



HISTORIA NOVA

DUKE HISTORICAL REVIEW

FALL 2021 ❖ VOLUME IV ❖ ISSUE 1

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Historia Nova

An Undergraduate Historical Review

DUKE UNIVERSITY

Fall 2021

Volume IV

Issue 1

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Preface

By John D. French (Interim Director of Undergraduate Studies)

I am pleased to offer a few words of introduction to this volume of Duke's undergraduate history journal, now in its fourth year. It's a pleasure to read this issue of *Historia Nova* that features research by our students spanning the world from the U.S. South and the United Kingdom to China, Nigeria, and the transatlantic slave trade. It is testimony to the seriousness of purpose of its dedicated editors Brenden Li, Sanjit Beriwal, Tyler Donovan, Patrick Duan, Bailey Griffen, Jacob Margolis, the authors, and its external reviewers who here provide a fine example of the purpose of history, the historian's craft, and the history journal.

Our twenty-first-century contemporary world has been reshaped, before our very eyes, by injustice, pandemics, and the injustice of the handling of pandemics. In such circumstances, it is all the more important to know which people lived, how they lived, what they did, and what they lived for since we have yet to overcome the division between those born to rule and those born to be ruled, those who matter and those who do not.

The writing and reading of history at its best can be seen as a form of moral witness as it was for Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* with his striking illustration of the unforgiving realities of power. The residents of the small island of Melos faced a tragic dilemma as they resisted Athenian demands to break with Sparta and submit to Athens. Rejecting the islanders' proposal of neutrality, they were brusquely informed that "you know as well as we do that right . . . is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

The flow of human history is about constant change that can be thought of as a multitude of rivers, some well-known and documented and others less so. The nineteenth century German poet Heinrich Heine once wrote to the young Karl Marx that "the difference between water and a river is that the latter has a memory, a past, a history." While anchored in historicizing the present, historians are nonetheless aware that "no man can cross the same river twice, because neither the

man nor the river are the same." To this insight from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, I would add a pithy observation from our own Mark Twain, an opponent of imperialism and fighter for justice. "Although history does not repeat," he observed, "now and then, it rhymes" which fuels our hope that humankind might avoid the suffering, injustices, and tragedies of our shared past if they knew its history better and thought about it more deeply.

Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

This issue brings a new installment of *Historia Nova* in which we hope to showcase some of the wonderful work of our Duke undergraduate students. Duke history department and history students often embody the *Historia Nova* idea of telling “new histories” in their teachings and research. Being the Duke undergraduate history journal, *Historia Nova* would like to be the first to showcase the wonderful work of our peers working in history. As such, the editorial team would like to thank the authors for their time and effort in their meticulous writing and research to bring us these narratives. Of course, we would also like to thank the history professors, graduate students, and Dr. French who have lent their time and expertise to help us bring this to you.

As historical research continues to advance, we are always interested in the new narratives, discoveries, and connections we are able to showcase; it is always important to give voice and acknowledgement to the stories less often told. Thus, in this issue we feature a comparison of the philosophies of pain and medicine between East and West, a biography of a prominent Nigerian anti-colonial activist, an analysis of the British welfare state and its mediation by the world wars, a discussion of the contexts and ideologies of Southern US radical left newspapers, and a biography and discussion of Anabaptist leader Hans Denck.

Thank you as always for reading and supporting *Historia Nova*, dear reader. In this issue we hope to bring to you new narratives, perhaps ones you may have not heard of or know little about, which may spur you to seek similar stories that deserve attention and acknowledgement. We hope that, like us, you will also learn much from these pieces. They offer glimpses into moments and lives long past that still have striking and unexpected impacts on ours today. As always, we earnestly hope you will enjoy this issue of *Historia Nova* and we encourage any reader to reach out, ask questions, and submit manuscripts.

Sincerely,
Historia Nova Editorial Board

Our Mission



Historia Nova features exceptional historical analysis from undergraduate students at institutions across the United States and around the world. Our publication reveals the field’s dynamism and challenges the ways in which history is interpreted and continually re-interpreted by scholars. We hope you enjoy this Spring Volume. For more information about our organization at Duke University please refer to our website at (<https://history.duke.edu/new-events/undergraduate>) or email us at (dukehistorianova@gmail.com).

