

PRIMEVAL GERMANY:
NAZISM THROUGH BEAST, BLOOD, AND SOIL IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

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The ideal German, Arminius, that became mythologized in the nineteenth century was immortalized at the top of Grotenburg Hill. Arminius's bronze statue symbolizes all of Germany's victories against foreign invaders who wanted to disrupt German culture and environment. The statue is wielding a sword that points towards France and a dead eagle under one foot. It is through the mythology of Arminius that propels Germans of the twentieth century to hark back to a primeval Germany. This sentiment is carried through the Second World War by the Nazis, specifically of major concern to Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler. Nazi environmental practices through these men, centered around the ideal notions of blood, soil, and beast. Out of the three, beasts would prove to be the most important and most difficult to accomplish. Göring's ideal German beast is the extinct primeval cattle, aurochs. Through aurochs the Nazi environmental programs and policies that were put in place would culminate into an ideal Germany made up of German beasts, forests, and blood. The current scholarship surrounding Nazi environmental policies focuses mainly on two aspects of the trifecta, forests and blood. In order to further understanding on the Nazi's fascination and mythologization of the environment, the key factor is analyzing the three points in congruence with each other and not as separate entities.

INTRODUCTION

Standing at the peak of Grotenburg Hill in the Teutoburg Forest looking over Germany is a statue portraying the man whom many declare to be the first German. The monumental bronze statue depicts Arminius, a Cherusci chieftain and former auxiliary of Rome, who defeated three Roman legions in 9 C.E.¹ The statue of Arminius stands eighty-seven feet tall, but atop Grotenburg Hill, the barbarian chieftain reaches a height of one thousand and three hundred feet.² Construction of the statue began in 1841 and was finished by 1875, nearly nineteen centuries after the battle itself. Nonetheless, the symbolism associated with Arminius's battle still rang through the hearts and minds of Germans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The statue of Arminius served as a reminder to Germany of the oppressive forces that tried to exploit German resources and its people for hundreds of years, but through all the centuries, Germany never failed in protecting the Fatherland. This sentiment never disappeared throughout the nineteenth century or twentieth centuries; instead, it grew.

Arminius represented a symbolic transition from German liberation into a romanticization of the Germany of old. This transition came during the 16th century with Martin Luther and Ulrich von Hutten's description of Arminius's achievements for Germany as "history's greatest general, grander even than Alexander the Great and Hannibal."³ This surge of romanticization sparked in the 1800s and carried through the early 1900s, reaching all aspects of German life. At the same time, Tacitus's description of German people was fueled through "late sixteenth century Germans struggling to create a national identity, create a cultural and political

¹ Peter S. Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome: Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoburg Forest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 35.

² Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome*, 35.

³ *Ibid*, 33-34, 107.

unity.”⁴ Writers and artists “seized upon Tacitus’s description of Arminius as the ‘liberator of Germany’ to create a hero of national proportions.”⁵ Tacitus’s *Germania*, a flawed historical ethnography depicting Roman perceptions of a primeval German civilization, became influential and popular in Germany through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶ The ancient text spread beyond the elites and intellectuals to wider audiences within the German public.⁷ Such historical works became even more prominent during the Third Reich with the convergence of Aryan ideology and propaganda about the ideal German man. The characteristics described the ideal primeval man as “having appeared on earth in full physical development, unhindered by inheritance of physical evil...not only received on his healthy neurological perfect impressions of nature’s particulars, but his unspoiled brain was in that perfect state for intuitive perception, classification, and all other mental actions.”⁸ This man, like Arminius or the powerful chieftains described by Tacitus, was propaganda that pushed for Germany’s return to the primeval. “A primeval natural environment thus was as important for the German validation of tribal heritage and identity as it was to the imagination.”⁹

The ideal man that the Nazis read of in Tacitus and wanted to create was only ideal when contextualized within the ideal and original German landscape, one that incorporated primeval flora and fauna. According to Heinrich Himmler’s (1900-1945) Generalplan Ost of 1939, which “was about bringing humans, nature and race into harmony in order to establish a new agrarian

⁴ Ibid, 32.

⁵ Ibid, 34.

⁶ Tacitus’s *Germania* is written about an ‘idealized stereotype of barbarians’ that Romans perceived. Tacitus never goes to Germany to collect data on Germanic tribes and is writing a propagandized idea of barbarians.

⁷ Thorsten Fögen and Richard Warren, eds., *Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the Idea of Nationalism in the 19th Century: Case Study* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 200.

⁸ Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, “Primeval Man,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1883): 72.

⁹ Johann J.K. Reusch, “Germans as Noble Savages and Castaways: Alter Egos and Alterity in German Collective Consciousness during the Long Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 1 (2008): 97.

way of life for Aryan colonists” in conquered eastern European countries.¹⁰ Flora and fauna, or more specifically the German forests and native animals like the aurochs, also served as key propaganda for the Third Reich, as ministers and scientists created government programs and legislation supporting the recreation of primeval German forests and animals. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) stated “science will have to dig in these shafts eternally and successfully and all things found are sure to have to harmonize and not to contradict one another.”¹¹ These words of Nietzsche spoke to the different aspects of the German environment that harmonized to create a primeval Fatherland. High ranking Nazi officials such as Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and Richard Walther Darré all contributed to the spread of propaganda in relation to environment, specifically forests and animals.

Forests are an integral part of any environment, at least from the perspective as described by Tacitus’s *Germania*. However, for German historians and Nazi officials, environment was more than simply a forest, it was Germanness. Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860) said “a long tradition... held the German forest to embody the very essence of Germanness...the spirit of the German Volk.”¹² The forest, like Teutoburg Forest, carried symbolism throughout generations, creating connections with ideals and defining attributes of what Germans once were and again should be. The symbolism associated with German forests was bound into Nazi ideology. Eberhard Freidank, writer for *Der Reichswart* (Reich Guardian) newspaper stated, in February 1933, “part of that process requires that we must first intimately familiarize ourselves with the

¹⁰ Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 13.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Truth and Falsity in an Extra-Moral Sense,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 49, no. 1 (1992): 67.

¹² Piers H. G. Stephens, “Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of ‘Hitler’s Green Party,’” *Organization & Environment* 14, no. 2 (2001): 176.

ideological world of the ancestors.”¹³ The process which the Third Reich used to familiarize itself and its people with the ideology of their ancestors comes through the creation of *Dauerwald* (eternal forest). *Dauerwald* was more than a forest, it held a symbolic meaning that would allow the German public to feel connected to their ancestors. “Like the *Dauerwald*, the German nation was supposedly an eternal collective in which the individual had responsibility for the greater good.”¹⁴ The Reich’s usage of political programs and policies in relation to forests come from the symbolism and romanticization of nature. However, the creation of these policies were not useful to the Nazi Party without the inclusion of the ideal German man and the ideal German beast.

The primeval beasts that correlated with mythology and German tradition no longer roamed the fields or forests during the Third Reich. The particular beast that originally piqued the interest of the Nazis, specifically that of Hermann Göring, was the aurochs.¹⁵ These primeval cattle are the ancestors to all domesticated cattle of Europe. Aurochs are integral to the classical histories of Europe, including Julius Caesar’s *Gallic War* and Einhard’s and Notker the Stammerer’s biographies of Charlemagne. These early histories describe aurochs as the ideal primeval animal to hunt because of their physical size, aggressive behavior, and the renown one could gain from slaying such an animal. It was a beast that no man could tame.

However, years before Göring became involved with aurochs, two zoologists believed that recreating the primeval cattle would be possible. Heinz Heck, director of the Munich Zoo,

¹³ First published as “Nordische Ekstase,” in *Reichswart*, vol. 5 (February 1933). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 148.

¹⁴ Bernd-Stefan Grewe and Richard Hölzl, “Forestry in Germany, c.1550–2000:” In *Managing Northern Europe’s Forests: Histories from the Age of Improvement to the Age of Ecology*, edited by Richard Hölzl and K. Jan Oosthoek, 1st ed., Berghahn Books, (2018): 40.

¹⁵ The word ‘aurochs’ indicates both singular and plural meaning.

and his brother Lutz Heck, director of the Berlin Zoo, both attempted a process they called, 'back-breeding'. This consisted of selecting various sub-species with the physical and behavioral traits that represent the aurochs of classical writing. Through breeding these cattle enough, the eventual end product will be an aurochs.¹⁶ The Heck brothers simultaneously embarked on their process of recreating the aurochs, unbeknownst to one another, in the early 1920s.¹⁷ Heinz and Lutz Heck both began their 'adventure' in recreating an extinct primeval German beast for separate reasons. However, as the National Socialist German Workers' Party rose to power, Göring and Lutz became kindred souls with similar aspirations for the aurochs and Germany.

Göring and Lutz Heck shared similar interest in the aurochs and each man saw the other as a means to an end for their ultimate goal, the return to a primeval Germany. Lutz Heck stated, "aurochs are the most powerful representatives of the primeval German."¹⁸ The recreation of aurochs gave Göring more motivation to throw himself into the environmental policies of Germany. The aurochs presented Göring and the whole of Germany an opportunity to return to the primeval state so continuously romanticized through Arminius. Göring believed that "like the German 'race,' also animals were products of the soil so that the bison became an embodiment of racialized Nazi geopolitics."¹⁹ The aurochs represented the ideal German beast and without it, the Nazis would not be able to complete their idealized Germany. The primeval Germany that many Nazi officials sought to create had to meet the requirement of the ideal German man and forest. However, the Nazi environmental agenda cannot be analyzed without the third integral

¹⁶ Heinz Heck, "The Breeding Back of the Aurochs," *Oryx* 1:3 (1951), 117.

¹⁷ Heck, "The Breeding Back of the Aurochs," 120.

¹⁸ Lutz Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, trans. by E.W. Dickes (London: Methuen & CO LTD, 1954), 139.

¹⁹ Bernhard Grissibl, "A Bavarian Serengeti: Space, Race and Time in the Entangled History of Nature Conservation in East Africa and Germany," *In Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*, eds., Bernhard Grissibl, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 112.

component of German nature, the aurochs.²⁰

Men of the twentieth century who curated policies on the environment, like Himmler, Darré, and Göring, employed a variety of terminology when discussing the environment. Historians of the Third Reich note that the Nazi-era environmental lexicon varies somewhat from other contemporary uses. Frank Uekötter states “since their beginning, conservationists had blamed industrialization and urbanization for the peril to nature, and there was no way to shift the blame to a small band of Jews.”²¹ The term “conservation” refers to the prevention of wasting or ruining the resources that the environment provides. While conservation is standard terminology used by American zoologists, biologists, and environmentalists to describe the movement of the early 1900s, it differs from the usage by the Nazis. During the Third Reich, practices connected with conservation and nature were understood and described under the collective term of “forestry”. “The federal forest administration settled for a compromise with industrial forestry under the umbrella term ‘close-to-nature economic forest’ (*naturnaher Wirtschaftswald*).”²² The issue with using terms such as “forestry” and “conservation” to describe the Nazis is the lack of inclusiveness for the holistic goals that the environment represented in their ideology. The environmental endeavors pursued by the Nazis were not strictly about conserving woodlands but included animal manipulation and human manipulation through ideology. The term “environmentalism” throughout this thesis refers to actions and concerns of the Nazis that led to aspects of conservation. “Environmentalism” provides the

²⁰ Alfred Newton, “Bison not Aurochs,” *Nature* 42, (1890): 28. “The ‘aurochs’ (=ox of yore), Latinized by Caesar in the form *urus*, is or was the *Bos primigenius*...it is wholly by mistake that in its extinction as a wild animal its ancient name was transferred to the bison, or *Zubr*.”

²¹ Frank Uekötter, “Green Nazis? Reassessing the Environmental History of Nazi Germany.” *German Studies Review* 30, no. 2 (2007): 271.

²² Grewe and Hölzl, “Forestry in Germany, c.1550–2000,” 40.

inclusive approach of Nazi actions aimed at animals, forests, and people.

These three points of analysis, animal, forest, and man, must be discussed together to understand the full picture of Nazi environmentalism, hitherto absent in historiography. This study not only expands upon other environmental and German historians, but it directly challenges the notion that the “green achievements of the Nazis have been overplayed.”²³ The criticism of the Nazi environmental agenda is apparent when solely examining forests and men. The primeval ideal German that Himmler, Göring, Darré, and Lutz Heck attempted to revitalize could not succeed without the primeval beast, aurochs. Heinrich Wiepking-Jürgensmann (1891-1973), worked as Göring’s landscape architect, in Lutz Heck’s Nature Protection Department, and Himmler’s Generalplan Ost. He “emphasized how German culture---from myths and fairy tales to major authors and composers---and thus the German people were expression of their forest landscape.”²⁴ Furthermore Wiepking-Jürgensmann, like Lutz, Göring, and Himmler, equated *Landschaftsplege* (care for the landscape) and the Volk in the same terms as a “hunter’s management of wildlife through the control of populations and environmental conditions.”²⁵ The aurochs are central in connecting the triad of Nazi environmentalism, and through the primeval beasts, an idealized German could begin to flourish. Thus, the environmental aspirations of the Third Reich must be expressed and understood holistically through all three components. A primeval German man cannot exist within a primeval forest without the primeval aurochs.

²³ Jamie Lorimer and Clemens Driessen, “From “Nazi Cows” to Cosmopolitan “Ecological Engineers”: Specifying Rewilding Through a History of Heck Cattle,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106, no. 3 (2016): 641.

²⁴ Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 144-145.

²⁵ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies*, 146.

The primeval Fatherland, as seen through the historiography, has taken on many different shapes through the analyses of numerous historians. However, the common factor within these analyses is the lack of attention to the aurochs. This was not the thinking of Nazi officials. For them “environment” encompassed flora, fauna, and the men who resided within them. By solely focusing on forests, historians of Nazi environmental practices have missed key aspects that create an environment. What was the public opinion of environmental policies and programs, such as *Dauerwald* (eternal forest), created by the Third Reich? Why has Nazi environmental policy been analyzed through animals, forests, and people separately? These questions open the historiography for larger interpretation of sources beyond those solely focusing on environment. A deeper analysis of language, mythology, and the romanticization of Nazi ideology, while still focusing on bureaucratic and economic factors that contribute to the development of Nazi environmentalism can be gained by analyzing all three aspects.

Environmental Historiography

Nazi ideology for most of the 1930s and through the end of World War II raises questions as the origins of its thinking through mythology. Peter Viereck’s *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* was one of many works written in 1965 that tried to understand the motivation behind the atrocities that occurred twenty years before. Viereck’s work is the starting point of this historiography, providing an analysis of factors behind the rise in the Nazi regime and the mythological symbolism that was used to captivate the German public. The romanticization of the *Nibelungenlied Saga* written in 1200, and the comparison of Arminius and Hitler to Siegfried, the saga’s protagonist, created an awakening of Germany. Viereck reveals this in various speeches Hitler gave during the rise of the Nazi Party stating, “out of its flames was

bound to come the sword which was to regain the freedom of the German Siegfried.”²⁶ Viereck’s analysis of the Nazi philosophy and the possible reasons to what would inspire an entire nation, sets the historiographical foundation by not looking solely at environment or conservation. His analysis provides the basis for early understanding of Nazi ideology and what captivated all of Germany through the aspects of Nazism, romanticism, and mythology but also an avenue to explore different aspects of the regime.

Beyond the romanticism embedded within Nazi ideology during the rise of the party in the 1930s, historians focused primarily on the atrocities and the reasoning behind them. Stefan Kühl has attempted to find such connections in his 1994 work, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*. Kühl does not focus on the programs and policies put in place for environmental conservation. However, what Kühl accomplished was to find initial parallels between Nazi ideology and environmentalism. Kühl writes, “the ‘best stock’ had perished on the battlefields of World War I, and economic depression, mass unemployment, and widespread hopelessness had caused the birthrate to drop.”²⁷ While this statement does not directly address or mention conservation of the German environment, Kühl’s language of German citizens incites similarities to language used by Lutz Heck and Hermann Göring when discussing animals. Kühl and Viereck’s contributions to the historiography are not directly related to the environmental policies and programs that emerged before and during World War II. However, their work does show the correlation of language from Nazi officials seeing themselves as the farmers who needed better stock in order to raise a healthy animal to be sold at market.

²⁶ Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), 139.

²⁷ Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 60.

The ‘best stock’ that Kühl and high ranking Nazi officials refer to is the idealized German man. The idealized man, like Arminius, was not able to flourish without being surrounded by the idealized German forest and beasts. John Alexander Williams’s 1996 article, “‘The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature’: The Movement to Preserve the Natural *Heimat* from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich,” analyzed German gender roles in relation to the growing interest in environmental thought in Germany. Williams states that “the stakes were high, for if the German people failed in this way to unite into a strong, ‘natural’ community, they would become ‘cultural fertilizer for other nations.’”²⁸ He argues that Germany of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had been following a *Sonderweg* (peculiar path) that ultimately culminated under the Third Reich.²⁹ Western thinking had corrupted not only the German landscape but German men as well. Williams argues that during the Third Reich, the prominent and easily accessible solution to Germany’s *Sonderweg* was through nature and environmental practices. “If the natural landscape surrounding rural farms and fields was to work its ‘cleansing and ennobling’ magic, it would have to remain fully ‘unviolated and unadulterated.’”³⁰ The ideal German man who was sought by high ranking Nazi officials, like Himmler and Göring, was only capable through the reconstruction and preservation of the ideal primeval German landscapes and its animals. Williams connects Nazi environmental practices with the ideology of idealized German masculinity through a “new ‘modern *Heimatschutz* (the preservation of the *Heimat*)’ ...based on ‘a deeper *scientific* knowledge of the foundations of the German national character.’”³¹

After Viereck, Williams, and Kühl, the historiography does not progress towards

²⁸ John Alexander Williams, “‘The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature’: The Movement to Preserve the National *Heimat* from the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich,” *Central European History*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1996): 339.

²⁹ Williams, “‘The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature,’” 340.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 346.

³¹ *Ibid*, 366.

environment and conservation until 1999, with historians like Susan Bratton writing critiques of Luc Ferry's 1995 work, *The New Ecological Order*. Ferry, a neo-humanist, believed all beings were connected through natural law, questioned ecologists and animal rights advocates whose writings demanded the "granting rights or intrinsic value to nature."³² However, the approach that Ferry takes "failed to document the relationship between Nazi environmentalism and Nazi racism."³³ The aspect of Nazi environmental policies that Ferry does pay attention to focuses solely on *Das Reichsjagdgesetz* (the national hunting law) which was passed in July 1934.³⁴ Ferry argues that through the law, "man is no longer positioned as master and possessor of a nature which he humanizes and cultivates, but as responsible for an original wild state endowed with intrinsic rights, the richness and diversity of which it is his responsibility to preserve forever."³⁵ Ferry's analysis of environmentalism in the Third Reich solely focuses on the legislation of hunting and conservation. His analysis does not address the racial ideology of the Reich and allows historians to critique and further analyze the relationship Nazism had with the environment.

Susan Bratton's "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," becomes the turning point in the historiography by arguing that Nazi environmental practice was more than hunting laws. Ferry's work became a foundation that allowed Bratton to analyze Nazi environmental ideology but also its connection to racist ideals. Bratton offers comparable language to Viereck and Köhl in describing not only environment and ecology but the Aryan and Jewish communities as well. She states that "animal

³² Susan Power Bratton, "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," *Ethics and the Environment* 4, no. 1 (1999): 3.

³³ Bratton, "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," 3.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

³⁵ Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order*, trans. by Carol Volk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 107

motifs representing the antithetical natures of the German and the Jew, which is a subtle, but powerful, argument against the assimilation of ‘unnatural’ Jews into German culture.”³⁶ These types of motifs were central in not only artistically representing physical differences between Aryans and Jews, but the relationship these two groups had with nature as well. The most prominent motif Bratton includes is from composer Richard Wagner’s (1813-1883) *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung) which was completed over the course of his life. Bratton writes: “Siegfried, in fact mocks Alberich for his ugly countenance, and directly calls him a *Kröter* (toad). Siegfried describes the Nibelungen as ‘ugly, disgusting and gray...thus represents nature as polarized between the beautiful and ugly, the clean and slimy and worthy and unworthy.”³⁷ These motifs and similar literary devices provide an opportunity for historians to analyze the evolution of Nazi racist ideology and its contribution to ideals of environmentalism. Bratton’s work brings the historiography into examining environmental aspects of the Third Reich beyond the traditional aspect of legislation and programs. She accomplishes this through her analysis of propaganda in films like *Ewiger Wald* and *Musikdrama* (music dramas) by Richard Wagner dating back to the early 1920s and 1930s, showing Nazi perceptions of positive and negative aspects of environment. Looking at Nazi environmental attitudes beyond the scope of legislation provides a perspective which was intended to connect environmental ideology with the German public. Bratton’s work shifts the historiography as one of the first works to look beyond legal documents and take a broader approach as to the sentiment towards nature through the eyes of the people.

