Emotions and the German Peasants' War of 1524–6

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What makes people act? What drives them to join a revolution where their world will be overturned, where they risk losing all they have, even their lives? The philosopher and historian David Hume argued that the passions, not reason, motivate action. 'Reason alone can never produce any action', he wrote. 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.' He didn't mean that reason was unimportant, but that ratiocination cannot be understood as operating without reference to human emotions.[1]

I have found this perspective very helpful in thinking about the Peasants' War, often interpreted, like many revolutions after it, as the result of a clash of ideas. For Friedrich Engels, who in London in 1850 wrote a concise history of the War in the light of his experience of the failed revolution of 1848, it was an incipient form of class struggle that was too early to succeed; for the right-wing Günther Franz, who held the first professorship of History in Strasbourg under the Nazis, it was a communitarian fight in which leaders were crucial.[2] Yet Engels, too, devoted a surprising amount of space to Thomas Müntzer, whom he regarded as the revolutionary leader – perhaps because he could not resist taking a pot shot at Luther, the German hero.[3] In the most recent interpretation by the Swiss historian Peter Blickle, it was a 'Revolution of the Common Man' – male language of the 1980s that reads oddly now.[4] Perhaps because Hume was a historian, his approach readily translates into thinking about collective emotion, or contagious feelings in groups, and it is group behaviour which historians of revolution need to understand. In 1959 George Rudé reoriented the study of the French Revolutionary crowd by taking seriously their reasons for engaging in revolt; but it does not diminish them to take their passions seriously too.[5] I have been very struck by the ubiquity of emotions in my sources: chroniclers mention 'fear', 'comfort', 'anger'; they report being 'so enraged that they lost reason', people being 'very raging and quite wild' or civic councillors 'whose eyes stood full of water'. Government officials pen long dispatches that convey anxiety and they reach for colourful metaphors; letter-writers

evoke horror and fear. Occasionally they even mention their own feelings, remarkable for chroniclers or bureaucrats in this period who usually strive to be impersonal.[6] Harder to gauge is what peasants themselves actually felt, because we have so few direct sources from them. What we do have, however, is their actions, their Articles of grievance, and what we know about how they formed a collectivity.

The greatest convulsion in western Europe before the French Revolution, the Peasants' War of 1525 saw vast areas of the Empire overturn their rulers for a period of three or so months. Hundreds of monasteries were burnt to the ground, as vast armies of peasants and townsfolk massed in central and southern Germany, Austria and parts of Switzerland and Italy. The peasants were brutally put down, and thousands were slaughtered by mounted cavalry and troops who were far better armed. The Peasants' War decisively changed the course of the Reformation, which had begun in 1517, just seven years before. But Luther sided with the lords, not the peasants who claimed that they wanted 'evangelical preachers'. He condemned them as 'mad dogs' and went so far as to write that those who killed them were doing a godly work; if they died slaying peasants, 'a more blessed death can never be yours'.[7]

As a result of the Peasants' War, the Reformation became a conservative movement. It allied with state power, a legacy which would shape German history for centuries after: the Lutheran church's insistence on obedience to political authority meant they could coexist with Nazism, and later the East German Lutheran church made its accommodation with the Marxist regime. The Peasants' War was the turning-point of the Reformation. Deeply traumatic, its emotional scars lasted for generations. My sense is that it produced more and better historical writing in the form of chronicles, letters and reflections of various kinds from its shocked contemporaries than the Reformation itself.[8]

EMOTIONS IN THE PEASANTS' WAR

The fortunes of the peasants' war followed an emotional arc, shaped as much by the seasons of the agricultural year as by the logic of revolution. It began in the autumn of 1524, as peasants began to formulate grievances, at first, in isolated lordships. We know little about what went on during that winter, though we do know that peasants visited one another, often at night, and that they began to formulate their grievances during the long dark evenings. In the spring, bands of peasants began to form, the Twelve Articles which became the nearest thing to a programme for the whole

movement were drawn up (and, importantly, printed), peasants began to create bonds of brotherhood with the towns, and optimism grew as the weather warmed. Monasteries fell to the peasants and were plundered and burnt, castles surrendered without a shot, and it seemed that the world had turned upside down.[9] In excitement, the peasants began to form armies of thousands. But even as early as May the tide began to turn – in Thuringia the peasants were massively defeated; in Alsace, thousands were slaughtered; but peasants continued to form armies. By the middle of June the vast uprising had passed its peak in most of Germany and by the end of June it was being decisively put down. From rumbling discontent to the release and joy of forming large victorious groups, through the height of revolutionary fervour and creativity, to the fear and misery of repression, the emotional cycle the peasants underwent was paralleled by the feelings of the elites: struck first by surprise – repeatedly, minor nobles report their astonishment at how subjects they thought were loyal and loved them turned in revolt – then by fear, as the peasant armies grew, till finally, in anger, they presided over a bloodbath far more extreme than any peasant army achieved.

These emotional patterns are of course to be found in most revolutions. The French Revolution began with a long period of formulating cahiers of grievance, years of increasing radicalization and then violence, followed by a long counter-revolutionary cycle; the Russian revolution followed a similar pattern of enthusiasm and disenchantment. In these ways the emotional pattern of the German Peasants' War might seem just to be a function of any revolutionary movement. Its brevity allows these patterns to appear in unusually stark form.

However, looking at the emotional dynamics can also help explain how ideas powered the movement through the actions they unleashed. Emotions can be contagious, so they can help us to understand how a group subjectivity could develop, and how collective action takes place.[11] Emotions are allied to other emotions: a sense of grievance can develop into anger; shock can give way to fear and then rage; horror can be followed by traumatic grief. Emotions have a temporal dimension: they take time to develop, but they can also be fleeting. Emotions tend to be labile: it is difficult to sustain an emotion like anger evenly for a long period of time, although, as I shall argue, both Luther and Müntzer exploited the power of rage to attract their audiences. But an approach which looked at emotions alone would not get us very far. Emotions

were integrally linked to beliefs and ideas, and to perception, that is, to how people understood their experience.

Here I take a different path from much recent writing in the history of emotion. Historians generally argue that emotional experiences and expressions are culturally constructed and therefore available to study through historically mutable discourses and cultural practices.[12] But is anger really so historically encoded? What drove peasants to furious and risky action was how they experienced the injustices they endured. Interesting as it is to ponder how early modern people may have imagined anger as one of the seven deadly sins, or personified it as a helmet-wearing virago, this does not help me understand the role of rage in the Peasants' War. William Reddy's study of emotions in the French Revolution focused on the role of sentimentalist discourses.[13] Reddy's concept of 'emotives' illuminates how powerful words – or indeed concepts like 'brotherhood' – could communicate emotion while ramping it up. But actions too – like storming a monastery in a peasant band – could create a kind of enraged exultation that was self-confirming. Barbara Rosenwein's concept of a 'community of emotion' helped create the study of anger as a historical phenomenon, yet I have found it less helpful for understanding the dynamics of anger in the Peasants' War.[14] Both sides, lords and rebels, understood each other's emotions even though their 'communities' in Rosenwein's sense and their languages of emotion were different. But what powered the revolt was that the emotions of anger and resentment were able to spread from peasant community to peasant community: this process demands analysis. True enough, we know the emotions our subjects felt because they say so, or their language expresses it, or their behaviour suggests it. Nor does it seem far-fetched to argue that these feelings are recognizable. But this does not mean that all the historian may do is analyse that language or those social codes. Indeed, in an event like the Peasants' War where the victors left extensive records and the vanquished very few, this would mean privileging the perspective of the lords over that of peasants and townsfolk.[15]

In this exploratory article I want first to outline the emotional cycle of the Peasants' War, showing how it related to the peasants' understanding of their experience. Then I want to ask what this emotional cycle might reveal about how a revolutionary movement happens, and how we might reach a different understanding of the role of ideology – or as I would put it, perceptions and ideas –in such an event.

I've divided the Peasants' War into the seasons. I'm not the first to do so: this is the theme of the East German artist Werner Tübke, whose wonderful gigantic circular panorama, 123 metres long and fourteen metres high, was inaugurated on the site of the peasants' defeat at Frankenhausen in September 1989, just days before the Berlin Wall fell. He devoted twelve years of his life to this art-work, and he understood the movement as a tragic, unending cycle, a vision which was deeply subversive in a society that subscribed to the Marxist march of history.[16]

AUTUMN

The War began with a revolt in the counties of Stühlingen and Lupfen in June 1524 when in the middle of harvest, the busiest time of the year, peasants were ordered to pick snail shells; the revolt soon spread to a far wider area. The peasants in Stühlingen articulated their grievances in a massive document of sixty-two Articles, which they sent to the Imperial court; this dealt with every detail of feudal life, including their annoyance at having to pick juniper berries and crush barberries for their lord. Many areas formulated grievances over the following months, which covered a wide range of issues; and as they did so, they drew on a long tradition of rural revolt and leadership, and on recent memory of the 'poor Conrad' and 'Bundschuh' movements (1493–1517). In the area around Forchheim, Articles demanded that 'all water, birds and animals' should be 'free and common' to hunt; the peasants at Briggach objected to having to gather manure for their lords, hobble their dogs and or be punished by hunters and foresters; while around Nuremberg, peasants objected to wild boars that damaged crops and complained of having to stay awake all night to protect their fields.[17]

These grievances were local and specific. They attacked serfdom by pointing to practices which they thought were ridiculous and unjustifiable; but which, once articulated, began the process of a structural critique of agrarian relations. The details of their stories contributed to the narrative of unreasonable demands, which overrode acceptable human relations. Hunting, for example, raised in many complaints, set nobles apart from commoners. Nobles were passionate hunters. Hunting was a major aspect of their socialization; it channelled aggression and licensed the shedding of blood; it meant riding horseback as sport, in a group, and experiencing the excitement of the chase.[18] Horses literally put nobles above commoners. Hunting also went with a different view of ecology. For the lords, pursuing the quarry licensed riding through

fields, across rivers, regardless of who owned the land; and this shaped their sense of place. On horseback, they could simply cover more distance. For peasants, on the other hand, deer and boars were pests which destroyed crops, while hunters trampled the ripening corn as they chased their prey. Peasants' horses were valuable labouring animals, different breeds from noble steeds. Land was not an open stage for the excitement of movement, but parcels of bounded strips and fields for working in, with histories, tricky ecologies and complex ownerships.

Only nobles could hunt deer; peasants and non-nobles were not allowed to eat venison unless it was given as a present – Luther's correspondence is full of requests to the Elector to provide the coveted meat for the wedding feasts of the Wittenberg clergy, as men who had once been monks or priests broke the rule of celibacy.[19] But if academics could ape their social superiors at marriage feasts, peasants could never enjoy this meat licitly. In some areas, peasants were not even permitted to trap the birds that were such an important supplement to sixteenth-century people's diets. Hunting spawned a vast material culture for the nobility, with special engraved guns, spears, knives, horse tackle and powder flasks, while in castles and hunting lodges throughout Europe, the animals the nobles loved to chase were depicted with painstaking realism in paintings and tapestries.[20] Cranach painted several hunting scenes for the Saxon electors in which the dynasty's castles featured proudly in the background, associating Saxon power with the chase (Fig. 1); and when the Elector of Brandenburg Joachim II built his hunting lodge at Grunewald, even the iron stove was decorated with panels celebrating hunting.[21] Attacking the legitimacy of hunting meant therefore attacking the legitimacy of untrammelled rule.

Fig. 1. Lucas Cranach, 'A Hunt in Honour of Charles V at Torgau Castle', 1544, Photograph © alamy.