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Duke University's Undergraduate Historical Review

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“Doctor, it hurts.” An analysis of mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century depictions of the Chinese body in pain

By Lillian Dukes, Duke University, Class of 2021

“In whatever aspect we regard them, the Chinese are and must continue to be to us more or less a puzzle, but we shall make no approach to comprehending them until we have it settled (*sic*) firmly in our minds that, as compared with us, they are gifted with the “absence of nerves.”¹

The above excerpt is found in Arthur H. Smith’s (1845-1932) *Chinese Characteristics* (1894), the most widely read American book on China until Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth* (1931). In a series of pseudo-scientific, humorous, and mordant essays Smith used race and “national character” to interpret Chinese food, dress, body care, music, art, language, architecture, politics, and religion. “National character” was a concept popularized by European scholars in the late-eighteenth century who considered human differences primarily in terms of geographic unity and cultural “manners.”² Smith, an American Protestant missionary who spent 27 years in China from 1872 to 1899, took particular interest with the Chinese response to and expression of pain, notably their supposed superhuman endurance to pain or “absence of nerves.” In awe, Smith recounted stories of Chinese babies who barely cried when being stung by bees and Chinese hospital patients gifted with the quality to “bear the ills [they have].”³ Puzzled by this “absence of nerves,” Smith drew on the philosophy social Darwinism and warned his audience of white expatriates and Americans back home: “Which is the best adapted to survive in the struggles

of the twentieth century, the “nervous” European, or the tireless, all-pervading, and phlegmatic Chinese?”⁴

In navigating the complex stereotypes surrounding expressions of pain and the “national Chinese character,” I unravel how biomedicine, Christianity, and Eurocentric conceptions of civility and science created moments of anxiety, curiosity, or genuine sympathy between Western missionaries like Arthur H. Smith and their Chinese subjects. In particular, the material produced from medical missions in China are especially useful as they provide insight into the intimate patient-doctor relationship. Through an analysis of medical visual material from the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, I plan to illustrate the important role of pain in validating Chinese selfhood to Western missionaries, and how rationalist Enlightenment thought attempted to standardize something as individual and irrational as pain. The consequences of which show that the mistranslation of pain became a phenomenon wherein Western doctors could simultaneously devalue Chinese medical ideology and Chinese experience.

Analyzing Pain:

The Pros and Cons of Using Visual Media

Any discussion of pain, scholarly or otherwise, is undoubtedly a challenge for, as Elaine Scarry eloquently states: “physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is

1 Arthur H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 5th rev. ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1894), 96.

2 Lydia H. Liu, “The Ghost of Arthur H. Smith in the Mirror of Cultural Translation,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 20, no. 4 (2013): 406-414, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18765610-02004004>.

3 Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 149, 158.

4 Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 97.

learned.”⁵ Indeed, despite attempts to categorize pain on scales from 1-10 and to capture pain’s essence through brooding song lyrics, poignant novels, and adjectives like “burning” and “sharp,” ultimately pain must be physically felt to be known in its entirety. Or, as Scarry articulates, “for the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that ‘having pain’ may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to ‘have certainty,’ while for the other person it is so elusive that ‘hearing about pain’ may exist as the primary model of what it is to have doubt.”⁶ Pain paradoxically exists in complete certainty and complete ambiguity.

My analysis of visual material, including portraits, advertising pamphlets, and documentary footage, is therefore an attempt to diminish the completeness with which pain destroys language and to discuss how visual material, in welcoming multiple interpretations, serves as a source of power imbalance. As Susan Sontag contends, “to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power.”⁷ In other words, through photography one wordlessly creates and controls the knowledge of another’s existence. Therefore photos, no matter how innocent or neutral in appearance, are significant tools of power. Although Sontag’s quote references photography specifically, I warrant that any visual material attempting to capture pain illustrates a creation of intimate knowledge that words otherwise cannot describe. Through visual media one can capture the ‘sounds and cries’ of pain that words cannot. A complete analysis of visual material, however, must go beyond a study of what is presented to ask why and by whom such images were created in the first place. In doing so, one understands the power behind each image.

