Turbulence and the German Peasants' War of 1524–6

by Lyndal Roper

When contemporaries talked about the Peasants' War, the word they all used was *Aufruhr*, one core meaning of which is 'turbulence'.[1] Indeed, the revolt itself was in a sense nameless, described by many at the time simply as 'the *Aufruhr*'. It is worth pausing on this word turbulence, not just, I shall suggest, because it was such a feature of contemporary discourse about the Peasants' War, but because it reveals something of the nature of the Peasants' War itself, the patterns of the rebellion, and the importance of turbulent movement. In what follows, I shall suggest how thinking about turbulence might enable us to understand rebellions in a new way.

Turbulence is a concept which plays an important role in fluid dynamics. Once particles reach a certain speed of movement within a channel, turbulence can arise. Spiral-like, producing complex and beautiful patterns, turbulence cannot be entirely predicted and still poses explanatory challenges. The effect of turbulence is to mix particles of different kinds, and this is another reason why engineers find it interesting. For non-scientists, it is more familiar through the effects of wind and water: perhaps the most famous example is the tidal bore that every now and again enables surfers to surf on the River Severn. Clouds, too, produce wonderful turbulent patterns.

Turbulence, it might be argued, as contemporaries used the word, was no more than a metaphor for the Peasants' War. But this article will argue that while it is indeed a metaphor, it is more. It is worth paying attention to how the peasants moved during the Peasants' War, because the patterns of movement themselves had a causal role in how the revolt spread, how it was able to smash the boundaries of lordship and of government, what its limits were, and why it so disturbed the authorities. This article builds on insights from the history of environment and from studies of revolt, but it also draws from the physical sciences to argue that historians need to think analytically about motion.[2] Such an approach must be interdisciplinary, and so I draw on language analysis and art history as well as engineering and mapping, all fields outside my own; but I hope that my approach may suggest new ways of thinking about mass action of the kind that took place in the Spring of 1525, as hundreds of thousands of peasants formed ever larger bands and took on their lords in the biggest uprising in Western Europe before the French Revolution.

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At root the noun *Aufruhr* conveys upward, stirring movement, and is related to the verb 'to stir up'.[3] It is not always intrinsically negative, though as we will see, propagandists opposed to the revolt soon made its resonances so. German humanists writing in Latin at the time also seem to have thought of the War through this lens, Ulrich Zasius for example writing of the 'tumultus rusticorum', the 'infelix turbulentia', or sometimes referring more negatively to the 'furiis rusticorum'.[4] Tumultus, turbulentia, furor: these are also words that convey the idea of turbulent movement. We can see what is distinctive here by comparing it with what happened later, as opponents increasingly began after the war to render the word *Aufruhr* in Latin as 'seditio', a word which lacks the resonance of turbulence and is much more obviously condemnatory.[5]

Contemporaries throughout Europe knew about and were fascinated by the phenomenon of turbulence. Leonardo da Vinci famously studied it, and took its spiral patterns directly over into how he painted hair and the folds of drapery.[6] Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* repeatedly mention *tumultus* as something intrinsically fascinating and not necessarily bad; indeed, it is what preserves freedom and prevents tyranny.[7] The artists Lucas Cranach and Albrecht Dürer were not unusual in showing an interest in turbulence. The patterns turbulence makes are transitory, and for artists they bring the challenge of representing movement in a medium that has only two dimensions.

In this discussion I begin by examining the word *Aufruhr* or turbulence in contemporary commentary on the revolt, sketching out what happened to the word during the Peasants' War. Next I map how people moved in turbulent ways during the revolt itself, tracking where the peasants went and how this shaped the revolt. That movement, I shall finally argue, and the trauma the War left behind it, is also echoed in the art of painters like Lucas Cranach, whose turbulent paintings of the hunt seem to carry the resonances of the revolt forward into the following decades.

I

For Martin Luther, *Aufruhr* was not at first something bad. Indeed, in his *95 Theses* he had proclaimed, echoing Matthew 20: 16, that the gospel is rejected because it 'makes the first last', that is, it moves what is on top to what is on the bottom, overturning social order. Indulgences, he averred, do the opposite by rewarding the rich, and that is why they are 'most acceptable' – not a virtue in his book![8] But the idea of turbulence and disorder soon became something he rejected, and when the Peasants' War broke out he condemned it as *Aufruhr*. In his infamous pamphlet *Against the Robbing and murdering hordes of peasants* (1525) the word *Aufruhr* was repeated over and over; in the paragraph where he condemned the peasants as mad dogs and commended slaying them as an act that merited salvation, he used derivatives of the word no fewer than six times. It is sometimes titled *Wider die stürmenden Bauern*, the 'storming' peasants, a word which draws on the same imagery of tumult and links it to tempestuous weather. By constantly using this word and its associated terms Luther cemented the link

between *Aufruhr* and evil; indeed, he begins by arguing that the peasants were inspired by the Devil.[9]

Meanwhile Luther's opponent Thomas Müntzer, a radical theologian who supported the peasants, was forthright in defending the so-called *Aufruhr*. In 1523, in a memorable metaphor that draws on the imagery of water and storms, he wrote, 'Therefore everyone should watch out for the great waves which pour their torrents of water down on our spirit. A wise helmsman shows his skill by negotiating the great waves; he should not and cannot try to avoid them'.[10] He titled this pamphlet *An Open Letter to his dear brothers in Stolberg, solemnly warning them to shun unjustifiable rebellion* [*Auffruhr*] – but in the course of the work itself, he insists that the tyrants are raging (a sign that the apocalypse is nearing), reminds his reader that 'what the world scorns, God raises up' and avers that as the Apocalypse nears 'the assembly of the elect [will] lay hold on the whole wide world, which will acquire a Christian government that no sack of gunpowder can ever topple'.[11] Some forms of *Aufruhr*, Müntzer implies, are justifiable. In 1524 he countered Luther's charge that he was guilty of *Aufruhr* by pointing out that Luther supported the princes, who wrongly take all created things as their own: 'The fish in the water, the birds in the air, the plants on the face of the earth – it all has to belong to them! Isaiah 5… It is the lords themselves who make the poor man their enemy. If they refuse to do away with the causes of insurrection [*Auffrur*] how can trouble be avoided in the long run? If saying that makes me an inciter to insurrection [*auffrürisch*], so be it!'[12]

So also the anonymous pamphlet *To the Assembly of the common peasantry* plays with the idea of overturning the existing order. Its woodcut cover shows the wheel of fortune [Fig. 1]. On the left, pikemen and peasants stand together, under the heading 'Here peasant man, good Christian', facing church dignitaries and knights on horseback on the right, who are labelled as 'Here Romanists and Sophists', that is, supporters of the Pope and Rome, guilty of sophistry, not truth. A pope with his tiara is bound to the wheel and turned downward towards a forest of pikes which are pointed at him. The time of the rulers, monks and dignitaries of the church is at an end, the woodcut suggests; and the peasants are on the move: 'Here is the hour and time of Fortune's wheel: God knows who will remain uppermost', explains a rhyming couplet. The wheel is turned by fortune herself, a woman – she has stolen the breeches, the symbol of male power, which flap around her legs. Order of all kinds, the image suggests, is being overturned by the motion of the wheel of Fortune. Underneath stands the rhetorical question 'Who advances Switzerland?', to which the reply is 'The lords' avarice'; that is, the 'Geitz' or selfishness of the lords is making people 'turn Swiss' and desire their own independence like the Swiss who had just achieved it.[13]

