[503] Ibid, p. 10.
[504] A Member of the British Legislature, 'The interest of Europe in the conditions of peace', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1870), pp. 9 – 10.

threat to Europe, whereas Germany, if left to develop itself free of the Celtic influence, would only proliferate those qualities so valued in England.

While issues of national character were not alone enough to indict the French of culpability in invading Germany, they certainly lent credence to further arguments presented. A Member of the British Legislature wrote:

> (France) sought to invade, to defeat, to humble Prussia. Invasion, defeat, and humiliation has been her own lot. […] France, in a jubilation of premature triumph, prepared to repeat the insults which the First Napoleon heaped upon prostrate Prussia at Tilsit. Prussia has […] proved herself not only a greater but also a more generous victor.[505]

Prussia was thus viewed as waging essentially a defensive war, for her own nationality, a patriotic war, so to speak. The theme of retribution was also highlighted in Smith's pamphlet: 'This terrible stroke that has fallen upon the beautiful land of France is no dream, it is a fearful retribution for many crimes.'[506] Indeed, retribution, and the further safeguard of Germany's borders from France was an argument adopted by writers on the war, particularly in reference to Germany's annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.[507]

The prolific author George Gleig wrote that 'France has over and over again […] endeavoured to make herself mistress of the entire left bank of the Rhine. Why should not Germany […] take back those provinces on the left bank which were originally hers?'[508] The

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[505] Ibid, p. 5.
[506] Smith, 'The Franco-German War', p. 6.
[507] Briefly, the context behind the controversial annexation of the two provinces went as such: on the German side, were two arguments, that Alsace – Lorraine were historically German, and that they were a necessity to German security, while on the other, that the annexation was unnecessary, and illegal, as it entailed the dismemberment of France, and furthermore, that, though they had German roots, the provinces had been under the dominion of France for such an age as to be rendered essentially French.
[508] George Robert Gleig, 'Why is Prussia Victorious?', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (December 1870), p. 662.

recapture of Alsace and Lorraine, then, according to Gleig, was no more morally iniquitous than what France had visited upon Germany, and of the former's many schemes to annex chunks of the latter. The duality of *revanche*, and national sovereignty and security were further promoted by Adolph Stahr, the German writer, defending Germany's actions.

The following excerpts are taken from a series of letters he wrote to an unidentified Alsatian, who defended the French right to annex the German territories along the Rhine as a safeguard for France against German aggression. It was in response to this that Stahr noted that it was France, rather than Germany, which had a demonstrable history of aggression against the latter, rather than the other way around:

> You impute it as a fault to us Germans, that we, who have been unjustly and criminally attacked by France, should now, as conquerors in the most righteous contest […] lay claim to the same argument in our own behalf.[509]

This implied hypocrisy of France, in claiming that others ought not to do to it, what it had done to others, was made explicit in a later passage:

> 'It is well known that France may do many things that are not permitted to another nation. The annexation of the German Rhine provinces to France is "an act of political necessity, for the good of France," the recovery of German Alsace […] is, […] "a crime against a foreign people."'[510]

France's hypocrisy appears to have been a source of some irritation towards commenters, with A Member of the British Legislature stating that 'France, in virtue of an imaginary superiority, considered herself entitled to all the rights of conquest, but exempt from the penalties of defeat,' and, because of this, 'Germany deserved the sympathy of Europe for

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[509] Adolph Wilhelm Theodor Stahr, 'Justice above sentimentalism!: before and after Sedan: letters on the war, addressed to an Alsatian', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1871), p. 5.
[510] Ibid, p. 6.

combating […] a pernicious French delusion.'[511] France, therefore, along with our earlier notations on the French character, was presented as something of the arrogant bully, in juxtaposition to the stolid, and essentially defensive-minded German.

A further point was made in defence of Germany, or rather against accusations of Prussian aggression and aggrandizement, and that was that Prussia's actions were inspired by patriotism, quite unlike the French. In a broad sweep, Smith justified Prussia's actions in both the Franco-Prussian, and the Austro-Prussian Wars:

> 'Prussia threw aside reserve and claimed the leadership of Germany […]
> viewed broadly, in the interest of the German race, her policy was essentially
> patriotic; […] it was impossible that Germany should ever constitute itself as a
> free nationality under […] that heterogeneous empire (Austria)'[512]

That Prussia was acting out of patriotism seemed to commenters to justify the annexation of the provinces. Furthermore, it was argued that the Germans were essentially a peaceable race, given to war only when absolutely necessary:

> 'Germany has no Napoleonic traditions, […] has never placed her glory in the
> subjugation of other races. […] No such boasts, begotten of vanity and self-
> assertion, have any place in the German mind.[513]

Note the invocation of the First Emperor, and the conclusions it brought to the fore. By asserting that Germany had no 'Napoleonic traditions,' A Member of the British Parliament was further implying that England, and indeed Europe, had little to fear from a united

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[511] A Member of the British Legislature, 'The Interests of Europe', pp. 33 – 4.
[512] Smith, 'The Franco-German War', p. 12.
[513] A Member of the British Legislature, 'The Interests of Europe', pp. 36 – 7.