Analyzing visual media, however, is not without its limitations. Limitations including a lack of diversity in the personage captured or a lack of visual material altogether are especially great when considering the diverse and large population in China and the constraints missionaries faced when producing visual material in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Similarly, although my discussion will rely primarily on generalizing the dogmas presented by Western and Chinese thought, this is not to say that there were outliers in either ideology. However, rather than detract from my argument, such caveats stand to further highlight the ways in which pain is mistranslated when taken from its cultural background. An analysis of visual material therefore allows me to consider the ways in which power imbalances between Eurocentric societies and China are upheld through the multiple subjective truths that stem from a single image.

Calculating pain: A brief history of biomedical communities’ attempts to standardize pain expressions

Founded in the echoes of Enlightenment thought, the rise of Western biomedicine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was one that, through the rationalization, objectification, and institutionalization of health, left little room for the subjectivity of pain. The aftermath of such practices has not gone unnoticed. Sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) characterized the ‘iron cage’ and the ways in which a mechanized bureaucracy hinders society.⁸ Historian and sociologist Michel Foucault (1926-1984) dissected the emergence of the Normal during this period, a time where when individuality was once lauded, it now negatively breaks the mold of

5 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain—The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

6 Scarry, *The Body in Pain—The Making and Unmaking of the World*, 4.

7 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), 4.

8 For more, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Los Angeles, Roxbury Publishing, 1998).

standardization, rationalization, and homogenization. Thus examinations—between physician and patient, schoolteacher and pupil, warden and inmate—become more than just an assessment of self, but ways in which power can be exerted by transforming one into the Other.⁹ Philosopher Ivan Illich (1926-2002), in creating the term ‘medicalization,’ commented on the ever-expanding role of medical jurisdiction and authority in realms outside of health.¹⁰ However, historian Roberta Bivins—in her book *Alternative Medicine? A History*—provides an especially insightful lens through which to view Western biomedicine’s creation of its Chinese “alternative” and Foucauldian other.

Notably, Bivins’s work illustrates that the creation of Chinese medicine as “alternative” grew out of a need for Western biomedicine to distance itself from its former Galenic, humoral-based—and therefore largely subjective—practice of medicine. Experience was displaced with scientific ‘experiment’ as the “notion that medical knowledge—knowledge about the body, behavior, health, and disease—should be universal, absolute, and ‘objective’, rather than individual, content, and ‘subjective’...” came to dominate Western medical practice.¹¹ “Objective” science, an authority that would be bolstered by Andreas Vesalius’ anatomical insights, Robert Koch’s advancements in isolating disease, and Louis Pasteur’s Germ Theory, became the European metric to which all other medical philosophies would be measured. If Western medicine was previously governed by the elusive humors, one might say that it was now dictated by the reliable microscope, such was the importance of visual, definite proof. Increased reliance on the tangible, provable aspects of health not only led to the rejection of divergent Chinese medical practices, but

also to the rejection “of the patient’s own experience of disease, the diminution of the patient’s authority over his or her own bodily knowledge.”¹² Indeed, as Bivins suggests, the push to produce extensive and exact medical knowledge greatly devalued the importance of disease experience, of pain, in Western medicine. Pain, after all, is not seen under a microscope. But, while pain’s subjective and transient nature might have led to its diminished importance in Western biomedicine, it did not escape attempts of standardization.

Entangled in increasingly rationalist beliefs, notably the creation of the Foucauldian Normal, physical pain, to the Western doctor, became highly standardized in hierarchies of race, gender, and class. The title of this section draws on Martin Pernick’s, *A Calculus of Suffering* wherein he describes the convoluted deliberations nineteenth-century American doctors made when prescribing their patients anesthesia. Ether-based anesthesia, a revolutionary surgical invention of 1846, would greatly aid in increasing the power of surgeons, promoting the entry of women into surgery, and fostering the bureaucratization of urban hospitals. Firstly, however, anesthesia’s existence would be used to further broadcast a “hierarchy of sensitivity, a great chain of feeling” wherein those who topped the hierarchy were most prone to pain.¹³ In creating a hierarchy, Western medical professionals were able to standardize and stereotype otherwise diverse expressions of pain. Nineteenth-century medical literature urged doctors to consider the ways in which a patient’s sex, race, age, ethnicity, economic class, personal habits, and temperament all impacted their (in)ability to feel pain, and thereby warrant or disavow the administration of anesthesia. Pernick depicts how common knowledge of the time held that “brute animals, savages, purebred