Bratton’s analysis shifted historical work towards analyzing preconceived notions of Nazi

³⁶ Bratton, “Luc Ferry’s Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism,” 8.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

environmental accomplishments. In 2001, Piers H.G. Stephens wrote an article arguing against Anna Bramwell's 1985 work, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's 'Green Party'*, that claims of 'blood and soil' as key ideologies of the Third Reich. Bramwell's analysis of the environmental ideology of the Nazi Party was centered around 'blood and soil', claiming that Nazi ideology was based on the premise that both the manhood of Germany and its environment would be cleansed through environmental conservation. However, Bramwell's analysis centered manhood solely around peasantry. "The idea that peasant farming could be economically desirable, and lessen dependence on imported fodder and food, naturally gave impetus on the moral arguments – that the peasant represented 'freedom, property thrift': 'frugality, loyalty, hard work'."³⁸ These characteristics, according to Bramwell, were the basis of ecologism and Nazism and the connections between them. Piers Stephens's 2001 "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of 'Hitler's Green Party'" claims that Bramwell did not have a complete picture of environmental understanding in the Third Reich. Stephens's analysis provides context on Anna Bramwell's original work, *Blood and Soil*, and also the areas of her research that later historians have seen as flawed. Stephens disagrees and finds that Bramwell's connection between ecologism and Nazism removes guilt from the regime and places it into circumstances created through ecologism.³⁹ While Viereck and Kühl's work focuses on the language and early understanding of Nazi ideology, Stephens discerns Bramwell's weak points by discussing further aspects of National Socialism through references of *Volk* identity in German forests.

The addition of Bratton and Stephens to this historiography provide analysis through the works of mythology, pseudoscience, and religious zealots like Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769-1860).

³⁸ Anna Bramwell, *Blood and Soil: Richard Walther Darré and Hitler's 'Green Party'* (Great Britain: The Kensal Press, 1985), 8.

³⁹ Stephens, "Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of 'Hitler's Green Party'," 174.

Stephans's uses Arndt to showcase the early links of nationalism with environmentalism stating, "a long tradition...held the German forest to embody the very essence of Germanness."⁴⁰ The combination of works by Viereck, Kühl, Bratton, and Stephans opens the door for analysis of the historiography of environmental Nazis in a new light, beyond environmental policies and programs.

In 2005 Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller took Nazi environmentalism even further, through an edited volume of essays written by prominent historians in the field looking at the environmental aspects of the Third Reich including legislation, programs, mythology, pseudoscience, and influences. *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* examines the environmental movements of Germany before and during the Second World War. "The most obvious and fundamental feature of almost all pre-1945 environmentalist movements was their parochialism: for the most part, environmental concerns were local, regional, or state-centered."⁴¹ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller study Nazi legislation, alongside analysis of programs and environmental ideals. A particular example of this is seen when "Michael Imort notes that it was largely because of Göring that the forestry doctrine known as *Dauerwald* ('eternal' or 'perpetual' forest) – first enunciated in the early 1920s."⁴² The introduction of ideal landscapes that the Nazi Party sought to implement shows the power that high ranking members had and their goals of altering the German environment. However, that did not stop with environmental programs. Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller analyzed mythology to discuss the individuals for whom the Nazis intended the *Dauerwald* to be used. This was particularly true for Party member and *SS-Oberführer* (senior

⁴⁰ Ibid, 176.

⁴¹ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*, 2.

⁴² Ibid, 9.

leader) member, Konrad Meyer (1901-1973). Meyer's knowledge and background as a professor of agriculture and land politics at the University of Berlin, meshed with his totalitarian viewpoints, and gained the attention of Heinrich Himmler.⁴³ Meyer's stated, "for us National Socialists, planning results in responsibility to people and state. More than the complete planning of space and economy, it aspires to the creation of a healthy social structure and a permanent configuration of our living space as befits Teutonic German men."⁴⁴ Mythology, pseudoscience, environmental legislation, and ideals, through the analysis of Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, provide a new understanding of the various degrees the Third Reich took in promoting the ideal German landscape.

Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller called for historians to view the 'green' aspects of the Nazis through a new lens. The most notable historian among of this generation of scholars is Frank Uekötter, author of several books and articles on the environmental history of Nazi Germany, but most known for his 2006 book *The Green and the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany*. *The Green and the Brown* takes a different approach by analyzing select individuals of the regime and their involvement in environmental policies. Through notable leaders within the Nazi Party such as Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and Wilhelm Frick (*Reichsminister of the Interior*), Uekötter studied the policies and programs which these men spearheaded. Uekötter's analysis of Nazi officials and their agendas for environmental protection introduces the individuals responsible for the inception of policies and ideas such as *Gleichschaltung* (animal protection organizations) and *Reichsnaturschutzgebiete* (national nature reserves). Specifically, Uekötter presents Schorfheide, a municipality just north

⁴³ Ibid, 246.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 246.

of Berlin, as a prime example of Göring's ideal *Dauerwald* (eternal forest), formally declared in 1937.⁴⁵ Uekötter shows, using this top-down approach the intended benefits of the Nazi Party environmental programs. This top-down analysis takes the public concern out of environmental practices in Germany and instead, focuses on the Third Reich individuals who used their power within the party to gain their ideal Germany.

Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier's 2011, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* further analyze the ideology that propelled conservation during the Third Reich. Biehl and Staudenmaier focus on the ecological ideology of Nazis in association with Völkisch movements of the time.⁴⁶ These particular movements refer to "a powerful cultural disposition and social tendency which united ethnocentric populism with nature mysticism."⁴⁷ The environmental ideology of the Nazi regime is shown as a romanticized aspect of conservation in the twentieth century. "Culminating in the 1920s, an assortment of occult and pseudo-scientific ideas coalesced around the idea of a German Volk into a romantic nationalism, romantic racism, and a mystical nature-worshipping faith."⁴⁸ This line of analysis connects romanticization of nature through mythology and folklore, with the growing nationalism under the Third Reich.

National identity through nature had been an underlying factor of the historiography before Biehl and Staudenmaier brought it to the forefront of analysis, not only among the Third Reich's top officials but also in contribution to their environmental plans. Frank Uekötter's

⁴⁵ Frank Uekötter, *The Green & the Brown: A History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 102.

⁴⁶ Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* (Norway: New Compass Press, 2011), 10, 17.

⁴⁷ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 44-45.

second book *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism* in 2014, uses nationalism as a main theme in understanding environmental practices of the twentieth century. Uekötter not only examines this concept in Germany but also uses examples of nationalism through nature in both the United States and in the Soviet Union. This dual analysis of nationalism and environmentalism explores how the people of Germany was able to support new policies and programs implemented by the Nazis. Uekötter contextualizes environmentalism of the Third Reich in the nineteenth century to elaborate on early environmental institutions that appeared across Germany. These included waterworks, slaughterhouses, garbage collection, garden agencies, and gas and electric utilities, all of which are considered by Uekötter as environmental potential or factors that frame environmental decisions.⁴⁹ Unlike other historians, Uekötter offers a broader context for Nazi-era environmentalism by tracing the creation and evolution of German environmentalism throughout the twentieth century. “The Nazi movement, too, never regarded conservation as a brother in spirit, and before 1933 we can hardly discern meaningful contacts between the two movements.”⁵⁰ In other words, conservation in Germany pre-dated the Nazis. Uekötter’s analysis allows us to graph its development over time, tracing the environmental influences that were pivotal to later Nazi officials.

Another aspect of environmentalism that pre-dated the Third Reich was experimentation with animals, specifically back-breeding, to recreate the primeval creatures that were critical elements of nationalist environmental mythology. While animal protection laws are often grouped together with environmental laws, Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca’s 2016 work, *Hitler’s Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* does the opposite and separates them.

⁴⁹ Frank Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation? A New History of Conservation in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 18, 41.

⁵⁰ Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, 52.

Their analysis allows the historiography to expand, offering new avenues of analysis by viewing animals and the environment separately. As Giaccaria and Minca point out, separating the two does not mean that they do not overlap. Instead, they “became entangled with wider efforts to conserve natural landscapes and reintroduce indigenous species to Germany.”⁵¹ This viewpoint expands the work of other historians, to view environmental programs, like aurochs back-breeding, within the larger context of Nazi environmentalism. The main actors central to Giaccaria and Minca’s work are Hermann Göring and the director of the Berlin Zoo, Lutz Heck. Their relationship provides one example of how the Nazis were able to use the environment for their own gain, outside of territorial expansion. Göring offered funding, shared interest, and similar ideology to Lutz Heck who in turn was able to furnish the Berlin Zoo with an abundance of animals and endless support for his work on back-breeding aurochs, primeval cattle. “Reintroducing aurochs helped complete the animals in *Nibelungenlied* and restore the lost Teutonic ecosystem.”⁵² Giaccaria and Minca shed new light on the historiography beyond these experiments on animals, and their analysis shows the lengths the Third Reich was willing to go to secure the primeval landscape. This also shows that Nazi environmentalism was much larger than protecting a landscape romanticized through mythology. It included people, flora, fauna, and the language Germany used to promote its ideal state.

Primary Sources

The practices of environmentalism during the Third Reich raise many more questions when one considers them as individual points for analysis. The historiography, as well as the

⁵¹ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies*, 138. Authors describe ‘Spatialities’ as the ‘detailed investigation of the spatial imaginations of the Nazi regime and of the actual geographies it designed and implemented through its thirteen years.’ See *Hitler’s Geographies*, pp. 2.

⁵² *Ibid*, 142.

primary sources, range over various points throughout history from the first century with Tacitus's *The Germania* to Lutz Heck's own 1954 work, *Animals My Adventure*. The primary sources that will be used in this thesis range from the writings of individuals within the Nazi Party to other professionals such as zoologists and ecologists. These sources come from individuals such as Wilhelm Frick the minister of the interior during the Third Reich, Bernhard Rust the minister of science, education and culture, as well as other top officials like Hermann Göring, Richard Walther Darré, and Heinrich Himmler. The programs and policies conceptualized during the Third Reich were created by top Nazi officials. It is imperative to analyze their influence on environmentalism to grasp a fuller picture. The primary sources do not simply stop with Nazi officials. Using only high ranking officials would allow too singular a perspective of the environmentalism in Germany. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman's 2013 work, *The Third Reich Sourcebook* provides many primary sources from speeches, party meetings, newspaper articles, protests, composers, and visual culturalist who "reinforced its ideological and racial assumptions."⁵³ Analyzing propaganda centered on the environment is crucial in grasping the intentions and reactions that environmentalism received with the German public. This includes movies like the 1936 film *Ewiger Wald* (Enchanted Forest), children books like *Der Giftpilz* (The Poisonous Mushroom) and *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher* (The Poodle-Pug-Dachshund-Pinscher). Works of propaganda such as these reveal the specific people whom the Third Reich targeted and intended to profit from environmental policies and programs.

Chapter Breakdown

As stated in the thesis and throughout this introduction, it is imperative to discuss

⁵³ Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman, eds., *The Third Reich Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), xxiii.

animals, forests, and people in conjunction to understand Nazi environmentalism. Unlike many of the works within the historiography, the chapters of this thesis will not be broken up into a single section for each topic of discussion. The major difference between this project and others is that each chapter interweaves analysis of animals, forests, and people at different moments within Germany from the late-nineteenth and through the mid-twentieth centuries.

The first chapter of this thesis, spanning the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, explores the origins of environmental nationalism and romanticization for animals, forests, and people, origins that were became intertwined and simultaneous. In order to discuss the origins of the Nazis' involvement with these topics, it must first be understood what exactly they were trying to recreate. It is through the early accounts of aurochs that German zoologists Lutz and Heinz Heck become enamored by these animals. Heinz's "The Breeding Back of the Aurochs" and Lutz's *Animals My Adventure*, show the early stages of research and curiosity in aurochs that led the brothers to their attempts in back-breeding. The origins of nationalistic environmentalism concerning forests and people are connected in the primary sources more than those of aurochs. Primary sources documenting the origins of forests also discuss the ideal people whom the Nazis wanted in their forests. These sources include *Musikdrama* like Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung) and novels like Paul Albrecht's 1920 *Arminius-Sigurfried*.⁵⁴ More novels, films, plays, and operas were created between the late 1800s through the 1940s. These sources begin to uncover the impetus for Nazi engagement with ideal forests and people. The origins of all three allow for not only understanding of what attracted Nazis to return to the primeval but also allowed for understanding the decisions made in regard to

⁵⁴ Martin M. Winkler, *Arminius the Liberator: Myth and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9, 84-85.

animals, forests, and people.

The second chapter, ranging from the late 1910s to the late-1930s, moves beyond the origins to the stage when these projects and policies were being formulated and implemented everyday life and eventually into Nazi law. The implementation for these projects and programs differ just as their origins did. In the case of animals, Lutz and Heinz Heck began attempts at back-breeding cattle in the early 1920s unbeknownst to one another.⁵⁵ The cattle they used, the physical and behavioral qualities they attempted to recreate, differed from each other, as did the patronage they received. The recreation of aurochs into a German environment began before the Nazis were in power. The same can be said of idealized notions of people in Nazi ideology. As seen with chapter one, propaganda like novels, films, operas, and other forms of media were built on the idea of nationalism. With the rise of the Nazi Party, these sentiments of nationalism had already begun to build across Germany during the twentieth century. It was propaganda that further drove these notions to the extremes. Propaganda through films, novels, and children's books allowed the Third Reich to spread images of the idealized man to all ages and socioeconomic levels in Germany like in *Der Giftpilz* (The Poisonous Mushroom). Unlike the implementation of programs surrounding men and beasts, the implementation of policies aimed at nationalism and romanticization of forests grew through Nazi law, and more specifically through Hermann Göring. This occurred through the creation of programs like the *Reichsforstamt* (Reich Forestry Service) and laws such as the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (Reich Nature Protection Law) formally passed in 1935.⁵⁶ The length of time to implement each of the three threads of environmentalism differs for each; cattle breeding takes years, films and novels

⁵⁵ Heck, "The Breeding Back of the Aurochs," 120.

⁵⁶ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 18.

might take years to film and produce for the public, while government laws and programs take time and funding to create and provide sufficient evidence for the betterment of the public.

The final chapter jumps forward in the chronology, focusing on the late-1930s through the end of the war in 1945, and considers how the three platforms of restoration took shape and the different outcomes that each had on Germany. The outcomes of these projects, programs, and policies had a wide range of meanings for officials in the Third Reich. The measure of success in back-breeding aurochs by Lutz and Heinz Heck was different for each brother, who found different purposes for their creations. Their success with aurochs as well as the success of creating *Dauerwald* and the public's reaction to the Reich Nature Protection Law were different for Hermann Göring. The outcomes for animals and forests hinged on the varying uses that Nazis intended. Göring saw 'wild' aurochs as an opportunity to "restore the lost Teutonic ecosystem," which allowed him to fulfill his fantasies as the Reichsjägermeister (Reich Hunting Master).⁵⁷ The outcome in regard to people is understood differently, the intention being that the success of the previous two, in conjunction with propaganda, would show that idealized men was only possible through beasts and soil, particularly seen through Himmler's *Generalplan Ost*. It is this point when questions arose with how the public, media, and Nazi officials responded to environmental changes in the Third Reich. The analysis of all three topics together creates a clearer understanding of the different facets of Nazi environmentalism are able to be gained.

The historiography of Nazi environmentalism has rarely acknowledged these different aspects in relation to one another. Though a majority of sources may conclude that Nazi conservation is an exaggeration of their agenda and ideology, this thesis does not agree.

⁵⁷ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 142. The concept of back-bred animals being 'wild' is difficult to define because it is considered pseudoscience to genetically recreate the animals and these animals are still in enclosed parks.

Environmentalism and conservation in the Third Reich cannot be simply understood through isolated environmental laws and programs that were created during the 1930s and 1940s. The laws that the Nazis put into effect served the purpose of protecting beasts, soil, and blood. The ideology that many top leaders of the Party publicly expressed aimed at the idea of returning to a sense of a primeval Germany, one with yoked German animals, forests, and people. In order to advance environmental studies on Nazi Germany, the topics of animals, forests, and people must be analyzed in congruence, as part of the larger Nazi environmental goal.

CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS, 1870-1918

The Nazi principles that blazed across Germany during the Second World War emphasized the purity of the Aryan race and Germany itself. This ideology was shared among all high-ranking Nazi officials, including Adolf Hitler, Hermann Göring, and Heinrich Himmler. This top-down doctrine manifested with Hitler and steeped down to officials, academics, soldiers, and civilians. The dogma of racial purity became a driving factor for Nazi programs and actions during the twentieth century, culminating in, the Holocaust. However, racial ideology was only a single aspect of Nazi desires for Germany. For example, Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), *Reichsführer-SS* (Reich Leader-SS), while actively participating in Hitler's racial purification of Jews, found a radical fascination with the ancestry of Germanic blood. This interest manifested itself through romanticizing Germanic culture, people, and mythology. Himmler believed that "if researchers could recover this primeval Germanic knowledge through archaeology and other sciences, then they might find superior ways of growing grain, breeding livestock, healing the ill, designing weapons, or regulating society."⁵⁸ This infatuation with these origins was not only to satisfy Himmler but would be the foothold for a greater Germany after the Second World War.

Along with Himmler, other Nazi officials believed that Germany would not be complete simply through racial purity. Hermann Göring (1893-1946), *Reichsjägermeister* (Reich Hunting Master), *Reichsforstmeister* (Reich Forest Master), and *Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe* (Supreme Commander of the Air Force), was more concerned with German flora and fauna. Göring's fascination with Nazi ideology centered primarily on creating German forests filled with

⁵⁸ Heather Pringle, *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 5.

Germanic beasts. Göring's knowledge of Germany's primeval beasts and forests would only be able to carry him so far, and like Himmler, he ended up recruiting academics to further reach his goals. The key advisor or partner in his quest for pure German beasts and forests were Lutz Heck (1892-1983), the director of the Berlin Zoological Gardens, and by association, his brother, Heinz Heck (1894-1982), the director of the Hellabrunn Zoological Gardens in Munich.⁵⁹ The brothers provided Göring with the knowledge and acquisition of different primeval beasts, and the primeval landscapes that would be needed to house these creatures.

Nazi doctrines during the Second World War were not universal among all members, nor were the means by which Nazis attempted to achieve them. Nazi officials and other members of the Party took it upon themselves to purify Germany, not only through "Aryan" blood but also through beasts and forests. These obsessions could not be put into practice hastily. An understanding of Germanic beasts, forests, and blood had to be acquired first. Lutz Heck stated that "no creature is extinct if the elements of its heritable constitution are still to be found in living descendants."⁶⁰ The same sentiment was true for the Nazis' pursuit of purity in all aspects of Germany. A pure Germany was only possible if Nazism could return all facets of society to their purest origins in beasts, forests, and blood. This triad was the basis of the environmental practices and ideology in Nazi Germany. The environmental practices that came to fruition during the 1930s and 1940s must first be understood through the seeds planted long before the Nazis came to power.

Blood: Germanic People and Masculinity

⁵⁹ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, V.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 142.