Defending the peasants against the charge of *Aufruhr*, the author argues that rebellion is justified if rulers are 'tyrants', the word which others like Müntzer were using to such effect. Christ himself, the author argues, was an '*Aufrührer*'.[14] Because the word *Aufruhr* did not necessarily have negative connotations, unlike

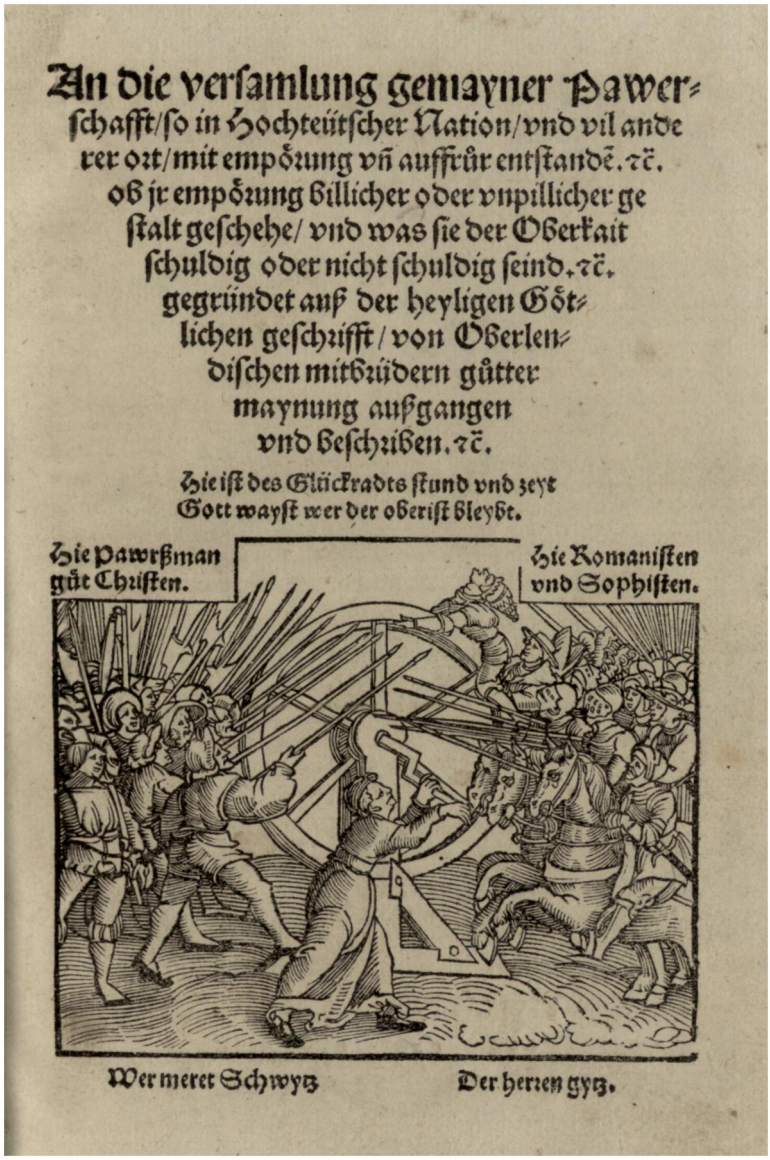

Fig. 1: Anon, *An die Versammlung gemayner Pawerschafft*, 1525, by kind permission of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

the German *Empörung* or the Latin *seditio*, it was possible for the rebels to seize it and to employ it positively, as this author did, to describe how brotherhood could be created.[15]

Luther's Catholic antagonists were not slow to develop the charge that it was Luther's theology that had led the peasants astray and caused the *Aufruhr*. One set

out with chapter and verse how Luther's 'false and *auffrurischem* gospel' had caused the revolt.[16] Luther had misled the peasants and had then betrayed them, others argued. 'That sure is a clever heavenly spirit, who first teaches the poor peasants disobedience, and now teaches, that they should be stabbed and slain', wrote a pamphleteer in 1525, quoting Luther's own words against him.[17] In 1526 Johannes Fundling condemned the 'double-tongued Luther' in a pamphlet whose cover depicted the positive image of the peasant which had been used before the war to idealize the evangelical peasant. Now, however, Fundling uses him to confront Luther, the monk attired in diabolic black.[18] As the Catholic chronicler Johannes Hass put it, writing from Goerlitz, Luther had started the whole business when he had written against the church. He had 'awoken the peasants against their authorities, so that I think there is not one authority however high or low in counties and cities throughout the whole German nation who did not become disturbed, troubled, molested and turbulent'.[19] His choice of words is interesting here: '*turbirt, bekomert, molestirt und auffrurisch*' – the two Latin coinages *turbirt* and *molestirt* convey the sense of movement too. He goes on to assert that the 'freedom that Luther proposed … pleased the common man, and thus they tried to attain it with a great movement, and overturned their government'. Throughout this rhetoric, the sense of disorder caused by the peasants' actions and movement is prominent.[20]

In summary, then, *Aufruhr* was the word almost universally used to refer to the Peasants' War. Indeed, peasants themselves used the term when they were interrogated about their role in the revolt, while during it they referred to villages being 'auf', that is, 'up' in revolt. The word is similar to 'commotion' used later by the English rebels of 1549.[21] And like 'commotion', it could be a neutral description; one rebel dated an event to 'the beginning of the *aufrur* on Ash Wednesday', while the peasants in the district of Wolkenstein referred to what happened during the 'aufrur'.[22] Just as Luther had to push to get his own Saxon ruler Friedrich the Wise to use force against the peasants, so too he had to push his own rhetoric to make the term negative, piling on derivatives of the word in the key paragraph of *Against the Robbing and murdering hordes of peasants*, because at its core the word just referred to the stirring up. Some of the rebels took on this language, and envisaged a stirring which would also be a circular movement of overturning; but it was not until their defeat that the word could no longer be reclaimed, and *Aufruhr* became almost universally a term of opprobrium. Even so, the earlier sense of the word stuck: in 1575 the mayor of Langsdorf estimated his age by recalling his strength at the time of the 'peasant *Aufruhr*'.[23]

II

But was this anything more than rhetoric? I want next to suggest that the experience of the Peasants' War was one of *Aufruhr* in terms of physical movement, by tracking the movements of some individual participants in the war, as well as the movement patterns of some of the larger groups: depending on how one counts them – and any number is misleading because they were

constantly joining and realigning – there were at least twenty or thirty big armed 'bands' and scores of smaller ones. Movement, after all, was central to the event, because only when peasants joined with their fellows in other lordships and broke the bonds of individual lordship could a widespread revolt happen. News had to spread through movement, and only when peasants travelled from their village could they bring other villages and towns together. Serfdom meant that technically a serf could not leave the land – in some areas a serf even had to ask permission for being out of their village overnight. Travelling long distances with a peasant band was thus an act of defiance, while the experience of joining with others in movement was itself key to the dynamic of revolt. Proximity is important in producing collective emotion, and as recent research has shown, moods can be literally contagious – especially so when peasants were risking everything by downing tools and leaving their fields.[24]

However, it is very difficult to track how this happened, how peasants got information or how they organized. Since letters were themselves incriminating, many of the sources from the peasants' side during the war were destroyed, though some chronicles reproduce the letters which peasant bands wrote to each other, and these indicate where they were camped. In addition I have used surviving criminal interrogations in which those interrogated say where they went – even though these were given under torture or its threat, and have to be used with caution, the itineraries those questioned gave are credible and correlate with the testimonies of others. Correspondence by alarmed officials plotted the movement of the bands as they came ever closer, and contemporary chronicles sometimes note the dates and places where the bands appeared.