9 Michel Foucault, “The examination,” in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 193.

10 For more, see Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (London: Marion Boyers, 1975).

11 Roberta Bivins, *Alternative Medicine? A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

12 Bivins, *Alternative Medicine? A History*, 39.

13 Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 157.

nonwhites, the poor and oppressed, the inebriate, and the old constituted the lower orders,” while the top of the hierarchy “included [white] women; the rich, civilized, educated, and sophisticated; sober drunkards; and the mulattoes.”¹⁴ This nineteenth-century hierarchy suggests ultimately that differences in pain expression were not only believed to be the result of biological difference, but also the result of difference in knowledge. Encompassing this idea, Pernick quotes distinguished founder of American Neurology, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell (1829-1914): “In our process of being civilized we have won, I suspect, intensified capacity to suffer. *The savages do not feel pain as we do.*”¹⁵ To suffer was to be civilized, and in linking the experience of pain to knowledge, nineteenth-century Western medical professionals were able to distinguish between those who nobly and *silently endured* pain, and those who savagely were *insensitive*.

To the doctors, like Dr. Mitchell, entrusted with being able to tell the difference between endurance of pain and insensitivity to pain, “endurance requir[ed] heroic effort; insensitivity [came] from brutish stolidity. Endurance involv[ed] strength and character; insensibility [resulted] from a moral or physiological defect.”¹⁶ Illustrative of the hierarchy of sensitivity at work, it was perceived that white sailors endured the pains of a harsh life at sea, while black indentured servants were brutishly insensitive to the pains of labor and their masters. In a similar manner, Arthur H. Smith, the aforementioned American Protestant missionary who spent almost three decades in China, compared Chinese laborers to automatons who were “...willing to labor a very long time for very small rewards...”¹⁷ In making

such judgements of character, nineteenth-century commentators were largely blind to the notion that any of the differences discussed so far were differences in the way pain was *perceived*, and instead rationalized such differences as “unnatural, pathological, and thus potentially curable.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, such ideology continues to thrive in the western medical establishment; recent data illustrates that myths surrounding black insensitivity to pain still exist in a significantly large number of white laypeople and medical professionals.¹⁹

Was this infamous “hierarchy of pain” the only idea to infiltrate the Western medical and scientific communities in the nineteenth century? Interestingly, amongst practitioners of “fringe” sciences of the era, such as Anton Mesmer’s animal magnetism, more commonly known as mesmerism, alternative conceptions of pain gained prominence. While visiting his family’s plantation in the French West Indies, French mesmerist Charles Poyen (? -1844) discovered that both whites and African slaves were equally responsive to his mesmeric trances. Inspired by the knowledge that all races experienced physical sensation in a similar manner, Poyen traveled to America in 1834 to lecture about the commonality of all races and the error of slavery. However, the success of Poyen’s lectures, just like mesmerism, was limited. Perhaps due to a combination of Poyen’s broken English, stark appearance, and revered scientist Benjamin Franklin’s especially derisive disapproval of mesmerism, Poyen’s abolitionist message and supporting evidence was not wholly satisfying to his American crowds.²⁰ Poyen’s plight is therefore illustrative of how changing the narrative surrounding

14 Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering*, 157.

15 Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering*, 154.

16 Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering*, 162.

17 Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 92, 153.

18 Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering*, 160.

19 Kelly M. Hoffman, Sophie Trawalter, Jordan R. Axt, M. Normam Oliver, “Racial bias in pain assessment,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 16 (2016): 4296-4301, DOI:10.1073/pnas.1516047113.