One of the first “historical ethnographies” of Germanic people sheds light on the physical and cultural lifestyles of the tribes. This description is found in *Germania*, by Publius Cornelius Tacitus (C.E. 56-C.E. 120), written approximately C.E. 100. His descriptions of Germanic people presented the barbaric Germans as the cultural other in comparison to Romans. Tacitus describes Germans as “distinct and unlike any other nation...fierce-looking blue eyes, reddish hair, and big frames...can exert their strength only by means of violent effort.”⁶¹ The physical characteristics of Germanic people was only a single aspect of life that Tacitus categorized. He addressed marriage laws, children, habits during war and peace time, slaves, politics, punishments, and dress. The stereotypes of their dress state that “they wear the skins of wild animals – the tribes near the river frontiers without any regard to appearance...women often wear outer garments of linen...and as the upper part of these is sleeveless, the whole of their arms, and indeed the parts of their breasts nearest the shoulders, are exposed.”⁶² However, the sense of cultural otherness was not ignored by all Germanic peoples. Through the centuries, Tacitus's work contributed towards Germans’ creating a cultural and political unity under a national identity of Germanness through proceeding centuries.⁶³ However, *Germania* was inherently flawed as an ethnography and historical source. The tribes Tacitus described were propagandized barbarians that fit the Roman stereotype of barbaric peoples. “His ethnography established the anthropomorphic caricature that defined the Teutonic stereotype.”⁶⁴ Though these stereotypes persisted, later Germans welcomed them with open arms. Through Tacitus’ other writings many German people

⁶¹ Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, trans. by H. Mattingly and S. A. Handford (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 104.

⁶² Ibid, 116.

⁶³ Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome*, 32.

⁶⁴ Johann Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe’s Classical Past*, trans. by Richard R. Nybakken (California: University of California Press, 2016), 20.

of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries learned the story of Arminius and his battle of Teutoburg Forest in C.E. 9.⁶⁵

The battle of Teutoburg Forest was one of Rome's major losses during the Empire. Three Roman legions were defeated, handily, in the forest located in the north of Germany by a Cherusci chieftain and former Roman auxiliary, Arminius.⁶⁶ Though the battle was decisive in both Roman and Germanic history, the later perception of its actors refashioned German history. Through the course of the sixteenth century, the Latin name Arminius was altered to fit with the Germanic language and culture that birthed him. It was changed to Hermann. The suspected first use of this new name was by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century when describing early Germanic heroes.⁶⁷ Hermann (Arminius) became hailed as a true hero of Germany, the first German who fought back against invaders who sought to disrupt and alter Germanic life and culture. This is exemplified throughout the sixteenth century through dramas, operas, and other literary forms. For example, German poet and satirist Ulrich von Hutten composed a drama in the 1520s stating that Hermann (Arminius) “deserved to be history’s greatest general, grander even than Alexander the Great and Hannibal.”⁶⁸ This romanticization of Hermann grew to a point when ruling elites of German-speaking kingdoms across Europe created a mythology of Hermann/Arminius.⁶⁹ In these traditions, Hermann became the ideal German man, one who exemplified Germanic culture and defended his home from alien peoples beyond its borders.

The mythology of Hermann was not simply used as a literary device in novels, dramas, and operas. Both the history and subsequent mythology of Arminius and the battle of Teutoburg

⁶⁵ Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome*, 32.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 35, 105.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 107.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 33-34.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

Forest became romanticized throughout Germany. The romanticization came about when Hermann transmuted into the main character of the *Nibelungenlied*, Siegfried, who "slew a dragon and bathed in its blood to become invincible in battle."⁷⁰ This symbolic transformation was carried out of the theatres and opera houses onto the battlefield against foreign invaders. Two notable examples of this are the War of Liberation, 1813, and the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-1871. The first was at a time when German states fought against Napoleon's French forces, and though defeated, German soldiers considered themselves Hermann incarnated.⁷¹ The second came during the Franco-Prussian War with France's defeat and culminating in Prime Minister of Prussia, Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) unification of the German states into one nation.⁷² Through each of these instances, German people molded themselves to be the embodiment of Hermann, protecting the Fatherland through any means necessary. "Out of its flames was bound to come the sword which was to regain the freedom of the German Siegfried."⁷³

The mythology and symbolism of Hermann as the hero of Germany did not end with the Franco-Prussian War. It was immortalized in monumental form. Standing at the highest point of Teutoburg Forest, on Grotenburg Hill, is a bronze statue of Hermann dedicated by Bismarck in 1875, shortly after unifying Germany.⁷⁴ It is one of many forms of symbolic representation of Germanic peoples. Hermann is depicted with a large nose, long hair, and a short beard while carrying a sword in his right hand, oriented firmly facing France, and a crushed eagle is under his left foot.⁷⁵ This massive symbol of Hermann became the idealized man throughout Germany, not

⁷⁰ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 78.

⁷¹ Viereck, *Metapolitics*, 11.

⁷² Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome*, 34-35.

⁷³ Viereck, *Metapolitics*, 139.

⁷⁴ Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome*, 35.

⁷⁵ Fögen and Warren, *Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the Idea of Nationalism in the 19th Century*, 227.

due to his muscular appearance, but through the mythologized determination, intelligence, bravery, and honor.



Figure 1.1. The 87 foot tall, bronze statue of Arminius or Hermann top of Grotenburg Hill in Teutoburg Forest. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Hermannsdenkmal near detmold. Photographer: Maurice Dzafic, under License CC BY-SA 4.0.

The statue of Hermann not only symbolized a Germanic hero but was also a symbol of ideal German masculinity. The erection of the statue in the late-nineteenth century coincided with growing senses of gender confusion in Germany and other nations across the globe. This confusion had built during the eighteenth century and took hold of German identity in the late-nineteenth century after the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian Wars. The question was not of an individual's biological gender but the meaning of manliness and masculinity through an

emerging urban and industrial society.⁷⁶ John F. Kasson's *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America*, does not focus on the ideal German man, but his work recognizes some anxieties surrounding masculinity in Germany during the nineteenth century. These anxieties originated during the Renaissance of the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries, with the nudity depicting classical, ideal, and exotic male and female subjects.⁷⁷ Germanic ideals of masculinity with Hermann began clashing with the Renaissance views of superior men and women which signified a different way of life than that of Germany. However, these anxieties in contradicting ideals of masculinity were quickly addressed during the early- to mid-eighteenth century after the defeats leading to the War of Liberation.

The shame and embarrassment from defeat was apparent in all aspects of life, and during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) knew this too well. Jahn experienced defeat on numerous occasions as a gymnast in his early life, a soldier fighting against the French in the War of Liberation, and a gymnastics educator at Hasenheide in Berlin.⁷⁸ Jahn held extreme views on German nationalism, which he combined with his love of gymnastics, becoming referred to as the "father of German gymnastics."⁷⁹ His reputation came through promoting young German men to not only take pride in physical exercise and appearance but, also their national identity. The combination of exercise and nationalism created an opportunity of young men across Germany to regain the symbolic ideals of masculinity that

⁷⁶ John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wong, 2001), 18-19.

⁷⁷ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man*, 21.

⁷⁸ Dieter Reicher, "Nationalistic German Gymnastic Movements and Modern Sports. Culture Between Identity and Habitus," *Historical Social Research* 45, no. 1 (2020): 213.

⁷⁹ Reicher, "Nationalistic German Gymnastic Movements and Modern Sports. Culture Between Identity and Habitus," 213.

were constantly being attacked by outside forces. The ideal German man was not lost through the War of Liberation, but through ideals and teachings, it could begin to resolidify for future generations. The teaching and ideals of masculinity and nationalism were central, according to Jahn, in building the ideal German man. These ideals, paired with the creativity and freedom provided in folk life, people connected and appreciative of nature, would be the only possible way to achieve a true German.⁸⁰ According to Jahn, the younger generations, who did not experience defeat by the French, were the groups in Germany who needed to be instilled with “patriotism and pride in their fatherland...deeply rooted in their hearts.”⁸¹

The ideal German masculinity of the early-nineteenth century fought against foreign forces and by the late-nineteenth century with the victory in the Franco-Prussian War, surged to new heights. This growth came about from the militarization of Germany in preparation for war with the French in 1870. The war created a new mode of expression for German masculinity through citizen-soldiers. “The citizen-soldier worked for and together with his fellow citizens, for the public sphere and the state, and he fought in war together with his comrades, sacrificing himself on behalf of his country.”⁸² This gave German men the opportunity to form bonds of brotherhood through life and death situations of war and gave them a chance to express their masculinity in combat. On the other hand, the armed conflict took men out of their everyday circumstances, many of which had led to anxieties about masculinity. The ideologies of the ideal primeval German man were reinforced in the “schools of manliness,” created by the German army in the nineteenth century.⁸³ The role of these schools were to transform the weak boys and

⁸⁰ Hans Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 4 (1949): 429.

⁸¹ Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” 420.

⁸² Thomas Kühne, “Protean Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity,” *Central European History* 51, no. 3 (2018): 401.

⁸³ Kühne, “Protean Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity,” 402.

men into real men by “ridding himself of his infantile, private, allegedly egocentric identity, rooted in the maternally dominated world of his family.”⁸⁴ The ideal primeval German man that was being created through war during the late nineteenth century also gave the people staying at home, mainly women, the opportunity to define their ideal primeval femininity at the same time.

The notions of womanhood and femininity created during the industrialization and urbanization of German cities can be further understood through the roles and lives of Germanic women during the time of Arminius. “As Erna Bohlmann notes in her essay, German women were ‘historically’ defined by their biological destiny much more than their male compatriots were.”⁸⁵ Bohlmann’s “The Position of the Ancient Germanic Women,” written in 1934, was not only a response to the changes in masculinity and femininity in the twentieth century but also a basis for understanding the idealized German girl and woman of the mid-twentieth century. Bohlmann states, “the position of women in any culture is generally taken as a measure of the people’s level of development.”⁸⁶ Bohlmann uses this sentiment in conjunction with the work of Germanist Dr. Bernhard Kummer (1897-1962). The primary focus of his research was Germanic people, politics, economics, and history. Kummer stated that Germanic women and girls were revered and sheltered through unwritten laws, but that did not mean that these women did not always need protection.⁸⁷ “She was better endowed with power, in spirit, and in sanctity than man...it explains her gift of prophecy, her inviolability, her active participation in blood revenge, her drive to action...we can see that women here are *equal to men* in every regard.”⁸⁸ The ancient Germanic women that Bohlmann and Kummer analyze are very different from those of

⁸⁴ Ibid, 402.

⁸⁵ Rabinbach and Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 242.

⁸⁶ First Published as “Die Stellung der germanischen Frau,” in *Wille und Macht* 2, no. 20 (1934). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 261.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 261.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 261.

the late nineteenth century. The womanhood and femininity of these Germanic women were on par and equal to the masculinity of the men. The women of the nineteenth century used the industrialization and urbanization of cities to reclaim the symbolism of an ideal German woman that was once lost.

Soil: The Soul of Germanness

"Until German unification in 1871, Germany was not a nation state, and the German-speaking part of Europe consisted of more than a hundred different states, each with its own administration and forestry."⁸⁹ The Germanic forests of the first century where Arminius fought were not the same at the end of the Roman Empire, Middle Ages, or the war's conclusion in 1945. The history and analysis of the primeval forests that Göring wanted to achieve were not solely about the various inhabiting flora species. Instead, the symbolism of forests and their spiritual and economic uses helped bolster the origins of the mythologized primeval forests and their significance.

"There is no 'zero hour' of environmentalism. Humans have pondered their relationship to the natural environment throughout the ages, and a concern for nature is probably as old as human civilization."⁹⁰ This sentiment was true even during Arminius's battle at Teutoburg Forest. The forests of the first century, for Germanic peoples, were the lifeblood of the tribes. Forests were providers of plants and animals for medicine, food, clothing, building, and crafts, and also defensive fortification against rival tribes and Roman legions. They were also natural dangers. The distinction and importance of these forests was evident in comparison to the plains of

⁸⁹ Grewe and Hölzl, "Forestry in Germany, c.1550–2000," 15.

⁹⁰ Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, 25.

Germany. Unlike the plains, where flat, land provided an opportunity for pack animals and wheeled carts' unhindered movements, forests presented obstacles that non-Germans had to



Figure 1.2. Map of German showing the location of Teutoburg, Rominten, and Schorfheide. Source: Wikimedia Commons, German Empire 1914 adm location map. Author: NordNordWest, under License CC BY-SA 3.0.

penetrate themselves. “In the primeval forest where a path must be hacked out with the aid of ax and knife man must be his own burden bearer.”⁹¹ However, for the Germanic people who lived in forests, their knowledge and connection with nature provided their resources and ability to travel through, knowing to follow the bear and aurochs trails.⁹² “Hermann thus represented a prime example of Germanic heroism against foreign domination, just as the primeval Germanic forests that had brought forth such a hero was a timeless preserve of ‘Germanness.’”⁹³ It was not

⁹¹ Raphael Zon, “Forests and Human Progress,” *Geographical Review* 10, no. 3 (1920): 141.

⁹² Zon, “Forests and Human Progress,” 141-142.

⁹³ Michael Imort, “A Sylvan People: Wilhelmine Forestry and the Forest as a Symbol of Germandom,” In *Germany’s Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*, eds. Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 58.

Germanic people who came to these primeval forests, but instead, the forests that birthed these Germanic heroes.

The ancient forests were central to the romanticism of Germanic heroes and crucial aspects of Germany's economic, spiritual, political, and physical life dating back to the first century. The flora of these forests included a combination of ferns, shrubbery, and various species of trees. The smaller flora included species of plants and shrubs like Hungarian gentian, greater wood-rush, and leathery moonwort.⁹⁴ The main species of trees throughout German



Figure 1.3. Various ferns and shrubbery that inhabit German primeval forests. (Left to Right) *Sceptridium multifidum* (Leathery moonwort), *Gentiana pannonica* (Hungarian gentian), *Luzula sylvatica* (Greater wood-rush). Sources: Wikimedia Commons, Botrychium multifidum Sweden 02. Photographer: Dubbeltänk, under License CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikimedia Commons, Schneeberg 5501. Photographer: Karl Gruber, under License CC BY-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons, Luzula sylvatica kz02. Photographer: Krzysztof Ziarnek, under License CC BY-SA 4.0.

⁹⁴ Terry O'Connor and Naomi Sykes, *Extinctions and Invasions: A Social History of British Fauna* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2010), 27. Hungarian gentian is the name of the plant species in the twenty-first century. It was possibly referred to as Ostalpen-Enzian or simply gentian.

forests included deciduous oak and beech, conifers like spruce, pine, and fir, black alder, and alder-ash.⁹⁵ These species of trees populated the primeval forest across Germany.⁹⁶ As human population sizes grew over the centuries, the forests that Arminius once inhabited began to change. Forests resembled more than a primeval past and became deeply engrained in German economies. Medieval timber extraction for firewood and construction were primarily the largest source of revenue. However, “cartwrights, glaziers, coopers, joiners, carpenters, brush- and basket-makers, spoon- and wood-carvers...paper production, and tanning leather,” were all tied to the forests in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹⁷ By the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the growing literary and artistic forms of romanticized forests manifested new ideologies. These ideals began to combine primeval ideals and growing forestry consciousness that gave German flora human characteristics. “Not only do the proud trees withdraw from the company of lower classes of plants by gathering and huddling in the forest...the noble oak forest shielding its inferiors.”⁹⁸ These sentiments of forests laid a foundation for scholars, writers, and politicians to exemplify the Germanness that would be found in primeval Germanic forests.

The sentiment most notably associated with the primeval German forests is derived from Prussian born poet, Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857), who weaved motifs of wanderlust and nostalgia into stories of German forests. The popularity and romanticization of his works propelled him to be known as the ‘poet of the German forest,’ his work portrayed forests as “soulful, melancholic, and brooding, but also as vigorous, primeval, and indomitable – and those

⁹⁵ Tomasz Samojlik, Anastasia Fedotova and Dries P. J. Kuijper, “Transition from traditional to modern forest management shaped the spatial extent of cattle pasturing in Białowieża Forest in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” *Ambio* 45, no. 8 (2016): 906.

⁹⁶ Grewe and Hölzl, “Managing Northern Europe’s Forests,” 23. Several tree species grew to approximately one hundred meters (330 feet) high during the seventeenth century and for reference, the tower of Big Ben in London is roughly 100 meters tall.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

⁹⁸ Imort, “A Sylvan People,” 63.

qualities were also ascribed to Germans as national characteristics.”⁹⁹ The forest was interconnected with its inhabitants, both non-human and human. It was a source of power and safety, but at the same time deadly. Eichendorff’s poetry of the nineteenth century brought the forests to life through human characteristics, ushering together the hundreds of different German states’ forests as a single organism. “When one sees nature in a necessary connectedness and interrelationship, then all things are equally important – shrub, worm, plant, human, stone, nothing first or last.”¹⁰⁰ The nineteenth century romanticists’ views of forests did not delve into a hierarchal order, instead they focused on the unity of all organisms in the ecosystems. The mysticism of Germanic forests rose through the nineteenth century and inspired cultural movements into the twentieth century and through the Third Reich.

The creation of social and cultural movements through the mysticism was forged through the combination of “naturalism,” connecting all beings and events through nature, due to the increase in pollution from the Industrial Revolution, as well as a rising sense of nationalism across Germany. The earliest example of this combination comes from Ernst Moritz Arndt’s (1769-1860) *On the Care and Conservation of Forests*, written in 1815.¹⁰¹ Arndt was a fanatic in calling for the unification of German states and used his works and journal *The Watchman* to “explicitly link nationalism and the natural environment, tapping into a long tradition which held the German forest to embody the very essence of Germanness.”¹⁰² Arndt’s work “rails against exploitation of woodlands and soil, condemning deforestation and its economic causes.”¹⁰³ The concern for forest exploitation and soil was common across Germany, dating back to the

⁹⁹ Ibid, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 16.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰² Bratton, “Luc Ferry’s Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism,” 176.

¹⁰³ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 16.

Peasants' War of 1525, a conflict against the German nobility for the price of wood.¹⁰⁴ These worries and confrontations were common due to the agrarian lifestyle of numerous German families, and similar issues continued to arise into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the forests' exploitation was Arndt's main concern, his conservation was mixed with a violent xenophobic sense of nationalism. "His eloquent and prescient appeals for ecological sensitivity were couched always in terms of the well-being of the *German* soil and the *German* people."¹⁰⁵ The combination of conservation and nationalism was not uncommon during the nineteenth century among scholars. Similarly, Arndt passed on some of his views to his student, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl.

Along with Arndt, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823-1897), University of Munich professor of history, took the same notions of conservation and xenophobic nationalism even further. Riehl classified his views of conservation as a romantic response to industrialism which "was sapping the spirit of the German people...there was no discontinuity between natural and social law."¹⁰⁶ His essay *Field and Forest*, written in 1853, stated, "we must save the forest, not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German."¹⁰⁷ Riehl's work favored the agrarian lifestyle of rural families across Germany that condemned the growing interests taken in industrialization and urbanization of cities. "His glorification of rural peasant values and undifferentiated condemnation of modernity established him as the 'founder of agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism.'"¹⁰⁸ Through the combination of the works of Arndt and Riehl, a

¹⁰⁴ Imort, "A Sylvan People," 18.

¹⁰⁵ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Bratton, "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," 177.

¹⁰⁷ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 16.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 16-17.

new cultural and social movement emerged under agrarian romanticism and anti-urbanism. The *völkisch* (ethnic) movement operated under the impression of a "powerful cultural disposition and social tendency which united ethnocentric populism with nature mysticism."¹⁰⁹ This development created an opportunity for individuals who shared similar perspectives to German forests as those who participated in the Peasants' War of 1525. From the movements' viewpoint, the longer that industrialization and urbanization of Germany continued, or at the very least continued without regulations, the once mythologized forests that birthed the hero Hermann would be destroyed or, worse, invaded. "They presented the Germanized forest as the first and last line of defense of a 'rooted' Germanic culture and identity against foreign domination and the softening influence of 'civilization'."¹¹⁰

The *völkisch* movement of the nineteenth century not only tied agrarian romanticism to anti-urbanism but also created a sense of community for German peoples and a relationship with German forests. Ernst Janisch's article "The Biological-Historical Background of German Living Space," written in 1943, breaks down parts of this movement that began almost a century earlier. Janisch states, "the *Volk* represents a community of men joined by blood and by fate, a community of common descent that shares a common culture and a common language as expressions of its inner nature."¹¹¹ The *Volk* (people), Germanic people specifically, were bound together not only by their blood but through a shared language and cultural experiences that spread across the different German states before unification. The main criticisms that the *völkisch* movement received from other intellectuals, writers, and radical nationalists, were due

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 17.

¹¹⁰ Imort, "A Sylvan People," 61.