Another of these wider issues was marriage, and many southern sets of Articles excoriated their lords' practices regarding it. Peasants complained that they had been imprisoned when they objected to their wives being forced to become serfs themselves if they 'married in' to a lordship, a practice through which formerly free women or women from another lordship could become enserfed. How could this be fair, they demanded? Some recounted their stories in detail, and their lords' unjust retaliation.[22] Others included demands about marriage in more general terms: lords were preventing them from marrying who they wanted, or levying fines if their partner was not subject to the same lord. Free women or women from another lordship were losing rights and, since serfdom passed through the female line, in due course their offspring became part of the lord's resources. Worse, the 'lords' most implicated in such practices were often monasteries or bishops, yet the church was technically the protector of marriage, and had full legal jurisdiction over it. Marriage was a sacrament, and the church insisted that it consisted solely in the free consent of

the couple to each other. Yet here was that same church devising restrictions on the marriages of their subjects, forbidding marriages with those of other lords or insisting that the woman's reproductive capacities belonged to them.[23]

The autumn passed with the writing of many series of Articles and some early revolts against particular lords; but it was not yet a wider movement. A straw in the wind, however, was a contract with a pastor at Wendelstein (technically appointed by the local lord, the Margrave Kasimir of Brandenburg). Drawn up on 19 October 1524 by the community of Wendelstein near Schwabach, the letter of appointment stated: 'So we will not recognize you as a Lord, but only as a servant and employee of the community, so that you do not command us but we command you.'[24] This militant language turned the tables: the pastor was not to be a lord, but only the 'servant', an English term which does not quite convey the humiliating resonance of 'Knecht'.[25] The Wendelstein contract was then printed in Nuremberg, where it reached a much wider audience: now other communities could agree terms that gave them control over their pastor too.

Common to all these issues is the conviction that an injustice has been committed, and that people have been duped by an authority that cares only for its own interests. The result is righteous anger, which in the case of the contract for the pastor led to rewriting the terms of the relationship between pastor and parishioners altogether. Significantly too, these resentments were being articulated and then shared with increasingly wide publics. The anger, moreover, was often not an individual but a collective response, and an anger *on behalf of* someone else.

WINTER

We know least about what happened that winter, but during these crucial months connections were forged between people in neighbouring areas. Their complaints moved beyond addressing individual lords towards a wider local geography, and towards a critique of serfdom itself. In winter there was less agricultural labour, and the long nights allowed people to gather in the so-called spinning parlours (*Gunkelstuben*) where women spun and where, so it was rumoured, courting and worse went on (Fig. 3). Whatever sensational stories circulated about village spinning bees amongst townsfolk, they certainly afforded peasants opportunities for meeting and talking in the warmth, gathered around the large ceramic stoves which heated German households.[26]

Fig. 2. Woodcut, Barthel Beham, 'Die Spinnstube', 1524. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

That winter there were rumblings. Gatherings of peasants were starting to make the authorities anxious. On New Year's Eve in Baltringen, a group of peasants was sitting in an inn, talking about 'how they wanted to start their matter'. The next month, the Mayor of Ulm encountered some peasants at Ried, and when he asked them what they were doing, they replied that they 'wanted to start a dance'. But there are no women here, the mayor responded. For answer, they merely pointed at the convent, alarming the mayor so greatly that he wrote to the convent at once.[27] At New Year, after years of unrest, the peasants of the abbot of Kempten rose up in revolt, an event contemporaries identified as the beginning of the War.[28] At Werdenstein in mid February, a group of peasants tried to take everything in the castle there, and called to the castellan 'come down, you old dog, we want to rip out your beard' and they compounded the insult to his manhood by calling to his womenfolk: 'come on you young whores, we want to take you and afterwards we'll rape the old ladies'. These peasants were insulting their own lord, and their aggressive hatred of him is

unmistakeable. We have only an account from the lord's point of view, who clearly experienced the insubordination of his peasants as a sexual and personal affront. But when the peasants were asked what they wanted, they said they wanted a different preacher, and 'they wanted to have a lord no more'.[29] As the lord saw it, this was now more than just a local dispute with him. Their anger had exploded creatively to attack lordship in general, just like the peasants who insisted that their pastor be their 'servant' and not their lord. Instead of letting him take their women, they wanted to have his.

It may well have been during those winter months that theological ideas began to crystallize further. By April a peasant commander was writing to the community of Bietigheim in Swabia in April of 'how utterly and completely we have been robbed not only of our daily bread, but also of the eternal bread', linking the issue of communion with the issue of justice.[30] This was a layman, not a priest. He was drawing on a much wider discussion, for back in 1519 Luther had demanded the cup for the laity – like priests they too should receive the wine of communion as well as the bread. In a host of towns and villages where evangelical clergy preached, this was now taking place, and it was one of the most tangible signs that the gospel had arrived. The Articles of the Alsace peasants maintained that Christ bought us with his 'rose-coloured blood' and so we were his serfs, no-one else's.[31] As the Twelve Articles, formulated between 27 February and 1 March, would soon put it,
'It has hitherto been the custom for the lords to treat us as their serfs, which is pitiable since Christ has redeemed and bought us all by the shedding of his precious blood, the shepherd just as the highest, no-one excepted. Therefore it is demonstrated by Scripture that we are free and wish to be free.'[32]

This argument was not new: previous peasant revolts had linked Christ's sacrifice to the demand for freedom too.[33] But it became explosive now the Reformation was instituting communion in both kinds. It fuelled a sense of righteous anger because, so it seemed, the clergy had deliberately withheld the wine from lay-folk for centuries. This went far beyond abuses connected with a particular lord, and it linked the matter of serfdom with the fundamental demand of the Reformation, communion in both kinds in line with the gospel. Indeed, the Strasbourg preacher Matthew Zell would soon be reported as having preached that one should show obedience only to the emperor and no-one else, whether princes or others, because every human being is 'free and should be uncompelled and should have his free will'.[34] For a brief period,

the cause of the peasants could be seen as going in lockstep with that of the Reformation.

Fig. 3. Woodcut, pamphlet cover, Diepold Peringer, *Des Christlichen Pawren getrewen radt,* Schönsperger, Johann d. J. 1524 *[VD 16 P 1389]* Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Abteilung Historische Drucke, Shelf mark: Cu 5140 : R.

Peasants were 'in'. The evangelical peasant, with his stout boots, dagger at his side, and peasant hat appeared on the cover of many evangelical pamphlets, confronting the representatives of the old church or standing alone, gesturing as he preached. The 'boot' had long been the symbol of peasant revolt, so their loving depiction hinted that the peasant might take a stand. They are surprisingly positive images, and they present the peasant as an actor, standing up for the gospel. By the winter of 1524–5, images like these had been circulating widely in popular print for some two or three years, and they meant that the peasants could be imagined not as an

unruly rabble but as individuals, heroes who were expressing righteous anger on behalf of others. Peasants had been used as early as 1520 to represent the common folk in opposition to the clergy. Solo peasants appeared in particular on covers of the works by the supposed 'Peasant of Wöhrd' near Nuremberg (Fig. 3) . Claiming to be an illiterate peasant, Diepold Peringer drew many credulous admirers, including even the level-headed Georg Spalatin, Luther's close associate, who heard him preach at Nuremberg: unfortunately, the real Peringer was later unmasked as a renegade literate priest.[35] A phenomenon suited to the times, his story fed the peasant demand, reiterated in just about all the versions of peasant Articles, for a preacher who would preach 'the pure Word of God'. The true Word was about freedom, because a true preacher would administer the wine, the blood with which Christ bought freedom for all.

This demand was even more revolutionary than it appeared because it meant insisting that the community could call its own pastor, regardless of the legal rights of patronage, which often lay with the lord who 'owned' the church or altar. It meant according the community agency in the teeth of the property-claims of the lords. Luther, who had at first demanded that the community have the right to call its own preacher, soon stepped back from the revolutionary implications. Only if the congregation owned the patronage rights could it do such a thing, he was soon arguing; otherwise, it must raise the money for a preacher-ship itself – an impossibility for rural peasant communities, as Luther knew.

By March, two of the chief ingredients of the revolution were in place. First, there was a sense of righteous anger, of having suffered an injustice. Peasants felt tricked and abused by both the lords and the church. Second, that anger was linked to religious convictions which undergirded a thoroughgoing critique of serfdom: the marriage restrictions, dues, hunting privileges and all the rest of it were wrong because serfdom was contrary to Christ's purchase of us with his blood. From Engels on, it has been easy to assume that the peasants were at an earlier stage of development, unable to articulate their class interests; or that religion was only important to those clergy who, against their own interests, became involved in the War. But instead of assuming that peasants were suffering from false consciousness or were clothing economic demands in religious language, we need to take seriously the ideas expressed at the time, which were, in an expanded sense, religious and theological.[36] They were about brotherhood, blood, and the gospel.

The anger people felt at their unjust treatment, for instance, was legitimated by the righteous anger expressed by Paul or by the Old Testament prophets, a stance which Müntzer made his own, in rhetoric which sounded Biblical even when it was not. Much of the anger was what I would call an 'on behalf of' anger: it was righteous wrath not only about one's own situation but about that of others. Anger can confer a powerful sense of self and agency; and the aggression it licenses enables people to think of new solutions. It could also, of course, lead to violence: *Ira,* anger, was one of the seven deadly sins, and artists a decade or so later would depict her astride a bear with bow and arrows, or with a lion and a sword.[37] This enhanced sense of self could become a collective identification, as peasants of various regions identified with the idea of the evangelical peasant, captured in the images, who could and must act. And just as peasants began to feel a sense of self that included many others, so also their sense of place was widened, as peasants began to feel common cause with others, beyond their fields and outside the boundary of their own lords' jurisdictions. So for example the Odenwald peasant band told the town of Bischofsheim, caught betweeen two peasant armies, that they could join and become brothers with either one, 'for it is all the same cause and assistance'. But if they did not, 'we will come however, and while we don't want to threaten you now, it would be much better for you to harness your horse to another's bier than that others should harness their horses to yours'.[38] This sense of unity was admittedly often fragile – time and again, one peasant band would refuse to co-operate with another; or referred to the peasants of another area as 'ausländer', foreigners.[39] When Thomas Müntzer was asked how far his new godly kingdom was to extend, he said he had tried to gain the land of Hesse and 'ten miles' around Mühlhausen. This would have been no further than seventy kilometres in modern measurements, not even as far as Wittenberg.[40]

SPRING

In March 1525 the Twelve Articles of the peasants of the Swabian League were finally agreed and printed. Worded by a furrier and a pastor on the basis of a number of peasant grievances, they became the nearest thing to a shared programme for the entire movement. First came the demand that a congregation should have the right to call its own pastor. A religious as well as a political document, every article was supported with scriptural quotation.[41]

The watch word of the spring was ‘brotherhood’. A highly emotional term, it evoked sharing and community. Peasants addressed each other as ‘brother’ and wrote to the members of other peasant bands as ‘brothers’. The forms of address which peasants used in their formal communications at this point were conspicuously polite.[42] When writing to the Lords, they exhorted them to join them as ‘brothers’. Early on, Thomas Müntzer had used brotherhood as a mechanism to expand his movement, persuading surrounding towns and villages to swear brotherhood with his supporters, formal oaths that bound them to protect each other and extended the territory of his influence.[43] But the practice was far more widespread: the illustrated chronicle of the peasants’ war in the Abbey of Weissenau, for instance, shows the peasants swearing brotherhood. (Its final scene is the serfs re-swearing their oath of loyalty to their overlord, the Abbot: right order had been restored and the world turned right way up.)[44]