Germany, simply due to the fact that it was not in the German character to embark on schemes of conquest as, so the stereotype went, the French were wont to do.

This German patriotism was of the same sort evoked during the Schleswig War. The sympathy that was drummed up then for the disenfranchised German Holsteiners was again brought to bear, in regard to the German Alsatian:

> 'We have alluded to the contempt with which the Alsatian is habitually spoken of by the Frenchmen […] The consciousness that he is a *conquered* being is a continual source of gratification to French pride, for all France believes that every inch of the soil was won by hard fighting, and is illuminated by *la gloire*.'[514]

And though there were arguments that the Alsatian, by dint of time and geographical proximity, was rather more French than German, in the pamphlet above, it was further explained that 'No one who is truly familiar with German language and the people of Alsace, can deny that they are at heart thoroughly Germany.'[515] Certainly, the issue of whether the Alsatians had more of the Teuton than the Gaul in them was a contentious one. Unlike the matter of Holstein, wherein the majority of the Holsteiners were recognized as ethnically German, it did not seem immediately clear as to whether France or Germany had more claim to the province of Alsace, with both sides of the debate employing the same argument, that Alsace-Lorraine was 'at heart' either German or French, depending upon which side of the fence one stood.

Regardless, in the pamphlet it is possible to see the similarity in the defence of German aggression during 1864, and 1870. In the former, the German Holsteiners had been

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[514] n. a., 'France, Alsace, and Lorraine', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (1870), pp. 18 – 19.
[515] Ibid, p. 19.

disenfranchised and were undergoing a process of forced 'Danicization,' and in the latter,

they were viewed, as per the pamphlet above, as somewhat second-rate, a conquered prize,

rather than a fully incorporated citizenry. The Germans were thus, in both cases, merely

attempting to protect their foreign relatives severed from the Fatherland not by choice, but by

history. These arguments resonated so strongly with their English proclaimers as they made it

clear that Germany was seen to be engaged in a patriotic, rather than nationalistic conflict.

The war had been engaged in fully on the part of Germany, not because it sought to conquer,

but rather to defend the institutions of Germanhood, as opposed to the 'Napoleonic traditions'

of France. In that sense, it appealed to commenters, the English quality of patriotism, rather

than the blind French devotion to nationalism.

A last point raised in defence of Germany was the old trope that a united Germany

would present stability on the continent: 'German triumph means security for European

peace. A French triumph means endless aggression and insecurity. An alliance between

England, and Prussia triumphant, would in all probability be the safest guarantee for the

world's peace conceivable.'[516] This was once again enforced by ideas of character, with

Smith attempting to silence critics of a united Germany under Prussia by noting that,

Teutonic ambitions of conquest, if they existed, would be kept in check by the presence of

both France and Russia, in the same way that Germany would halt the expansionism of these

two nations.[517] Coupled with the inherently homely character of the Teuton and, according to

Smith, 'We think these are cogent reasons in favour of a pacific Germany.'[518]

Gleig furthered the idea of the peaceful Teuton:

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[516] Ibid, p. 23.
[517] Smith, 'The Franco-German War', pp. 17 – 18.
[518] Ibid, p. 18.

'The laws of Prussia may here and there be unsuitable to our notions; but the Prussian people revere as well as obey them, because they know that without law neither life nor property is safe. The Prussians are a domestic people […] Yet when the honour or safety of Fatherland is threatened they turn out […] willingly to vindicate both.'[519]

This justification of Prussian aggression, and of the Prussian citizen's acquiescence to the authoritarianism of the government is of some interest, and appears in more detail in an article in *Macmillan's Magazine*. Referencing Frederic Harrison's criticism of Prussian and Bismarckian policy, Edwin Goadby explained the vital differences between Prussia and England, that made Bismarck's 'blood and iron' a necessity:

'Were England placed in the same position, and were Mr. Harrison an English professor, it would very much surprise us if he did not see more in the "blood and iron" theory than he is able to see now, with a sea-wall around us and a decent fleet to guard it.'[520]

And furthermore,

'There is no political life there, observes Mr. Harrison. Does he attribute its absence to the North German Chancellor? […] Feudalism has had to resist republicanism, and it is into this conflict that Bismarck has thrown himself heartily […] This is the secret of his "iron and blood" theory; and it would be the practice of even mild, monarchical England, if barricades were raised in Cheapside or Pall Mall.'[521]

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[519] Gleig, 'The Great Collapse', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (November 1870), p. 655.
[520] Edwin Goadby, 'A Few Words for Bismarck', *Macmillan's Magazine* (February 1871), p. 342
[521] Ibid, p. 344.

In the last passage, in particular, we see a trend that was particularly evident in commentary on the 1848 Revolution, that is that, authoritarianism, or feudalism in this instance, was preferable to republicanism, and its associated traits.