¹¹¹ First Published as "Der deutsche Lebensraum in seiner biologisch-historisch Begründung," in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Naturwissenschaft* 9, nos. 1, 2 (January/February 1943). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 180.

to the refusal of properly identifying the "alienation, rootlessness and environmental destruction in social structures, laying the blame instead on rationalism, cosmopolitanism, and urban civilization."¹¹² As the ideology progressed through the twentieth century, these criticisms became clear under Nazism. "The stand-in for all of these was the age-old object of peasant hatred and middle-class resentment: the Jews. The Germans were in search of a mysterious wholeness that would restore them to primeval happiness, destroying the hostile milieu of urban industrial civilization that the Jewish conspiracy had foisted on them."¹¹³ The fear of destroying the remnants of primeval forests allowed Germans to shift blame for environmental and societal turmoil onto Jewish people. By the end of the nineteenth century, the romantic language of Germanic forests had birthed a new mythologized ideology that would propel environmentalism in the coming decades.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, "German forests differed much from those of a hundred years before. Many forests, particularly in the north and east, had been converted into conifer plantations, becoming denser and darker in the process."¹¹⁴ The rise of industrialization and urbanization created a demand within cities for the same resources families previously relied on in their agrarian lifestyle. The areas of Germany that felt this pressure were the communities closely located to "large consuming industries like iron works," where timber extraction, commonly of oak and fast-growing conifers.¹¹⁵ With the migrations to cities everyday resources, like wood, clean water, and food, quickly became scarce with the potential fear of failure in the individual cities' infrastructure. This scarcity was seen through the late nineteenth century, with

¹¹² Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 17.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Grewe and Hölzl, "Managing Northern Europe's Forests," 35.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 21. There is a difference between slow- and fast-growing conifers. Slow-growing conifers approximate a growth rate of twelve inches per year. While fast-growing will approximate two or more feet per year.

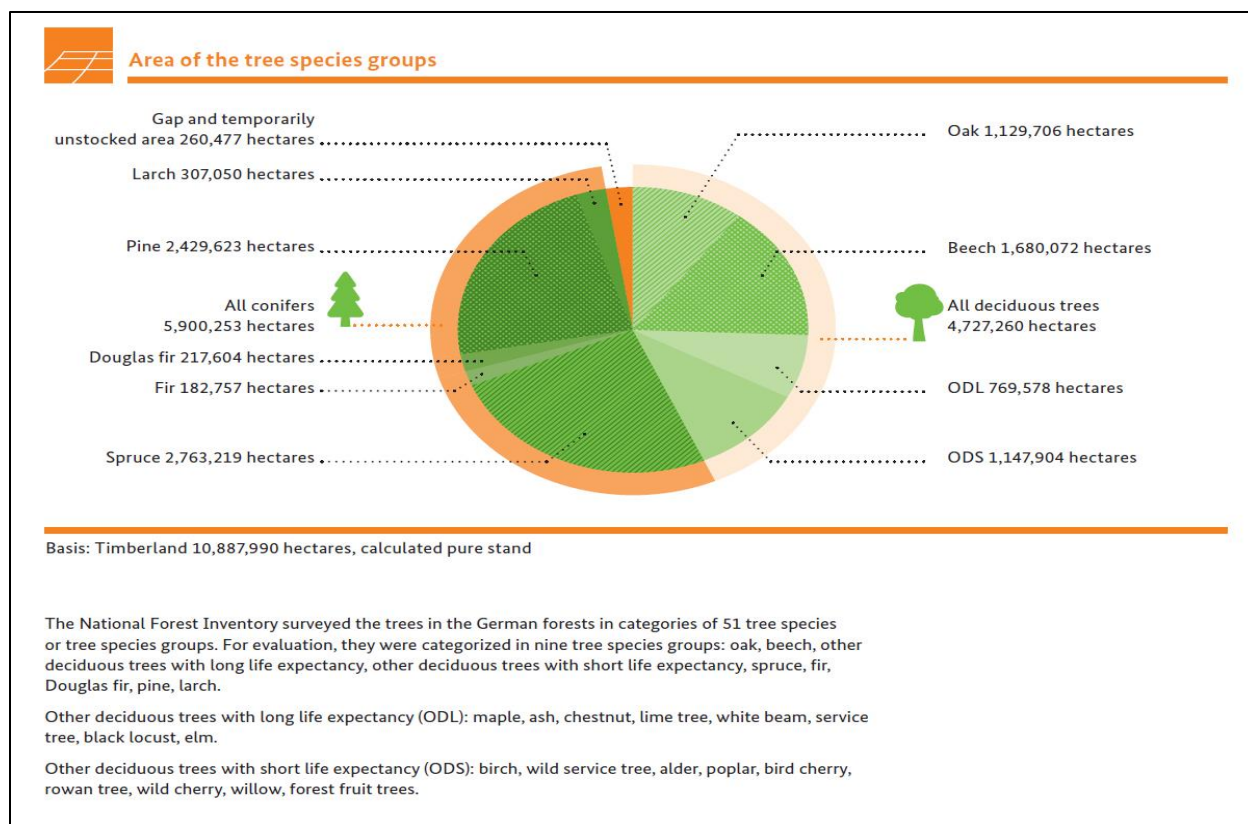


Figure 1.4. Graph depicting the total hectares of the various species of German trees. Sources: Wikimedia Commons, Area of the tree species groups. Author: *Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture).

many cities across Germany creating numerous municipal institutions like "waterworks, slaughterhouses, garbage collection, gas and electric utilities, as well as garden agencies that looked after municipal parks."¹¹⁶ One solution to this issue came about through conservationists and, the opposite of Arndt and Reihl, rationalists who understood the need for industrialization within urban areas. "Shortly before the First World War a few prominent conservationists made that argument in a petition to the German governments and called for the legal option to expropriate areas in the interest of conservation without compensation."¹¹⁷ The expropriation of land was one of the more reasonable ways of allowing the German state and urban cities to

¹¹⁶ Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?* 41.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 36.

maintain a level of modernity while also protecting Germanic forests before they were transformed into fields of dying stumps.

Beasts: Aurochs and the Primeval Fauna of Germany

The origins of primeval German beasts are unlike the previous two aspects of Nazi environmentalism. Unlike forests and blood, there were no remnants of the key primeval beasts that were romanticized during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the mythology of these animals was rooted within German intellectuals and fanatics, similar to those visionaries with Hermann. Through the finding of imagery and artifacts related to primeval Germanic beasts, the desire to have the beasts back only grew larger. These ranged from Swiss biologist Conrad Gessner's (1516-1565) *Historia animalium* (History of the Animals) of 1555, depicting aurochs, wisent, and other animals from across Europe.¹¹⁸ Medieval artifacts included the horns of aurochs that had been worked and adorned with gold for the use as hunting horns, taken from the Polish king Sigismund III in 1655 by Swedish armies.¹¹⁹ The *Nibelungenlied* was a key source of mythologized understanding of what primeval fauna may have once roamed Germany. Various fauna captivated Göring, according to zoologist and recipient of his patronage, Lutz Heck. In particular, "the two huge wild oxen, which have become almost legendary but are regarded as the most powerful representatives of the primeval German game – the European bison (wisent) and the aurochs."¹²⁰ Though these beasts were extinct or on the verge of extinction in the case of Wisent, their mythologized stature remains a driving force in Nazi environmental programs.

The last aurochs became extinct in 1627, hypothesized to have been hunted down in the

¹¹⁸ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 140.

¹¹⁹ Gary Bruce, *Through the Lion Gate: A History of the Berlin Zoo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 213.

¹²⁰ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 139.

forest near the Jaktorovo region, south of Warsaw, Poland, for girdles to be produced from its leather.¹²¹ These animals were completely erased from Germany's ecosystem almost three hundred years before the Nazis come to power. In Bruce Bower's 2006 article titled "Cattle Call of the Wild," five aurochs fossils had been discovered in Italy dating as far back as 17,000 years ago.¹²² The aurochs is one of few animals that is seen in copious historical periods, being interwoven into classical European histories to include Julius Caesar's *Gallic War*, written between 58 and 52 B.C., and Einhard and Notker the Stammerer's biographies of Charlemagne, written in the ninth century. Caesar described the size of the beasts as only slightly smaller than an elephant and marveled out how "Germans slay zealously...those who have slain most of them bring the horns with them in public places for a testimony thereof, and win great renown."¹²³ Einhard and Notker accounted that while hunting for aurochs, Charlemagne's envoys "saw the immense animals...were stricken with a mighty fear and turned and fled."¹²⁴ Each of these histories describes them as the idealized primeval beast. Hunting a single aurochs could garner renown beyond one's dreams. Lutz Heck recalls the process of hunting a single animal through Swiss naturalist Conrad Gessner's (1516-1565) 1606 edition of *Historia animalium*, stating, "the strongest are killed by hunters by the King's command. One animal is separated from the herd, and many men and hounds then hunt it, often for a long time. It falls only when pierced in the breast."¹²⁵ The notoriety of aurochs throughout European history ranges thousands of years, partially contributing to the grandiose mythology surrounding the primeval Germanic beast.

¹²¹ Ibid, 139-140.

¹²² Bruce Bower, "Cattle's Call of the Wild," *Science News* 169, no. 19 (2006): 294.

¹²³ Julius Caesar, *Caesar: The Gallic War*, trans. by H.J. Edwards and C.B. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1917), 353.

¹²⁴ Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. by David Ganz (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 93.

¹²⁵ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 140-141.



Figure 1.5. Map showing the location of the Białowieża Forest, was inhabited by aurochs and wisent.
 Source: BBC, “Białowieża: Poland to resume logging in primeval forest” (March 2021).

Like the legend of Hermann, the mythology surrounding the aurochs stems from the *Nibelungenlied* poems of Siegfried with other Teutonic knights hunting aurochs and deer, elk, and wisent (European Bison) in the primeval forests of Germany.¹²⁶ The poems were among many medieval writings that grew in popularity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with readers forming fantasies and mythologizing their tales of beasts. One specific example is Himmler's reaction describing it as “incomparable eternal beauty in language, depth and all things German.”¹²⁷ On the other hand, Göring had a slightly different reaction than Himmler. To Göring, the *Nibelungenlied* was a model by which “the beneficent hunter-forester maintains the balance of a *Heimat* (homeland) cultural ecology.”¹²⁸ The desire for aurochs was created through the combination of its long history, written mythology, and appearance.

The idealized primeval German beast was unlike any other within Germany due to its

¹²⁶ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 140-141.

¹²⁷ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 80.

¹²⁸ Lorimer and Driessen, “From “Nazi Cows” to Cosmopolitan “Ecological Engineers,” 638-639.

appearance and temperament towards other animals or humans. The sheer size of an aurochs would have towered over most men across Europe. The average height of an aurochs measured at the withers, the meeting point of the shoulder blades on the back, were six feet tall. The bulls would weigh close to one and a half tons (3,000 lbs.) or more, while the females would be average at one ton (2,000 lbs.). Each horn of an aurochs measured roughly a meter long (3.28 ft.) and were curved forward, similar to a spear.¹²⁹ The coats of the bulls were black with only a slightly yellow-white stripe along the back, but the cows had a red-brown coat with darker shades along the neck area.¹³⁰ The temperament of these beasts matched their physical



Figure 1.6. Digital reconstruction of aurochs in comparison to a human by José María Galán. Source: El País, “Coast of giants: Footprints in Spain confirm coexistence of massive aurochs with Neanderthals,” (June 2022). Author: Raúl Limón

appearance, being extremely aggressive, specifically during the rutting season of August to September.¹³¹ The notoriety of aurochs came partly from medieval writings, but largely due to its

¹²⁹ Douglas I. Campbell and Patrick Michael Whittle, *Resurrecting Extinct Species: Ethics and Authenticity* (New Zealand: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 30.

¹³⁰ Heck, “The Breeding Back of the Aurochs,” 118.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 119.

sheer size especially compared to domesticated European cattle like the Scottish Highland, Hungarian, and Podolian Steppe cattle which average 152.4 cm (5 ft.) in height.

While the aurochs may have been the most mythologized primeval Germanic beast in Germany due to its extinction, another primeval fauna still roamed across Europe and Asia Minor, the wisent (European Bison). The major difference between the wisent and aurochs in appearance, other than physical size, is the length and coloring of their coats. While the aurochs have short coats which grow longer during the winter, the wisent has a woolly, brown coat which is the same for both males and females. “In contrast to the habits of the browsing, forest-dwelling Wisent, the Aurochs lived mainly on grass and herbs and was for that reason to be found in more open country in the pastures of river beds.”¹³² Another major difference concerning wisent is their herd behavior. The aurochs would travel in herds, varying in different sizes based on the number of bulls in a particular area. The wisent, according to Lutz Heck, adapted to the extinction of other primeval beasts and its species became ‘resourceful solitary’.¹³³ “Even in the time of the Teutons the bison was a rare animal, and even then it seems to have lacked the means and the strength to increase greatly. Thus bisons had scarcity value when in ancient times they were hunted by princely sportsmen, and as those princes were passionate hunters the forest bisons became steadily fewer as the centuries passed, in spite of some protection in various forests.”¹³⁴ By the beginning of the First World War, roughly 750 wisents had taken refuge in the Białowieża Forest located in Poland. As the occupying German forces began to withdraw from the forests in 1918, hunters from surrounding villages massacred the population because the

¹³² Ibid, 119.

¹³³ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 165.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 165.

forest was a part of no-man's-land on the eastern front. Only five wisents survived.¹³⁵ The wisent during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were on the verge of extinction, similar to their kindred species in America. While this beast was not as highly sought after, in comparison to aurochs, it was one of the final primeval Germanic beasts.

While the aurochs and wisent were the prime examples of primeval beasts, they alone did not fill the forests of Germany. Other species of fauna were scattered across Germany and displayed the diversity of the German environment. These other fauna existed alongside the primeval beasts but, their symbolic meaning did not equate to that of aurochs due to the relative abundance they appeared in comparison to primeval beasts. The primeval forests included fauna like wolves, bears, lynx, wild boar, red deer and roe deer, otters, and species of avian fauna like eagles, owls, cranes, and storks.¹³⁶ These animals, like aurochs and wisent, were not only key aspects to the forest ecosystems, but were central figures in the beauty of forests and the livelihoods of people in the surrounding area. The Białowieża Forest, just one of the primeval forests, was understood for its importance economically and was put under official protection as a royal hunting ground in 1409 and persisted as much until the beginning of World War I.¹³⁷ These varying species of fauna were not the only ones to inhabit primeval forests, however, they were some of the 'wild' fauna in forests. The primeval Germanic people of the first century through the eighteenth century used the forests as a pasture for their domesticated animals to graze and feed. These domesticated animals included goats, pigs, sheep, horses, and cattle, often dairy cattle.¹³⁸ The fauna that encapsulated primeval forests were wild and domestic, carnivores

¹³⁵ Ibid, 165.

¹³⁶ Erik Hoffner, "Forest Medieval," *Earth Island Journal* 24, no. 4 (2010): 34.

¹³⁷ Hoffner, "Forest Medieval," 36. Though not located in Germany, sets as a prime example of a preserved primeval forest.

¹³⁸ Samojlik, Fedotova and Kuijper, "Transition from traditional to modern forest management shaped the spatial extent of cattle pasturing in Białowieża Forest in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," 904.

and herbivores, and varied drastically in size, though they all were crucial elements in romanticizing and mythologizing the wisent and aurochs in Nazi ideology.

Conclusion: Environmental Ideology in Practice

“Folkish ideology emerged during the Second Reich (1871-1918), but it was World War I, the Versailles Treaty, and the crisis of the Weimar Republic that elevated it to a position of supreme importance in the 1920s and 1930s.”¹³⁹ These ideals were cemented during this time; blood, forests, and beasts do not randomly appear in the Nazi desire or Nazi environmental ideology. The policies and programs that were designed to serve the triad were created for two separate reasonings. The first was to uphold and ensure the purity of Germany extended past the racial purification of people who do not fit the Aryan ideology. The second was to selfishly satisfy the obsessions of Himmler and Göring, whose particular interests at first glance did not correlate. Himmler desired for knowledge of the origins of ancient Germanic culture, people, weapons, and mythology, and Göring wished to create primeval German forests. Only when these two aspects are observed in conjunction with Lutz Heck's fascination with recreating extinct primeval beasts can a pure Germany exist, from people, flora, and fauna. This triad was the basis of the Nazi environmental ideology that forms during the Second World War.

Though Himmler and Göring used the Nazi Party as a resource in their quests, Hitler did not share the same enthusiasm towards primeval Germanic people, beasts, or forests. The understanding that Hitler came to with his subordinates essentially allowed the projects to take place to twist them to fit his propaganda. One example of this concerns Germanic peoples. Hitler shared the views of ancient Romans that the Germanic tribes were simply barbarians and an

¹³⁹ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 6-7.

embarrassment.¹⁴⁰ When forced to discuss the Germanic tribes, Hitler stated, "we are National Socialists, and we have nothing in common with this Völkisch idea...nor with petit-bourgeois Völkisch kitsch, or with heavy beards and long hair. We have all cut our hair quite short."¹⁴¹

Göring experienced similar sentiment when discussing hunting aurochs. Though the triad of Nazi environmental ideology did not fit Hitler's concepts of purity, it still attracted German people from across the nation with an interest in building a foundation for a future Fatherland. "The Nazi myth, fertile and funeral, was intended to impregnate others, to awaken the future race and urge new generations of Aryans to rise up once more, out of sacred respect for their ancestors."¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 72.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 398.

CHAPTER TWO: PLANNING, 1919-1938

The Wilhelmine period of German history ended in 1918 and encapsulated the German public with romanticizing and mythicizing the ideal environment. “The prevailing attitude of Wilhelmine environmentalists to the natural world was aesthetic and sentimental rather than ecological.”¹⁴³ This sentiment did not stop solely with the flora and fauna of Germany. It included larger-than-life attitudes and ideologies towards the species of fauna that inhabited the German environment, while also redefining the ideal masculinity and femininity of individuals, one befitting the values and characteristics of their ancestors. Before 1914, the environmental agencies of Germany were strictly under the direction and funding of individual states and districts.¹⁴⁴ The end of the Wilhelmine period and the devastation of the First World War created a radical shift in the ideals set during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The post-war period in Germany did not intrinsically radicalize the ideals of blood, beasts, and soil. The individuals who emerged during this period and the popularization of pseudoscience propelled them to the forefront of the Nazi environmental agenda. The methods for materializing the ideologies of blood, beasts, and soil were not actualized within a year. These ideals were set into motion only after specific processes that were unique to each. The first half identified German public opinions towards environmental issues and ideology, which came to fruition through taking the romanticized and mythologized ideals of primeval Germany and putting them into political, economic, cultural, and social practice. This fascination coincided with growing political ideologies and national identities in post-World War Germany. “Nature had value only as a source of vigor for Germany’s national soul.”¹⁴⁵ This sentiment was

¹⁴³ Stephens, “Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of ‘Hitler’s Green Party,’” 177.

¹⁴⁴ Ueköetter, “Green Nazis?,” 268.

¹⁴⁵ Stephens, “Blood, Not Soil: Anna Bramwell and the Myth of ‘Hitler’s Green Party,’” 179.

combined with one of fear that slowly grew during the war and into the post-war period. However, it was in the 1930s that the ideals of blood, beasts, and soil took physical forms and became the forerunners of German environmental practices.

Adolf Hitler's leading political platforms of Aryan purity and anti-Semitism for the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) were not considered radical during the early twentieth century. Their foundation had already been laid by 1918. The end of the First World War, the conditions of the Versailles Treaty, and the economic crisis with the end of the Weimar Republic created a breeding ground for racist ideology in placing blame for Germany's downfall on the Jewish population. This attitude emerged during the 1930s through Nazi officials like Himmler, Darré, and Göring, believing that the Volk would be able to overcome the "humiliation of Versailles."¹⁴⁶ However, doubts about this being successful shifted Germany's economic and political adversities onto Jews. Nazi racism was expressed as "neither capitalism nor industrialization per se were thus at fault for German's environmental woes; rather, 'Jewish capital' and 'diseased' individuals had diverted economy and society from their organic foundations in the soil."¹⁴⁷ It became immersed into every aspect of Germany, from everyday life at the supermarket to politics, economics, military, and environmental practices. The romanticization and mythologizing of an ideal Germany shifted its attention. The primeval German man and environment that were once a goal for all individuals of the nation was now being threatened.