Strikingly, some individuals moved in circles of no more than about twenty to thirty kilometres, about the distance to the nearest market. In Mühlberg, near Erfurt, some villagers were meeting in the pub to decide what to do when they were joined by others from nearby villages Kirchheim and Rettbach. They were convinced something was afoot because their local official had driven all his animals to the castle, and had permitted a hunt for hares to take place on land where hunting had previously been off limits. To the villagers, it looked as if this was the first step in making all land free for hunting, as the peasants were demanding. All these areas were within a district of around twenty kilometres, which was the region in which this rumour circulated.[25]

In the area around the Kyffhauser mountains, a rumour spread from Oldisleben to Bilzingsleben that the Count of Heldrungen was about to steal the peasants' animals; so they rang the bells to summon neighbouring villages to help, while one Andris Schorlitz rode to from Bilzingsleben to Frankenhausen to ask for their aid.[26] The Frankenhauseners told Schorlitz that help would only be given if they joined the 'brotherhood'. From there, Schorlitz rode with the message to Kannawurf, where he stopped to drink a good Einbeck beer, riding on to Bilzingsleben and finally Oldisleben. Schorlitz was clearly trying to suggest he had not been actively involved in the revolt, but his confession revealed the route he followed, and it was a rough circle through villages about twenty kilometres apart.[27] It is therefore possible that news spread in successive spirals, as the next

people followed their own circle of roughly the same length. This would be different from linear or radial patterns, though news will also have spread along roads in lines from town to town, as it passed by word of mouth or as messages, often written, were carried from one place to another. Indeed, the peasants may also have avoided larger towns until they were strong enough to attack them because of the need for secrecy, and this may also explain the different patterns of their movement.

So also, the peasant and town participants in the battle of Leipheim (a town now in Bavaria near Günzburg) all came from settlements on the south side of the Danube, an oval stretching no more than around twenty-five kilometres. Hundreds of them were forced into the river by the troops of the Swabian League, who cut off their retreat and pressed them into the arms of the knights so that they drowned 'like pigs'.[28] Or, to take another example, the town of Schweinfurt in Franconia received missives from two separate peasant armies. These had assembled at Bildhausen and at Aura, no more than thirty kilometres from each other, and about the same distance away from Schweinfurt itself. Soon these groups joined with camps at Frauenroth, Heidenfeld, Theres, Arnstein and Hausen that had now formed in a rough circle around Schweinfurt, and they wrote to another band at Breitungen, a further eighty kilometres away.[29]

Initially, individuals joined peasant bands fairly close to their homes. The peasant leader Hans Sippel of the Werra band confessed that the revolt had begun at Volkershausen, little more than three kilometres from the town of Vacha, to where it soon spread; there they had been joined by peasants from Bad Salzungen, another twenty kilometres away, as well as from the town of Schmalkalden, about forty-five kilometres from Vacha. Some had joined at Schmalkalden from Eisenach, over forty kilometres distant. Lucas Dresseler of Eisenach insisted even in interrogation that he had gone to join the peasants 'aus freien willen', of his own free will, and had found them at Salzungen, thirty kilometres away – though most of those interrogated after the War wisely claimed that they had joined out of fear or in obedience to their civic oaths. After joining, however, many marched long distances: the Werra Band took the town of Salzungen, marching victoriously through Lengsfeld to Schmalkalden and then on to Meiningen, with some of the original group going further, back to Eisenach, in a total journey of over 150 kilometres. Yet the town of Eisenach was barely thirty kilometres from where the band had started, and here Sippel and others met their end when they were tricked, let into town and then seized. In this case, some individuals walked long distances or deliberately made a journey to join the army, and the full route was a kind of circle. But not all stayed the distance; some remained only a night or so with the band, with others leaving after Meiningen, and the membership of the band was probably in a state of constant flux.[30]

In the case of the armed band led by Hans Müller of Bulgenbach we can trace the army's movement because a chronicler from the town of Villingen noted it. Over a period from May 3 to May 14, the armed band covered at least 200 kilometres through the Black Forest, though their terminus points were

only sixty kilometres apart. They too moved in circles in pursuit of provisions, destroying castles, terrifying monasteries, and branching out occasionally, making temporary stations at Vöhrenbach and then at Triberg and Sankt Georgen; then after a more or less straight progression south, they looped back on themselves in spiral fashion.[31]

The movements of some of those in what became the Neckartal Band under Jäcklein Rohrbach were similarly multidirectional. On April 2 many of the peasants in the region around the town of Heilbronn came together, meeting in the village of Flein: these included peasants from Mergentheim ruled by the Teutonic Order, others ruled by the town of Heilbronn itself, and yet others from further afield. From Flein the group under Rohrbach's leadership planned to attack a rich ecclesiastical foundation at Wimpfen, but were stopped at Grossgartach (now Leinfelden) by hostile peasants, so they wheeled back in the opposite direction towards Öhringen instead. On April 16 this group carried out the infamous massacre at Weinsberg, where twenty-four nobles and their retinues were forced to run a gauntlet – a distance of about twenty to twenty-five kilometres back in the direction of Heilbronn. On 19 April, Heilbronn admitted the peasants into town. The peasants did not attack Wimpfen, but having made a Christian Union with Heilbronn, they were able to pressure Wimpfen to become part of their wider sphere of influence: Wimpfen had to permit its citizens to join the peasants if they wished, and not a few did so. Rohrbach himself along with two hundred others left and joined another group in Württemberg around Matern Feuerbacher, while the main band moved to the monastery of Amorbach, from where it issued articles on May 4 and joined with the Odenwald Band: here it was eventually defeated. In this case, the band seems to have followed a jerkily circular movement in its early days of formation, avoiding the towns, aiming for monasteries and castles where they could loot the provisions they needed, and relying on villages in a landscape dominated by the medium-sized town of Heilbronn. The big tactical problem they faced – how to bring peasants and disaffected townsfolk together – was solved in both Wimpfen and Heilbronn by forming unions with the towns. Marching together, the patterns of movement brought these disparate groups of townsfolk and peasants, free men and serfs, into a united fighting force; but there were also splits and regroupings. They were defeated; their leader, Jäcklein Rohrbach, would be roasted to death by the leaders of the troops of the Swabian League.[32]

How was this movement of peasant army bands experienced by those who were not on the rebels' side? Johannes Cochlaeus's refutation of Luther's *Against the Robbing and murdering hordes of peasants* has an appendix which provides a history of the War. It is a remarkable achievement, printed in the year in which the revolt happened, and it attempts a birds' eye view across the German speaking lands and an overall assessment of the number of casualties. Not least of its interesting features is how the author imagines Germany and the space of the revolt, for this was not a given – Germany did not exist as such, and regional boundaries were unclear and did not correspond with lordship. Remarkable too is the sheer number of places – eighteen different areas in Swabia alone – in which

the peasants were 'up' (*auf*), and the quick, seemingly random sequential involvement of one area and then another, so that the entire region became part of the movement. For the chronicler, it must indeed have seemed like an overwhelming, unpredictable commotion, an *Aufruhr*.[33]

The same fascination with the force of the revolt's movement is evident in the chronicle of Lorenz Fries of Würzburg, who wrote a history of the war in three volumes, each one adopting a different narrative approach. The first volume provides a chronological history, and the third an administrative account, organized village by village for ready reference – he was an official. The second 'book' is particularly interesting in relation to movement, because it described the revolt from the point of view of the 'other assemblies and camps of the peasants at Bildhausen, Aura, Hausen, Frauenrod, Theres, Sotenberg and elsewhere' – that is, Fries provided a history of what became the Bildhausen Band, the peasant army nearest to Würzburg, and where it went. This is the group we encountered earlier, which formed a rough circle of encampments around Schweinfurt, and he details how it was formed, how it captured the monastery of Bildhausen, how its leaders persuaded the peasant bands around Würzburg to join it, how they merged with those from Schweinfurt, how they set their sights on the town of Würzburg, moving eventually to Königshofen, and how they were defeated.[34] Fries tracks the paths of the various armed bands, showing how the Bildhausen band became ever larger until its marches and movement threatened the entire bishopric.