Support for Germany was therefore very much founded on existing ideas of the French character, which became an implication of guilt, and a source of vilification. Germany was held to have been fighting a defensive, patriotic war against the predations of a rapacious nation which had attempted various times in the past to subsume German territories. Additionally, the defenders of the German cause were quick to highlight how similar Germany was to England. By invoking the themes of domesticity, and patriotism, they made the argument that the Germans, explained to be a pacific race, were wronged by the French, and deserving of English support. These arguments were thus based as much on ideas of national character, as much as they were on the grounds of legality. In the following pages, we will look at the arguments made by detractors of Germany, and how these were grounded in a growing apprehension of Prussianism, which had commenced with the Second Schleswig War. Though a disapprobation of Prussianism was apparent long before the Battle of Sedan, 'the war after Sedan forced many Englishmen to reassess the image of Germany […] and the re-evaluation was inordinately harsh because the earlier image had been idealized.'[522] These arguments countered the idea of a peaceful Germany that sought only to unite its people in defence against the rapacity of France by highlighting Prussia's own attempts at expansion and aggrandisement.

'Germany, under Prussian leadership, is now animated with an overbearing and aggressive spirit,' wrote Henry Dix Hutton, the Irish barrister, Comtist, and positivist, 'the alleged peaceableness of the Germans […] seems to me partly a delusion.'[523] While Prussia

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[522] Gladstone, 'Germany, France, and England' p. 559.
[523] Henry Dix Hutton, 'Prussia, France, and England. No. I. Prussia', *Cowen Tracts* (1870), p. 2 – 3.

had maintained that its army, and system of military service was one of defence, the Comtist Frederic Harrison, himself no lover of France, in the pamphlet referenced to by Goadby above, noted two things:

> 'The notion of the Prussian army being simply a militia of citizens fighting for self-defence is an idle figment […] a devotion of the national power to war as a profession.'

And also

> 'In Prussia the professional soldier makes less noise – not because the professional soldier is so alien to the rest of society, but because he is so akin to it.'[524]

Recalling Prussia's past of military conquest, Greg wrote that 'The historical antecedents of Prussia […] are not altogether creditable, and they are not particularly reassuring. For nearly two centuries the rulers of Prussia have pursued a career of aggrandisement.'[525]

Harrison continued that a Prussian triumph over France meant that 'Europe is handed over to a generation of war; and civilisation is thrown back incalculably. […] All the life of Southern Germany will be crushed out of her.'[526] Harrison implied, therefore, that Prussia had militarized its population with the express intent of using it in schemes of conquest, and had been waiting merely for the most opportune moment. Thus, while we saw earlier how Prussia was seen as domestic and pacific, to Harrison, this was a mere fiction, reinforced by the fact that the Prussians had been so drilled into obedience by the military state. This was emphasized by Reeve who explained that Prussia had, by dint of its military might, terrorized

[524] Harrison, 'Bismarckism', p. 3 – 4.
[525] William Rathbone Greg, 'The Great Duel: its true Meaning and Issues', *The Contemprary Review* (December 1870), p. 143.
[526] Harrison, 'Bismarckism', p. 11.

the smaller German states into crowning Wilhelm Emperor: 'The title of Emperor […] was obscurely tendered to him by a junto of small princes, who were trembling at the least sign of Prussian irritation.'[527]

Nor was Harrison alone in predicting that a Prussian triumph would give Europe over to war. Hutton maintained 'Germany, again, now seeks not alone the dismemberment, but the humiliation of France. […] In continuing the war, Germany not alone attacks France, but menaces Europe […] there will be much to fear from a Prussianized Germany, united, not by any principle of freedom, but by the interests of foreign conquest.'[528] The appellation of 'Prussianized' is of some interest in that it further emphasized the Prussian role in German militarism. This was written after the Battle of Sedan when, with the capitulation of Napoleon, and two of his armies, France lay prostrate and helpless. The continuation of the war under such circumstances was met with some disapprobation. "An Englishman," in a letter to Wilhelm explained how, though Prussia had essentially started by waging a defensive war, the situation had been reversed quite completely, and that 'the more the war, on the part of France, tends to become a defensive war, the more will the sympathies of all civilized and Christian nations […] veer round to France.'[529]

"An Englishman" was relatively mild. More vehement was Alexander Malet the diplomat and minor noble, who wrote:

the Prussians have manifestly changed their ground since the war began, and the change has not produced a better opinion throughout Europe of their honesty […] the King of Prussia declared that Germany entered unwillingly into a war which she had not sought […] But when defence was converted into

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[527] Henry Reeve, 'The German Empire', *Edinburgh Review* (April 1871), p. 461.
[528] Henry Dix Hutton, 'Europe's need and England's Duty', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1870), pp. 15 – 17.
[529] An Englishman, 'The pacification of Christendom: a letter to the King of Prussia', *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1870), pp. 4 – 9.

invasion […] the King of Prussia changed his note […] he declared that he

made war not on the French nation but on the French army.[530]

The perceived tendency to view the ethics of the situation as rather fluid on the part of the

Prussian executive brings us to another branch of Prussianism; that is the assumed perfidy of

Bismarck.