Brotherhood had moral force, and it could be invoked to police their own members. So in April, one field ordinance established what living in a ‘brotherly manner’ meant: blasphemy, drunkenness, gaming and so forth were banned, and disorderly women were not to be tolerated in the camp.[45] Brotherhood could have its flip side however, and one commander wrote to the community of Bietigheim that ‘we want you to come and give us brotherly troth’. But if you won’t, he went on, ‘we will come to you, and you won’t be laughing’.[46] Near Heidelberg, peasants were described as coming together like a ‘fire’. By night, they run together ‘without fearing the authorities’.[47] They assembled at church ales (one of the few occasions at which, significantly, peasants could bear arms), and they would meet at night too, waking peasants from their beds (so this hostile observer wrote) and forcing them to join with them in brotherhood.[48]

At this point, brotherhood was a highly inclusive idea: anyone could become a brother. But what did peasants mean by it? And how did it function? ‘Offering ‘Brotherhood’ to the lords was about social levelling, and though their letters to the lords were polite, peasants would use the informal ‘you’ as an expression of equality. But brotherhood was also an emotional appeal, an attempt to lance the potential aggression by offering kinship and love. And they meant it, because ‘brotherly love’ was about creating a world where there would be no division, class or enmity, but where injustice would be overturned by the emotional bond of fraternity. Many of the Thuringian nobility in the area around Mühlhausen eventually agreed to swear

brotherhood with the peasants: the peasants compelled them to do so because they believed their oaths would neutralize their opposition. This was why it was possible for peasants to decide, for example, to appoint the knight Götz von Berlichingen as their commander. As he told it, Götz was sitting outside a tavern when he met a peasant leader who said: ' "Götz is it you?" I said "yes, what's up? What should I do, or what do the commanders want with me?" And he said "You must be their commander"'. When Götz remonstrated that he was a lord and so on the other side, they would not take no for an answer. Here genuine bonds of affection overrode identifying him as an enemy – at least, as he told the story later, writing his memoirs in old age.[49] He was not unique: the hapless Hans Hake of Hackpfüffel, a noble, was forced to become a peasant commander 'not out of joy of or? pleasure' but because of 'fear and compulsion', as he later explained to his overlord Duke Georg of Saxony.[50] In the Samland, one local notable was forced to leave his breakfast, swear brotherhood, and join in their march after drinking a brandy with their commander, a miller.[51] Indeed, at this early moment, towns too were willing to espouse brotherhood with the peasant armies encamped outside them, and many of the townsfolk saw the peasant cause as their own. Brotherhood created an emotional kind of class union, by inviting groups of people together in an open, inclusive manner – anyone could be a brother – and calling on them to fight for the gospel.[52] Against whom they were fighting could remain at this point unclear.[53] This is why the peasants appear so naïvely trusting, and why Engels described them as the 'plebeians and peasants', only their 'most advanced faction' under Thomas Müntzer were truly revolutionary, 'a small minority of the insurgent masses'.[54]

Brotherhood was not obviously open to women. Its rituals were male: women could not swear oaths, they could not bear arms, they did not wear the peasant boots and hat, all talismanic marks of peasant identity, and they were not part of the peasant military. The common man might be the hero of the Reformation; in sixteenth-century parlance, the 'common woman' was a prostitute, one of the targets of evangelical moralism.[55] But this did not mean women played no active part in the war, or that the idea of brotherhood did not attract them. The Catholic conservative and anti-Lutheran Johannes Cochlaeus was specifically appalled by the women, who he regarded as culpable; they followed the preachers more audaciously, he insisted, going on to aver that the women of Leipheim were rightly punished by being forced to wear the town symbol of Ulm on their clothes for the next thirty years, because they 'were so

completely Lutheran that they forced and incited their menfolk to revolt'. Wearing the badge of Ulm signified that the Leipheimers had forfeited civic independence, and it made their women look like prostitutes: in many towns, those who worked in the brothel wore distinctive badges on their clothes.[56] The radical preacher Thomas Müntzer was notorious for the enthusiasm of his female followers but women in Mühlhausen where he became preacher had long broken barriers. One woman said she had officiated at communion herself with the support of the 'preacher', Heinrich Pfeiffer, Müntzer's later ally; while the sister-in-law of the local government official there seems to have taken a prominent role in events, even voting at the key meeting where Müntzer's followers instituted an Eternal Revolutionary Council – contrary to 'female modesty' and what was 'fitting', as alleged in a complaint against her after the war was over.[57] It is difficult to know whether women were simply subsumed under their menfolk, and whether they too joined in the marching as part of a baggage train; or whether they supported the cause by assuming the agricultural labour or the mining work the men left behind. We know of a few fierce women peasant leaders, but we know almost nothing about them.[58] Women are not pictured in Jacob Murer's wonderful contemporary visual chronicle of the peasants' war: men alone are shown storming the convent of Weissenau and massing in peasant bands.[59] Everywhere the language of the peasants celebrated maleness: they fought 'manfully', their opponents conceded; and the ideal of brotherhood was a resolutely male vision: noble women were not apparently called upon to swear 'brotherhood'.

All through the spring, peasant bands began to grow, much to the alarm of the authorities. A band would form, and then a 'Haufen' or heap; at first a couple of hundred peasants, and soon thousands; they were 'like bees' swarming, it was said. The Bildhausen band began with the peasants ruled by the monastery that gave the group its name, but soon became one of the biggest of the Swabian armies as more joined. And their 'bands' seemed to be invincible. Monasteries fell to them without resistance, leaving their treasures, wine and the grain of their tithe barns to the peasants. The peasant bands then set about purifying their churches, smashing and burning the 'idols' so that true worship could be held. At the monastery of Anhausen, they ripped the manuscripts and threw books in the well, and they decapitated the statues of Jesus, Mary and other saints. They played ball with the sacrament, throwing it about the church in its pyx. One of them donned a chasuble with a mass vestment on top, mocking the clergy.[60] The story was repeated at monasteries and convents

everywhere: at the monastery of Schöntal, they 'reformed the monks', ripped up their music and other books, smashed the windows, 'and expressed their brotherly love of the lords in Turkish fashion', one hostile chronicler wrote – he meant that the rebels were behaving like Turks, not Christians, by smashing religious objects.[61] At Torgau, they broke the lamps in front of the sacrament, demolished the altarpiece made by Lucas Cranach himself which had been bought for fifty gulden, ripped the curtain in front of the choir and slashed the breviary with a sword.[62] The brotherhood they wanted was not that of the fat monks, but of a just godly society. So bankrupt had monasticism become at this point that the secular lords did not lift a finger to help them; indeed, the crisis in monasticism brought about by the Reformation was so severe that many monasteries must have had few monks left.

The experience of going about in groups several thousand strong, and of seeing the powerful monasteries that had loomed so large in the rural landscape simply falling to them, must have been intoxicating. So too must storming the castles, climbing their walls, and taking command of the heights. During March, April and in some areas into May and beyond, peasant armies were on the march, forming bonds with each other. The experience of living together, eating and drinking in large groups, sleeping out and leaving agricultural labour to fend for itself at the busiest time of the year, created a situation of exceptionality, where time seemed to stand still. It was like a peasant fantasy of *Schlaraffenland*, the Land of Cockaigne, where winged roasted capons offer themselves for eating, houses are made of gingerbread or pancakes, and pigs run about ready for slicing and eating.[63] The peasant marauders took gold and silver plate, tankards of precious metal, which they piled on their wagons. (Always with an eye for the main chance, the noble peasant commander Götz von Berlichingen admitted he had bought some golden plates from a peasant – but to his annoyance they turned out to be only tin. He doesn't tell us what else fell into his hands.)[64] At Würzburg, which was surrounded by peasant armies, the city repeatedly had to provide provisions for the members of the 'heaps'; around Mühlhausen, people stewed fish in giant beer barrels to feed the numbers.[65] Looted monasteries had at first provided ready supplies. At Mergentheim they took the castle and town of the hated Teutonic Knights and drank all their wine; at Bruchsal they emptied the monks' cellar; at Ochsenfurt they drank an incredible 500 Fuder (500 thousand litres) of the cathedral chapter's wine and consumed most of their grain.[66] In monasteries and convents everywhere the peasants fished the ponds out completely, so there was

nothing left – the delicate fish so prized for fast days became feasting food for peasants, who normally had to make do with much grimmer Lenten fare.[67] Shocked commentators noted that they guzzled the finest wines; Martin Cronthal, the secretary of Würzburg, recorded with disgust that the peasants in the town even spilt tipped? it on the ground.[68]

Brotherhood was created as people ate, drank, seized booty and joined in an orgy of consumption, eating up completely the grain that would normally be saved for next year's seed, the wine and the fish. The Mühlhauseners wreaked havoc as they marched across the Eichsfeld, taking sheep 'in wool' without bothering to shear them.[69] I've not come across accounts of slaying deer: in some regions, they seem like the disciples to have subsisted on fish; in others, they slaughtered oxen. Brotherhood meant overcoming the normal lines of separation, joining together, escaping from the everyday, moving about and experiencing physical exhaustion in the group. And above all, it meant the joyous oblivion of emptying the cellars. To modern historians, the peregrinations of the peasants seem illogical; they made for wine stores, not for the strategic targets at which they should have aimed; and they went marching at the time when their fields needed them most. But creating that sense of union, of unbounded brotherly love and annihilation of difference outside of time, was the point. It was the landscape which drew them in particular directions, to the buildings whose towers dominated the region and which represented stores and power, and which enabled them to continue in the intoxicating state of living outside time, beyond lordship.

This mood of unbounded brotherhood could sometimes slip into a kind of Dionysian excess, and become violent. Now lords who resisted becoming brothers became targets. One atrocity stood for this switch of emotion and marked the turning-point of the war: the Weinsberger Bluttat of 16 April. A visiting salt seller noticed that the Weinsberg castle was empty, so the peasants seized the moment: storming the castle they took the countess and her children hostage. The knights who should have been guarding it were in the town; but the town was 'utterly pro-peasant' and opened the town to the peasant fighters. There they captured the count and many of the nobles and mounted knights. Diettrich von Weiler fled into the church and up the tower, and tried to bargain for his life with the peasants below. He was hit by a shot, so one peasant fighter climbed the tower and threw him down. The peasants led the captured nobles to a meadow outside town where they forced twenty-four knights and their

boys to run the gauntlet. Then they took the clothes from the corpses, and burnt the castle to the ground. One man who had been the count's piper and who had, as one chronicler put it, 'shared dinner' with him, plucked the count's hat from his head, put it on his own and declared that he wished to be a noble. When the count was finally killed he smeared his spear in his fat.[70]

This was the most extreme incident of 'dionysian excess', where a group carried out a quasi-military ritual and killed twenty-four knights and pages in cold blood, dressing in noble clothes and enjoying a carnival of inversion, before burning the castle. Members of their own 'band' dissociated themselves from the deed. At castle Lauda near Würzburg, the peasants set the castle on fire; some of its defenders fled to the tower, some to the cellar; but those in the cellar somehow managed to survive and were captured by the victorious peasants. The pregnant castellan's wife was captured with her children, stripped of her clothes, and sent 'bare-headed into misery'; the peasant fighters threatened to make her husband run the gauntlet. But on this occasion the peasants held a debate on what to do, some urging that they should be let go if they would swear an oath of brotherhood; while one leader argued that since God had saved those who fled to the cellar, the peasants should show mercy.[71] A vote was held, where 'everyone should raise his finger', and it was agreed to let them go as brothers. The procedure of the debate and vote; and the appeal to God's decision, cut the emotional cycle in this case.[72]

It is hard to know whether peasants seriously intended to slaughter the lords or whether they merely wanted to force negotiations. The peasant leader Erasmus Gerber was reported to have confessed that they planned to expropriate all authorities, lords, those of the nobility and the rich burghers and citizens, and 'shame their wives in front of them' before killing them.[73] Thomas Müntzer's rhetoric was becoming yet more bloodthirsty: writing to Count Albrecht in May 1525 he warned him that 'God instructs all the birds of the heavens to consume the flesh of the princes; while the brute beasts are to drink the blood of the bigwigs'.[74] He encouraged his troops on the eve of battle telling them that the enemy's own bullets would redound on them, and that whenever one band was defeated another would rise. His prophecies seemed to be sealed with a divine sign when a rainbow appeared, the army's own symbol – because the battlefield is a high plateau from which you can see for miles, this would have been electrifying. 'Pay no attention to the cries of the godless. They will entreat you ever so warmly, they will whimper and wheedle like children', he had admonished

them, 'Show no mercy'.[75] Müntzer's preaching, if his letters are anything to go by, seems to have been driven by an extreme pitch of rage; and he directed his fire at individuals, cursing them in bloodcurdling language. Yet this vivid emotional tone apparently appealed to his followers, an intense and exaggerated version of the anger that emerges in the peasant Articles.