Nazis reinforced this sentiment by drawing on racial discrimination against Jews, which persisted in Germany since the mid-nineteenth century with Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des*

¹⁴⁶ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 82.

Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung). This sentiment evolved and solidified in Germans identifying "Jews with the concept of pollution, showing them as the people who 'did not fit', who were 'out of place', who 'spoiled the picture' – and otherwise offended the aesthetically gratifying and morally reassuring sense of harmony."¹⁴⁸ The Nazi Party's ideology gave the prevailing belief that the nation's racial purity and the environment were being tainted. High-ranking Nazi officials acted by protecting and actualizing Germany's primeval ideals, which were no longer through fantasy but through reality. "Civilization and the life of nations are governed by the same laws as prevail throughout nature and organic life," and the officials within the Nazi Party would see to it that their new primeval Germany would remain pure.¹⁴⁹ The structure of this chapter intertwines the ideology of the Party during the early twentieth century. One did not take precedence over another in the grand scheme of revitalizing primeval German society, environment, and beasts.

Beasts: Heck's, Aurochs, and Göring's Vision

The operations to produce the ideal primeval beasts of Germany did not begin in the 1930s with the rise of the Nazi Party. They began earlier with two brothers who were zoologists and biologists, Heinz (1894-1982) and Lutz Heck (1892-1983).¹⁵⁰ The two brothers lived their youths in Berlin, being accustomed to observing and interacting with animals from around the globe due to their father, Ludwig Heck (1860-1951), who worked as the director of the Berlin Zoological Gardens.¹⁵¹ During their youth, the two acquired a fascination with aurochs and other

¹⁴⁸ Francesco Buscemi, "Edible lies: How Nazi propaganda represented meat to demonise the Jews," *Media, War & Conflict* 9, no. 2 (2016): 181.

¹⁴⁹ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Due to Heinz and Lutz sharing a last name, their first names will be used to distinguish between the two for clarity.

¹⁵¹ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 91.

indigenous German fauna like wisent, wolves, and horses. Unfortunately, the primeval aurochs that the brothers loved became extinct in 1627, and once they were extinct, the possibilities of interacting with the species were gone.¹⁵² The two shared a mutual interest for extinct animals, but their reasonings differed. Heinz stated in 1951 that “if man cannot be halted in his mad rage for destruction of himself and all other creatures, it’s at least a consolation if some of those kinds of animals he has already exterminated be brought back.”¹⁵³ The two sought to revive and reintroduce primeval aurochs into Germany’s environment. The process through which Heinz and Lutz sought to accomplish their goal was to reverse engineer the domestication of aurochs that occurred over the course of millennia. This process was coined back-breeding.¹⁵⁴

Heinz Heck’s process for back-breeding aurochs did not begin on a whim. Prior to his aurochs research coming to completion, Heinz was focused on the well-being of many different species of animals. This became evident in 1928 when he ascended to Munich's Hellabrunn Zoological Gardens' director. As a result, Heinz created the first ‘geo-zoos’ in Germany, accurately recreating the naturalistic landscapes native to the animals and the symbiotic relationships between the animals.¹⁵⁵ This feat emphasized not only the zoo's fauna but also the flora and landscapes that would be present if the animals were in the wild. According to Heinz, the back-breeding of aurochs was not to purify the German environment. Instead, aurochs and geo-zoos were tools that had the power “to bring natural history close to the people.”¹⁵⁶

The similarity between the two brothers was further represented in their methodology of back-breeding. Heinz began his process in 1921 by selecting cattle across Europe that showcased

¹⁵² Ibid, 140.

¹⁵³ Heck, “The Breeding Back of the Aurochs,” 122.

¹⁵⁴ Campbell and Whittle, *Resurrecting Extinct Species*, 31.

¹⁵⁵ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies*, 140.

¹⁵⁶ Heck, “The Breeding Back of the Aurochs,” 122.

aurochs phenotypes, or physical characteristics resulting from genetic evolution. Heinz did not indicate the specific number of cattle brought to Munich but did indicate the varying species that were believed to lead to success. He included the species of cattle and in what order he bred them, describing his methodology as "Hungarian and Podolian steppe cattle bred with Scottish Highland cattle and grey and brown Alpine breeds and with piebald Friesians and Corsicans."¹⁵⁷ After a decade of breeding-back cattle, Heinz's succeeded in the spring of 1932, describing the calves as "alike as slices of bread from one loaf."¹⁵⁸ He further described these newly created beasts by stating that "at most the shade of colouring varies slightly in the adult animals, sometimes lighter, sometimes darker, just as to-day among our deer, hares, and foxes there is a measure of colour variation."¹⁵⁹ The significance of recreating aurochs for Heinz was not that of a return to the primeval. Instead, it was a sign that animals lost to human actions still had a chance for survival. Lutz described his brother's work with aurochs and the Hellabrunn Zoological Gardens as having "retained their old importance as scientific centres, as breeding-places for rare animals, as the last refuge of animals that are becoming extinct, and as centres of the best sort of popular education."¹⁶⁰ Unlike his brother, Lutz saw aurochs as a natural marvel and a primeval identifier. Lutz's ideology and process for back-breeding were essential for Nazi officials like Hermann Göring in actualizing the pure German environment romanticized since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Lutz Heck did not follow in his brother's footsteps and instead sought the tutelage of their father, Ludwig Heck (1860-1951). Ludwig spent most of his life as a zoologist and director

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 120.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 120.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 120.

¹⁶⁰ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 109-110.

of the Berlin Zoological Gardens, particularly from 1888 to 1931.¹⁶¹ Ludwig was the standard for zoological research in the eye of Lutz, using his knowledge to expand German science across the globe further, which culminated in two species of animals being named after him.¹⁶² The



Figure 2.1. Animal discoveries made by Ludwig Heck (left to right), long-tailed finch (*Poephila acuticauda hecki*) and Heck's macaque (*Macaca hecki*). Left Source: Wikimedia Commons, Long-tailed Finch RWD1. Photographer: theworldbirds.org under License CC BY-SA 3.0. Right Source: Wikimedia Commons, Macaque à crête. Photographer: Pearcat under License CC BY-SA 4.0.

aftermath of the First World War allowed Lutz to learn about animals like his father did, and shortly after, he began to travel across Africa and North America in the 1920s.¹⁶³ These environments offered an opportunity to learn about landscapes and the interactions between flora and fauna and observe beasts that Germany no longer had. Alpha-beasts or megafauna, like aurochs, stood as the primary representation of the primeval natural world of the forefathers.¹⁶⁴ Places such as Africa and North America, particularly Ethiopia, and Canada, provided an opportunity to see varying species of animals, including baboons, rhinoceroses, moose, and

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 91.

¹⁶² Ibid, 108-109.

¹⁶³ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 140.

¹⁶⁴ Bruce, *Through the Lion Gate*, 217.

bighorn rams.¹⁶⁵ These excursions served as a reminder that Germany was no longer a representation of a primeval environment. This galvanized Lutz to not only bring German fauna back to a state of primeval excellence and was an opportunity to fulfill a fantasy of being in the *Nibelungenlied*, being a part of “Siegfried’s hunt in the forest of the Vosges,” through the descriptions of “the game of past ages.”¹⁶⁶

Unlike his brother, Lutz was public about the goals and processes by which he would back-breed aurochs. Though it is neither definitive when he began this process, nor the order in which he bred the cattle, he left detailed reports describing the cattle, their specific traits relating to aurochs, and the locations they inhabited. The specific number of cattle purchased is explained in Theodore G. Ahrens's 1936 article, "Breeding Back the Extinct Aurochs." Lutz began his process of back-breeding with a focus on fighting bulls. The first species were located in varied regions of southern France, including the Rhone delta, Camargue islands, and Provence. Lutz purchased five French fighting bulls from the writer and cattle farmer of the Camargue region of France, Marquis de Baroncelli (1869-1943).¹⁶⁷ An additional three fighting bulls were acquired from Spain, and finally, four Corsican cattle from the island of Corsica due to the deep black coloring of the bulls and the reddish-black coloring of the calves.¹⁶⁸ While Heinz sought to breed more central and eastern European cattle, Lutz nominated to breed western and southern European species of cattle. Lutz selected breeds he believed retained the physical representation of an aurochs and the aggressive, violent temperament that defined the beast within Aryan ideology.¹⁶⁹ Lutz stated that “on a clear autumn day in 1938 heavy lorries brought some huge

¹⁶⁵ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 22, 39, 118, 119.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 139.

¹⁶⁷ Theodore G. Ahrens, “Breeding Back the Extinct Aurochs,” *Journal of Mammalogy* 17, no. 3 (1936): 266-267.

¹⁶⁸ Ahrens, “Breeding Back the Extinct Aurochs,” 267.

¹⁶⁹ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies*, 157.

animal vans to the moors at Rominten, and unloaded them in a little wood. The vans were opened, and out rushed the first aurochs of the new age, to wander once more in German forests, as in the legendary days of old.”¹⁷⁰



Figure 2.2. Lutz Heck (far left) and Hermann Göring (far right) discussing various game animals on a map of the Białowieża Forest with an aurochs horn in front, from *Waidwerk der Welt*. Source: Cabinet Magazine, “Heavy Breeding: The Heck ‘Aurochs’ and the quest for biological unity,” (Spring 2012). Author: Michael Wang.

Once Heinz and Lutz Heck began their processes of back-breeding aurochs in the early 1920s, the Nazi Party was in its infancy, being formed during the same time. The reintroduction of aurochs became a central piece of the Nazi environmental ideology. However, it was not exclusive to aurochs as the only viable fauna needed to purify the German environment. Wisent or European Bison were another fauna Lutz wanted to resurrect due to the last wild wisent being shot by a poacher in the Bialowicz forest in 1921.¹⁷¹ He further expressed the need for another primeval beast by stating, "once the bison was the king of the Germanic forests, royal game

¹⁷⁰ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 154.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 165.

reserved in the Dark Ages for hunting by the lord of the realm."¹⁷² Nazi officials, by the 1930s, understood that the only viable long-term solutions to purification of the environment were through legislation. Hermann Göring proposed the National Conservation Law in the summer of June 1935, allowing for “the designation of nature reserves and national monuments...large-scale ‘landscape protection reserves’ (*Landschaftsschutzgebiete*)...also provided for the creation of ‘National Nature Reserves’ (*Reichsnaturschutzgebiete*).”¹⁷³ Though they were not passed, these types of natural reserves were designed for the conservation of the German environment but, more importantly, as personal hunting grounds for Göring and other Nazi officials. This became one of the many attempts by Göring to utilize his position of *Reichsjägermeister* (Reich Hunting Master) and *Reichsforstmeister* (Reich Forest Master) in manipulating legislation for personal gain. The failed attempts at enacting conservation laws began to shift during the summer of 1935.

The key to succeeding in conserving the remaining semblance of primeval German fauna and flora by the Nazi Party and Göring was the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (Reich Nature Protection Law or RNG), passed in July of 1935.¹⁷⁴ The specific reasoning for the law stated:

Today, as in the past, nature in the woods and fields is the German people’s longing, joy and relaxation. The local landscape has changed fundamentally compared to earlier times, its vegetation has often changed due to intensive agriculture and forestry, one-sided land consolidation and coniferous tree cultivation. A species-rich animal world that enlivened forests and fields disappeared with their natural habitats. Today, the non-material as well as economic damage of such redesign of the German landscape is clearly evident...only the transformation of German man created the preconditions for effective nature conservation. The German Reich government sees it as its duty to ensure that even the poorest of the people have their share of German natural beauty.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ibid, 165.

¹⁷³ Uekötter, “Green Nazis?, 275, 276-277.

¹⁷⁴ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Hans Schwenkei, “Das Reichsnaturschutzgesetz vom 26. Juni 1935 (RGBl, I, S, 821) und die Verordnung zur Durchführung des Reichsnaturschutzgesetzes vom 31. Oktober 1935,” in *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1, no. 821 (1935): 5.

The RNG gave Nazis the ability to seize private land to create nature reserves, and it also led to the creation of other legislation. This foundation led to the passage of the Reich Animal Protection Law and the Reich Hunting Law. Conservation laws geared towards animals allowed elite, wealthy German men to exhibit their masculinity through hunting. It also allowed scientists like Lutz Heck to be closely involved with high-ranking Nazi officials. Lutz and Göring brought mythologized primeval beasts to the forefront of the Nazi regime. Lutz became the creator of these beasts through back-breeding programs and Göring their protector through legislative processes.

Soil: The Creation and Protection of *Dauerwald*

The *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (Reich Nature Protection Law or RNG) of 1935 became a crucial step in conserving and restoring primeval German forests during the Nazi regime. However, prior to the Nazis' rise to power in 1930, most concerns regarding the primeval German world were not based on the environment. Instead, the focus centered on Germanic origins and culture and their relationship with the environment. The romanticization and mythologization of the German forests and landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries set the foundation for future scholars in Germany, as well as top brass within the budding Nazi Party. Unlike that of aurochs, the growing interest in primeval German landscapes were centered around a combination of two ideologies. The first was the *völkisch* movement discussed by Arndt and Riehl in the mid-nineteenth century, arguing for a cultural and social unification of people through nature mysticism.¹⁷⁶ The second was a reconnection to or understanding of the Teutonic

¹⁷⁶ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 17.

spiritual connection with nature. By the 1930s and the ascension of the Nazis, environmental preservation became melded with the racial purification of the Aryan race.

Though the *völkisch* movement did not originate during the Nazi regime, the concept resonated within German society after the devastation of the First World War. The romanticized mysticism of Germanic landscapes, embodied by Arminius, continued to nurture a nationalistic identity through the environment. The culmination generated deep compassion and drive for conservation and became a centerpiece for Göring and the Nazi regime's environmental ideology. This primary concept, *Dauerwald* (permanent forest), sought to conserve the remnants of the primeval landscapes and offered "Germans a spatial and temporal escape hatch to an idyllic and nostalgic Germany of yore."¹⁷⁷ This concept of *Dauerwald*, though ecological and scientifically charged, became fundamental in cultural and social life. This single idea transformed Nazi and German perceptions of the possibilities of what the environment and forests could be. It "presented the Germanized forest as the first and last line of defense of a 'rooted' Germanic culture and identity against foreign domination and the softening influence of 'civilization.'"¹⁷⁸ The significance of primeval forests reshaped German and Nazi attitudes toward the environment and sparked a constant wave of conservationist movements and laws intending to rediscover what a pure German forest was.

The sentiment and support of the *Dauerwald* idea led German environmental practices and ideology to expand the notions of primeval forests. The resounding consensus around this movement was that "the 'natural' forest was more ecologically stable and productive in the long term compared to its 'scientific' counterpart, so a Germany that was organized according to this

¹⁷⁷ Imort, "A Sylvan People, 55-56.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 61.

model would eventually outlast its more industrialized neighbors.”¹⁷⁹ The 'natural' forests were deteriorating. The forests, like Rominten, that Nazis saw as primeval were no longer untouched and required human intervention to flourish. The romanticization and mythology of primeval forests shifted from ideals within novels and plays to becoming a reality within the German environment. Göring and the Nazis created this movement through the 1933 mandate of a *Lebensreform* (back-to-nature) movement.¹⁸⁰ The *Lebensreform* became the first step for Göring to use his authority within the regime to alter the German landscapes into a scenery resembling the primeval forests within the *Nibelungenlied*. The *Lebensreform* mandate not only grew from the *Dauerwald* idea but was a crucial step in turning the attention of the Nazi regime towards nature protection. As stated in the previous section, before the passage of the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (Reich Nature Protection Law or RNG) in 1935, the nature protection of Germany centered around private land issues. Göring brought the issues and ideologies of conservation into the Nazi political agenda. Before World War I, matters of conservation were sporadic throughout Germany, with no unification or consensus on what needed protection. Göring became a savior for ecologists and conservationists across Germany during the Third Reich. By 1935, German conservationists stated, "Reich Forestry Minister Göring has now taken conservation into this strong hand and given our efforts the backbone of Reich law."¹⁸¹ This sentiment went beyond ideals of conservation from the early twentieth century, and inspired two new forms of conservation within the Nazi regime, *Landschaftspflege* (landscape preservation) and *Heimatschutz* (homeland protection).¹⁸² These new trends reached individuals across socioeconomic classes with the common goal and understanding that “organic planning called

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 67.

¹⁸⁰ Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 115.

¹⁸¹ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 54.

¹⁸² Ibid, 73-74.

for a functional integration of natural landscapes into a comprehensive regional land use plan.”¹⁸³ Land usage, forest conservation, and landscape preservation became integral for Göring and the Nazi environmental ideology. Though multiple movements and laws were formed through the concept of *Dauerwald*, many individuals were still dissatisfied with the state of the German environment.

The environmental ideology of Germany before 1935 made a radical shift after the passage of the RNG. Conservationists across Germany began to witness the power and authority available to the Nazi regime. Göring and the Reich Forestry Service wielded power to alter the German environment however they saw fit, mainly according to Göring’s desires. German foresters saw that the Nazi Party offered the opportunity to move one step closer to the primeval.¹⁸⁴ This process would not occur overnight, nor, through the perspective of Göring, were there enough men in Germany who shared his visions for forests.

During the mid-1930s, conservationists were required to fulfill their public duty by being educated on Nazi environmental ideologies in *Weltanschauliche Schulungslager* (ideology camps).¹⁸⁵ These camps participated in ideological and physical training to create patriotic environmental role models and spread Nazi environmentalism ideologies across Germany.¹⁸⁶ One particular *Weltanschauliche Schulungslager*, the Horst Wessel School, was located in the city of Kassel, within the northern area of Hesse, Germany. The minutes from one of the conferences in 1934 stated, “life in the Forest School is communal labor in a community that is separate from school or home life. The body, still drunk with sleep, is strengthened in the fresh

¹⁸³ Ibid, 73-74.

¹⁸⁴ The term “foresters” is used interchangeably with conservationists in sources like Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller’s *How Green Were the Nazis?*.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 54.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 54-55.

forest air of the morning; the lungs are purified.”¹⁸⁷ The conservationists from *Weltanschauliche Schulungslager* put Göring’s ideologies and legislation into practice for future generations to enjoy the environment. “We don’t want merely to create a Germany of power...but also a Germany of beauty.”¹⁸⁸

The issues that began to arise with conservationists and their ideals for returning the German environment to the primeval correlated with the Nazis’ racial purity of the nation. The Nazi regime sought to racially purify all aspects of Germany, which did not exclude the environment. The racial purification of the German environment did not initially earn widespread support amongst conservationists in the 1930s. However, through the *Dauerwald* concept, this attitude began to change. “Like the *Dauerwald*, the German nation was supposedly an eternal collective in which the individual had responsibility for the greater good but was ultimately dispensable – like individual trees felled to preserve a healthy forest.”¹⁸⁹ Göring’s fantasized primeval Germany and the Nazi regime’s call for racial cleansing within Germany created the basis for the Nazis’ environmental ideology. These racial ideals were based “on a purely ecological level...measures to exclude, eliminate, or control certain exotic species...[are] necessary if we are to hang onto classic ecosystems.”¹⁹⁰ It became difficult for conservationists or the German public to refute this logic after Adolf Hitler’s “Speech at the NSDAP Congress on Culture” in September of 1933. He stated, “the most natural worldview is borne by the instincts of the unspoiled, primitive *Volk*, and it is this that enables its people to automatically assume *the*

¹⁸⁷ First published in *Schule im Dritten Reich—Erziehung zum Tod? Eine Dokumentation*, ed., Geert Planter and Schüler der Gerhart-Hauptmann Schule in Kassel (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 244.

¹⁸⁸ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 79.

¹⁸⁹ Grewe and Hölzl, “Forestry in Germany, c.1550–2000,” 40.

¹⁹⁰ Eric Katz, “The Nazi Comparison in the Debate over Restoration: Nativism and Domination,” *Environmental Values* 23, no. 4 (2014): 379.

most natural and hence the most expedient stance with regard to any and all questions immediately affecting its life.”¹⁹¹ This type of characterization between good and destructive forces within the environment propelled environmental practices into Nazi ideology. Propaganda circulation by the Nazis aimed not only at identifying the Jewish population as a threat to German society, culture, flora, and fauna but also at reinforcing the concepts and ideals of a primeval Germany.



Figure 2.3. “Nazi depiction of primeval Germanic village,” Still frame from Hans Springer, *Ewiger Wald*, 1936.