I am not suggesting that the Peasants' War was a textbook example of turbulence in the sense used by engineers – but I do think that contemporaries' overwhelming use of the word *Aufruhr* to describe it captures something vital about the experience of those caught up in it. Turbulence is more than just a word which dominated contemporary discourse about the War, which we might analyse using the tools of discourse analysis; it was a feature of the revolt itself, and ideas drawn from engineering can help us to understand why the movement patterns themselves were significant. Turbulence enabled mixing, stirring up the townsfolk with country folk as they joined in common cause, and joining peasants from different villages and lordships against a common enemy. Without such mixing, peasant bands could never have formed and could never have created the 'brotherhoods' which powered the movement. Without movement and mixture, it would not have been possible to break the bonds of feudalism that had atomized rural grievances for centuries, pitting peasants against their local lord and against other villages in a fight to preserve their local privileges. Movement enabled people to join together, attacking the lords as a group. Unlike a 'normal' army, the rebels did not have a single enemy, and they aimed rather to join with each other in ever bigger groups, one reason why their movement seemed so apparently random to their opponents. Indeed, armed confrontation when it happened was not generally the result of peasants setting out to attack the lords directly, but rather of the lords forming armies to march out against the peasant bands; sometimes the lords even struggled to find where the peasant armies had gone. For many of those who joined the rebel bands the

experience must have been exciting, allowing them to imagine new ways of living and new forms of collective action – this was part of the thrill of the rhetoric of preachers like Thomas Müntzer, or of the visionary author of *To the Assembly of the Common Peasantry*. Turbulence, the power of people in movement, helps us finally to understand the sheer physical force of the revolt, because the numbers of peasants who massed together had huge destructive potential. Their combined force made it possible to destroy monasteries and castles, reshaping the landscape and, like a turbulent flood, flattening everything in their path. Indeed, as contemporaries reported, in the area of Würzburg and Bamberg alone 292 castles and fifty-two monasteries were utterly destroyed; in the area of the Peasants' War as a whole we now know that half of all convents and monasteries were attacked in some way, over six hundred, a staggering total.[35]

III

The experience of *Aufruhr*, turbulence, left its scars on all those who lived through it: the victors, but also the witnesses, including chroniclers, artists, and their patrons, as well as the defeated. In this final section I turn to the role of *Aufruhr* in the paintings produced by the workshop of Lucas Cranach, court artist to the Elector Friedrich the Wise of Saxony and his successors, in the years after the peasants' defeat, to suggest how the paintings can be seen as reactions, perhaps unconscious, to the experience of the war.

Cranach was interested in tumult and motion from his early years, as his remarkable paintings of the Martyrdom of St Catherine show, with their fascination with the effects of storms, clouds and lightning. In the years after his appointment as court painter in 1505, his painting became more static in style, even formulaic, though he retained his interest in skies and clouds. But in 1529, four years after the Peasants' War, he started producing large-scale hunting scenes of a rather different style. These resemble his earlier images of tournaments, which aimed to capture the movement of heaving crowds, horses and lances, but instead they are packed with wild animals, and the scene is split by a turbulent river. The earliest of these paintings, from 1529, illustrates a hunt with the Emperor Maximilian and Friedrich the Wise, both of whom were dead at the time the picture was painted, and it invokes a past world rather than depicting a present hunt (Fig. 2). Over the following years Cranach's workshop produced about eight of these paintings which survive, and they were copied right into the early seventeenth century. They count amongst his larger works, and they were made for high-level patrons: for the Elector, and some probably as gifts for the Emperor Charles V and the Emperor Ferdinand.

Cranach was a townsman, not a peasant, but the towns he lived in were tiny; he probably wore Friedrich the Wise's livery and had court connections, and he also knew his neighbour Luther well, so he would have known how riven the elite had been about how to respond to the peasants' revolt. In these hunting scenes, the profusion of animals running in all directions does not present a natural order, but a turbulent 'stirring up'. It contrasts powerfully with Cranach's static, orderly

Fig. 2: Lucas Cranach, A Stag Hunt with the Elector Friedrich the Wise, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, © KHM-Museumsverband

Fig. 3: Lucas Cranach, Hunt at the Castle of Torgau in Honour of Charles V, 1544. Oil on panel, h. 114 cm, w. 175 cm, P002175. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

paintings of Adam and Eve with their glowing flesh and beautifully realized animals, which he was producing at the same time. The paintings of the hunt show a disordered natural world, in which the animals are chased by lords in splendid attire; stags are hunted into the river, where they stir up the waters. As he produced later versions of the scene, he (or the workshop; Cranach had a large number of assistants and a vast workshop building with big doors designed to accommodate the large altarpieces they were making) became more interested in how to represent the water patterns to which this turbulent activity gives rise. At first these were represented with little more than wavy lines in the water, but soon circular series of waves were painted around the animals' limbs, each improving on the last.[36] The antlers of the stags, too, became ever more elaborate.

At the top of each painting there is a castle, and their shining towers are crowned with the Electoral and imperial coats of arms, immortalizing the castles which their rulers had in many cases only recently built.[37] The paintings of the hunt celebrate rulership, and with their large, impressive size, they monumentalize the right of the nobles to hunt. What better way, therefore, to celebrate what still set nobles apart from peasants? In the aftermath of the Peasants' War these paintings were a powerful statement of noble rule; indeed, some may have been destined for the hunting lodges the Electors had built around their territories, fine Renaissance buildings in the forest their rulers claimed as their own, and from which peasants were excluded, unable to access the fine timber either.[38]

Hunting had long been a favoured theme in medieval tapestries and frescoes. Cranach's paintings, tapestry-like in their scope, size and complex perspectives, depicted members of the Saxon ruling house alongside the Emperor, mini-portraits of these men hunting together. They were idealized representations rather than portraits of actual hunts, intended to showcase the alliance of the Emperor and the Elector (a relationship that was also strained). For instance, on the lower right of the 1544 painting, now in the Prado, Sibylle the Electress is shown as she takes aim; she is dressed in red, with her court women all decked out in what is probably red court livery too; at the bottom left, we see Elector Johann Friedrich with Emperor Charles V, while coats of arms are emblazoned on the top of the image. These paintings show the world turned right way up, castle at the top, rulers hunting the 'turbulent' animals through the roiling water, enjoying the chase as they kill their prey. The noble stags with their antlers and coveted points, the kings of the forest, are worthy trophies. In the background menial peasants who know their place assist.[39]