In a pamphlet on 'Prussian honesty,' it was explained that 'The Hohenzollern

Candidature was in fact nothing less than a declaration of war against France by Prussia […]

an underhanded manoeuvre to get war declared.'[531] The belief then, was that Bismarck had

manipulated Napoleon into declaring war in order to 'throw dust into the eyes of Europe, and

make her believe that the ambition of France was the cause of the war; and at the same time,

pave the way for the demand of the provinces themselves.'[532] Even German Unity was

charged with being little more than a Prussian scheme of aggrandizement:

> 'It was only among German patriots […] and not among German statesmen
>
> […] that the notion prevailed that the Fatherland was one day destined to
>
> become one and indivisible. […] we assert that the aggrandizement of Prussia,
>
> and not the triumph of German unity, except so far as Prussia triumphed too,
>
> has been throughout the keystone of his (Bismarck) policy.'[533]

It was believed that at the heart of this duplicity sat Bismarck. The following passages will

elucidate this point:

> Prussia possesses three Parliaments and one Bismarck; and the one Bismarck
>
> has hitherto been more than a match for the three Parliaments. […] One

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[530] Alexander Malet, 'The Overthrow of the German Confederation by Prussia in 1866', *Edinburgh Review* (October 1870), pp. 309 – 10.
[531] Cosmopolitan, 'Prussian honesty', p. 7
[532] Ibid, pp. 7 – 8.
[533] Malet, 'The Overthrow of the German Confederation', pp. 294 – 7.

governing principle may be traced throughout his conduct of affairs – the

principle of repudiating parliamentarianism as a master while using it as an

instrument.[534]

And also

So it is now with Prussia, or Germany (referencing the German desire to annex

Alsace-Lorraine). For ourselves we use these terms as identical; the spear may

be German, but the point is Prussian, and Count Bismarck wields it for purely

Prussian ends.[535]

Consequently, it is possible to see how, by 1871, Germany was held to have been thoroughly

Prussianized, the catspaw of Bismarck, and German Unity was viewed as possible only

because it served the goals of the Prussian Chancellor; despite his claims to the contrary,

Bismarck was presented as a Prussian nationalist, rather than a German patriot.

A last point of contention held against Germany was the annexation of Alsace and

Lorraine. While the German perspective was that the residents of these provinces were of

German stock, Hutton suggested a counterpoise, explaining that, though historically, the

provinces may have been German, by the nineteenth century, they have become thoroughly

French, and that the argument that the Alsatians spoke German and thus ought to be part of

Germany was an invalid one:

Nationality does not mean identity of race or language, but that fundamental

harmony of social sympathies, ideas, and institutions, the creation of

[534] , John Wilson, 'Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism', *The Quarterly Review* (January 1871), p. 85.
[535] Malet 'The Overthrow of the German Confederation', p. 312.

successive generations, which slowly engenders the political unity we call national existence.[536]

Gladstone, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, also voiced the dubiousness of annexing 'a million and a quarter of a people from the country to which they have belonged for some two centuries.'[537] Gladstone further admitted that 'the war had modified or altered its character, now that it was carried out by the Germans apparently for the sake only of a forcible annexation of French territory.'[538] His remarks are telling of how German military action after the Battle of Sedan, when France was obviously defeated, heralded a change in opinion on Germany.

Though noting that the French Government, in its 'preternatural perverseness,' had forced the issue of war,[539] Gladstone maintained that, after the Battle of Sedan, Germany ought to have ceased hostilities: 'The victorious Germans have since been bidden to stay their onward steps, on the ground that the war was not the war of the French people.'[540] Furthermore, the war was the responsibility of 'a faction in the narrowest sense, which sympathised with the worse and overruled the better minds of the Emperor and his Government.'[541] There is something to be gained by looking at these statements as a commentary on the perceived over-centralization of French politics, the 'bureau' of 'bureau and barrack.' The war was not a war of the French people, but by over-centralizing his government, and allowing himself to become puppet to factionalism, Louis Napoleon had been unable to prevent war,[542] to the detriment of his subjects.

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[536] Hutton, 'Europe's need', pp. 13 – 14.
[537] William Ewart Gladstone, 'Germany, France, and England', *Edinburgh Review* (October 1870), p. 582 – 3.
[538] Quoted in Rüger, 'A Fallen Idol', p. 560 – 1.
[539] Gladstone, 'Germany, France, and England', pp. 568 – 70.
[540] Ibid, pp. 579 – 80.
[541] Ibid, p. 580.
[542] Not in the sense that Napoleon had been against war, but rather that he had been manipulated into it by his own ministers.