20 Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: White House seances, Ouija circles, masons, and the secret mystic history of our nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 33-35.

the existence of pain in persons required surmounting the rigors of the Western scientific establishment and skepticism surrounding decidedly foreign ideas.

Therefore, like mesmerism, indigenous Chinese medicine and Chinese persons’ expressions of pain were heavily scrutinized, debated, and dismembered by nineteenth-century Western observers. Under the guise of “misconceived notions of commonality,” practices of Chinese medicine like moxibustion and acupuncture were stripped of their foreign philosophies and forged into something more palatable for the Western patient.²¹ Moxibustion was viewed as a form of cautery and was therefore easily facilitated into Western medical practice, whereas acupuncture, lacking a European analog, was largely set aside.²² I therefore posit that pain, too, was misinterpreted by Western doctors in China under such misconceptions of commonality. As I have illustrated, pain expression outside of the European norm implied brutish savagery, a lack of civilized knowledge, and something that needed a cure. Such assumptions were made under the expectation that all physical pain had a universal “correct” form of expression. Thus, blinded by what they believed to be an objective truth, Western biomedical practitioners were largely doomed to misinterpret the expressions of pain of their foreign patients.

Pain at the Universal Hospital of Love

It is during this era, the rise of nineteenth-century rational, objective, and standardized healthcare, that I begin my exploration of the Western perspective of the Chinese body in pain. In 1835, Peter Parker (1804–1888), a Yale-trained missionary and physician, opened

the first Western-style hospital in China, the Ophthalmic Hospital in Canton (Guangzhou). The building was donated by Wu Bingjian, a rich merchant who was unique in that he extended his relationships with Western individuals beyond the strictly business associations common at the time. Likewise, Parker was determined to open a hospital in the commercial hive Canton to facilitate “social and friendly intercourse” between the Chinese and non-Chinese.²³ He had hoped that armed with his knowledge of medicine, Christ, and Cantonese, his Canton Hospital, known in Chinese as *Pu’ai Yiyuan* (普愛醫院), or the Hospital of Universal Love, would replace the “pitiable superstitions” of the Chinese with Christianity.²⁴ In the three years between 1845 and 1848 his hospital treated 7,571 patients, a remarkable number of patients for a new hospital, particularly in a country whose native-born residents were typically suspicious of foreign individuals and most likely had never received Western-style physician care.²⁵ But, despite the exterior promise of “universal love,” Parkers’ work, combined with the paintings done by his colleague Lam Qua, helped to embody the creation and pathologization of the Chinese identity and experience of pain.

Although it is easy to look at Pu’ai Yiyuan’s uncommon and immense success and sing the praises of Parker’s “enthusiastic missionary of exceptional vigor and ability,” it must be noted that Pu’ai Yiyuan’s initial success was not due to the purportedly superior dogmas of Western biomedicine and Christianity.²⁶ Rather, as Bridie Andrews contends, “early missionaries made considerable accommodations in order to meet Chinese expectations” and that, until the second half of the nineteenth century, “doctors East and West were

21 Bivins, *Alternative Medicine?*, 69.

22 Bivins, *Alternative Medicine?*, 69.

23 Chi-Chao Chan, Melissa M. Liu, James C. Tsai, “The First Western-Style Hospital in China,” *Archives of Ophthalmology* (Chicago, Ill.: 1960) 129, no. 6 (2011): 791–793, doi:10.1001/archophthalmol.2011.120.

24 Chan, “The First Western-Style Hospital in China,” 793.

25 Chan “The First Western-Style Hospital in China,” 792.

26 Louis Fu, “Healing Bodies or Saving Souls? Reverend Dr Peter Parker (1804–1888) as Medical Missionary,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 24, no. 2 (May 2016): 273, doi:10.1177/0967772014532895.

compounding medicines from the raw *materia medica* according to the same basic principles.”²⁷ To be concise, components of Western missionary medical practice were initially incredibly similar to Chinese practice and ideology. While such practices of accommodation and commensurability did greatly aid in the “winning of patients’ confidence and friendship,” missionaries like Parker were then left with the challenging task of proving the superiority of their Western skill, thereby warranting the adoption of Western medicine, and more importantly, Christ, to their Chinese patients.²⁸ The solution to this conundrum became the primary factor in determining which illnesses missionary hospitals would treat; treating external ailments like easily removed tumors and cataracts provided immediate cures Chinese patients could view with their own eyes. Parker, accordingly, understood that the best way to convince his wary patients of this skill was to show them rather than tell them.