Whatever Cranach and the workshop may have intended by them – and I do not think the artists would have been consciously making connections to the Peasants' War – paintings such as these convey something of the experience of *Aufruhr*, suggesting what a commotion of this kind might feel like to live through and to come to terms with later. They reveal, too, what reimposing order after the War may have meant; for the hunt and pleasure of the chase derives from using weapons to kill, and asserts the boundaries between nobles and peasants as well as between rulers and beasts. The right to hunt had been one of the major

demands of the peasants, and article 4 of the printed Twelve Articles of the peasants (the nearest thing to a programme of the whole movement), was devoted to hunting. It proclaimed that God had given mankind dominion over all the animals, birds and fish, and so everyone, not just nobles, should be allowed to hunt. Not only that, in some areas, the game the nobles preserved for the hunt 'gobble up the crops God gave for man's use': and this 'offends both God and neighbour', a ringing indictment, since brotherly love and neighbourliness were the movement's core values.[40]

Just how closely this issue was connected to that of the political power of the lords is evident in the remarkable anonymous pamphlet *To the Assembly of the Common Peasantry*, whose cover I discussed earlier. Its author interrupts its account of the nature of political power and the circumstances in which rebellion is justified with a chapter on hunting entitled 'Whether game belongs to the common man or not'. The answer is unequivocal: 'The Christian faith must not tolerate this godless, unprincely behaviour, this rule by which a lord makes wild game his own personal property. He is, in short, robbing poor people of what is theirs, for game is free for whoever takes it on their own ground.' Castigating the lords' unjust and vicious punishments of poachers, the author moves to the point the Twelve Articles had also made about how game damages crops, but puts it even more strongly: 'Indeed, more than that: all Christians, on seeing wild animals do damage to their neighbours, are obliged, out of Christian brotherly duty, to drive these common dangerous beasts off their neighbours' property to protect them from harm – whether by stabbing or shooting, as far as they can and are able.'[41] (Ominously Luther would use strikingly similar language in his *Against the Robbing and murdering hordes of peasants* to condemn the rebels themselves as wild animals, calling on 'everyone who can' to 'smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog.'[42]) For the writer of *To the Assembly of the Common Peasantry*, rebellion against tyrants was justified; the lords' behaviour in the hunt was 'tyrannical' (*tyrannisch*), and opposed to Christian brotherliness. Indeed, it epitomised the selfish, idolatrous and unchristian nature of lordship itself.[43]

Hunting in this period involved using beaters and barriers to force large number of beasts into a closed area, where they could be slaughtered, just as the battle tactics at Leipheim involved 'kettling' the peasants and forcing them into the river where they drowned. While the painting of 1529 is reticent about blood, just as it fails to depict the antlers in all their glory, later paintings are not shy of showing splashes of red. In the years after the defeat of the peasants, when the streets had run with blood, and when the peasants' claim for power to chase the birds of the air, the fish of the water and the produce of the land had been forcefully defeated, what better way could there be to celebrate the reimposition of noble authority?

This iconography enjoyed a long life. Indeed, when in the eighteenth century the hunting-mad Bishop of Konstanz chose to furnish himself a new castle at

Meersburg, he decorated his audience rooms with lavish tapestries of hunting scenes, the first set of which, with deliberate anachronism, showed a hunt with the old Emperor Maximilian (d. 1519) and hunters dressed in sixteenth-century attire. It was a tribute to the hunting scenes tapestries produced in the 1530s in Brussels for the Habsburgs and possibly designed by Bernard van Orley, which are now in the Louvre, and which would also be copied a century later for Louis XIV. But the use of this iconography to display power and imperial loyalty derived also from the hunting pictures made famous by the Cranach workshop. The co-option of Cranach and the nod to the sixteenth century was not limited to scenes such as these. Ironically Cranach, the Lutheran artist and friend of the reformer, was the painter whose 1537 image of the Madonna and Child was now being copied and put to use as a miraculous image in many Counter-Reformation pilgrimage churches in southern Germany.[44]

The nostalgic tapestries of the chase, the epitome of luxurious art, were also a statement of the legitimacy of the secular rule of the Bishop, underlined by his prowess in the hunt which only those of noble status could enjoy. This was precisely what the Peasants' War had attacked, insisting that peasants too should have the right to hunt, that Bishops should not be secular rulers, that peasants should not be forced to feed the lords' hunting dogs, and that the lords should not have a monopoly on natural resources like the wood of the forest, the birds of the air or the fish of the waters. In the tapestry, the dogs are depicted in loving detail, and instead of the river, the forest takes centre stage, while the Bishop's subjects are shown happily at work in the background. By now turbulence had apparently been quieted under the benevolent rule of a bishop who cared for his subjects' souls as well as their material wellbeing. But this was, of course, not fact but merely how it looked – or how an eighteenth-century bishop hoped it looked – from the vantage point of his sumptuously decorated audience rooms, near his bedchamber.[45]

IV

In this article I have explored turbulence as a cultural artefact, a theme which suddenly became salient in the early sixteenth century in the realms of painting, rhetoric, science and art theory. But I have tried to go beyond discourse by exploring turbulence as a physical phenomenon that itself had causal power. If we are trying to make sense of a mass, largely illiterate movement, it cannot be enough to explain it on the basis of printed ideas; indeed, we miss an important dimension of any revolutionary movement if we restrict ourselves to what its leaders or opponents wrote, and do not also reconstruct what those who were part of it actually did. I am suggesting too that if we are to understand historical change, historians need to consider not just the environment – the mud, the hills, moors and bogs where the peasants chose to meet, the dense forest into which they often fled – but patterns of movement in that environment. Bodies are not static abstractions; rather, living human beings make history as they move. In a feudal society where lords deliberately tried to bind peasants to the land as serfs, or forced them to give labour dues, the intention was to secure their labour force

by preventing them from moving away. This is not to say that peasants were immobile – far from it. They were constantly on the move, and town markets, dotted all over the rural landscape, made the sixteenth-century economy function, as well as spreading news, print, and revolutionary ideas.

The turbulent movement of the rebels was key to its short-lived success because it enabled peasants to join with others from different regions and to form a fighting force that mixed people of very different backgrounds, dialects and overlords, and from town and village. For their rulers, these patterns were terrifying and unpredictable, as revolt spread 'like wildfire' and 'their peasants' no longer loved them or respected their feudal oaths. For those who took part in them, being part of the *Aufruhr* or 'commotion', marching together, eating the meat, bread and drink they captured, camping out together overnight, and levelling castles and monasteries, meant being brothers, living outside lordship, and beyond time. They were bloodily defeated, but the turmoil of those months was not forgotten. From the vantage point of the present, the Peasants' War can seem little more than a doomed interlude in the Reformation. Yet the shadow it cast, and the trauma of memory it left behind, lies beneath the surface of many of the words and artefacts that seem to celebrate noble power and order, disrupting our sense of what the Reformation was, and what it might have been.

Lyndal Roper has been a member of the History Workshop Journal editorial collective for many years. Her book *Summer of Fire and Blood: The German Peasants' War* was published in 2025.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1 This was brilliantly demonstrated by Benjamin Heidenreich in a book he titled 'An Event Without a Name?': *Ein Ereignis ohne Namen?: Zu den Vorstellungen des „Bauernkriegs" von 1525 in den Schriften der „Aufständischen" und in der zeitgenössischen Geschichtsschreibung*, Oldenbourg and Berlin, 2019, in which he undertook a comprehensive digital word analysis of all the available documents in print form.

2 I am indebted to Susan Broomhall, Ivan Marusic and Joy Damousi, who held an interdisciplinary conference on Turbulence in Adelaide, 12 December 2019, which sparked this essay some years later. I am also greatly indebted to Susan Broomhall and to Ivan Marusic for making me think about fluid dynamics.