In addition to these points, Gladstone further emphasized the idea of self-determination, with regard to the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine:

> Germany […] declares that together with indemnity for the past, she must have security for the future […] this security must be taken in the abstraction of French territory. Now this means French territory with its inhabitants. And the question immediately arises, is there to be no regard paid to their feelings in the matter?[543]

Gladstone explained that Germany was justified in placing France under certain restrictions, in order to guarantee future neutrality, even if this meant the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. However, he further noted that there were conditions to this annexation, namely, that Germany had to have been able to prove that the annexation was absolutely necessary for continued future peace and security. More importantly, however, the population had to have been 'willing parties to the severance.'[544]

Thus, nationhood was determined by more than language, or ethnicity, but by active choice of the inhabitants themselves, highlighting the growing importance of self-determination:

> Of the whole sum of human life, no small part is that which consists of a man's relations to his country […] To wrench a million and a quarter of a people from the country to which they have belonged for some two centuries, and carry them over to another country […] is a proceeding not to be justified in the eyes of the world and of posterity.[545]

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[543] Ibid, p. 582.
[544] Ibid, pp. 581 – 3.
[545] Ibid, p. 583; as stated in the introduction, the term 'self-determination' was not one that appeared with frequency.

In this instance, therefore, consent of the inhabitants played a greater role than a shared historical ethnicity, for though the inhabitants of Alsace had their roots as Germans,[546] by the time of the Franco-Prussian War, Gladstone noted the Germans to have been regarded as 'almost hereditary enemies.' There is something quite Mill-ian in this, the argument for common feeling, and sympathies between a people and its government, without which free institutions, representation, and thus nationhood, would be an impossibility. This was, incidentally, the same argument against the earlier Austrian plan of *Großedeutschland*, which proposed the incorporation into a united Germany of all of Austria's non-German territories.

The idea that language and race were not the sole determinants of nationality was further propounded by Robert Gascoyne Cecil, who would later serve as Prime Minister:

> a ceded territory would be a constant memorial of humiliation […] Alsace and Lorraine have been French for two centuries […] French sentiment is intense among the population. […] They were German in the same sense that Burgundy was German. They were parts of the 'Holy Roman Empire.'[547]

These were essentially the same arguments employed by Gladstone; though there was some distant historical claim to a shared ethnicity, this had faded by the present day, to such an extent that no common feeling existed between the involved parties. These sort of arguments belied the defence of Germany presented on pages seven and eight.[548]

Cecil then went on to explain that 'The idea that the patriotism of the conquered provinces will gradually subside […] is contrary to all modern experience,' an impossibility because of the 'spread of education and the increased freedom of discussion.'[549] Though in

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[546] Being descended from the Alemanni tribe, from which we derive *Allemagne*, i.e. Germany.
[547] Robert Gascoyne Cecil, 'Count Bismarck's Circular Letters to Foreign Courts', *The Quarterly Review* (October 1870), p. 547.
[548] Though the truth of the matter as to whether the Alsatian identified more with France, or with Germany, is perhaps best left aside here.
[549] Ibid, p. 548.

reference to Alsace-Lorraine, this last statement has great meaning to the general debate on ideas of nation, and identity; whereas, in bygone centuries, conquest was enough to subsume wholly another nation and its people, in the nineteenth century, this had been rendered obsolete. By dint of increased communication, and an education of a nation's past, a united nation could no longer be truly conquered. We will note the similarities to Bagehot's arguments presented on the benefits of 'Great' nations in the first chapter. This was also partially the reason why the distant shared historical ethnicity of Alsace and Germany was invalid: Alsace had been conquered by the Franks during a period where conquest was enough to subsume a people's autonomy. In the nineteenth century, such an atavism was viewed as impossible.

Ultimately, there seems to have been a fear that Germany could further apply race and nationality as its justification for further war:

> 'Whatever portions of Europe are inhabited by populations sprung from the
> same stock as the great German nation […] are to be regarded as wrongfully
> wrenched from German dominion. […] German Switzerland, Flemish
> Belgium, and Holland are regarded as mere questions of time […] the Swiss,
> Flemings, and Hollanders alike […] are a set of stupid "Particularists" for
> fancying they have any valid claims to separate existence.'[550]

Gladstone too, was wary, noting that Germany was able to escape the monetary constraints of waging a war: 'She alone among modern nations has discovered a check on a disposition to go to war. She has learned to make it pay; to exact from the enemy the cost of her operations in the shape of pecuniary indemnity.'[551]

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[550] Wilson, 'Count Bismarck', pp. 88 – 9.
[551] Gladstone, 'Germany, France, and England', p. 588.

Prussia and Germany – a Growing Threat

From an examination of these works, it is possible to trace a developing fear of Prussian domination, and intentions. Whereas in the 1848 Revolutions, German attempts at unification had been commented on with a certain patronizing air, and in its later republican stages, with contempt, by 1871, there was a growing concern about Prussian militarism and duplicity, personified in the form of Bismarck. This concern was intensified by the fact that less than a decade prior, Prussia had taken the lead in the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, under the same guise of nationality as it applied to Alsace and Lorraine. From the tone of the pamphlets and periodicals, it appears that commenters did not think so much in terms of a United Germany, but rather an enlarged, and aggrandized Prussia. Views on the three wars of German Unification show that, in England, they were seen as a ploy on the part of Bismarck to subsume the entirety of Germany under the Prussian thumb; the Chancellor could thus best be described as a Prussian aggrandiser, rather than a German nationalist. As stated in the introduction, by the end of the Franco-Prussian War, such was the dominance achieved by Prussia over Germany, that, often, to speak of the latter was to mean the former.