The heady feeling of brotherhood and harmony could give way to a state of frenzied exaltation, in which people believed that the normal laws of nature would be suspended, Jacob Wehe, pastor of Leipheim, prophesied that the League's spears and muskets would turn at God's command and slay their own side;[76] Müntzer's followers were convinced that even the stones of Heldrungen castle would rise up and 'give way before them'.[77] Appalled townsfolk described how the peasants in their towns lived '*im Sauss'* (living it up); they were drunk all day, they did not work, they did not have lodgings, they did not make rational decisions.[78] Being in a state of inebriation was precisely about bringing people of different backgrounds together, of suspending all normal duties and rational behaviour. Ordinary time was suspended as peasants consumed stores and refused to worry about the agricultural tasks of spring, which ran according to the calendar of the saints' days. For those who followed Müntzer, it meant moving into apocalyptic time. It was about not working and instead consuming all the supplies that should be husbanded; and it could lead people to overcome inhibitions of all kinds, including against violence. This kind of emotional state may be necessary for revolutionary engagement. As Katrina Navickas has shown, nightly drilling together on isolated moorland roads gave impetus to Luddism in nineteenth-century England; George Rudé noted that revolts in France often began in wine-shops; Andy Wood has pointed to the importance of 'play, festivity, plunder, excess and fun' in rebellion, and Norman Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millennium* of 1957 showed how millenarian perceptions of time helped drive popular protest. Indeed, the crowd's storming of the Bastille or the women's march in the French Revolution were themselves exciting, radicalizing experiences whose power derived in part from the intoxicating physical closeness of being in a crowd.[79] Certainly the bonds of loyalty created by assembling together were powerful: mostly, peasant bands stuck together; and fled together too. Even after the peasants of Alsace and Thuringia had been defeated, peasants in Franconia did not give in but stood steadfastly against their lords.

SUMMER

The emotional cycle of the peasants was mirrored by an emotional cycle of the authorities. At first reluctant to intervene, some on the lords' side favoured negotiation, and it took time for the Swabian League to commit to intervention and for the Saxon princes to form an alliance and muster men: they met with repeated refusal to join even for pay. 'May God turn his anger away from us. If God wants it thus, then the result will be that the common man will rule. If this is not his will…matters will soon change', wrote Luther's ruler, the Elector Frederick the Wise, with gloomy fatalism from his sickbed.[80] Townsfolk, princes and lords underwent a period of shock and then apprehension as peasants no longer treated them with deference, and as they heard many – not just peasants, but townsfolk and intellectuals – attack the rightness of rule. But Weinsberg marked a turning point. Whether because the massacre offered a propaganda opportunity to justify retaliation or because they were sincerely shocked by what happened (the men killed at Weinsberg had powerful relatives amongst the leadership of the Swabian League and the Empire), the policy of the lords switched to confrontation. Now the princes began to muster their armies to wreak a revenge that was far more bloodthirsty.

'Summer' came at different times that year. In Frankenhausen, in the middle of May, the peasants were defeated by a coalition of the lords including Catholics and Protestants. Something of the chaos can be glimpsed in the extraordinary encounters after the battle between Müntzer and the rulers he had threatened, in which all the normal rules of social intercourse were again suspended. The Catholic Duke George of Saxony sat down on a bench beside Müntzer and asked him straight out why, in breach of the laws of war, the messengers sent to negotiate had been executed. Landgrave Philip of Hesse got into a scriptural debate with Müntzer, countering with New Testament passages when the rebel preacher cited the Old. Soon Müntzer would be imprisoned, tortured and executed; but for a brief moment, time stopped and men of completely different social class addressed each other as equals, as if the peasants' war truly had created brotherhood at its moment of defeat.[81]

But this interval did not last long. In Alsace in mid May, Duke Anthony of Lorraine took the field against the peasants, and committed some of the worst atrocities of the war. When the peasants fled into the village of Lupstein, his troops set the village on fire from all four corners. Some of the peasants had taken refuge in houses with their booty, many others gathered in the church. Gradually the fire spread

towards the church. The men took off their hats and put them up against the windows as a sign of surrender, but it was too late. The chronicler reckoned that five or six thousand people died. Another letter-writer describes how virgins were dragged into the fields and raped, while things were done to married women 'such that the poor women did not know what to do'.[82] From there, Lorraine's troops went to the town of Sauverne and sacked it; because the soldiers were largely French-speaking and not local, they had no fellow-feeling with the German population. Riding into the town, one chronicler recorded there were so many bodies on the streets that one simply had to ride over them. At the height of the massacre, a voice could be heard saying in German: 'Strike! All is permitted!' – it was as if God himself had licensed it.[83]

On 4 June at the battle of the tiny village of Ingolstadt five thousand were reportedly killed; at Königshofen, eight thousand.[84] In the village of Ingolstadt some fled to the churches and were so desperate that they seized the tiles off the roof to throw at the enemy, but they were all slain. The castle in which the peasants were defending themselves was set on fire and the peasants fled to the cellar; the army stuffed straw into the cellar and set it alight – only three survived, and an eye-witness counted 206 corpses the next day.[85] The streets leading into Ochsenfurt near Würzburg for a quarter of a mile in every direction were full of butchered peasants; corpses were found in the vineyards. One military unit captured sixty peasants but then slaughtered them all, because, so they said, the peasants had threatened to kill them.[86] Back in April in Leipheim, the peasants had been caught in a pincer movement by the troops of Georg Truchsess von Waldburg; thousands were stabbed, others forced into the Danube, where they drowned.[87] Near Pfeddersheim in the Palatinate, battle took place on the upper fields, so that the blood ran down into a hollow: this spot on the B-road is still known as the 'blood cave'; and there is a 'Blutrinne' (Blood runnel) down the slope from the battlefield, where six thousand peasants were slain, to the town of Frankenhausen.[88]

Because the peasants were usually so outclassed by the military forces they confronted, and unable to deal with cavalry, the battles were particularly bloody and meant that the soldiers trampled, stabbed and slashed peasants at close quarters. With so much of the fighting of this kind, soldiers lacked the emotional distance from killing that using cannons or guns provides. Many commentators remark on the amount of blood: when it rained at Lupstein, it ran red down the streets and gutters.[89] For the troops it entailed an orgy of blood and plunder. The commanders could not

always control their troops – at Sauverne they ran amok; at Würzburg, it was now the wagons of the troops that were piled high with beds, mattresses, plate, linen and everything the victorious soldiers could seize from the townsfolk.[90] It was an orgy of killing far more extreme than that of the peasants and carried out against civilians who were largely unable to retaliate. This may well have meant that it required similarly shocking breaches of normal behaviour – and that it was traumatic is suggested by eye-witness accounts from those who fought, including one apparently celebratory chronicle by a French soldier who nonetheless recorded the shocking violence he witnessed in graphic detail.[91] Others tell chilling anecdotes without commentary: when numbers of fleeing peasants became trapped in a ditch, the commander of the lords' troops, unwilling to venture after them, promised freedom to any peasant who killed his comrades. Thereupon one peasant set about slaughtering five of his companions, who did not resist. But the sixth fought back until neither could gain victory and both toppled into the moat and drowned.[92]

Why did the lords undertake such brutal revenge, harming themselves economically as they slew their own workforce? Contemporaries, even those who supported Luther, were appalled by the savagery, and shocked by Luther's failure to condemn the 'slaying without pity' of the peasants by the 'tyrants', as one of those closest to Luther put it in a letter to him, not mincing his words.[93] In part the brutality went beyond what some commanders intended: they were simply unable to control troops who were let loose on towns in which peasants were hiding, and who scented plunder. Many were troops from elsewhere with no fellow feeling for the local populations. They may have found it difficult, too, to deal with an enemy that was often unable to fight back effectively; though the Duke of Lorraine found it harder to defeat the peasants than he had expected. The praise for the manly ('manlich') fighting of the peasants may betray the uneasiness of many commentators at the sheer inequality of the struggle.

What seems to have unleashed the ferocity was the peasants' attack on the lords' claim to authority, expressed in their attack on individual lords. All commentators insisted that this was 'Aufruhr' – disorder, disturbance – and so, unsupportable. The stories they remembered were about the interactions between individual lords and the peasants: the threat to pull out one lord's beard, the threats of rape, the Weinsberg atrocity. Sitting next to Müntzer after his capture, Duke Heinrich of Braunschweig ribbed him: 'You're a fine one to want to be the equal of princes…, how come you

say that a prince shall have no more than eight horses, and a count, four'?: he had not forgotten Müntzer's plan to limit the numbers of horses and knights, and it rankled because horses encapsulated noble status and entitlement.[94] Everyone mentions the sheer numbers of peasants, and how quickly they massed; when one band was defeated, another soon formed. It was as if everything was out of control and the knights, themselves a declining social group, were facing annihilation by peasant hordes.[95] The extreme nature of the violent assault seems to have been connected to a fear of social and political collapse, and it was epitomized in what nobles experienced as an attack on their manhood, jeopardized when so many were forced to break their oaths to their feudal superiors and swear brotherhood with peasants in contradiction of their noble code.

The anarchic killing of the early summer was followed by a period of cold-blooded punishment carried out by the lords against the rebels. This was selective, and it followed ritual forms, as men like Kasimir of Brandenburg moved in an arc of retribution marching from Würzburg to Rothenburg, executing 'their' peasants. They also took revenge on those towns which had sworn brotherhood with the peasants. The townsfolk would be summoned to meet at 7 a.m. on the town square, where a series of up to twenty or so executions would be carried out. Instead of hanging, most were decapitated, and killed not at the gallows outside town but on its very commercial heart, their blood staining the marketplace. Their bodies were left to rot, 'for punishment and horror',[96] polluting the town's centre; many of them were local notables, men who had played their part in politics for many years and who had sought to save their town from armies of peasants they could not possibly resist. Sometimes they might be forced to stand, unbound, in a ring for execution. 'I think I'll soon have seen enough of this, I'm off home', muttered one victim, as it came to his turn – he escaped into the crowd.[97] But others accepted their fates; one commentator noted how, when the knights hunted down the peasants, they did not resist, but 'let themselves be slaughtered like chickens'.[98] At Kitzingen, Casimir had fifty-eight citizens blinded and exiled; in other towns, he had the fingers of those who had sworn oaths with the peasants cut off.[99] Sometimes revenge was pointedly personal: the piper of Weinsberg who had plunged his spear in the lord's fat was executed by being tied by a short chain fastened to a pillar. A ring of fire was lit around him and he was roasted to death for about fifteen minutes.[100]