3 'aufruhr, f.', *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/25, <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=A06824>, consulted 12 August 2025; and see also aufrühren, Aufrührer, rühren, etc. See also Hermann Fischer, *Schwäbisches Wörterbuch*, 6 vols, Tübingen 1901–1936, Bd. 1, (A-B/P), p. 410.

4 See for example Letters of Ulrich Zasius, in Alfred Hartmann, *Die Amerbachkorrespondenz*, vol 3, Basel 1947, p. 14: 14, 20 April 1525; p. 16: 46, 27 April 1525; p. 38: 3, 16 June 1525. See also Heiko A. Oberman, 'The Gospel of Social Unrest: 450 Years After the So-Called "German Peasants' War" of 1525', *Harvard Theological Review* 69: 1–2, 1976, pp. 103–29.

5 When Johannes Cochlaeus, Luther's antagonist, translated Luther's 'Widder die stürmenden Bauern' into Latin, the word he used to translate *Aufruhr* was 'seditio'; Cochlaeus, *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, Cologne: Peter Quentel, 1525 [VD 16 L 7485.] See also Heidenreich, *Ein Ereignis ohne Namen*, p. 93 n. 300, p. 243; Jacob Holzwart's history, written in the 1530s, was entitled *Rustica seditio totius fere Germaniae.* On the mass of printed works produced during and about the Peasants' War, see the comprehensive Thomas Kaufmann, *Der Bauernkrieg: Ein Medienereignis*, Freiburg, Basel, Vienna: Herder, 2024.

6 Ivan Marusic and Susan Broomhall, 'Leonardo da Vinci and Fluid Mechanics', *Annual Review of Fluid Mechanics* 53, 2021, pp. 1–25.

7 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy (1520)*, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, Chicago, 1996, book 1 chs. 4 to 8, where he discusses Roman history and argues repeatedly and strikingly that 'tumults' in fact have beneficial effects and kept Rome free, counterposing this to 'tyranny'; pp. 67–81 and throughout. See also the chapter on conspiracies, Book 3 ch. 6, pp. 315–22, and following chapters. For the frequent uses of the word *tumultuare*, 'tumult', and variants in the *Discourses*, and also for the word *tiranno* and variants, see p. 455; often the words are used multiple times on the same page.

8 See Martin Luther, *The 95 Theses*, in *Luther's Works*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957 (hereafter cited as Luther, *Works*), vol. 31, p. 25, Theses 62–66; and note also Thesis 92, p. 33, 'Away then with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, "Peace, peace," and there is no peace! [Jer. 6: 14]'; *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften*, 72 vols., Weimar, 1903 (hereafter cited as Luther, *Schriften*), vol. 1, pp. 233–238, 236: 22–30; 238: 14–15. Interestingly, Luther was himself accused early on of fomenting *Aufruhr* by his attacks on the church, while other Catholic opponents warned that a peasant uprising would result. See for example Wolfgang Wulffer, *Wider die unselige auffrure Merten Luders*, Leipzig 1522 [VD 16 W 4584]; and the brilliant attack on Luther by Thomas Murner, *Von dem grossen Lutherischen Narren …*, Strasbourg: Johann Grüninger, 1522 [VD 16 M 7088, 7089], which included woodcuts linking Luther and Lutheranism with the symbol of peasant revolt, the Bundschuh. After the War, Hieronymus Emser's rhyming indictment, *Der Bock dryt frey auff disen plan* [Augsburg], 1525 [VD 16 E 1100] blamed Luther for the war and for urging the populace to '*auffrur'* [fol a ii (r)].

9 Luther, *Schriften* 18, pp. 357–61, 358: 3–18; Luther, *Works* 46, pp. 49–57, 50. *Aufruhr* is translated here as 'rebellion', which does not convey the full resonances of the word Luther used. In 1522, in the wake of the reforms in Wittenberg during his absence, he had published *Eine treue Vermahnung zu allen Christen, sich zu hüten vor Aufruhr und Empörung*, Luther, *Schriften* 8, pp. 676–87. Here Luther joked that now the light of day had revealed the tyranny of the clergy, it would not surprise him if it ended in 'vffrur', for the common man would have fair cause to set about him with 'flegeln vnd kolben' like Karsthans himself (p. 676: 17–18); Karsthans, or Jack the Hoe, embodied the doughty Christian peasant hero, and was appearing on many pro-Reformation popular woodcuts at this time. In this tract Luther is using *Aufruhr* in the sense of 'vffrur vnd ergerniß' (p. 687: 24–5), that is, the offence that is caused to others when the Reformation proceeds too quickly, as it had in Wittenberg in his view. While he certainly does not advocate *Aufruhr*, he does not condemn it as forthrightly and unequivocally as he would later in his 1525 pamphlet.

10 'Derhalben muß ein yeder der bülgen warnemem mit den wasserstramen, die auff vnsern geist falle, der seiner sach gewiß ist. Ein kluger schiffman muß vnde kan die bulge nicht meiden, sondern muß sie meisterlich brechen**'.** The letter was printed as *Ein Ernster sendebrieff an seine lieben bruder zu Stolberg vnfuglichen auffrur zu meiden*, Eilenburg: Nikolaus Widemar, 1523 (*An Open Letter to his dear brothers in Stolberg, solemnly warning them to shun unjustifiable rebellion* [auffrur], 18 July 1523); Thomas Müntzer, *Thomas Müntzer Ausgabe, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [hereafter cited as *TMA*] vol. 2 , pp. 173–84; *The Collected Letters and Writings of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. and trans. Peter Matheson, Edinburgh 1988, hereafter cited as Matheson, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, pp. 60–64, 63. Matheson points out that the imagery is based on Psalm 93, which Müntzer had just translated in free form for his German liturgy. The imagery of storms is very important to Müntzer. It is significant that the letter was written to his brothers in Stolberg, where Müntzer himself was born.

11 'Dan wirt erst der vmbkreiß der erden bestetiget zu der vorsamlung der außerwelten, das er ein christlich regiment gewinnet, welches von keinem puluersacke vmbestossen mag werden', *TMA* vol. 1, pp. 179: 12–180: 3; Matheson, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, p. 63 and n. 473; 'sondern was die welt vorschmeht, das erhebt Got, was torheit ist, das ist weyßheit etc', *TMA* vol. 2, pp. 181: 18–182: 1; Matheson, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, p. 63.

12 Müntzer uses the adjective '*auffrürisch'* here, not the noun form. Thomas Müntzer, *Hochverursachte Schutzrede* (1524), *TMA* vol. 1, pp. 385: 19, 335.

13 Anon, *An die Versammlung gemayner Pawerschafft*, [Nürnberg]: [Hieronymus Höltzel], 1525, [VD 16 A 2438], hereafter cited via the edited edition: Anon, *An die Versammlung gemeiner Bauernschaft: Eine revolutionäre Flugschrift aus dem Deutschen Bauernkrieg*, ed. Bernd Rüdiger, Siegried Hoyer, Gotha: Bibliographisches Institut, 1975. The wheel of fortune is circular, and so its motion may end up putting the Pope on top again. Translation taken from the forthcoming new edition as part of the Taylor Editions Series 'Reformation Pamphlets', by Howard Jones, Henrike Lähnemann, and Rahel Micklich. The figure turning the wheel has also been identified as a monk, possibly Luther; but for a persuasive identification as Dame Fortune, see R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, Oxford, 1981 (1994), pp. 121–2.