The ideal primeval Nazi environment was one that scientists and Nazi officials set out to draw attention and support to accomplish this goal. Lutz not only achieved his own goal but Göring’s as well. However, primeval megafauna like aurochs had more extraordinary charm than

¹⁹¹ Delivered on 3 September 1933. First Published as “Adolf Hitlers Rede auf der Kulturtagung der N.S.D.A.P.,” in *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933* (Munich: Verlag Franz Eher Nachfolger GmbH, 1934). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 114.

ideals about the environment. The Nazis' used various forms of propaganda to relate racial purity to ideologies of conservation and primeval forests. The media created regarding the environment did not try and focus on a single age group or socioeconomic class or medium to relay the regime's message. One specific example of this is cinema as a form of propaganda. The most popular environmental movie during the Third Reich was Hans Springer's 1936 film *Ewiger Wald*. Nazi moving pictures of the early twentieth century, like *Triumph of the Will* (1935), *Die Nibelungen* (1924), and *Lucky Kids* (1936), were shown in black and white. However, the dialogue of *Ewiger Wald* differed significantly from others of this period.¹⁹² Instead of a back-and-forth dialogue between two or more characters on the screen, Springer intended for the film's narrator to be speaking of Germany in the third person. The narrator is speaking a poem, and the first words stated were, "the nation stands – as does the forest – in eternity."¹⁹³ A combination of imagery depicting German history, Springer arouses emotions comparable to the plays and operas by romanticists of the eighteenth century. The film is a call to action to drive Germans towards nationalistic and primeval ideals. Nationalism was further linked to the film when the narrator said, "restlessly the new seed is longing for the new deed that the soil of spring new forest will bring."¹⁹⁴ The officials of the regime who gave support to environmental policies saw themselves and the Party as the new seeds of Germany. *Ewiger Wald* captivated audiences in Germany by revitalizing romantic views about the German environment. The call to action is for Germans to take pride in their environment and history and no longer allow internal or external forces to ruin the primeval environment.

¹⁹² Rabinbach and Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 556-557.

¹⁹³ *Ewiger Wald*, directed by Hans Springer (Lex Films, 1936), 11:08, <https://archive.org/details/EwigerWaldVollversion>.

¹⁹⁴ *Ewiger Wald*, 50:39.

Blood: *Volksgenossen* and Exotic Species

Though the environmental ideology of the Nazi Party gained traction amongst high-ranking officials, it by no means boasted the bulk of adherents' attention. Instead, the ideas enveloping Aryan superiority took precedence for a majority of the regime. The key individual in this crusade was Heinrich Himmler. With a similar passion to Göring's desire to hunt primeval beasts, Himmler drove to clean the German environment of exotic species of flora, fauna, and humans, intending to reintroduce a primeval culture back into the German state.

The reintroduction of primeval Germanic culture and the extermination of exotic species occurred simultaneously. The first aspect, reintroduction, occurred through numerous cultural and social policies. The recreation and representation of primeval fauna and landscapes, through films like *Ewiger Wald* and legislation like *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz*, gave Nazi Germany the outward appearance of a primeval environment. However, it did little for the cultural livelihood of its citizens. The romanticization and mythization of Arminius as the ideal German man dating back to the sixteenth century gave Himmler his foundation. The persistent issue was defining a roadmap for individuals to achieve a primeval culture. Unlike scientific methodology or environmental legislation, cultural and social policies were set to alter perspectives. However, Himmler was not the first individual to suggest these ideas after World War I.

German writer Hans Grimm (1875-1959) shared a similar sentiment with Himmler's environmental ideologies. Grimm's 1926 book *Volk ohne Raum* (People without Space) promoted ideologies that "demand for the Nazis to consider returning to Germany's lost colonies, that Germany needed resources greater than its limited geographic space provided."¹⁹⁵ Grimm used

¹⁹⁵ Rabinbach and Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 447.

the term “lost colonies” to describe spacious environments but plagued by poverty and misery, but only after he began living in Cape Colony, South Africa from 1897 to 1911.¹⁹⁶ These ideals were formulated based of his observations, Grimm believed that Germany would be able to gain a greater number of resources that had become insufficient from the outcomes of the First World War. However, Grimm’s views were considered too radical during the Weimar Republic.¹⁹⁷ Though his work of 1926 was originally rejected, Grimm continued writing and, in 1934, published *Lüderitzland: Sieben Begebenheiten*.¹⁹⁸ His 1934 work expanded upon the ideologies of *Volk ohne Raum*, but was immersed in Nazi ideals. Grimm's ideologies were, before his time, the sentiments of *Volk ohne Raum* and *Lüderitzland: Sieben Begebenheiten* were crucial in justifying the Nazis’ racial purification and expansion of German environments. Through *Lüderitzland: Sieben Begebenheiten*, he stated that “for a *Volk* that is large in number, a *Volk* forced to live cramped shoulder to shoulder and whose members must each relinquish a portion of their own most primeval humanity, the value of a colony will not be determined based on...swift victory.”¹⁹⁹

Returning Germany to a primeval state would not have been possible with simply having enough land; Germans needed to desire a primeval environment and culture to achieve this fully. An example of the various attempts Himmler used was *Thingspiels* (thing games), open-air stage performances that incorporated a variety of pseudo-medieval plays, and other performances.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 447.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 447.

¹⁹⁸ There is no clear translation for this title. It comes up as being *Lüderitzland: Seven Incidents* or *Lüderitzland: Seven Events*. *Lüderitzland* was a colonial territory of Germany, located in present day Namibia.

¹⁹⁹ First published in *Lüderitzland: Sieben Begebenheiten* (Munich: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1934).). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 178.

²⁰⁰ Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 81.

The purpose of *Thingspiels* was to allow people the opportunity to travel back in time and experience cultural festivities of old Germany. Citizens could experience Himmler and Göring's desires for pure Germanic culture within primeval German forests. Himmler and other Nazi officials saw this as a restoration of the “heroic spiritual force” that was missing from the German people throughout the twentieth century.²⁰¹ Allowing people to experience aspects of old Germanic culture only went so far in Himmler’s fantasies. The next challenge was to transform the industrialist, individualistic attitude of the German people into a collective Nazi identity.

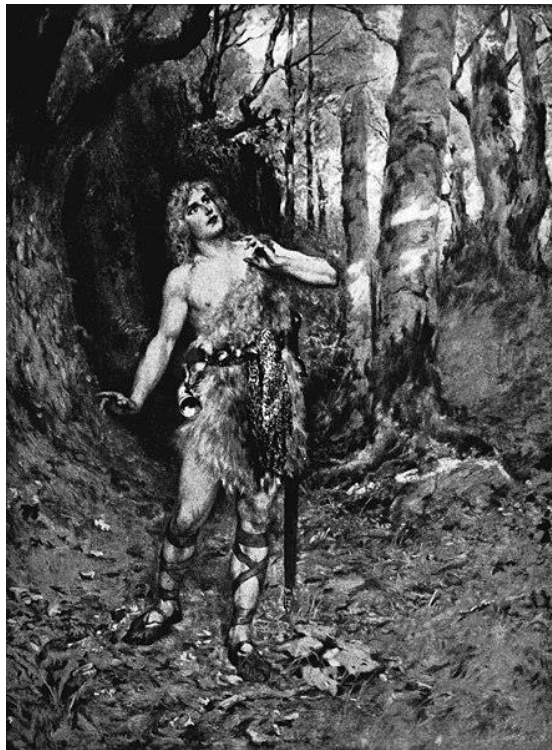


Figure 2.4. Wagner’s depiction of Siegfried as the ideal German man in a primeval forest. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Wagner - Siegfried, act II - Once more say to me, Lovely singer - Ferdinand Leeke - The Victrola book of the opera. Illustrator: Rous, Samuel Holland. *The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of One Hundred and Twenty Operas with Seven-Hundred Illustrations and Descriptions of Twelve-Hundred Victor Opera Records*. New Jersey: Victor Talking Machine Company, 1917. Page, 461.

²⁰¹ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 81.

The primeval Germany of Himmler and Göring's dreams were centered around the environment and the cultural lifestyle of old. However, industrialization in Europe drastically altered not only the environment but also the masculinity, femininity, and social comradery of German people. The process by which Himmler sought to alter this was through *Volksgenossen* (ethnic comrades). The reasoning behind this ideal was that "binding ethnic comrades to their ancestors and descendants...embedded the individual within the collective well-being of the nation."²⁰² *Thingspiels* were a single aspect of *Volksgenossen*, which was reinforced further through experiencing primeval aurochs and mythicized landscapes.

Though *Volksgenossen* offered the ability to bring Germans together on a large scale, Himmler sought more immediate actions, focused on building male identity for his primeval Germany. However, this idea did receive waves of resentment from women. Erna Bohlmann's 1932 article, "Die Stellung der germanischen Frau," challenged gendered ideals set by social norms. She stated, "we cannot afford to fail in our attempt to forge a concept of womanhood that is heroic and recognizes all of women's innate strengths and allow her to have the same impact as a complement to man."²⁰³ Though SS journals like *Das Schwarze Korps* would advertise that ideal masculinity included "a man to care about and nurse his children in public," this did not meet the ideals of Himmler.²⁰⁴ The ideal man for Heinrich Himmler was a soldier, an individual who was "tough and aggressive, in control of his body, mind, psyche...and moral 'hardness.'"²⁰⁵ This particular man fit not only Himmler's ideals but Göring's. The masculinity of German men were based on perceptions of what society considered to be the 'other' of the ideal. These

²⁰² Ibid, 2.

²⁰³ "Die Stellung der germanischen Frau," In *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 262.

²⁰⁴ Kühne, "Protean Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity," 393.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 390.

individuals were considered to be 'exotic species' by the Nazis. Therefore, creating a completely primeval environment with fauna, flora, and humans that resembled romanticized Germany needed to be cleansed of all beings that could taint its purity.

Racial purification of Germany was central to the Third Reich's ideology, not excluding the environmental ideology led by Göring, Himmler, and Lutz. However, this purification took a different approach than other forms, like the eugenic and sterilization legislation within the Reich. The combination of racial purity and environment had long been aspects of Nazism. Hitler's 1925 manifesto, *Mein Kampf* stated, "when people attempt to rebel against the iron logic of nature, they come into conflict with the very same principles to which they owe their existence as human beings. Their actions against nature must lead to their own downfall."²⁰⁶ Himmler maintained that the downfall of the Aryan race would come from the populations that had been ignoring the laws of civilization and, in turn, the laws of nature.²⁰⁷ The individuals in charge of the Reich's environmental ideology characterized Jewish populations as exotic species who did nothing to help nature flourish. "Exotic species are compared to overly sexual and prolific immigrants that degrade stable native communities," the primeval Germanic communities.²⁰⁸ These were not new sentiments for Himmler or the Nazi Party. For example, the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) regularly incorporated motifs signifying "Jew as evil animal," in his work.²⁰⁹ Though Himmler led the movement to purify the German environment of 'exotic species,' he did not take on this task alone.

²⁰⁶ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 27.

²⁰⁷ Williams, "The Chords of the German Soul are Tuned to Nature," 367.

²⁰⁸ Katz, "The Nazi Comparison in the Debate over Restoration: Nativism and Domination," 383.

²⁰⁹ Bratton, "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," 7.



Figure 2.5. Richard Wagner's depiction of Alberich (top right) became inspiration for Nazi propaganda of Jews. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Ring11. Illustrator: Arthur Rackham from Wagner, Richard. Translated by Margaret Amour, 1910. *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*. London: William Heinemann, New York: Doubleday, Page 44.

Himmler allied himself with Richard Walther Darré (1895-1953), who held the positions of Reich Peasant Leader, *Obergruppenführer* (Senior Group Leader) in the SS, Minister of Food and Agriculture, *Reichsleiter* (Reich Leader) of the Nazi Party, and in 1932 was named head of the SS Race and Settlement Main Office.²¹⁰ Himmler sought Darré specifically based on the Nazi Party's acknowledgment of Darré as a top race theorist.²¹¹ Darré modified Himmler's ideals with his understanding of race theory. The position that Darré took relied less on the actual

²¹⁰ Richard Walther Darré, *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil*, trans. by Augusto Salan and Julius Sylvester (Munich: Antelope Hill Publishing, 2021), ix, xiv.

²¹¹ Bratton, "Luc Ferry's Critique of Deep Ecology, Nazi Nature Protection Laws, and Environmental Anti-Semitism," 31.

extermination of Jewish populations and focused instead on identifying the characteristics of German and exotics species that would and would not benefit the future Reich. This culminated in his attempts at creating a ‘new nobility’ within Germany. This ‘new nobility’ would be the collective transformation of “peasants, people and nobility into a unity.”²¹² Darré’s ‘new nobility’ would not be dominated by industrialization or consumerism. Instead would protect Germany while appreciating and caring for the primeval environment created by Lutz, Göring, and Himmler. Darré believed that the creation of his ‘new nobility’ would not be racially pure through only Nazi environmental ideologies. He believed that the triad of Nazi environmentalism was to ensure the purity of the ideal primeval German man and society. Darré states that “the aspects of the breeding concept and the measures for evaluating the results of breeding selection...can be dealt with directly or indirectly by the self-governing body of the noblemen. Breeding is nothing more than striving for the ideal offspring through thoughtfulness and the well-managed use of the available resources.”²¹³ The only remaining issue for Darré was finding a suitable location that resembled the ideal primeval forests of the first century.

Conclusion: Imagination to Reality

As the conflict of World War II spread and the power of the Nazi regime increased, the reality of victory grew closer to reality. The precedent for numerous Nazi officials like Himmler, Göring, and Lutz was obtaining a pure primeval German environment. Through the passage of legislation, cultural programs, racial discrimination, and recreating megafauna, an idealized Germany from the first century grew closer. The triad of Nazi environmental ideology, beast, blood, and soil had come to fruition in German society. The rise of Nazism gave power to the

²¹² Darré, *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil*, xxvi.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 144.

good aspects of the environment and degraded the bad. Ideal primeval Germans became recognized as *Herrentiere* (master animals), while Jewish people were *Menschentiere* (human animals).²¹⁴ Propaganda flushed these ideals out in films, books, and outdoor activities, allowing the triad to be further engrained within society. The First World War had caused a decline in the romanticization and mythologization of a primeval German environment. The work done by Lutz, Himmler, and Göring restimulated that sentiment, though it was now mixed with Nazi racial ideology. One fact was now certain for the officials of the Third Reich; “forests mark the provincial edge of Western civilization, in the literal as well as imaginative domains.”²¹⁵ Lutz, Göring, and Himmler's imaginations made a primeval German environment a reality.

²¹⁴ J.W. Mohnhaupt, *Animals under the Swastika*, trans. by John R.J. Eyck (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022), 6.

²¹⁵ Robert G. Lee and Sabine Wilke, “Forest as Volk: *Ewiger Wald* and the Religion of Nature in the Third Reich,” *Journal of Social and Ecological Boundaries*, no. 1 (2005): 23.

CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION, 1939-1945

The shift in the environmental actions of Nazi officials from the scope of chapter two (1918-1938) does not change drastically by the beginning of 1939 when the war began. At this point, the Nazi regime had built the environmental ideals, their foundations laid out during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the romanticization and mythicization of its ideal beasts, blood, and soil. By the end of the First World War, this triad of objectives had become closely linked with budding fears of economic, political, and social ruin. However, for Hitler and other Nazi officials, the environmental platform was the perfect breeding ground for gaining support and enacting their own political agendas. Though the Nazis are most notoriously affiliated with the horrors of the Holocaust and the racial cleansing of Europe's Jewish population, not all Party officials saw this their top priority. Göring's fascination with primeval beasts and landscapes and Himmler's desire to return the German population to an idealized state of masculinity and femininity created a basis for the regime's environmental ideologies and policies. The attempts to return Germany to a primeval state that authors, playwrights, and scholars bolstered as a romanticized theme shared similarities with Hitler's ideals of the Holocaust. It was cleansing Germany of its invasive species, including flora, fauna, and humans, and returning all aspects of Germany to a pure state. However, the environmental ideologies of the Nazi Party would ease the German public into the more radical ideologies within the regime.

The environmental actions taken within Germany between 1918 and 1938 were simply the first steps in actualizing the Party's ideologies. With the creation of environmental laws like the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (RNG) and movements like *Lebensreform* (back-to-nature), Nazi officials and scientists found ways to put their ideals into legislation. While the underlying intentions of these environmental actions may not have been publicly widespread, they did send

a message to all German people, both those deemed to be pure and those seen as invasive. However, for individuals such as Himmler, Göring, Lutz Heck, and Richard Walther Darré, simply implementing environmental policies would not suffice. In order to make an idealized primeval Germany a reality, the following steps would be crucial for the Nazi regime. Simply put, it was not effective to have environmental policies only as theoretical ideals. These officials knew this as well. Actions needed to be taken to show the German public how the different aspects of beasts, soil, and blood were necessary to return Germany to the Nazis' faultless state. The environmental laws produced by the Nazi regime once World War II began were derivatives of the main ideologies. However, by 1938, Himmler, Göring, and Lutz had begun to enjoy the fruits of their labor and expand their interest in the triad even further.

The interest and actions taken towards creating the ideal German environmental triad were all part of slow building processes. The ideologies that Himmler, Göring, and Lutz sought would not be manifested overnight, and they knew their grand designs would take time. As each program progressed further from simply being romantic mythology to programmatic reality, the paths that each of these men took changed, as well. For example, Lutz's recreation of aurochs began in the early 1920s and did not produce a finalized beast until 1938.²¹⁶ Hermann Göring's influence and endeavors in the passing of the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (RNG) in 1935 were only possible through the constant trial and error of previous legislation of the Weimar Republic during the early twentieth century.²¹⁷ While one aspect of the Nazi environmental ideologies was undertaken, others did not stop and wait. Just as these different ventures were simultaneous during the regime's time in power, the same is seen with Nazi officials' various responses through

²¹⁶ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 154.

²¹⁷ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 29-30.

the environmental laws and movements. The order in which the triad of Nazi environmental actions as depicted within this chapter follows the intertwining and concurrency of the triad. Soil, blood, and beasts are the critical ideologies of the environmental agenda of the Nazis. The development of this triad took a turn once the armed conflicts of the Second World War began in 1939. Romanticism and mythologization turned to legislation and social movements until finally putting these ideologies into reality, actualizing a primeval Germany, which was rooted in the minds and fantasies of individuals across Germany.

Soil: The New Forests and Spreading the Primeval

The trajectory of Nazi environmental programs, legislation, and movements by the end of 1938 were finally developing and sinking into the soil of Germany. Similar to many of the other Nazi ideologies, the immediate goal was to focus on Germany itself, but it was not limited to those borders. In the same fashion as Germanic tribes of the first century, the Nazi regime, particularly Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler, saw the boundaries of primeval German forests expanding farther across Europe. This environmental expansion was never a possibility in German history prior to the involvement of the Nazi Party. The conservation and preservation sentiment in Germany was never unified at any level. State and regional efforts in environmental practices were focused strictly on projects that would prove to have an immediate effect on a particular region. Göring, Himmler, and other Nazi officials began to expand legislation and practices by ultimately uniting, or attempting to, all conservation programs under the same banner of restoring the German environment to its pristine, primal state.

While environmental ideologies and actions had been taking shape through the Nazis' rise to power, this period saw a slight difference from those before it. During the late 1930s and into the 1940s, Nazi officials began overlapping in the triad of Nazi environmentalism. Göring had

split his attention, seeing to both the creation of beasts and soil. However, during this time, other vital individuals directed their attention towards this aspect. In particular, Himmler and Lutz begin to find ways to align themselves with Göring's environmental legislation and social movements to further their own interests in beasts and blood. Though these individuals took part in further expanding upon Göring's landscape and forestry ideologies, Göring remained at the center. This especially rang true with other conservationists at the state and local levels.