Whereas in 1864, Prussia may have been thought of as a nuisance in that it defeated the smaller Denmark, the rapidity with which it replaced France as Europe's premier military power served to heighten the concerns of the direction Germany would take in the following decades, particularly in the dire portents of a European war. It was not only the advanced means by which Germany waged war,[552] but also the seeming lack of reticence towards aggression that served as a cause for concern, as it instigated, and won, three conflicts in a remarkably short period of time. This desire for military conquest had previously been

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[552] The innovative German use of a general staff to coordinate its army, its artillery, and railroads, indicated an increasingly mechanized and industrial way of waging war; most of these traits would be employed by all participants in the Great War.

identified as a French trait, and not a German one, but the ascension of Prussia meant that it quickly became associated with the latter. While the genre of invasion literature is often seen as a product of the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the popularity of Chesney's *Battle of Dorking*, published in 1871, spoke to some fears, not only of Germany's growing strength, but more importantly, of its expansionist tendencies.

It is of interest that arguments such as the 'small and gallant monarchy' of Denmark in 1864 bear a striking similarity to 'brave, little Belgium' in 1914, fighting valiantly, and ultimately futilely against a grasping, predatory Germany. However, these similarities must be viewed carefully, and should not be taken to mean an overwhelming wave of negativity towards Germany in England, noting that, even on the eve of the First World War, there was still a feeling of kinship between the two nations. As Kennedy has rightly stated, a true 'antagonism' did not arise until the decades following 1871.

Certainly, the Prussian cause in all three wars still found much support amongst English commenters such as Matthew, who argued for the legality of the matter, decrying what they believed to be the 'sentimentality' of the popular press. The annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, for example, was seen as a further step towards the unification of Germany, reflecting what Varouxakis has pointed to as a propensity for 'great' nations, rather than small, petty states. This trend, as explored in the first chapter, highlights the progress that could be made towards a universal civilization, via the creation of strong, indivisible nations.[553]

Nonetheless, the Siege of Paris, by which time France had very clearly had its ideas of *la gloire* beaten out of it, made it increasingly difficult for a defence of Germany to be made. The siege itself seemed unnecessary, France having lost the majority of its armies with its

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[553] Varouxakis, '"Great" versus "Small" nations', pp. 136 – 46.

stunning defeat at Sedan. That the provisional government that replaced Louis Napoleon refused to surrender, on the whole, seems a weak excuse for the continuation of the war, especially considering that the investment of the city exposed its civilian residents to extraordinary hardships. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, which unlike Holstein, was not identifiably German was regarded as intolerable. While it could be argued that Germany was coming to the aid of the latter, and preserving Holstein's ethnically German character from assimilation, Alsace and Lorraine were German only inasmuch as they had been settled in the distant past by Germanic tribes. These arguments provide some good insight into the limits of, and what constituted, the idea of nationality in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, while an Anglo-German 'antagonism' came to maturity in the 1880s, the seeds for such had already been laid in the preceding decades, with suspicion of Prussia's goals arising as early as the Second Schleswig War. At the heart of this lay an increasing perception of what Prussianism meant, that it was not some mere method of governance, particular to distant Berlin, but that it was a growing menace within the European system. Indeed, by the end of the Franco-Prussian War, Prussia had become synonymous with Germany, particularly in terms of perceptions of the new empire's militarism. The spectre of this militarism and expansionism grew steadily more apparent through the three wars until the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.

The dominance of Prussia over all the other German states brought a certain degree of apprehension to many English writers, considering the perception of Prussia's militarism. We have already explored in the first chapter, the suspicion held towards the Prussian education system, and how it was viewed as a thinly disguised vehicle of despotism, meant to enforce upon the population docility and obedience. The 'lesser' German states, as well as the character of the individual German, had been subsumed and overwhelmed by Prussia, and thus, it was felt, the new-born German empire would take on the characteristics of its dominant parent. Though Prussia had brought to Germany a degree of vitality,

modernization, and progress, these had to be balanced against the perception that, as it was increasingly evident through the 1860s and '70s, it was also a self-aggrandising, militaristic, and autocratic state, with little regard for the sovereignty of other nations, and helmed by the calculating and expansionist arch-Prussian, Bismarck.