14 Anon, *An die Versammlung gemeiner Bauernschaft*, ch. 9, p. 112, entitled 'Wer ayn aufrürer soll gescholten werden' ['Who ought to be called an *Aufrührer*']. The author cites the story of Jehu who was also 'ain armen Cuntzen', a poor 'Conrad', that is, a poor peasant, who rebelled against the 'tyrant' King Ahab, and to whom the prophet said, 'Not I, but thou king, with thy godless crew, the brood of thy father the devil, thou makest the *aufrur'*. He goes on to argue that by this measure, Jesus himself was an '*Aufrührer'* when he expelled the merchants from the temple. Exactly the same argument is made by Sebastian Lotzer in his *Entschuldigung ainer frummen Christlichen Gemain zu Memmingen*, [Augsburg], 1525, fo. A iii (v), published early that year after a disturbance in a Memmingen church in December 1524 – a similarity which may support the view that Lotzer is in fact the author of the anonymous *An die Versammlung*, and see also n. 44 below. Other authors who have been suggested include Thomas Müntzer and Christoph Schappeler; most recently Thomas Kaufmann has suggested Ulrich Hugwald. On the tract and possible authorship, see Kaufmann, *Der Bauernkrieg*, pp. 183–91.

15 It is fascinating to compare this with another image of Fortune, this time from the French chronicler Nicolas de Volcyr, who wrote a chilling account of the atrocities committed by the troops of Anthony of Lorraine (in which he participated) when they put down the Peasants' Revolt: 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. Ostensibly a triumphant account of the victories of the Catholics over the pestilential Lutherans, its detail reveals the full horror of the massacres. The title page shows a wheel of fortune, while Faith or the Church tramples underfoot the dragon and lion of heresy. Moses and the old church are represented by a column. The artist twists Luther's famous insight against him: the just man lives by faith because all the works of God consist in 'faith', Fides – that is, the Church. The image is static and abstract and betrays little hint of the horrors the text contains. By contrast, the cover of the anonymous *An die Versammlung* celebrates the overturning of order and movement itself.

16 'falschen vnd auffrurischem Euangelio', Cochlaeus, *Wider die Reubischen*, fo. A iii (r) [VD 16 L 7485, C 4338].

17 'Wol ist das als ein gescheider himlischer geist, der erstlich die armen paurn vngehorsam gelernet hat, vnnd ietzo leret, das man sie erstechen vnd erwurgen sol', Kilian Leib, *Von der endschafft vnd frucht der aufruer vnd empörungen des gepouels vnnd gemainen volcks wider die oberkei*t, [Regensburg], [Paul Kohl], 1525 [VD16 L 1002. B I (v)].

18 Johann Fundling, *Anzeigung zweier falscher Zungen.* Landshut: Weißenburger, 1526. [VD 16 F 1088].

19 Johannes Hass, *Görlitzer Rathsannalen*, in *Scriptores Rerum Lusaticarum. Sammlung Ober- und Niederlausitzischer Geschichtsschreiber*, ed. E. Struve, Vol 4, Görlitz 1870, p. 12: 19, hereafter cited as Hass, *Rathsannalen.*

20 'den die freiheit so Lutherns furgegeben, nicht alleine bey der geistlikeit, sundir auch bey der werltlichen obrikeit, hat dem gemeinen man, vbir aus wolgefallen, vnd hat also mit grossir bewegung dornoch gegrieffen, sich wiedir seine obrikeit entsatzt etc. Doraus hat gefolget, das sundirlich die pauerschafft auffgestanden', Hass, *Rathsannalen*, p. 25: 20–25. See also *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 cited as *AGBM*), vol. 1, p. 573, June 18, 1525, letter of Elector Joachim to Herzog Albrecht of Prussia, who also blamed 'die lutterische und vorkerte auslegung des heiligen evangeliums' for the war; he describes the destruction as the result of an 'ufrurig, gewaltig, irrig und muttwillig furnehmen', Hass, *Rathsannalen*, p. 12: 20-25.

21 See Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 165–6; the rebels also spoke of 'camping time', a term used in relation to football and thus associated with male rituals.

22 'Im anfang der ufrur uf der krumen Mittwoch', *AGBM* 1, p. 558, June 1525; *AGBM* 2, p. 315, May 17 1525, Articles of Peasants in Amt Wolkenstein. Some bands argued that they were not 'aufrürherisch' [*sic*]: Hans Sippel and other captains of the peasants wrote to the town of Salzungen that they had assembled 'nicht aus aufruhr beweget' (not moved by *Aufruhr*) but because the 'gemeinen nutzen' (common good) was burdened by the fact that the Word of God had not been preached purely to them, 23 April 1525, *AGBM* 1, p. 208. Another group turned the tables by arguing they would elect their own preacher 'uf das zu keinem aufroher geprediget, wie bisher durch die monche geprediget' (so that no *Aufruhr* would be occasioned by preaching, as had heretofore been the case with the monks), *AGBM* 2, p. 265, May 10, 1525, Gemeinde of Sangerhausen to Amtmann Melchior von Kutzleben. Increasingly the authorities also started to use the word '*emporung'* [*Empörung*, rebellion], which is related to movement upwards and is a more emotional word with connotations of anger.

23 Thomas T. Müller, *Mörder ohne Opfer. Die Reichsstadt Mühlhausen und der Bauernkrieg in Thüringen*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2021, p. 41; in 1575 the Schultheis of Langsdorf estimated his age by recalling his strength at the time of the 'beurischen aufruhr'.

24 See Lyndal Roper, 'Emotions and the German Peasants' War of 1524–6', *History Workshop Journal* 92, 2021, pp. 1–33; Lyndal Roper, *Summer of Fire and Blood: The German Peasants' War*, London 2025, pp. 213–41.

25 *AGBM* 2, pp. 576, 602–3; the local official wanted to have hare meat to celebrate his child's baptism.

26 On bells and on sound in general in the Peasants' War, see Daniela Hacke, 'Hearing Cultures. Plädoyer für eine Klanggeschichte der Bauernkriege', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 66, 2015, pp. 650–62; Hacke, 'Mit Augen und Ohren die Welt betrachten. Sinnesirritationen in englischen Reisenberichten über Nordamerika im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert', *L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtwissenschaft* 31, 2020, pp. 27–47; Doris Stockmann, 'Der Kampf um die Glocken im deutschen Bauernkrieg', in *Der arm Man 1525*, ed. Hermann Strobach, Berlin 1975, Akademie Verlag; and Erich Stockmann, 'Trommeln und Pfeifen im deutschen Bauernkrieg', in ed. Strobach, *Der arm Man 1525*.

27 *AGBM* 2, pp. 643–6.

28 'wie die schwein', Franz Ludwig Baumann, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Oberschwaben. Chroniken*, Tübingen: Lit. Verein, 1876 (hereafter cited as Baumann, *Chroniken)*, p. 551, chronicle of the secretary of Truchsess Georg von Waldburg. This low-lying area is still very waterlogged today, though the Danube has now been tamed and there are high banks to control it. For distribution of participants in the battle, see Map, Roper, *Summer of Fire and Blood*, p. 194.

29 *AGBM* 1, pp. 172–3, 349.

30 *AGBM* 1, pp. 463–7.

31 Heinrich Hug, *Villinger Chronik von 1495 bis 1533*, ed. Christian Roder, Tübingen: L.F. Fues, 1883, pp. 115–21.

32 Roper, *Summer of Fire and Blood*, pp. 201–6; Gerd Schwerhoff, *Der Bauernkrieg. Geschichte einer wilden Handlung*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 2024, pp. 208–14, 230–1; Moriz von Rauch, 'Der Bauernführer Jäcklein Rohrbach von Böckingen,' in *Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte*, NF 32, 1925/26, pp. 21–35; Moriz von Rauch, *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Heilbronn. 4. Band: Von 1525 bis zum Nürnberger Religionsfrieden im Jahr 1532*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1922, pp. 212, 238, 281–8, 293–5 and throughout.