Thus in 1834, Parker hired Lam Qua (林官, also known as Kwan Kiu Cheong), a highly renowned painter in Canton to produce full-color portraits of the more dramatic or ‘interesting’ cases of pathology, women and men with enlarged cancerous growths, congenital deformities, and gangrene. Lam Qua was, in the words of art historian Carl Crossman, “the most celebrated Chinese painter in the English style in Canton”, known for his ability to render his subjects’ likenesses extremely well. Witty and candid, Lam Qua, was simultaneously highly influenced by the works of Western painters and highly critical of them. Supposedly, upon viewing an English painting of a Chinese executioner wearing ridiculous “long silken robes, with satin boots, and... mandarin caps, with peacocks’ feathers dangling from them,” Lam Qua is to have remarked, “Perhaps

the Englishman really didn’t know a lie about that in Pidgin [when he heard one]; [but] I think he’s quite the fool: the Chinaman’s no such fool, what he sees he can do, what he doesn’t see he can’t do.”²⁹

In a period of almost 15 years from 1834 to 1850, the stylistically “bilingual” Lam Qua produced more than a hundred portraits of Parker’s patients. Parker’s deliberate use of ocular proof extended to more than just convincing his Chinese patients of his skill; Parker understood that visual proof was necessary to convince those back home of the worthiness of his cause. Moreover, Professor Stephen Rachman suggests that the paintings were deeply personal to Parker. “On a psychological level, the paintings must have served as a form of compensation for the doctor who took no fees and found surgery a religious ordeal... Many of the paintings were, indirectly, the tokens and mementos of answered prayers.”³⁰ In this light, Lam Qua’s portraits immortalize both the pathology of Parker’s patients and Parker’s personal success in fulfilling a Christ-like act of service. Consequently, Lam Qua’s “bilingualism” proved especially useful to Parker, simultaneously providing advertisement of his skill to the largely poor classes of Chinese and, to his wealthy Western audience, proof of the existence of a people who needed deliverance from their physical and spiritual maladies. Therefore, while Pu’ai Yiyuan is only one of many Western missionary hospitals to do work in China—and arguably an outlier at that—the work of Lam Qua and Peter Parker provide immense insight into the origin of consequential mistranslations that occur when interpreting and creating images of the body in pain.

In keeping with the Victorian fascination with “national character,” for Parker, the key message to be extracted from the portraits was

27 Bridie Andrews, *The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine, 1850-1960* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015), 53.

28 Andrews, *The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine*, 53.

29 Ari Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2008), 11, 42, 46-47.

30 Stephen Rachman, “Curiosity and Cure: Peter Parker’s Patients, Lam Qua’s Portraits,” *The Journal of Early American Life* (2016), accessed December 18, 2021, <http://commonplace.online/article/curiosity-and-cure/>.

what he came to recognize as the distinct "Chinese character". Historian Ari Heinrich discloses:

"*character* encompassed more ineffable characteristics such as what Westerners perceived to be a uniquely Chinese 'disregard for time, disregard for accuracy, a talent for misunderstanding, a talent for indirection... intellectual turbidity, an absence of nerves, contempt for foreigners, an absence of public spirit...indifference to comfort and convenience, physical vitality'"³¹

As a missionary doctor, Parker was especially interested by the "absence of nerves," or lack of pain expression he saw while operating on his patients. Of the almost 40,000 patients he treated before 1858, those in which Parker wrote about most frequently and of whom he had portraits made, were those who he perceived as curiously insensitive to their often grotesque and painful afflictions.