A clear example was the most prominent civic association across Europe in 1939, *Bund Naturschutz in Bayern* (Federation of Nature Conservation in Bavaria), whose central goal was the protection of natural treasures in Germany.²¹⁸ While this is only a single example of one of the regional environmental organizations during the late 1930s, conservationists' appreciation for Göring did not go unnoticed. After the passage of the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (RNG), Reich Animal Protection Law, and the Reich Hunting Law, Göring became the undoubted spokesman for German conservation. The *Bund Naturschutz in Bayern* stated, "now Göring has taken conservation into his strong hand; he lent the legislative backbone to our concerns."²¹⁹ The smaller environmental organizations across the nation, affiliated with the Nazis or not, used this legislation as a stepping stone to further the conservation efforts that were once looked down upon by industrial-minded individuals.²²⁰ Creating and backing environmental legislation was not enough for Göring's plans to recreate a primeval Germany. Legislation had to be paired with conservation practices that would reshape the German landscape.

The power which Göring held as *Reichsjägermeister* (Reich Hunting Master) and

²¹⁸ Uekötter, "Green Nazis?," 268.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 276.

²²⁰ This is a common theme in Miles A. Powell's *Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation*.

Reichsforstmeister (Reich Forest Master) gave him the authority to lead Nazi conservation. As *Reichsforstmeister*, he was charged with being the head of the *Reichsforstamt* (Reich Forestry Service). While his goal was returning the German environment to a primal state, it was only a single step towards fulfilling his fantasies of hunting the mythologized beasts of German literature. The legislation gave him the opportunity to piece together these fantasies and make them a reality were through the creation of *Landschaftsschutzgebiete* (landscape protection reserves) and *Reichsnaturschutzgebiete* (National Nature Reserves).²²¹ Göring saw these reserves as possible future hunting grounds for his personal use with the help of Lutz Heck. However, the two individuals understood that merely using the German landscape for their own greed would not gain the public and financial support needed to maintain these locations. This sentiment began to change shortly after Göring brought Lutz into the *Reichsforstamt*.

In 1938, Lutz Heck was given the position of *Oberste Naturschutzbehörde im Reichsforstamt* (Nature Protection Authority within the Forest Service), placing him in charge of managing and maintaining the endeavors of the Reich Forestry Service.²²² With Lutz under his wing, the two men began to push for the formation of national parks across Germany. On the surface and to the general public, these parks would allow Germans of all socioeconomic classes the ability to experience and enjoy an ancient Germanic landscape filled with purely German flora and fauna. However, Göring saw this as an opportunity to find areas of Germany that would be available for his pleasure regarding hunting. For Lutz, it was an opportunity to be involved in the recreation of ancient landscapes and ensure the aurochs and other prehistoric beasts would have a chance to be housed outside the zoo's confines.

²²¹ Ibid, 276-277.

²²² Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 144.



Figure 3.1. A map of current *Reichsnaturschutzgebiete* (National Nature Reserves) in Germany. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Karte Naturparks Deutschland high. Author: Lencer, under License CC BY-SA 3.0.

The process through which the Forestry Service acquired suitable land was slow and saw several challenges in its formation, the biggest of which was the removal of non-Germans from their land. Under German law before 1935, "the rule of law obviously called for some kind of compensation if conservation decrees significantly constrained or even prohibited land use."²²³

²²³ Uekötter, "Green Nazis?," 278.

Göring understood this issue would arise and took measures when forming the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* (RNG). According to the law, “Article 24 abolished any corresponding obligation pursuant to the Nazis’ rule of ‘*Germeinnutz vor Eigennutz*,’ or ‘the common good above the individual good.’”²²⁴ This sentiment rang true not only in the Nazis' ideologies about primeval landscapes but also in beasts and blood. The common good, in this instance, was the Nazis' desire to return Germany to a pure state. However, for Göring, the common good meant his own individual interest. Once his *Reichsforstamt* began to acquire land for reserves, it did not stop, and between 1937 and 1943, the total amount of land acquired reached 32,111 acres which encapsulated approximately forty-six reserves.²²⁵ This acreage gave Germany protected wilderness that could be used for public enjoyment but, more importantly, for Göring's enjoyment. However, the environmental protection from the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* exceeded beyond wilderness and into cities.

The natural reserves created by the *Reichsforstamt* began to turn the landscapes outside the cities into those spaces romanticized about since the nineteenth century. However, Göring’s influence in conservation propelled not only his ideologies but other Nazi officials to strive for an ideal state of the German environment. One particular individual who understood the true intentions of Göring’s legislation was another Nazi official. Albert Speer (1905-1981) who was the *Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion* (Minister of Armaments and War Production). Before taking this position in 1940, Speer first joined the Party in the mid-1930s as an architect. Speer spent his initial time with the Nazis as the *Generalbauinspektor für die*

²²⁴ Ibid, 278.

²²⁵ Ibid, 277. For reference, the size of one acre is 43,560 square feet, and an American football field is 48,000 square feet.

Reichshauptstadt (General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital or GBI).²²⁶ The initial goal that Speer was tasked with was to transform the green spaces of Berlin, ultimately “transforming the city into ‘Germania,’ the monumental capital of the new Nazi racial empire.”²²⁷ The passage of the RNG law provided Speer not only difficulties with his plans but also an opportunity to reshape the city itself into a capital under the same name as Tacitus’s *Germania*. Speer’s sought to accomplish this through the creation of sports fields, swimming beaches, camping grounds, and playgrounds, all of which took inspiration from the recreational activities that were a part of his upper-middle-class upbringing.²²⁸ The recreational opportunities that the Nazi environmental ideologies presented were not only for the purpose of conserving the primeval environment. New urban environmental projects like Speer’s, were publicized as “valuable new contributions to the strengthening of a racially healthy *Volk*,” in the late-1930s.²²⁹ Speer and other Nazi officials saw this as an opportunity, partly for the expansion of environmental ideologies but as a way to ensure the ideal masculinity, femininity, and racial purity of the green spaces within Germany’s cities.

Speer’s interest in using environmental legislation and conservation for the racial purity of German blood was only a single example of the two aspects mixing during the Third Reich. Another primary example of this is Heinrich Himmler’s involvement with environmental practices. Himmler initially expressed his obsession with German mythologization of blood and soil in 1935 when he created the *Ahnenerbe* (ancestral heritage) division of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS).²³⁰ The goal of the *Ahnenerbe* was to serve as an elite research institute for Nazi scholars

²²⁶ Barry A. Jackisch, “The Nature of Berlin: Green Space and Visions of a New German Capital, 1900-45,” *Central European History* 47, no. 2 (2014): 319.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 309.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 326.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 320-321.

²³⁰ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 2.

and scientists, to analyze “the old legends and myths of Europe that brimmed with clues to the primeval religions and technology of the Aryans.”²³¹ By 1939, Himmler employed 137 researchers and 82 support workers to act as his primeval research workshop.²³² He began incorporating these ideas into his work with the SS and at concentration camps, particularly in Dachau. One method he used was biodynamic cultivation, which utilized pseudoscientific views of the farm as an organism, managing layers of soil formed through composts of leaves and manure, rejecting the use of artificial fertilizers.²³³ Himmler took these experiments even further in late 1939 with *Generalplan Ost*. This operation placed Himmler in charge of all the territories in the east over which the Nazis were taking control. The overall objective of *Ost* was “bringing humans, nature, and race into harmony in order to establish a new agrarian way of life for Aryan colonists.”²³⁴ By turning the conquered land in the east into Aryan colonies, Himmler saw an opportunity to turn these lands into areas resembling a primeval German past.

The environmental ideologies and policies in the late 1930s and into the 1940s created an opportunity for Nazis to use them for their gain. Göring amassed tens of thousands of acres of land to expand his ideal primeval hunting ground. Himmler and Speer saw the environmental legislation introduced in 1935 only as an opportunity for the regime’s future. Through manipulating these ideologies, officials found a way to justify their desires for racial purity further. Combining these aspects of Nazi environmental ideals, soil, and blood, the primeval environment and purity began to intertwine and become a reality.

Blood: Purifying the New Nobility and the Agrarian Lifestyle

²³¹ Ibid, 78.

²³² Ibid, 3.

²³³ Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, 50-51.

²³⁴ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 13.

The drive to return Germany to a primeval state was ever-present throughout World War II, and was expressed through a wide array of programs and approaches, including the most notorious program of the Holocaust. Concentration camps, ghettos, and mass extermination were all tactics that the Nazi regime employed to ensure that the purity of German blood would be recaptured. The main enemy that German masculinity and femininity faced in its resurrection, according to scholars, high-ranking Nazi officials like Wilhelm Frick (1877-1946), and Nazi legislation, was the European Jewish population. The Reich discovered it possible to rid



Figure 3.2. Depiction of the ideal German man in the forefront. Nazi depiction of Jews in the background on the far left. Source: Jewish Virtual Library, “Anti-Semitism & Nuremberg Laws: Der Giftpilz Cartoons.” Illustrator: Hiemer, Ernst. *Der Giftpilz*. Nuremberg: Stürmervverlag, 1938. Page 34.

themselves of their self-proclaimed nuisance and began that process, these efforts did little to return citizens to an ideal man and woman romanticized in the nineteenth century. Himmler, Speer, Darré, and Wilhelm Frick all found that environmental legislation could be used to further

their ideologies of racial purification. The ability to return the German people to an ideal man could only be possible if it correlated with the other environmental aspects, soil and beasts, which had long become the central fantasies of Nazi environmental ideologies.

As previously stated, Himmler's actions towards creating his ideal primeval German became possible through the passage of the *Reichsnaturschutzgesetz* and the implementation of *Generalplan Ost*. Beyond the environmental implications this operation posed, for Himmler, it was a means to an end. Himmler took the environmental ideologies of the early 1930s, *Lebensreform* (back-to-nature), which was at the core of the environmental social movements, and combined it with his own ideas of racial purity. This became known as *Ostkolonization* (east colonization), which revolved around the concept of "a 'sociobiological refoundation' of the Nordic race, through the creation of an agrarian society free from the plagues of urban, industrial modernity."²³⁵ This foundation of primeval Aryan society brought forth the romanticized lifestyle of the first century into the twentieth century. According to Himmler, these primeval Germans were able to master excellent ways of living that had been lost throughout history, such as "superior ways of growing grain, breeding livestock, healing the ill, designing weapons, or regulating society."²³⁶ Himmler's ideals with *Lebensreform* and *Ostkolonization* placed the Volk as one primary motivation for returning Germany to the primeval. Wilhelm Stuckart (1902-1953), lawyer and State Secretary of the *Reichsministerium des Innern* (Reich Interior Ministry), and Hans Globke's (1898-1973), *Ministerialdirigent* (councilor) in the Office of Jewish Affairs, article "Civil Rights and the Natural Inequality of Man" expressed the importance of the Volk in the German state. The article stated that "the point of departure of National Socialist doctrine

²³⁵ Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 278.

²³⁶ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 5.

does not rest with the state but with the *Volk*. That is to say, in order to be able to test, judge, and correct the suitability and efficacy of external *völkisch* forms, we must grasp them as more than mere means to an end.”²³⁷ These accomplishments would only be brought back into the hearts and minds of German citizens by recreating the primeval environment and living spaces. Though *Ostkolonization* created the first step for Himmler, it would only be successful with enough labor and Aryans to fill the spaces themselves.

The racial purification of Germany and eastern Europe was the top priority for Hitler, Himmler, and other Nazi officials. However, for Himmler, it was a means of accomplishing an ideal primeval state for all Aryans to bring their fantasies of Germany into reality. Therefore, before Himmler’s colonies were completed, the environment and people needed to be cleansed. “Before the beginning of the mass exterminations, Himmler had envisioned Auschwitz as a model town and agricultural station for eastern Europe,” to act as test versions of *Ostkolonization*.²³⁸ These types of experiments to recreate ancient model towns brought the romanticized and mythologized environmental ideologies into practice. *SS-Oberführer* (senior leader) and Himmler’s direct subordinate in planning *Generalplan Ost*, Konrad Meyer (1901-1973) stated in 1941 that “for us National Socialists, planning results in responsibility to people and state. More than the complete planning of space and economy, it aspires to the creation of a healthy social structure and a permanent configuration of our living space as befits Teutonic German men.”²³⁹ Himmler conceptually placed eastern Jewish populations as essential to the success of racial cleansing and as a viable source of labor. *Generalplan Ost* also established the

²³⁷ First published in *Kommentare zur deutschen Rassengesetzgebung*, vol. 1 (Munich: 1936). In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 211.

²³⁸ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 159.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 246.

forests of Poland as hunting grounds that would be cleansed of “inferior Jews and Slavs...to make room for ‘superior’ Aryans.”²⁴⁰ Cleansing the environment not only meant the landscape itself, but the people inhabiting them as well. Even if racial purification of the setting took place, the next issue that Himmler would identify as critical was the mental state and masculinity of men who would expand Nazi ideologies into those territories.

The need to restore German citizens to an idealized state of masculinity was a top priority for Himmler during the late 1930s and into the 1940s. The traits of ideal masculinity were exhibited in men who were “energetic, powerful, brave, bold, aggressive, independent, rational, intellectual, and knowledgeable.”²⁴¹ The characteristics of a primeval man like Arminius or the fictional Siegfried had been lost over the ages due to growth of industrialization. Though propaganda and social programs would help direct people towards upholding those values, the rebirth of the ideal German man needed to occur at a faster rate. Himmler sought out other Nazi officials to help with his endeavors, particularly Darré, who had already assisted Himmler in the biodynamic cultivation experiments at Dachau in 1940.²⁴² While Himmler wanted to restore primeval masculinity and femininity, with the understanding that this also meant racial purity, Darré was more focused on the latter.

The triad of Nazi environmental ideologies began to take a new shape with Darré. He saw 'blood' not as Himmler did, but instead only as the Aryan race itself. He propelled this idea through his knowledge and training in genetic livestock selection or animal breeding.²⁴³ According to Darré, “genocide developed into a necessity under the cloak of environmental

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 14.

²⁴¹ Kühne, “Protean Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity,” 394

²⁴² Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, 51.

²⁴³ Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller, *How Green Were the Nazis?*, 131-132.

protection...ecology alone does not prescribe a politics; it must be interpreted, mediated through some theory of society in order to acquire political meaning.”²⁴⁴ However, this was not a deterrent from subscribing to the environmental ideologies of the regime. Instead, environmental ideologies became a tool which Darré would use to create a new nobility of Germans, who possessed the primeval ideals that had been missing in Germany. According to him, “blood was the bearer of a person’s qualities, that the physical and psychological qualities of a person were passed on from ancestor to offspring, and that noble blood also transmitted noble qualities.”²⁴⁵ If these qualities were passed through generations of pure Aryans, then those qualities of primeval Germans would resurface in the twentieth century. High ranking Nazis claimed that “just as the life of a plant is naturally determined by the cooperation of the male and female forces, which ultimately results in blossoms and fruit, so a political community cannot grow organically without the collaboration of the characteristic strengths of both sexes in unrestricted and versatile deployment.”²⁴⁶ Breeding programs were not going to be enough to ensure that the ideal masculinity and femininity would return to German men. However, it allowed racial purity legislation to be incorporated into Nazi environmental ideology.

Reclaiming the ideal primeval man was not simply accomplished by recreating those spaces in eastern Europe. Nor could this be accomplished through Darré's insights into racial theories and the breeding of a new nobility of Aryans. In 1941 Hitler stated, “the life of an individual must not be set at too high a price. If the individual were important in the eye of nature, nature would take care to preserve it. Amongst millions of eggs a fly lays, very few are

²⁴⁴ Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 41.

²⁴⁵ Darré, *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil*, 10.

²⁴⁶ Leila J. Rupp, “Mother of the ‘Volk’: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology,” *Signs* 3, no. 2 (1977): 369.

hatched out – and yet the race of flies thrives.”²⁴⁷ For Himmler, nature’s protection was not enough to guarantee the same for future generations. Himmler furthered the process by manipulating legislation designed by Wilhelm Frick (1877-1946), the *Ministerrat für die Reichsverteidigung* (Council of Ministers for the Defense of the Reich) and *Reichsministerium* (Reich Minister of the Interior). “Frick advocated state-sponsored eugenic intervention that fulfilled ‘Nature’s wishes,”²⁴⁸ and in doing so, used legislation as a tool for guiding the population on Nazi ideologies. The particular piece of legislation that Himmler took advantage of to ensure the resurgence of the ideal primeval man was the "Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Volk," passed in 1935. The law was broken into eight articles explaining prohibitions, exceptions, implementations, and punishments. For example, the law states in article one, section c, “either party, regardless of whether he has been declared legally incapacitated, suffers from mental illness that renders the marriage undesirable for the *Volk* community.”²⁴⁹ The protection of the *Volk* community was essential to Himmler, Frick, and other Nazi officials, ensuring the safety of the *Volk* is protected. “The Reich minister of the interior, with the approval of the deputy Führer and the Reich minister of justice, is authorized to issue all legal and administrative ordinances necessary for the execution and amplification of this law.”²⁵⁰ Racial purity legislation like this provided Himmler the opportunity, alongside Göring’s reserves, to protect the German environment in the mid-twentieth century. This protection, in his viewpoint, not only defended the environment in the immediate but ensured that future

²⁴⁷ Thomas Kühne, “Fabricating the Male Bond: The Racial Nation as a Training Camp,” In *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler’s Community, 1918-1945* (Yale University Press, 2010), 36.

²⁴⁸ Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 104.

²⁴⁹ Announced on 18 October 1935 as “Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes (Ehegesundheitsgesetz).” First published in *Reichsgesetzblatt* (Berlin: Reichsverlagsamt, 1935), 1:1419. In “Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Volk (1935).” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 1st ed., eds., Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (University of California Press, 2013), 329.

²⁵⁰ “Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes (Ehegesundheitsgesetz),” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 330.

generations of ideal primeval men would be able to experience a Germany of the same caliber.

The plans to turn romanticized and mythologized ideals of an ancient man into a reality came about through numerous actions taken by Nazi officials. Himmler pulled together as many resources available to accomplish his goals. The manipulation of Göring's environmental legislation, *Generalplan Ost*, Darré's new nobility, and Frick's marriage law was crucial to implementing the full scope of the Reich's environmental ideologies. These actions played into the environmental ideologies by bringing together the men who sought to accomplish the same things of returning Germany to the primeval. "Those who achieved a sense of security through comradeship amid the insecurity of a totalitarian state and the reins of a 'total institution' shared an exceptional feeling – the 'feeling of absolute superiority.'"²⁵¹ Just like environmental ideologies, racial superiority became a tool that propelled the ideals and characteristics of primeval German society into the larger goals of the Third Reich's environmental triad.

Beast: Primeval Roam the Fields

The latter half of 1938 saw the first primeval aurochs on German soil in almost three hundred years. Their rebirths not only played into the dreams and fantasies of Lutz Heck and Göring but provided a pivotal piece to the triad of Nazi environmental ideologies. Nature reserves, like Rominten and Schorfheide, and eastern territories realized the Nazis' environmental plans, but they were not enough for the leaders of these projects. Beasts were necessary for a genuinely primeval Germany to go from book pages and theatre stages of the nineteenth century and into the eyes and hearts of all pure Aryans. Though aurochs were the center of attention of Nazis involved in the environmental programs, additional native fauna

²⁵¹ Kühne, "Fabricating the Male Bond the Racial Nation as a Training Camp," 50.

would be needed. “For Lutz Heck and Göring, zoological science legitimated nationalistic mythology,”²⁵² and created an opportunity to reshape the fauna of Germany. The success of recreating an aurochs became fuel for Lutz and Göring, showcasing that the primeval could once again be the reality of Germany.