33 Cochlaeus, *Wider die Reubischen und Mordischen rotten*, fo. A iii (r); also edited in Baumann, *Chroniken*, pp. 781–96.

34 'andern versammlungen und lägern der bauren zu Bilthausen, Aura, Hausen, Frauenrod, Theres, Sotenberg und anderswa', Lorenz Fries, *Die Geschichte des Bauern-Krieges in Ostfranken*, 2 vols. Würzburg: Thein'sche Druckerei Stürtz, 1883, vol. 1, p. liv; pp. 345–464 for the account.

35 Anon, Broadsheet, *Das sind die Clöster, und Schlösser, so die Schwartzweldischen Pawern verprennt und geplündert haben*, 1525. See Louisa Bergold, Charlotte Gauthier, Lyndal Roper and Edmund Wareham-Wanitzek, GIS Map, Visualising the Destruction of Convents & Monasteries during the German Peasants' War**,** https://oxforduni.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=0f114412ae944ff7b95de754631747c9, and Table in Roper, *Summer of Fire and Blood*, p. 293: we are updating these figures as we discover more institutions that were attacked.

36 These can be readily consulted in the online Cranach Digital Archive https://lucascranach.org/index.php/Home. The first is from 1529 and is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; it features Elector Friedrich the Wise, the Emperor Maximilian and Elector John the Steadfast; it deliberately looks back to the past as both the Emperor Maximilian and Friedrich himself had died by 1529 [80.2 x 114 cm]. There is a copy of this produced some time after 1529 in the

Statensmuseum for Kunst in Copenhagen [56.5 x 80.5 cm]. The Cleveland Museum of Art has a version of hunting near Hartenfels Castle from 1540, which shows the Elector Johann Friedrich and his wife Sibylle [116.8 x 170.2 cm]; the Prado has two further versions of this from 1544 [114 x 175 cm] and 1545 [118 x 177 cm]. There is another version of it in the Kunsthistorisches Museum from 1544 which some attribute to Cranach the Younger [116.2 x 176.4 cm]. The dimensions indicate how the paintings were growing in size as well as complexity. The Öffentliche Kunstsammlungen Basel have a copy of the 1529 painting from about 1600 [86.5 x 124.3], as does the Burrell Collection [83.2 x 119.5 cm]. There are also some fragments of hunt genre paintings that were produced by the workshop, including one from about 1538 to 1540 now in the Östergötlands Museum, Linköping. Cranach had earlier produced woodcuts celebrating the hunt; see for example his 'Kurfürstlich-sächsische Hofjagd' of 1506, Kunstsamlungen der Veste Coburg, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv Nr. I, 45, 115, reproduced in *Apelles am Fürstenhof. Facetten der Hofkunst um 1500 im Alten Reich*, ed. Matthias Müller, Klaus Weschenfelder, Beate Böckem and Ruth Hansmann, Berlin: Lukas Verlag und Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, 2010, pp. 214–5, 215.

37 See Matthias Müller, 'Architektionische Spurenlese in einer untergegangenen Residenzlandschaft', in *Cranach und die Kunst der Renaissance unter den Hohenzollern. Kirche, Hof und Stadtkultur*, ed. Elke Anna Werner and others, Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 2009, p. 108, which discusses the representation of Castle Hartenfels at Torgau in the paintings now in the Prado from 1544 and 1545 and compares them with the depiction from 1530 in the National Gallery in Oslo in the background of 'Das Goldene Zeitalter': Müller points out that the castles, which are on the line of the horizon, are probably not represented as they would have looked at the time and are idealized despite the detail with which they are painted.

38 See for example the Jagdschloss Grunewald, Berlin, which has a fine collection of Cranach paintings, though not one of the hunt. It also has collections of deer antlers and a 'Leuchterweibchen', a candelabra in the figure of a woman, made of antler: this style of lamp was very popular and can be seen today in many castles and hunting lodges. The lodge also has motifs drawn from hunting on its iron stoves. There is a beautiful frieze depicting deer over the entrance from 1542. St Eustace, the patron saint of the hunt, was converted when a miraculous crucifix appeared in the antlers of a deer, and his feast continued to be celebrated with hunts even in Protestant Saxony. The Jagdschloss now also houses a hunting museum. There is a huge material culture concerned with the hunt and with antlers in particular. See also, for example, the huge pile of antlers from deer shot by hunters over the years, on display in Schloss Waldburg, the castle of Truchsess Georg von Waldburg who led the Swabian Army which defeated the peasants.

39 Lucas Cranach the Elder, Lucas Cranach the Younger, 'A Hunt in Honour of Carlos V at Torgau Castle', 1544; it has also been suggested that the paintings are designed to insist on the Elector's loyalty at a time when he was actually involved in forming the Schmalkaldic League against the Emperor. On red and possible female livery I am grateful to discussion with Sophia Feist.

40 'Dz vnser (So Got dem menschen zu nutz wachsen hat lassen)', 'vnbruderlich … sunder aigennützig vnd dem wort Gotz nit gemeß sein', Peter Blickle, *Die Revolution von 1525*, Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1977, p. 324; *The Revolution of 1525*, tr. Thomas A. Brady, Jr and H.C. Erik Midelfort, Baltimore, 1981, Appendix 1, p. 198.

41 Anon., *An die Versammlung gemeiner Bauernschaft*, ch. 6, pp. 104–5; the similarity of argument here to the Twelve Articles is striking. Also similar is the careful phrasing. The writer is apparently appealing to creation theology to argue that just as with the birds of the air and the fish of the water which God created for the use of all mankind, lords cannot claim game as theirs – and then undercuts this by adding that it is certainly free if taken 'on his [i.e. the peasant's] own ground'.

42 'Drumb sol hie zuschmeyssen, wurgen und stechen, heymlich odder offentlich, wer da kan', Luther, *Schriften* 18, p. 358: 14–15; Luther, *Works* 46, p. 50.

43 Anon, *An die Versammlung gemeiner Bauernschaft*, ch. 6, pp. 104–5.

44 The image of the Madonna and child (Mariahilf), originally painted by Cranach around 1537 or later, was taken by Leopold V of Austria (1586–1632) from Dresden to Passau; then in 1650 it was moved to Innsbruck, where it was placed in the high altar of the Innsbruck Cathedral and was publicly honoured. Many copies were made of it, especially in South Germany, Tyrol, and in alpine regions and it is honoured and used as a miraculous image in pilgrimage churches.

45 Neues Schloss, Meersburg, Audienzzimmer; there are also fine white plaster reliefs of hunting scenes.

ABSTRACT

This article uses the lens of 'turbulence' to give a new perspective on the German Peasants' War of 1524–6. It suggests that the term *Aufruhr* (commotion/turbulence) shaped contemporary perceptions, arguing that the peasants' patterns of movement – spirals, circles, unpredictable shifts – were central to the revolt's spread and power. Drawing on engineering and art, it highlights how motion itself mixed the members of the armed bands, challenged lordship, and unsettled authorities. The war's turbulence was also echoed in art, especially Lucas Cranach's hunting scenes, reasserting noble order. Turbulence, it argues, was not just metaphor, but a force that shaped history.

Keywords: Revolt; Revolution; Germany; German Peasants; War; Reformation; peasants; movement

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