Take, for example Lo Wanshun, aged 41, a woman who's large "sarcomatous facial tumor" had afflicted her for almost twenty years. Despite the large protrusion from her face, Lo Wanshun appears poised and serene in the portrait (Figure 1). Her slightly upturned mouth, the glow surrounding her face, the gentleness of her outstretched hands, and her relaxed, if not almost vacant eyes, all seem to encompass Parker's requirement that the portraits express this shade of "Chinese character". Lo Wanshun appears impassive—almost indifferent—to her condition. In describing her case, Parker corroborated such ideas:

"As usual, the traces of the cautery and escharotics of the *native practitioners* were seen upon it; and the patient stated it had been lanced, and the hemorrhage in consequence was arrested with difficulty...on the 15th of December the tumor was successfully removed. The patient endured the operation

with fortitude characteristic of the Chinese. The loss of blood was considerable, she vomited but did not faint (emphasis added)."³²

Almost ten years after treating Lo Wanshun, Parker similarly writes of Yang Kang, who also suffered from a facial glandular tumor:

"He greatly delighted when informed on the feasibility of an operation, and resigned if the result should be fatal, as he deemed death preferable to life of mendacity and suffering. Oct 26th, the tumor was extirpated. (...) The patient discovered great fortitude, coolly remarking on commencement of the first incision 'It hurts, doctor.'"³³

Parker's journal illustrates stark opposition between Yang Kang's allegedly impassioned plea—that death by Parker's hand would be preferable to his current situation—and Yang Kang's off-handed comment during surgery, "It hurts, doctor". In like manner, Yang Kang's portrait shows a great juxtaposition between the gravity of his condition and his stoic, unconcerned expression (Figure 2). Parker rectified such conflicting ideas by interpreting these events through the lens of his superior skill and knowledge. Therefore, he recorded that Yang Kang was "greatly delighted" by the thought of surgery and afterwards lived as "a monument of gratitude, witnessed by thousands who come thither."³⁴

Analyzing Lo Wanshun's and Yang Kang's cases jointly, a pattern emerges wherein it becomes clear that Parker, although sympathetic to his patients' afflictions, alienated them on the grounds of their lack of pain response only to illustrate their joy and serenity when under his care. Guided by Parker's interpretation, the portraits illustrate how his patients' deformities existed not only as cancerous growths, but also as a curious deficiency in character and selfhood. Thus, subsequent missionaries, such as Arthur H. Smith, were left to

31 Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images*, 58.

32 Peter Parker, "First Quarterly Report of the Hospital," *Chinese Repository* 5 (1836-1837): 457.

33 Peter Parker, "13th Report," *Chinese Repository*, 14 (1845): 450-452.

34 Parker, "13th Report," 450-452.

ponder if the Chinese response to pain was to be lauded or feared. As seen in Lo Wanshun's and Yang Kang's portraits, the portraits intentionally highlight a tension between the normal and the pathological. Impassive faces starkly contrast facial tumors whose enormity "seemed to represent the enormity of the medical problems and missionary challenges of China."³⁵ As few portraits were made of Parker's patients after their surgery, the typical Western viewer could only relieve such tension by turning to Parker's testimony of the surgery. In this way, Parker successfully produced a narrative that his patients' physical and spiritual wellbeing required a cure that only a Western doctor and, by extension, Christ, could provide. Whether or not the "absence of nerves" characteristic of the Chinese was to be lauded or feared, Parker presented proof that Western culture, in the form of medical missionary work, could save souls. Therefore, reflective of the subversive techniques of the hierarchy of pain, Parker's translation and illustration of his patients' pain ultimately reinforced the supposed superiority of Western biomedicine and the "otherness" of the Chinese experience.



Figure 1: Lam Qua, *Lo Wanshun, Aged Forty-one, [an] Interesting Woman of the First Society of Her Native Village (?)*, ca. 1837, oil on board, 61 X 47 cm. Courtesy of Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.