Conclusion

As we near the end of our journey, what is most striking, alongside a palpable sense of relief, is how confident our English writers, commentators, and journalists were about their reflections on Germany, and the German national character. As explained in the first chapter, there was very little doubt as to what constituted Germany, and they were able to envision a German nation, though one did not yet exist, at least in the form of a nation-state. They drew on the pillars of language, shared identity and history, and a culture which they perceived all the German states had in common. The government of Prussia might have been an authoritarian one, just as Baden was somewhat more liberal, but beneath it all, the German people were viewed as a singular race. 'Race,' in our context, as explained earlier, did not bear quite the negative connotations that came to be associated with it, particularly when the discussion centred around white, Christian Europeans. It seems here, to be rather pointless to explore how Asiatic, or other indigenous peoples were viewed. To the English thinker, their distant cousin, the Teuton, bore a set of characteristics. A certain domesticity, simplicity, a quiet faith. Diligence and industriousness, too, were seen as one of the hallmarks of the German people. These traits, so thought our commenters, were also common to the English people, a result of their shared historical past. But what defined, and separated the English from the Teuton, was that the former had an admixture of Celtic influences, a holdover from the Norman invasion. It was this peculiarity that was deemed to have made England a bastion of constitutional liberty, and a beacon of stability in 1848, when, even as revolutions rocked the continent, the Chartist movement remained peaceful and non-violent.[554]

The Teuton, however, was thought not to possess this unique combination of characteristics, and so, despite their admirable traits, they tended to be overly-speculative

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[554] Mandler, *The English National Characater*, pp. 86 – 102.

dreamers, particularly their literary figures, more given to concocting schemes for which they had no viable plan. They were, unlike the English, not grounded in the world of practical realities. Although some, like Arnold and Carlyle, used the German character as a tool of education and defence against the ever-growing Utilitarianism that came with England's rapidly expanding industrial might, we see how over-speculation could be viewed as harmful, particularly in reporting on the 1848 revolution.

The impractical dreamers at Frankfurt, the dirty, conspiratorial student with his clandestine meetings, in themselves were harmless. But during a period of revolution and upheaval, they surged to the fore, and took the lead in clamouring. But clamouring for what? According to some of our sources, those revolutionaries did not know, and were seen as much more content to be heard, than to have any particular substance to their words. To other reporters though, it was evident that the Germans desired unification. Early in the revolution, English writers assumed that the German revolutionaries sought to attain unification via a liberal, constitutional platform, imposing perhaps, their own views and desires upon the Germans. These writers were quickly disabused of their notions, however, when it became apparent that the Germans considered unification the first and most important goal. This did not sit well with English commenters, confident as they were in their understanding of the 'German mind.' And so their shock soon turned to dismay, as they began to see elements of republicanism, and a full democracy creeping into the revolutionary agenda. Questions arose as to why their cousins did not adopt their splendid illusion of moderate liberty. These needed to be answered by greater thinking on national character; what made the English unique?

Concurrently, they noticed more and more, the French cast that coloured the revolution. It was the *Tricolore*, and not the Union Jack that seemed likely to fly over *Paulskirche*. In some senses, the French element was a way to blame the failure of liberalism to take root in Germany in 1848. English liberalism was still the secret of moral and political

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stability. It was just that the French, by dint of proximity and revolutionising up and down the Rhine, were spreading their contagion. That the Germans were seen in England to be obsessed with unification and nationalism made them especially vulnerable. Unbounded enthusiasm for nationalism was a dangerous thing indeed, especially in the minds of the speculative Teuton. Visions of barricades being thrown up in the streets, and images of democratic mobs roaming towns in search of victims, were drawn up by some of the popular newspapers of the day, *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, to name but two.

But, despite their confidence that they understood the German, and his national character, many English writers failed to take into account Germany's own peculiar development. The lack of an independent middle class, and a Whig tradition, simply meant that English liberalism failed to take root in Germany. A lack of awareness of this caused English commentators to lay blame upon the German character, as well as the insidious allure of French *égalité*. Almost in despair, our English writers threw their lot in with the German governments, explaining their support of the counter-revolutionary, and reactionary activities the latter imposed. This was something of an anomaly, especially with regard to the Prussian government, most closely associated with functionarism, militarism, and authoritarianism. These governments were restoring order, and with order came the stability necessary for liberalism to flourish. And so, despite a return to authoritarianism, English optimism in Germany remained high through the early mid-nineteenth century. Doubtless, it was thought, liberalism would come to grow there.

When, some sixteen years later, Prussia and Austria instigated the Second Schleswig War, there was a great deal of condemnation amongst English critics. The twin duchies of Schleswig-Holstein were indivisible, and to tear them asunder would be to violate all principles of nationality. Yet, defenders of Germany found recourse in much the same arguments. Schleswig's population was comprised, in the majority, of Germans. The question

became quite the quandary, so much so that Palmerston was given to commenting on its opacity. Nonetheless, English newspaper reporting, relying on wide readerships, appealed to the sentimentalism of its audience, by describing the valour and courage of 'poor, brave Denmark,' fighting in vain against the menacing Teutonic powers of Prussia and Austria. An important distinction between print media at the time is to be found in pamphlet-writing on the same issue, wherein the writers, eschewing sentimentality, laid out the salient features of the confusing affair, and for the most part, coming down in favour of the German powers. To them, it seemed clear that while newspapers were drumming up sympathy for 'poor, brave Denmark,' none seemed to be making the case for 'poor, brave Schleswig,' its German population being oppressed as it was, by the Danes, who, it was detailed in the pamphlets, were attempting to quash the Germanness out of them. Unfortunately for Germany, these pamphlets reached a far smaller audience than the great newspapers of the day. When the inevitable German victory was reached, Prussia annexed the twin duchies. While attitudes would not turn against Prussia at the time, it heralded the beginnings of what was perceived to be Prussian self-aggrandisement.