CONCLUSION

The Peasants' War followed an emotional cycle that was paralleled by a seasonal arc. Through the autumn, a sense of local grievance grew as communities articulated their grievances in formal Articles which were presented to their feudal lords. These complaints were largely about injustice; often, they concerned the sufferings of others, and they fuelled a powerful sense of righteous anger, legitimated by the gospel. The grievances began to articulate what was systemically wrong with the system of feudal lordship. By winter the individual complaints were being linked and spread beyond borders, as peasants began to join together. This blossomed spectacularly in the spring. Within very short periods, large groups of peasants formed, developing targets and strategies; and justified fury was shared in a wave of brotherhood. The Peasants' Articles were printed in spring, and though they were the grievances of Swabian peasantry, they soon spread to become something like the programme of an entire movement. Most important in creating revolution was the period of 'procession', or 'marching' in the late spring, as armies of peasants lived, slept, and ate and drank together and monasteries and castles fell to them. It was a time of jubilee, of triumphant exaltation, and of mystical union brought about by the complete annihilation of responsibility through drink and through release from agricultural drudgery and enslavement to time; indeed it is like the 'camping time' of the English rebels of 1549 about whom Andy Wood has written.[101] This collective emotional state, however, could sometimes slip into a kind of aggressive frenzy, and it may be that only such a state could enable peasants to fight for their land and freedom, finally smashing the personal loyalties of serfdom and the feudal order, and shattering the tyranny of the oaths which were the primary form of compulsion under feudalism. This loss of inhibition was mirrored by the emotional cycle of those on the lords' side, who engaged in a far more bloodthirsty carnival of revenge. One commentator believed that 100 thousand peasants were slaughtered by the troops of the Swabian League alone. A fervent anti-Lutheran, he still called for 'mercy and pity with so many widows, orphans, old and sick people' and mourned 'the houses are burnt, the fields and vineyards untilled, clothes and household goods stolen or burnt, cows and sheep taken, likewise horses and gear'.[102] Its legacy was an unspoken trauma, which may have left wounds deeper and more long-lasting than the Reformation itself.[103]

There is a relevant distinction here between grievances that are systemic, and grievances that blame individuals or types of individuals as the source of the problem. Both kinds were at work in the revolt. As the peasant spokespeople began to put into words the practices that so offended them, they linked these to the theology of the Reformation, in particular to the idea that Christ's blood, withheld from them by the Catholic priests, had bought their freedom. This legitimated a tide of anti-clerical feeling, and it was not just structural, directed against the secular and agrarian power of the church, but issued in antagonism towards particular individuals, rich abbots who exploited their peasants, people like the Bishop of Würzburg who simply ran away, and 'pfaffen' or clerics in general. In towns, similar feelings could turn against the Jews, who were blamed for usury – anti-semitism reared its head at several points during the revolt, a classic example of blaming the faults of a system on a group of individuals.[104] Renegade priests also joined the peasants, and they developed its theology of rebellion – indeed, many pastors were executed in the wake of the revolt. This anti-clericalism was shared by the lords, many of whom did not at first think that the revolt concerned them. Abbots, monasteries, and above all the hated Teutonic Knights were the first targets and they were not apparently offered the hand of brotherhood. Only later did secular lords become identified as the enemy, and even then, this could be overcome by appeals to fraternity. It was not that the peasants were simply too stupid to recognize their class enemy. Their critique of lordship was biblical, and they craved a Christian social order where differences of class, though not of gender, could be obliterated and union achieved. This was also why mystical theology, with its striving for union with the divine and loss of self, could exercise such a pull within the movement, underpinning Müntzer's violent theology and colouring the words and imagery of many lesser-known preachers.[105]

It is impossible to read Müntzer's words now without being struck by his towering rage: he condemned the 'Martinian peasant filth', the 'Lutheran pudding and …Wittenberg soup' of Lutheranism, excoriated the godless princes, and threatened ferocious revenge against the traitors whom he saw everywhere.[106] The infamous 'Pinckepank' passage of his letters exhorting the people of Allstedt to 'Go to it, go to it, while the fire is hot! Don't let your sword grow cold, don't let it hang down limply! Hammer away ding-dong on the anvils of Nimrod, cast down their tower to the ground' became a by-word for the emotional excesses of the Peasant War.[107] Müntzer's tidal wrath seems like the ragings of a demagogue, but it certainly gained

him supporters, many of whom stuck with him until the bitter end. His antagonist Luther also unleashed his anger in his pamphlet *Against the Robbing Murdering Hordes*, calling on the lords to slay the rebels like mad dogs, even, by an odd coincidence, borrowing Müntzer's metaphors: back in 1524 Müntzer had called for the godless to be 'slain like mad dogs'.[108] Here, as so often, the two leaders mirrored one another. Well aware of the creative force of anger, Luther later remarked: 'I have … no better work than anger and enthusiasm; for if I want to write poetry, write, pray or preach, I have to be angry; then my whole blood is refreshed, my understanding is sharpened, and all unpleasant thoughts and *Anfechtungen* [temptations, trials] give way' – an interesting recognition of what would today be recognized as the role of anger as a defence against depression.[109] Both Luther and Müntzer were masters of the rhetoric of rage, though in Luther's case that was usually leavened with humour. One of the features of the Peasants' War was that for some preachers, Müntzer and Luther in particular, anger powered the charisma that attracted their adherents, creative but brooking no argument and leading to bloodshed.

So what does the emotional cycle of the Peasants' War help us to explain? Following the logic of emotions helps to understand why the revolt developed in the way it did. It explains how a collective subjectivity was created, not only though ideology, but through religious passions, which played a particularly powerful role in this rebellion and which triggered action. This is what Hume meant by reason being the slave of the passions. The Peasants' War has not left much in terms of written ideology, and so historians have tended to focus on leaders like Müntzer who produced written works which can be studied, thus potentially over-estimating his influence even in the area where he was active. But illiterate societies are not devoid of ideas, and mystical experience can surpass language.

Brotherhood was not just a concept, but an experience; freedom was not simply a watchword, but something lived together, as peasants went on the march. This was how they were able to capture castles and monasteries, and why they were willing to risk all they possessed. The symbolism of blood was evident everywhere. The Catholic priests had kept Christ's blood from the peasants, yet Christ himself bought his people's freedom with the sacrifice of his blood; brothers were bound with blood; preachers like Müntzer preached of blood and his followers dreamt of it, seeing visions of blood, even a door with a keyhole full of blood.[110] Defeat brought massive bloodshed, and in its aftermath the lords deliberately chose the bloodiest forms of

execution. If we are to explain the behaviour of groups, we need to explain their formation, what binds them together, what symbols give them force, and what emotions their members experience. This must form as much a part of our explanation as do ideas.

Lyndal Roper bio needed

NOTES AND REFERENCES

I would like to thank the late Henry Cohn (1936–2021) from whose work we have all learnt so much; and Martin Donnelly, Laura Gowing, Ruth Harris, Kat Hill, Peter Matheson, Thomas T. Müller, Hannah Murphy, Mike Roper, Tom Scott, Steve Smith, Barbara Taylor, Ed Wareham, Charles West, Peter Wilson, Andy Wood, the Early Modern Workshop Oxford, and students of the German Peasants' War Special Subject 2019, 2020 for their help.

1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* London, 1739–40, Book 3, part 3, section 3, 'Of the Influencing Motives of the Will', where he argues that reason and passion are at war over the control of the will and that rational action is better than action governed by feeling. It is interesting, given his views on peoples who were 'naturally inferior' and his complex attitudes to slavery, now the subject of research, that he uses the word 'slave' in this context.

2 Franz's career stretched from the 1930s to the 1970s. He was a Nazi supporter but also a remarkable and energetic scholar whose work has profoundly shaped the historiography of the Peasants' War, not only because he wrote what is still its standard history – Günther Franz, *Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg* (1933), Darmstadt, 1969 – but also because he was involved in collecting and selecting its massive published source materials and hence influencing how it is understood. He was a co-worker on Walther Fuchs's vast collection of 'Middle German' documents which includes the crucial region where Thomas Müntzer was active; he published a collection of *Akten* of the Peasants' War (*Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg. Aktenband* (1935), Darmstadt, 1968, 1972) and many other source collections; and his brief documentary overview of the Peasants' War remains an invaluable starting point: Günther Franz, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges*, Darmstadt, 1963.

3 As a result, Engels also over-emphasized Luther's role, tending to present the war as an ideological conflict even while understanding that material factors lay behind it. He saw Luther as a mouthpiece of the middle classes, albeit with a 'sturdy peasant nature': Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), English transl. of 3rd edn, Moscow, 1956, p. 62; and Müntzer as a 'plebeian revolutionary' (Engels, *Peasant War*, p. 67): we now know that the two men in fact shared similar class backgrounds. Both came from mining towns and were part of the elite. Engels's heroization of Müntzer was also an attack on the conservative adulation of Luther in his own day.

4 See Peter Blickle, *Der Bauernkrieg. Die Revolution des gemeinen Mannes*, Munich, 1998, first developed in *Die Revolution von 1525*, Munich, 1975; and *The Revolution of 1525*, transl. Thomas A. Brady and H. Erik Midelfort, Baltimore, 1981. Recent scholarship includes Benjamin Heidenrich's *Ein Ereignis ohne Namen? Zu den Vorstellungen des 'Bauernkriegs' von 1525 in den Schriften der 'aufständischen' und in der zeitgenössischen Geschichtsschreibung*, Berlin and Boston, 2019, which offers a discourse analysis of the words used for the event based on digitization of all available printed sources; David von Mayenburg, *Gemeiner Mann und Gemeines Recht. Die Zwölf Artikel und das Recht des ländlichen Raums im Zeitalter des Bauernkriegs*, Frankfurt am Main, 2018; Sigfried Bräuer and Günter Vogler, *Thomas Müntzer: Neu Ordnung machen in der Welt. Eine Biographie*, Gütersloh, 2016, the authoritative biography of Thomas Müntzer; and Thomas T. Müller's *Mörder ohne Opfer. Die Reichsstadt Mühlhausen und der Bauernkrieg in Thüringen*, Petersberg, 2021, the first fully archivally-based comprehensive account of what took place in Mühlhausen. The invaluable starting point in English, which makes it possible to teach university-level courses for those without German, is the Introduction to *The German Peasants' War: a History in Documents*, ed. Tom Scott and Bob Scribner, Atlantic Highlands, 1991..

5 George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution*, Oxford, 1959, esp. pp. 210–31.

6 'dennen di augen woll wassers stunden': Letter of Johann of Fulda to Michael Streyttell, 22 April 1525, in *Akten zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Mitteldeutschland*, ed. Otto Merx, Walter Peter Fuchs and Günther Franz, 2 vols in 3 parts, Leipzig, 1923–42, reprint Aalen, 1964 (hereafter AGBM), vol. 1 part 1, p. 180,. The letter is full of emotion words: 'draurelich entgegen gangen' (walked sadly

toward), ‘sauer gesehen’, (looked sourly), ‘ser scharret und ganz ungestimm’ (very raging and quite wild), ‘zorniglich’ (angrily), ‘waineten augen’ (crying eyes) and so forth, pp.180–1. Johann Textor wrote to his clerical superior that he is ‘in forchten und mit fliessenden zehren’ (in fear and with flowing tears): AGBM 2, p. 23; Georg von Werdenstein writes ‘Da war ich erzürnet, daß ich kein vernunft hat’ (thereupon I was enraged so that I lost reason): Franz Ludwig Baumann, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Oberschwaben*, Stuttgart, 1876, modern reprint (hereafter Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*), p. 487. Nicholaus Thoman suddenly moves to the first person at the end of his description of the peasants’ defeat, expressing his relief: ‘Ich vermain, das gott der almechtig sunder gottliche gnad ayner oberkayt hie zu Weyssenhorn mitthaylt hab, das sy solliche unzymliche wuderwertikeyt des gmainen folcks nider getruckt haben und zu friden gestelt’ (I think that God the Almighty granted especial divine grace to the authority here at Weissenhorn, so that it suppressed and pacified such unseemly repugnance on the part of the common folk): Nicolaus Thoman, *Weissenhorner Historie*, in Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, pp. 1–240 (hereafter Thoman, *Weissenhorner Historie)*, p. 69.