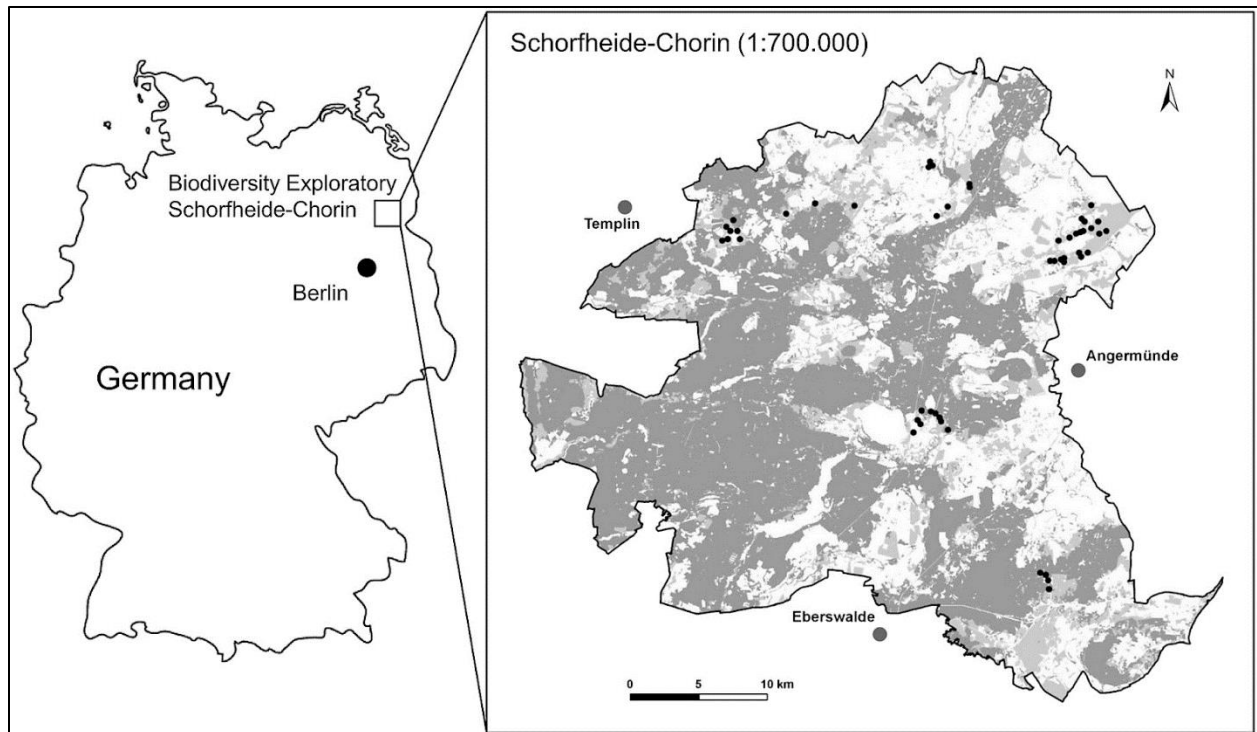


Figure 3.3. Map of Schorfheide nature reserve, one of the reserves Göring used for hunting primeval beasts. Source: Figshare, Location of the Biodiversity Exploratory Schorfheide-Chorin in Germany and a map of the Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin. Author: Olga Heim, Julia T. Treitler, Marco Tschapka, Mirjam Knörnschild, Kirsten Jung.

The first group of aurochs released in Rominten were a marvel for the fact that the once extinct beasts were able to run free once again. This was only one of two reserves where aurochs were eventually released, the second being Schorfheide nature reserve, slightly north of Berlin. Göring used his own environmental legislation to secure land for this space and turn it into an animal farm for public leisure. Between 1939 and 1942, the reserve expanded from 141,200

²⁵² Lorimer and Driessen, “From “Nazi Cows” to Cosmopolitan “Ecological Engineers,” 647.

acres to 185,500.²⁵³ Rominten and Schorfheide, through the years of the Nazis regime, were spaces that gave Lutz and Göring the opportunity to live out their fantasies from the *Nibelungenlied*, where they “went on many hunting trips to relive the myths, wearing traditional dress, carried spears.”²⁵⁴ These hunting trips and interactions with aurochs were not isolated to Lutz and Göring. Nazi officials became fascinated with the animals at Lutz’s disposal and the possibilities of reclaiming their primeval masculinity in these spaces. As a result, a few high-ranking Nazis became involved with Lutz in 1939, including Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), who headed the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda). Goebbels did not participate in the hunting activities, but he did request, and was given lion cubs from Lutz to keep as pets.²⁵⁵ After the first aurochs were introduced into the nature reserves, Lutz expanded his zoological curiosity to other primeval beasts that had gone extinct or were on the verge of it.

Aurochs were not the only primeval beast that Göring and Lutz had set their eyes on revitalizing in the late 1930s. The other fauna that Lutz used his zoological experience on was the *Wisent* (European Bison). These megafauna were not entirely extinct worldwide, but had been recently extirpated in Europe.²⁵⁶ Though these beasts were no longer found in the European wild, there were still small numbers in zoological gardens. By 1924, the International Association for the Preservation of the Bison took a census of Wisent around the world, which totaled twenty-eight.²⁵⁷ Lutz's experiments to increase the population size slightly differed from those that took place with the aurochs a decade earlier. Nevertheless, Lutz stated, "just as in the

²⁵³ Uekötter, *The Green & the Brown*, 102, 107.

²⁵⁴ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 141.

²⁵⁵ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler's Geographies*, 140. Once the animals grew too big to keep as pets, they were released and hunted by Lutz and Göring.

²⁵⁶ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 165.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 166.

re-breeding of the aurochs, we proceeded from the principle of the modern science of heredity, that the bearer of the heritable constitution is not the blood but the chromosomes, solid components of the sexual cells of the parents.”²⁵⁸ The other significant difference between the experiments between aurochs and Wisent was the need to reaccustom the captive bison to the wild. These new European bison that were being used to fill Göring’s nature reserves had reached population sizes of eighty-four by 1937.²⁵⁹ The combination of beasts like the aurochs and Wisent provided the newly reborn native environments of Germany their missing megafauna. Moreover, these animals not only gave Lutz and Göring an opportunity to hunt in primeval traditions but also German citizens the ability to experience the qualities of the romanticized ideal German man.

Beyond the two megafauna that were brought back into the ecosystems of the Nazi environments created during the Second World War, Lutz sought other creatures that had become extinct that were not mythological or romanticized but useful. The particular animal that piqued his interest did not have merit as a trophy for hunters. Instead, it offered an opportunity not only to his curiosity but to the Reich as well. The tarpan, as Lutz stated, was a mouse-grey wild horse that had long been extinct from Germany and the rest of Europe.²⁶⁰ According to Heinz Heck, the tarpan was a wild horse and the ancestor of domesticated horses. The difference between them was "wild domesticated horses have long, flowing manes and in such feral herds, specimens of all colours can be seen – greys, blacks, chestnuts, bays, and piebalds. Wild horses have short, bristly manes like zebras and all the members of their herds are of the same colour, namely the

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 167.

²⁵⁹ Richard Glover, "The Wisent or European Bison." *Journal of Mammalogy* 28, no. 4 (1947): 341.

²⁶⁰ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, v.

wild colour.”²⁶¹ Tarpan did not fit the initial ideals of primeval fauna that Lutz and Göring sought to create, but for Lutz, it was more about bringing back an extinct animal than living like Siegfried of the *Nibelungenlied*. As a result, the tarpan, extinct since 1876, was successfully back by Heinz in 1933.²⁶² Lutz’s description of his experiments on tarpan does not have the same detail compared to those recorded with aurochs. This species was not a main priority for Lutz or the Nazis; the aurochs and the Berlin Zoological Garden were the centers of their attention.

Tarpans brought a unique perspective to the Nazi ideologies of beasts that aurochs and Wisent did not, mythologized beauty, and the inaccuracy of back-breeding. Lutz described tarpan from the *Nibelungenlied* as, “Now Siegfried slew a bison and an elk, of wild aurochsen four, and a grim Schelch. The word ‘Schelch’ corresponds, as my father pointed out, to the modern German word Beschäler or stallion. The adjective ‘grim’ is entirely appropriate, for there is scarcely any fiercer and more dangerous animal than the wild horse.”²⁶³ The majesty of tarpan for Lutz was solidified like with aurochs and wisent. The three primeval beasts were unique in comparison with each other, but the wild horses were outliers. Unlike with aurochs and Wisent, attempting to ride a tarpan had the slimmest chances of resulting in death but probable chances of bodily injury, according to Lutz.²⁶⁴ As of 1954, when writing his autobiography, *Animals my Adventure*, the number of tarpan roaming Rominten and Schorfheide ranged close to 150 wild horses.²⁶⁵ Though the true difference between tarpan and the other primeval beasts was Lutz’s acknowledgment of inconsistencies in the wild horses. He stated, “just as in the re-breeding of the aurochs, we proceeded from the principle that no animal can be extinct whose heritable

²⁶¹ Heinz Heck, “The Breeding-Back of the Tarpan,” *Oryx* 1, no. 7 (1952): 339.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 341.

²⁶³ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 155.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 156.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 156.

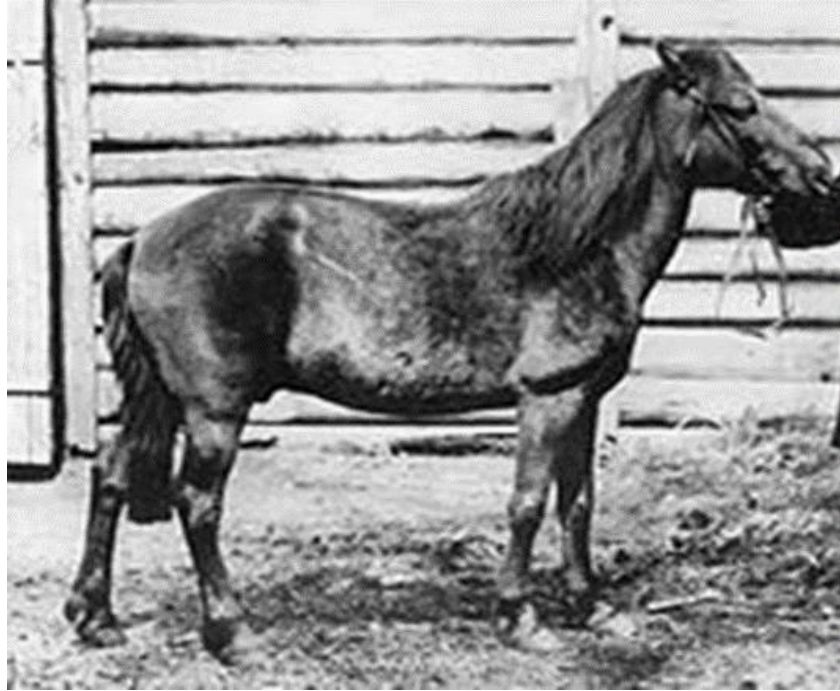


Figure 3.4. Photograph of Tarpan from the late nineteenth century Russia. Source: Wikimedia Commons, Kherson Tarpan. Photographer: Scherer under License {{PD-US}}.

constitution still exists. This constitution may be crossed with other species of animals, it may have suffered changes through race formations.”²⁶⁶ Even if the tarpan, aurochs, and Wisent did not genetically match their primeval ancestors, the attempts by Lutz set a precedent in Germany during the twentieth century and were vital to Nazi environmental ideologies.

The Berlin Zoological Garden, with Lutz as the director, was a scientific hub for the Reich's environmental ideologies. However, the Third Reich's influence on the zoo did not truly take hold until 1936 during the Olympics. “Lutz Heck fashioned a Teutonic zoo, with ‘Wolf Rock’ at hub, surrounded by quintessentially ‘German’ animals like bears and lynxes.”²⁶⁷ This attraction brought people from all over the world to see the magnificence of pure German fauna.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 156.

²⁶⁷ Sandra Swart, “Zombie Zoology: History and Reanimating Extinct Animals,” in *The Historical Animal*, ed. Susan Nance (Syracuse University Press: 2015), 59.

Beyond showcasing the environmental ideologies that the Reich practiced, the zoological garden allowed Lutz to have a plentiful supply of animals and space for experiments. Shortly after Lutz became involved with Göring directly, Jews were barred from entering the zoo in mid-1938.²⁶⁸ The combination of racial ideologies and ideal primeval beasts pushed the Berlin Zoological Gardens towards its peak popularity in the twentieth century. In the summer of 1939, the zoo had reached a size of “over four thousand large animals...including five hundred mammals of various species; also a thousand species of birds, and in the Aquarium countless reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and insects.”²⁶⁹ The zoological garden had become a center of learning and wonder for Germans of all ages and professions, but not for Jews or other non-Germans. It was a place that allowed individuals to revel in the pride and majesty of German fauna. However, as the war raged on, the circumstances for the zoo began to drastically change physically and symbolically.

As World War II raged across Europe, primeval environmental ideologies slowly began decreasing in priority for Nazi officials, but they did not stop. Lutz and other conservationists in the early-1940s continued to pursue Nazi ideologies. Austrian zoologist Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989) studied animal behavior in captive and domesticated animals, analyzing the changes that occurred over millennia.²⁷⁰ Written in 1940, Lorenz’s article “Disturbance of Characteristic Behaviors through Domestication” argued that primeval fauna behaviors developed from “clans moving across vast territories...developed noble qualities in their efforts to ‘combat hunger, cold, predators, and barbarians’.”²⁷¹ Lorenz combined his work with the primeval ideals that had

²⁶⁸ Kevin Prenger, *War Zone Zoo: The Berlin Zoo and World War 2* (South Carolina: GmbH & Co.KG, 2018), 35.

²⁶⁹ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 89.

²⁷⁰ Thomas M. Lekan, “A Zookeeper’s Ecology,” in *Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti* (Oxford University Press: 2020), 28.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 29.

persisted since the eighteenth century. A particular example of this was Lorenz's solution to species deterioration, which "advocated a eugenic solution: regulating human reproduction in an effort to overcome the deleterious effects of the modern welfare state's 'unnatural' selection of weak or infirm individuals."²⁷² Building off of Lorenz's work, Prussian veterinarian and Frankfurt Zoological Garden director from 1945 to 1974, Bernhard Grzimek (1909-1987) feared, not directly domestication, but the impact of materialism on German fauna and people.²⁷³ Grzimek's work ranged a variety of topics during the 1940s from dispelling myths of stereotyped beasts to the relationship between instincts and adaptability of animals. Lorenz and Grzimek were some of the prominent zoologists of the 1940s to usher in a new age of scientific research combined with Nazi environmental ideologies. The two men did not overtly conclude the ideologies of the Reich. However, both men "saw Göring's animal and nature conservation laws as a 'model for the world' at the time."²⁷⁴ The work done by zoologists in the 1940s combined the different aspects of Nazi environmental ideology into one. This transition began to signify the steady decline of the Third Reich's control and desires as the Second World War ended.

Conclusion: Fall of the Zoo and the Primeval Dream

The destruction of the Berlin Zoological Gardens shattered much more than the zoo itself. By 1939 the Nazi environmental ideologies had been manipulated through legislation, social programs, and leisure activities. Himmler, Göring, and Lutz found the power that came with associating with the Nazi Party a tool for actualizing their fantasies. The goal of returning the German environment to an ideal primeval state was to bring back a time of a pure Germany. Though by 1939, the foundation of these ideologies had been laid through the romanticization

²⁷² Ibid, 29.

²⁷³ Ibid, 23-24.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 32.

and mythologization of the triad. Turning fantasies into reality was only possible through numerous years of patience and constant determination. Göring and Himmler were determined to turn the wavering German environment into one that had been long lost to industrialization. The ideal man that had long been lost from Germany's history could only return through creating a suitable environment that provided flourishing landscapes with primeval flora and fauna, though to Göring and Lutz, the beasts were the key to the Nazi environmental ideals. Unlike the other two aspects of these ideologies, beasts were the only one that had been completely removed from the environment. Therefore, understanding the full scope of Nazi environmental practices and ideologies can only be understood not as individual practices but as a whole with the same goal of returning Germany to the primeval.

CONCLUSION: OUTCOMES

The pure primeval German man and environment associated with the triad of environmental ideologies ended by 1945 with the end of World War II. The anxieties that surfaced in Germany after the War of Liberation in 1813, had now returned. The difference between the two time periods, though both filled with humiliation from previous defeats, the anxieties of 1945 and into the 1950s were filled with guilt. As the war encroached closer to Berlin and into Germany's borders, the high-ranking Nazi officials deeply connected to the environmental ideologies had shifted their focus. Himmler, Lutz, and Göring were not concerned with continuing to return beasts, blood, and soil back to a primeval state. Germany's political and cultural climate in 1945 was not about returning to the primeval but protecting the remnants of the triad. No aspect of Germany was safe from encroaching gunfire and bombardments, and "as this racial war of conquest turned against Nazi Germany, the effects could be felt throughout society, including the realm of green spaces."²⁷⁵ This conclusion briefly notes how each aspect of the Nazi environmental ideologies reacted to the tides of war changing against the Third Reich and signify the individual breaking point of each ideal.

Regardless of any countermeasures that were taken place to protect the buildings or animals, it was nearly impossible to ignore the damage from aerial bombardments. Lutz and his staff took precautions to ameliorate damage, but at a great cost.²⁷⁶ The first real sense of danger occurred in 1941. According to Lutz, the zoo was struck by six five-hundred-pound bombs.²⁷⁷ Once the bombs began to drop, the biggest issue was not the death of the animals. In many

²⁷⁵ Jackisch, "The Nature of Berlin," 330.

²⁷⁶ Heck, *Animals my Adventure*, 91. Nazi military officers ordered the zoo to kill any animals that could be an immediate threat to public safety if they were to escape, including lions, tigers, leopards, and bears.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

instances, some of these animals were used as a food supply for families and other animals, and this included deer, buffaloes, and antelopes.²⁷⁸ Though the first bombardment ceased in 1941, the zoological gardens did not waver in their faith in the environmental ideologies of the Reich and began to rebuild in hopes of reopening its gates. The zoo itself was not crucial to the environmental ideologies, but it represented all the aspects they were trying to achieve. It put pure primeval German beasts of mythological proportions on display and built its habitats and enclosures to characterize the environments Göring protected and recreated. It exemplified the respect and knowledge the ideal primeval man needed to survive in these spaces. The second and most damning bombardment the zoo faced came in August of 1943, leaving the zoo as a wasteland. In that second attack, roughly seven hundred and fifty species of animals died, but some of which escaped, in particular, “721 mammals belonging to 233 species, and 1212 birds of 477 species.”²⁷⁹ The destruction of the zoo came to symbolize the end of the Nazi environmental triad, as the Reich's main objective was no longer recreating a primeval Germany. Instead, it was solely set on finishing its racial purification.

Heinrich Himmler's main focus of returning German men to an ideal primitive culture and society ended horrifically in compassion to the other aspects. Himmler's fantasies and obsessions with romanticized Germanic primeval men correlated with Hitler and the Nazi Party's ideologies of anti-Semitism. These two ideals created beliefs that Germany needed to be racially pure, which included purifying the Aryan German populace but also removing the groups of people Nazis considered to be invasive species, specifically Jews. Racial purification led to the creation of ghettos and concentration camps that provided the Nazi regime with an endless

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 107.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 93, 106-107.

supply of slave labor and space to exterminate Jews. As the balance of war shifted away from the regime, in 1942, the Nazis enacted the Final Solution, which took “evacuated Jews first, group by group, to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported farther East from there.”²⁸⁰ The Final Solution gave Nazis an opportunity and permission to exterminate as much of Europe’s Jewish population as possible. By the mid-1940s, Himmler’s focus was solely on carrying out the Final Solution and saw the creation of mobile gas wagons with the sole purpose of causing rapid genocide.²⁸¹ Once the orders for carrying out the Final Solution came, the ideologies of ideal primeval German men, like Arminius, ended.

As the Eastern front of the war inched closer to Berlin and began passing through the Rominten and Białowieża Forest, the remnants of primeval forests were crumbling. The forests of the first century and those of the *Nibelungenlied* were constant sources of romanticized and mythologized ideals of primeval landscapes in Germany. Göring rose through the ranks of the Nazi Party, gained a position of authority in Hitler’s regime, and used his position as *Reichsforstmeister* (Reich Forest Master) and *Reichsjägermeister* (Reich Hunting Master) to turn fantasy into reality. The creation of *Landschaftsschutzgebiete* (landscape protection reserves) and *Reichsnaturschutzgebiete* (National Nature Reserves) was for the Göring to have primeval land to hunt like Siegfried. However, these ideal primeval forests were incomplete without primeval beasts, specifically aurochs and Wisent. The destruction from the Final Solution and the Red Army in eastern Europe, those aspects of Lutz and Göring’s ideal primeval Germany, began to end. The Nazi environmental ideologies were not able to be fully expressed individually. The triad of Nazi environmentalism had a long history in Germany as being the centerpieces of

²⁸⁰ Giaccaria and Minca, *Hitler’s Geographies*, 253.

²⁸¹ Pringle, *The Master Plan*, 215.

romantic and mythological interpretations and dating back to the first century C.E. Ideologies of beasts, blood, and soil turned from fantasies into reality, but also created destruction and a horrific genocide in the process.

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