It was during the Austro-Prussian War that disapproval of Prussian militarism began to morph into a certain wariness. Already somewhat disgruntled with the results of the Second-Schleswig War, English writers saw the Austro-Prussian War as having been purposefully instigated by Prussia. In light of this, the Prussian role in the Second-Schleswig War was revised, with many beginning to see Austria as having been made a catspaw. Prussianism began to be associated with not just militarism and authoritarianism, but also with expansionism and self-aggrandisement, as it became clear after Austria's defeat and expulsion from Germany, that Prussia intended to establish a hegemony over the other German states, which it did, via the *Norddeutscher Bund*. It was also during this period that Prussia began to become increasingly synonymous with Germany, such that the Franco-

Prussian War, which was, in reality a war between France and Germany, had Prussia as ne of its namesake. Bismarck's cunning manipulation of Louis Napoleon's impetuosity and pride led to France declaring war on Germany. Initially, as we saw, there was little criticism of Prussia. Bismarck may have been the manipulator, but Louis Napoleon was the one to cross the Rhine. It was argued, therefore, that the Franco-Prussian War was, in its early stages, an essentially defensive one on the part of Germany.

It was only after Sedan, when Germany insisted on prolonging the war, and besieging Paris, that opinions began to see a drastic turn. Defences of Germany maintaining a defensive war seemed increasingly feeble, especially when it annexed Alsace-Lorraine under the presumption that their inhabitants were descended from Germanic stock. This too, was not a fair reason, so thought Englishmen such as Gladstone. The Alsatians, through long contact, had become Frenchified, and no longer identified themselves as being Germans. No plebiscite was allowed them as to determining whether to join Germany. Amidst the splendour of Versailles, Carlyle's Queen of the Continent was established, but its magnificence was tarnished by a reputation for military violence, and expansionist tendencies. Hence, though it was only in the 1880s that Germany began to be a rival to England in terms of naval power and industry, the Anglo-German antagonism had its roots in the prior decade, and, to a degree, even in the mid-1860s.

But to say that English perceptions of Germany were filled with gloom and dread would be facetious. As we explored in the second chapter, there was some admiration for German literature, personified in the figures of Goethe, Schiller, and Richter. The first might have been viewed as a universal paragon of literature, but the latter two were both widely admired, not only for the quality of their work, but also because they represented the better parts of the German national character. Schiller was imagined to be a lover of liberty, a true patriot, and devoted to the betterment of his craft, through which he could educate and uplift

his readers. Whether this was truly his intent is best left to one of his many biographers, but what is most important is that this was the English perception of him. Romantic images of the young Schiller labouring by candlelight to complete *Die Räuber* captivated the minds of English reviewers of his work, proving his love of liberty via his defiance of his patron, the Duke of Wurttemberg's strictures. The play itself was deemed a sort of social commentary on Germany, emblematic of the challenge against authoritarianism. And if Schiller was the German spirit, then Richter was the German character. Readers of his works in England assigned to him characteristics that would become common in attempts to define the German national character. Perceptions of his industriousness, simplicity of life, and humble appreciation, led William Henry Smith to dub him the most German of all Germans. In a somewhat paternal manner, English commenters viewed his parochialism and rusticism as the embodiment of *Vaterland*. Thus, we see how perceptions of Germany's literary figures allowed their English critics to identify the salient aspects of the German national character. These figures, Schiller and Richter more so than Goethe, were to English thinkers, Germany and the German national character in microcosm.

Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to emphasise the importance played by English perceptions of national character in their understanding of events on the continent. By framing the revolutions of 1848 through the lens of character, they were better able to draw conclusions as to why the particular brand of English liberalism failed to take hold in Germany. This failure came to be viewed, not as an inherent inapplicability of liberalism, but rather as the result of the peculiarities of the German character. The ascendancy of Prussia could also be attributed to the character of the German, and, conversely, certain aspects of the German national character were caused by the Prussian emphasis of 'Bureau and Barrack.' The idea of the poet as representative of character is of greatest interest, as it adds greater value to the sphere of literature, one of those cultural institutions that formed the pillars of

nationhood. That individuals could be perceived as carriers, and transmitters of, national character seems an area well worth exploring. I hope, in some small way, that this thesis has contributed to understanding the importance placed in the mid-nineteenth century, on issues of national character and nationhood, and that it may, in the future, aid some other poor unfortunate.

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