7 ‘rasende hunde’: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Schriften, 72 vols, Weimar, 1903 (hereafter WA), vol. 18, pp. 357:9; ‘seliglichern tod kanstu nimer mehr uberkomen’: WA 18, p. 361:26; *Luther’s Works*, Philadelphia, 1957–ongoing (LW), vol. 46, pp. 50, 54.

8 See for example the chronicles of Peter Harer: Willi Alter, *Die Berichte von Peter Harer und Johannes Keßler vom Bauernkrieg 1525*, Speyer 1995, p. 27 (cited hereafter as *Harer* and *Keßler* respectively); Martin Cronthal: *Die Stadt Würzburg im Bauernkriege von Martin Cronthal, Stadtschreiber zu Würzburg*, ed. Michael Wieland, Würzburg, 1887 (hereafter *Cronthal*); Lorenz Fries: *Die Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, ed. August Schäffler and Theodor Henner, 2 vols, Aalen,1978, reprint of Würzburg edn of 1883, 1908, 1937 (hereafter *Fries*); of the nuns of Heggbach (in Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*) and the works of Johannes Cochlaeus; of *Heinrich Hugs Villinger Chronik von 1495–1533*, ed Christian Roder, Tübingen, 1883 (hereafter *Hug)*; the verbosely conversational reports of Antonius von Kospoth (the official at Annaberg and Schellenberg: printed in AGBM vol. 2) and many others.

9 This is even captured visually on the cover of the pro-peasant printed pamphlet *An die versamlung gemayner Pawerschafft/ so in Hochteütscher Nation/ vnd vil ande||rer ort/ mit empörung vnd auffrur*

entstanden, Hieronymus Höltzel, Nürnberg, 1525: VD 16 A 2438. It shows a peasant woman with a man's breeches dangling around her legs who turns the wheel of Fortune; a small pope is about to be turned downwards. On the viewer's left are the 'peasant folk, good Christians' who bear spears and agricultural implements; on the right, the 'Romanists and Sophists', nobles, and assorted cardinals and monks. The woman turning the wheel has thus also overturned the gender order by stealing the breeches.

11 So for example a recent study shows how moods can be spread among young people: Per Block and Stephanie Burnett Heyes, 'Sharing the Load: Contagion and Tolerance of Mood in Social Networks', *Emotion*, 2020 doi: 10.1037/emo0000952. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 33370141. DATE? It's 2020

12 For a survey of the field, see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: an Introduction* (2012), transl. Keith Tribe, Oxford, 2015. See also Joanna Bourke, 'Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History', *History Workshop Journal* 55, 2003, pp. 111–33; Bourke, *Fear: a Cultural History*, London, 2006; and Ute Frevert, *Die Politik der Demütigung. Schauplätze von Macht und Ohnmacht*, Frankfurt, 2017. For a succinct critical summary of the approach, see Thomas A. Kohut, *Empathy and the Historical Understanding of the Human Past*, London and New York, 2020, p. 40.

13 William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: a Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge, 2001. On emotives, see esp. pp. 96–111.

14 Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, 2007; Rosenwein, *Anger: the Conflicted History of an Emotion*, London and New Haven, 2020; she is particularly good on righteous anger. On the elites' view of peasant anger as animalistic see Paul Freedman, 'Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages', in *Anger's Past: the Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein, New York, 1998.

15 See for example Stephen Justice, who explores the ideas of the rebels of 1381 by looking at their actions, such as making bonfires of documents: Stephen Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, Berkeley, 1994, pp. 140–70.

16 Tübke's painting was then the biggest canvas in the world. On the work and its sources, see Ulrike Eydinger, 'Motive historischer Flugblätter und Druckgraphiken im Bauernkriegspanorama von Werner Tübke. Zur Genese des Kunstwerkes', in *Reformation und Bauernkrieg*, ed. Werner Greiling, Thomas T. Müller, and Uwe Schirmer, Cologne, 2019.

17 Baumann, *Akten Oberschwaben*, pp. 188–208, p. 196; Franz, *Akten*, p. 339; Baumann, *Akten Oberschwaben*, pp. 96–7; Franz, *Quellen*, pp. 318–9.

18 On hunting and blood sacrifice, see Daniel Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War*, Cambridge, 2008.

19 Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet*, London, 2016, pp. 225, 281.

20 See Munich's Jagd- und Fischerei-museum for examples of the material culture of hunting.

21 Jagdschloss Grunewald, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagdschloss_Grunewald#Hunting, accessed 28 Jan. 2021: other panels featured coats of arms. The entrance also has a beautifully carved relief over the doorway of stags locking horns, and there is a seventeenth-century light-fitting made of antlers, a material often used for decorative purposes in such castles. Grunewald was built in 1542–3, contains paintings by Cranach, and was just fifteen km away from the newly-built main electoral residence; it also housed the Elector's mistress. It thus encapsulated all that set nobles apart.

22 Franz, *Quellen*, pp. 124–5 (Kempten region); p. 227 (Klettgau); Franz, *Akten*, p. 131 (Nellenburg); p. 150 (Mittelbiberach); p. 161 (Oggelshausen and Tiefenbach; reply to lost articles); p. 163 (Augsburg Bishopric peasants); pp. 247, 249 (Schaffhausen villages); pp. 274, 276 (Solothurn, response); p. 286 (Rotberg villages: permitted in treaty of May 1525); Baumann, *Akten Oberschwaben* (Stühlingen), p. 199.

23 The classic article on anticlericalism remains Henry Cohn, 'Anticlericalism in the German Peasants' War 1525', *Past & Present*, 83, 1979, pp. 3–31.

24 'So werden wir dich für kain Herren, sunder allain fuer ein Knecht und Diener der Gemaind erkennen, das du nit uns, sunder wir dir zu gebieten haben': Franz, *Quellen*, p. 316. For a translation, see Thomas A. Brady and Katherine G. Brady, 'Taking Control of Village Religion: Wendelstein in Franconia', in *A Sourcebook of Early Modern European History*, ed. Ute Lotz-Heumann, London, 2019.

25 *Dorffmayster vnnd Gemaind zu wendelstains fürhalten/ den Amptleüten zu Schwabach vnd jrem new angeendem Pfarrherrn gethan*, Jobst Gutknecht, Nuremberg, 1524: VD 16 W 1904. This pamphlet had an interesting local backstory. The local judge Hans Herbst had taken to writing pro-Reformation pamphlets, criticizing his brother-in-law the pastor Johann Linck for lack of evangelical zeal, mocking him in verse, and advocating that a common chest be established to help the poor (this pamphlet also featured a female textile worker, even pictured on the cover):

Eyn Gesprech von dem gemaynen Schwabacher Kasten, als durch bruder Hainrich, Knecht Ruprecht, Kemerin, Spuler, vnd jrem Maister, des Handtwercks der Wüllen Tuchmacher, Hieronymus Höltzel, Nuremberg, 1524: VD 16 H 2228). Herbst soon found himself in prison for his pains. Whether or not he wrote the letter of appointment (and its aggressive tone suggests it may even have been a mock piece published by an opponent), its sentiments certainly fitted with the trend of his pamphleteering: he published five such pamphlets in Nuremberg 1524–5.

26 Many negative stereotypes about Gunkelstuben circulated from the 1530s on and they became a subject of popular print. On the sexual symbolisim of Beham's print see Alison Stewart, 'Distaffs and Spindles: Sexual Misbehavior in Sebald Beham's Spinning Bee': https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=artfacpub.

27 'ire sachen wellent anfahen'; 'sie woltent ain Danz hon': Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, pp. 279; 279–95: 1541 report of a nun from Kloster Heggbach. See among many similar examples, the report of the Council of Stadtilm who say they admonished their rebels not to attack 'such noble, honourable, virtuous and innocent virgins': AGBM 2, p. 467.

28 See for example Johannes Cochlaeus, *Wider die Reubische[n] und Mordischen rotten der Bawren, die vnter dem schey[n] des heiligen Euangelions felschlichen wider alle Oberkeit sich setzen vnd empören Martinus Luther; Antwort …,* Peter Quentell, Cologne, 1525: VD 16 L 7485, fo. D ii (v).

29 'Kum herab, du alter Hund, mir weilend dier den Bart heraußraufen'; 'Ir jungen huren, wir wellend euch geheuen und die alten kamerschellen darnach nöten'; 'si wellen kein herren mer han': Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben,* p. 486.

30 'Wie gar und ganz mir beraupt seyn gewest des tegliche Brots nit allain, sunder auch des ewigen Brots', Günther Franz, 'Aus der Kanzlei der württembergischen Bauern im Bauernkrieg', *Württembergische Vierteljahresheft für Landesgeschichte* NF 41, 1935, pp. 83–108, 88.

31 Franz, *Quellen*, p. 239: 'Dan Cristus unser Herr uns tur mit sinem rosevarben Blut erlost und erkouft hat, deß eigen wir alle sient und niemants anderst.' The reference to colour is interesting here: cheap woodcuts showing Christ's suffering on the cross often included red colouring indicating Christ's blood or were coloured by their owners. See Ryan Asquez, 'The Suffering Christ: an International Symbol of Piety and Identity, 1450–1550', D Phil diss, University of Oxford, pp. 219–37.

32 ‘Ist der brauch byßher gewesen das man vns für jr aigen leüt gehalten haben, wölchs zu erbarmen ist, angesehen das vns Chrstus all mitt seynem kostparlichen plutvergussen, erlößt vnnd erkaufft hat, Den Hyrtten gleich alls wol alls Den höchsten, kain außgenommen, Darumb erfindt sich mit der geschryfft das wir frey seyen vnd wöllen sein’: Scott and Scribner, *German Peasants’ War*, p. 254; German text, Mayenburg: *Gemeiner Mann und Gemeines Recht*, pp. 365–71, 367.

33 John Arnold, ‘Religion and Popular Rebellion, from the Capuciati to Niklashausen’, *Cultural and Social History* 6, 2009, pp. 149–69, 154.

34 ‘frey und ungezwungen sein soll und sein fryhen Willen hab’: testimony of Martin Küfferknecht von Rappoltsweiler, 6 August 1525, that is, after the war; Franz, *Akten*, p. 185: the original was lost by Franz’s time and he relied on an incomplete transcription. So also the pastor of Burgwalde, who dressed as a peasant, reportedly preached against vanity (‘Hoffart’ – one of the Seven Deadly Sins) warning that the nobility would cop it, and announcing ‘Ich wil euch ein nau regiment sagen’ (I will tell you a new government/order). He allegedly also preached against ‘Hofarbeit’, labour dues, though others (interrogated after the War) said he only objected to labouring on saints’ days, and that he was trying to protect himself by hiding among peasants: AGBM 2, 702–4. Here again evangelical ideas were mixed with hostility to serfdom; interesting too are the strategies of the witnesses after the War to protect their pastor.

35 Roper, *Martin Luther*, p. 245.

36 For a similar argument, see Arnold, ‘Religion and Popular Rebellion’.

37 Sets of engravings of the Seven Deadly Sins gained popularity from the 1530s and their iconography became stylized. Heinrich Aldegrever’s ‘Wrath’ of 1552 shows her with a bear; Georg Pencz’s set from 1541 shows her with a lion. Interestingly, depictions of Anger in all these series (including later artists such as Callot or Goltzius) are much less negative than depictions of other sins, especially Envy. On Envy, see Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination*, Charlottesville and London, 2012.

38 ‘dan es ist alles ein gleiche sach und hilff’; ‘das aber wir komen werden, doch wollen wir euch noch zur zeit ungetroet haben, aber vil besser were euch, ire hefftet ewr pferdt an eins andern baren, dan das andere ire pferdt an ewre heftten solten’: Norbert Höbelheinrich, *Die Neun Städte des Mainzer Oberstifts*, Hildesheim, Zurich

and New York, 1994, p. 141 (report of the Bischofsheimers on their negotiations with the peasantry).

39 *Cronthal*, p. 56.

40 *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe*, ed. Armin Kohnle, Eike Wolgast, Siegfried Bräuer, Manfred Kobuch, Wieland Held, Siegfried Hoyer, 3 vols, Leipzig, 2004–17, vol. 3, p. 272. For *Müntzer*'s wish to appropriate all land within a ten-mile radius of Mühlhausen (about 46 miles), and Hesse as well, see *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. and transl. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh, 1988), 1994, p. 437,

41 Scott and Scribner, *German Peasants' War*, pp. 252–7. The Zwickau printing of *Dye Grundtlichen Vnd rechten haupt Artitkl/ aller Baurschafft vnd Hyndersessen der Gaistlichen vnd Weltlichen oberkaytẽ von wö]lchen sy sich beschwert vermainen*, (Johann Schönsperger d J., Zwickau, 1525) has a delightful woodcut image of peasants consulting together indoors: VD 16 G 3563. [Not mentioned in main text? – AD I think that's ok because the 12 articles, of which this is one printing, IS mentioned in the main text].

42 On forms of address and their importance in seventeenth-century France, see Giora Sternberg, 'Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the Time of Louis XIV'**,** *Past & Present* 204, 2009, pp. 33–88.

43 Tom Scott, *Thomas Müntzer. Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation*, New York, 1989, pp. 47–96.

44 *Jacob Murers Weissenauer Chronik des Bauernkriegs von 1525*, ed. Günter Franz and Werner Fleischhauer, 2 vols, Sigmaringen, 1977.

45 *Fries* vol. 1, pp. 143–9; and see similar values expressed in the Mandate of the Württemberg peasantry, Wilhelm Vogt, *Die Correspondenz des schwäbschen Bundeshauptmanns Ulrich Artzt von Augsburg a. d. J. 1524 und 1525*, Augsburg, 1880, pp. 199–201.

46 'das irs von Buttika [=Bietigheim] nit werden lachen': Franz, 'Aus der Kanzlei', p. 88. For similar threats, see pp. 89, 92–3, 96: the town of Balingen, for example, was ordered 'zukommen in disse bruderschaft', 'to enter this brotherhood', with threats if they did not. This collection is particularly interesting as a rare set of letters from a peasant chancellery which were captured, containing draft copies of letters sent and others received.

47 'one scheu der Oberkeit': Alter, *Harer*, p. 48.

48 'weckten sie in Betten uff': Alter, *Harer*, p. 49.

49 ‘Götz, bist da, sagt ich ja, was ist die sach, was soll ich thun, oder was wollen die hauptleuth mein, da hebt er an, du must ir Hauptman werden’: H.S.M. Stuart, *The Autobiography of Götz von Berlichingen,* London 1956, pp. 72, 72–3. Götz von Berlichingen, the knight with an iron fist – he had a prosthesis– wrote a much later account of his life when he was an old man. His rambunctious tale was the inspiration for Goethe’s play, an English version of which was written by Walter Scott; Joel Harrington is working on a translation of the original.

50 ‘aus keinem frolucken ader wollust’, ‘aus forchte und bedrangnisse’: AGBM 2, p. 355. He added that he had not sworn an oath to them. He could not read or write, he explained, but he was sure that even the notary had not understood what they signed.

51 ‘Historie von dem Auffruhr der Samländischen Bauern’, *Erleutertes Preußen* 2, Königsberg, 1725, pp. 328–57; 531–66: report of Nikolaus Richau, town Councillor of Königsberg, manuscript in library of Camerarius, Wallenrod. In this revolt the noble was forced to swap clothes with a peasant. Richau’s hostile account of what took place describes how the peasants demanded that the noble surrender and ‘Gib dich gefangen!’. When, as a man of honour, he demanded to know to whom he must give himself captured they had no answer – an anecdote mocking the rebels’ ignorance of the chivalric code. It may also, however, reveal their self-understanding as a group, not as individuals.

52 On brotherhood, see Kat Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525–1585,* Oxford, 2015.

53 So for example the Odenwald peasants wrote to the peasants at Wunnenstein with whom they were making a union instructing them not to attack the nearby castle Löwenstein because its lords had reached agreement with them (‘gegeaint, gesetzt und zufriden gestelt’). If they were to do anything hostile to these lords or plunder their property, then ‘we would be caused…to support their graces militarily’: Franz, ‘Aus der Kanzlei’, p. 87.

54 Friedrich Engels, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg,* 1850, 2017 digital edition, chap. 2 (see especially towards the end). Engels’s analysis is subtle, and recognizes the importance of mysticism in peasant revolt. See also Janos Bak and others, ‘“The Peasant War in Germany” by Friedrich Engels – 125 Years After’, in *Journal of Peasant Studies* 3: 1, 1975, and *The German Peasant War of 1525*, ed. Janos Bak, London 1976.

55 Lyndal Roper, '"The Peasant War in Germany" by Friedrich Engels – 125 Years After: 'The " Common man", the "Common good", "Common women": Gender and Meaning in the German Reformation Commune', *Social History* 12, 1987, pp. 1–21. For more on masculinity and the peasants' war, see Roper, 'Band of Brothers', forthcoming.

56 'yre weiber, welche so gar lutherisch sein gewesen das sie yre menner gedrungen vnd geraytzt haben, aufrur zu machen': Cochlaeus, *Wider die Reubische[n] und Mordischen rotten,* fo. E iii (v). This pamphlet by the indefatigable Johannes Cochlaeus, Luther's antagonist and first anti-biographer, provides first a refutation of Luther's theological views, then an imaginary dialogue between himself and Luther. He next includes a brief panoramic history of the Peasants' War, divided by region and centring on Swabia, from where its author (perhaps not Cochlaeus himself) most likely came. Probably one of the first full historical overviews, it is a remarkable achievement, published in the year of the revolt. Cochlaeus also provides a refutation of Luther's refutation of Thomas Müntzer's final letters.

57 'Wuhr umb sie Messe gehalden das ir doch nicht gebuert': Stadtarchiv Mühlhausen 10 K 3, Nr. 13, fo, 13 (r). See also Thomas T. Müller, 'Ein ehrbarer Rat, entlaufene Mönche und streitbare Weiber. Zu den reformatorischen Bestrebungen in der Reichsstadt Mühlhausen in Thüringenn bis zum Jahr 1525', in *Vor- und Frühreformation in thüringischen Städten (1470–1525/30*), ed. Joachim Emig, Volker Leppin and Uwe Schirmer, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2013; AGBM 2, pp. 535, 773, 834 (Dorothea Ziegler).

58 See for example Margaret Rennerin, alias die 'schwarze Hofmännin', whom Franz describes as the leaders' 'advisor, or possibly their evil spirit': Franz, *Bauernkrieg*, pp. 189–90; and a woman named 'Lülich' in Windsheim: Scott and Scribner, *German Peasants' War*, pp. 225–6. Tom Scott, 'The Collective Response of Women to Early Reformation Preaching: Four Small Communities and their Preachers Compared', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 102, 2011, pp. 7–32: Scott points out that the only recorded examples of women's collective action were at Riedlingen, Waldshut, Allstedt and Kenzingen. The visual culture of the twentieth century, however, stressed the opposite. Käthe Kollwitz's magnificent set of lithographs of the Peasants' War deliberately underlines women's role, using these women's stories inspirationally. One remarkable and moving image shows a woman who has been raped: an image from a woman's point of view, it has no salaciousness.

The tradition then passed through to East German art of the Peasants' War, with artists like Elisbeth Voigt, trained by Kollwitz, taking this up. See Tina Mendelsohn, 'Women Artists of the DDR', forthcoming.

59 Franz, *Jacob Murers Weissenauer Chronik des Bauernkriegs.*

60 Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, p. 256 (from the later Chronicle of the Cistercian monk Johann Knebel). Knebel also accuses the peasants of dressing like nobles, setting aside their smocks and donning trousers cut short and white slashed with blue along with big hats with feathers.

61 'und ire bruderliche Liebe gegen den guten Heren noch turkischer Art mitgeteilt': *Harer*, p. 27.

62 AGBM 2, pp. 74–5.

63 The most famous depiction of Schlaraffenland is that by Pieter Breugel from 1567.

64 Stuart, *Götz von Berlichingen*, pp. 77–8.

65 Reinhard Jordan, *Chronik der Stadt Mühlhausen. Vol 1 bis 1525* (1900), reprint, Bad Langensalza, 2001, p. 188.

66 Mergentheim, *Harer*, p. 26; Bruchsal, *Harer*, p. 28; Ochsenfurt, *Fries* vol. 1, pp. 143–4; see also Nicolaus Thoman, *Weissenhorner Historie*, p. 73.

67 Fishing out ponds is mentioned in countless sources and is depicted in the visual chronicle of Jacob Murer. In Reinhardsbrunn for example the peasants simply moved into the monastery in late April and 'slaughtered, cooked, brewed, roasted, fished out the ponds and hunted us poor brothers out in the evening…': AGBM 2, p. 708.

68 *Cronthal*, p. 66.

69 See AGBM 2, pp. 512–28 for lists of damages to the property of nobles and monasteries compiled for compensation suits. Several list hundreds of sheep 'in wool' – probably taken and slaughtered for meat in disregard of the fine wool ready for shearing. They also list iron locks and fixtures ripped from doors, roof tiles smashed, stores taken and even dung for the fields burnt, presumably as fuel.

70 Christan Kolb, *Geschichtsquellen der Stadt Hall* (Württembergische Geschichtsquellen, 1), Stuttgart, 1894, pp. 208–9 (chronicle of Johannes Herolt); Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, p. 585 (for his end). See also Nicolaus Thoman's *Weissenhorner Historie*, pp. 89–9.

71 *Fries* vol. 1, pp. 87–8.

72 Other peasant groups condemned the Weinsberg massacre; Rohrbach, supposedly one of the leaders, was removed from his position: Scott and Scribner, *German Peasants' War*, pp. 236–7; Thoman, *Weissenhorner Historie*, p. 90. Thoman was chaplain of St Leonard's Weissenhorn: Rohrbach eventually suffered the same fate as the piper, roasted to death.

73 'ire Weiber in Angesicht der Mannen schmehen': Franz, *Quellen*, p. 257: 'confession' of Erasmus Gerber – but there was no written confession, as the officials of the Bishop of Strasbourg explained to the town Council. On the other hand, the ordinance of the Württemberg peasants strictly forbade rape of all women, matrons or virgins: Vogt, *Artzt*, 200 (Article 9); this was found by their enemies at Herrenberg in a collection of documents they had deposited before the decisive battle at Böblingen. The ordinance also included admonitions against drunkenness; the same is true of the Franconian ordinance at Ochsenfurt: *Fries* 1, pp. 144–7.

74 'wie Gott alle vogel des hymels fordert, das sie sollen fressen das fleysch der fursten, vnd die vnvernunfftige thier sollen sauffen das blut der grossen hansen': *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, p. 464; Letter to Albrecht of Mansfeld, Frankenhausen, 12 May 1525: *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. and transl. Matheson.

75 'Sehet nit an den jhammer der gottloßen. Sie werden euch also freuntlich bitten, greynen, flehen wie dye kinder. Lassett euch nit erbarmen': *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, p. 412; 26 April 1525, Müntzer to the people of Allstedt; Matheson, *Müntzer*, p. 141.

76 Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, pp. 551–2 (Chronicle of the notary of Truchsess Georg von Waldburg).

77 'auch die steine vor ihnen weichen': AGBM 2, p. 378, letter of Johann Rühel to Luther, 26 May 1525.

78 *Cronthal*, p. 68; *Harer*, p. 49.

79 Rudé, *The Crowd*, pp. 217–20; Katrina Navickas, 'Luddism, Incendiarism and the Defence of Rural "Task-scapes" in 1812', *Northern History* 48, 2011, pp. 59–73, 69–71; Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of early modern England*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 165, and see also on seasonality, time and popular memory, Wood, 'Popular Senses of Time and Place in Tudor and Stuart England', *Insights* 6: 3, 2013, pp. 2–9; and Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, New York and Oxford, 1957, p. 1970.

80 AGBM 2, p. 91. In this letter, written on Good Friday, he even recognized that the poor had been exploited, and had not been given the true gospel. See AGBM 2, pp. 189, 190 for a similar reluctance in early May to fight the peasants and an insistence on negotiation; he was on his deathbed by this point.

81 *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* vol. 3, pp. 258–9. A similar story is told about the pastor of Leipheim Jacob Wehe, who also conversed with his conquerors before his execution. They accused him of being a godless preacher; he insisted he had preached peace and the Word of God and was dying for the sake of God's Word. Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, pp. 552–3 (Chronicle of notary of Truchsess, Georg von Waldburg).

82 Nicole Volcyr de Sérouville, *L'histoire & receuil de la triumphante et glorieuse victoire obtenue contre les seduyctz et abusez Lutheriens mescreans du pays D'Aulsays…*, Galiot Du Pré, Paris 1526 (cited hereafter as *Volcyr*), fos xlvi (r) –xlviii (r) (Book 2, chs 11, 12, 13); 'Dorzu so triben sie dermossen stuck mit weibern, also daß die armen Wiber nit wissen wonus': Franz, *Quellen*, p. 258.

83 *Volcyr*, fo. lii (r) (chap. 18).

84 *Fries* vol. 1, pp. 313 ff (Königshofen); pp. 321–5 (Ingolstadt); Otto Merx, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der religiösen und sozialen Bewegung in den Stiftern Mainz, Würzburg und Bamberg (1524–1526)', *Archiv des historischen Vereins für Unterfranken* 49, 1907, 135–158, 153–4 (Report of Hans Fridell, Königshofen, pp. 152–6).

85 *Fries* vol. 1, pp. 321–5: here Fries reports what he saw himself and how he counted the bodies in the castle: 'ritte ich [with others]… gein Ingelstat, stunden ab und gingen hinein in das sloss, zeleten der toten leychnam, so darin lagen, 206' (p. 325).

86 'mit bauren gezetelt gelegen waren': *Fries*, vol. 1, p. 323.

87 Thomann, *Weissenhorner Historie*, pp. 82–3.

88 Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, pp. 120–1 (Thoman, *Weissenhorner Historie*: copy of letter of Elector Ludwig of the Palatinate to Truchsess Georg describing the battle of Pfeddersheim): https://www.worms-erleben.de/erleben/erleben-und-feiern/kultur/Geschichte/anekdoten/bluthohl_pfeddersheim.php, accessed 21 Jan. 2021. The flowing blood is remembered in the Blutrinne, Frankenhausen: see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bad_Frankenhausen/Kyffh%C3%A4user (with photo), accessed 21 Jan 2021.

89 Volcyr, *L'histoire*, book 2 chap. 13, fo. 47 (v) to 48 (r).

90 *Cronthal*, p. 87.

91 Volcyr, *L'histoire*. The book is also illustrated: the opening illustrations to the entire book show Fortune and Justice, the overall message of the book, and Volcyr himself is depicted writing in a St Jerome-like pose. The woodcut that heads Book 2, which deals with the Sauverne events, is a more realistic image of landscape and soldiers and a town about to be despoiled. It does not, however, show the fires.

92 Lorenz Fries tells this story: *Fries* vol. 1, p. 325.

93 'das würgen ohn barmherzigkeit den Tyrannen, und daß sie daraus märtyrer werden können': Johann Rühel to Luther, 26 May 1525: AGBM 2, pp. 378–9.

94 'du bist ein schöner fürstengenoß, ….Wie kommestu darauff, daß ein fürst nicht mehr den 8 pferde, ein graff 4 pferde haben sollen': Johann Rühel to Luther, 26 May 1525: AGBM 2, pp. 378–9. It had also been mentioned earlier in a letter of Hans Zeiß to Christoph Meinhart, 5 May 1525: AGBM 2, p. 203, so was probably well known; and it was one of the points to which Müntzer later confessed, *Thomas- Müntzer-Ausgabe* 3, p. 266. The confession was printed and so became well known.

95 On knights in this period see Hillay Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: the Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440–1567*, Cambridge, 1998; Gadi Algazi, *Herrengewalt und Gewalt der Herren im späten Mittelalter*, Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1996.

96 'Andern zur straff vnndt abschew': *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* N F 3, 1885, nos. 4 to 6, pp. 73–7; 113–6; 137–40: 138 (Report of Michel Gross von Trockau, chief Captain of Infantry of Margrave Casimir, hereafter Gross, 'Bericht').

97 'Ich hab Mir des Dings baldt gnug gesehen, will darfür heimbgehen', Gross, 'Bericht', p. 116.

98 ‘reuter uf sie stossen, so lassen sie sich on gegenwehr wurgen wie die hüner’, *Crontal*, p. 37. Crontal, civic notary of Würzburg, explains that he is writing at length because he wants the reader to know what it was like. At another point he uses the same metaphor, writing ‘es was dieser zeit alles recht, was man gegen den armen furnahm, und die menschen wie die hüner geschetzt’ (at that time everything that was done against the poor was just, and people were valued like chickens), *Crontal*, p. 89. ‘Hühner’, chickens, were common feudal dues.

99 Gross, ‘Bericht’, pp. 139–40. Townsfolk were easier to inflict exemplary violence on because they were usually easier to find and shocking sights were easier to stage; they were also not the lords’ workforce. Gross evidently found some of the sights disturbing, and he writes sympathetically of one ex-monk who had written some letters for the peasants, and was otherwise very learned in scripture. He describes how the man comported himself at execution in a most Christian manner, and when his head fell on its stump in the grass its mouth opened three times as if it screamed ‘Jesus’ (p. 139): the miraculous story hints at possible injustice.

100 The same fate befell Jacklein Rohrbach who allegedly led the assault. In a similar revenge punishment, one of Margrave Casimir’s soldiers stuck a spear through the body of a ringleader of the Anhausen monastery attack who had mocked the clergy by wearing mass vestments: it was left there for three days, ‘so that the punishment of God should be manifest’. Baumann, *Quellen Oberschwaben*, p. 257 (Chronicle of Johannes Knebel, Conventual of Kaisheim).

101 Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions*, pp. 165–6: ‘camping time’ also referred to football so that the term was redolent of male rituals and could convey the hostility of young against old, as well as referring to physical camping out.

102 ‘erbarmung vnd mitleyden.. mit so vil witwen, waysen altenn vnnd krancken lewtenn, die durch dissen yammer in so grosse not armut zwang vnd trubsal kommen seind…die heuser seind verprenit, die Ecker vnnd weingarten vngepaut, kleider vnd haußrat geraubt oder verprennt, kue vnnd schoff genommen. Des gleychenn roß vnd gschyrr’: Johannes Cochlaeus, *Wider die Reubischen vnd Mordischen rotten der Bawren…*, fo. E iv (r). See also Johannes Salat’s powerful metaphor, ‘The cart is broken, the tie is sprung, and the unwilling communities, driven too hard, have sprung out of the harness in which they walked so willingly for so long’ (der karren prochen, der bogen zersprungen, und die unwilligen gmeinden uß demm gschirr, darinn sy lang so willig gangen, jetz alls übertriben us gsprungen sind): *Johannes Salat*

Reformationschronik 1517–1534, ed. Ruth Jörg, 3 vols, Bern 1986, vol. 1, p. 327: he blamed Luther and Zwingli, and the exploitation of the peasants by their lords. On the figure of 100 thousand deaths, see also for example *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, ed. Alfred Hartmann, Basel 1942–2010, vol. 3, pp. 53, 56, 58, 314: this is the figure Bonifacius Amerbach cites in his letters to a series of friends.

103 On violence and the breaking of taboos I have found very helpful the work of two twentieth-century historians: Joanna Bourke, especially *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare*; New York 1999; and Bernd Weisbrod, 'Military Violence and Male Fundamentalism: Ernst Jünger's Contribution to the Conservative Revolution', *History Workshop Journal* 49, 2000, 68–94.

104 At Rothenburg ob der Taube, the preacher Johann Teuschel who had formerly preached against the Jews inciting attacks on them now preached in support of the Reformation, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs aus Rotenburg [sic] an der Tauber*, ed. Franz Ludwig Baumann Stuttgart 1878, modern reprint, pp. 9–11 (chronicle of Thomas Zweifel).

105 Engels was however well aware of the power of mystical religiosity in the Peasants' War.

106 'Martinischen bawrendreck', 'deyner lutherischen grutz vnd ynn deyner Wittembergischen suppen…: *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* vol. 2, p. 464; Letter to Albrecht of Mansfeld, 12 May 1525, in *Müntzer*, ed. Matheson, p. 157.

107 'Dran, drand, weyl das feur heis ist. Lasst ewr schwerd nicht kalt warden von blut. Schmidet pinckpanck auff den ambos Nymrod, werfft yhn den torm zu boden!', Letter to the people of Allstedt, c. 26, 27 April 1525, *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, p. 415; Matheson, *Müntzer*, p. 142. Luther published it along with other letters in his condemnation of Müntzer shortly after the defeat. In 1534, Georg Witzel also mocked Müntzer's 'Binckbancks hammerdon', now a byword for angry rebellion. He claimed to have written a letter admonishing Müntzer for it at the time, though no copy survives apart from Witzel's own printing of it in 1534 during an argument with Justus Jonas, who accused him of sympathizing with Müntzer. The letter appears to have more than a touch of hindsight. In the wake of the Peasants' War, Witzel lost his post. He appears to have been a friend and co-worker of Jakob Strauss, but by this time Müntzer and Pfeiffer did not apparently count Strauss amongst their supporters. See Georg Witzel, *Von der Christlichen Kyrchen*, fo R 3 v, where he writes about the

time when everything ‘schon nach Binckbancks hammerdon/ dran dran wolt’, and see *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, pp. 392–3 and notes 4 to 6.

108 ‘Wan der amptman von Sangerhausen adder ander tyrannen hyeherkemen, dan solten sye nicht gedencken, das yhr alten kramantzen solten stadthaben…sunder man solte sye erwurgen wye dye wutenden hunde’: *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, p. 313, Müntzer to Hans Zeiss, Allstedt 22 July 1524, and for similar language, see pp. 300–01.

109 ‘Nunquam mihi melius procedit orare, praedicare, scribere, quam cum irascor. Ira enim **erfrischt mir mein gantz geblut, WHY BOLD? This is in the original; it’s because it’s in German. I suppose we don’t have to retain it, but they indicate the language shift this way.** acuit ingenium, propellit tentationes.’ I am grateful to Simon Ponsonby for pointing this out. See WT 2, 2410 a and also 2410 b.

110 *Thomas-Müntzer-Ausgabe* 2, pp. 324–6, Hans Puttyger to Müntzer; Gesichte des ‘Vaters’ Herold aus Liedersdorf, pp. 326–30; Matheson, pp. 107–8 (ship full of blood); visions of Herold of Liedersdorf, summer 1524, p. 110 (door with keyhole full of blood).