Figure 2: Lam Qua, *Yang Kang, Aged Thirty-five, Latterly a beggar in Macao*, ca. 1845, oil on board, 61 x 47 cm. Courtesy of Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

35 Rachman, "Curiosity and Cure: Peter Parker's Patients, Lam Qua's Portraits."

Such was the consolidated message of Chinese alterity and the excellence of Western medicine and Christ that Parker inspired in his reports for the *Chinese Repository* and in displaying Lam Qua's paintings. Between 1840 and 1841 Parker traveled the United States and Europe where he successfully advocated for missionary work in China to a list of notable figures: John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, William Henry Harrison, Martin Van Buren, the Dukes of Sussex and Wellington, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the King and Queen of France, to name a few.³⁶ However, Lam Qua's portraits shocked their Western audience as much as they invoked sympathy. Although Parker attempted to ensure that his lectures and portrait presentations were ones of "extirpation, containment, and conversion," the portraits became objects of "curiosity" akin to the surreal museum hoaxes (e.g., the "Fiji mermaid") made popular by the notorious showman P.T. Barnum.³⁷ Of note, the Oxford English Dictionary reveals that the abbreviation for curiosity, "curio," originated in the 1840s to describe artifacts from "China, Japan, and the Far East."³⁸ The Yale collection of Lam Qua's portraits was only mounted once, in 1922. Next to one of the paintings a comic verse read:

"Peter Parker's pickled paintings Cause of nausea, chills & faintings; Peter Parker's putrid portraits, Cause of ladies' loosened corsets; Peter Parker's purple patients, Causing some to upchuck rations. Peter Parker's priceless pictures: Goiters, fractures, strains, and strictures. Peter Parker's pics prepare you for the ills that flesh is heir to (*sic*)."³⁹

As discussed previously, without Parker's testimony and advocacy, Lam Qua's portraits embodied a tension between the normal and pathological self. As evidenced

above, this tension, combined with the medical and cultural exoticism of Parker's patients, generated feelings of amusement and disgust amongst a Western audience. In this way, the cultural oeuvre produced at Pu'ai Yiyuan can be viewed as one that both helped further the message of Chinese alterity, an "otherness" that manifested not only in the Chinese experience of disease, but also in their medical treatment.

However, to solely analyze Lam Qua's portraits as Parker and his Eurocentric audience would have generally viewed them would be to strip Lam Qua of his role in painting his people. These paintings, after all, are the result of cross-cultural communication, and thus should not be viewed as solely the result of Western dominance, even if Parker's interpretation and resulting narrative consistently supports such dogmas. Instead, in discussing how Lam Qua depicts the agency and expression of his subjects, it becomes evident how Parker and other medical missionaries mistranslated pain.

Mistranslating Pain: Re-evaluating ideologies lost in 'misconceived notions of commonality'

Before unravelling an alternative perception of Lam Qua's portraits, one must first understand the distinct cultural role of pain in Chinese medicine's philosophy of health. While a complete discussion of the history and basis of Chinese medicine lies outside the scope of this inquiry, some of the major foundational literature include: *Huangdi Neijing* (黃帝內經; The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor), *Mai jing* (脈經; The Pulse Classic), *Shang-han Lun* (傷寒論; Treatise on Cold Damage Diseases), and *Bencao Gangmu* (本草綱目; Compendium of Materia Medica). Such classics underscore the constitutional elements to the ideology of Chinese medicine: yin and yang, the five phases

36 Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images*, 44.

37 Rachman, "Curiosity and Cure: Peter Parker's Patients, Lam Qua's Portraits."

38 Rachman, "Curiosity and Cure: Peter Parker's Patients, Lam Qua's Portraits."

39 Rachman, "Curiosity and Cure: Peter Parker's Patients, Lam Qua's Portraits."

and six organs, qi, pulse reading, and Chinese materia medica.⁴⁰ Even as these philosophies changed with time, Keh-Ming Lin claims that traditional Chinese medicine maintained a persistent “unwillingness to differentiate between psychological and physiological functions” to the point that the “tendency toward extreme somatization maybe ultimately different from that of other cultures.”⁴¹ Stated simply, a central dogma of traditional Chinese medicine is one in which one’s mental and physical condition are intimately and completely bound. The heart harbors the spirit, the kidney serves as a reservoir for “essence,” the lungs are susceptible to worries, and the stomach and spleen to over-thinking. Such a philosophy, while seen in the ideologies of Vedic and Galenic medicine, stands in stark contrast to the Cartesian dichotomy of ‘mind *versus* matter,’ the dogma after which Western biomedicine was chiefly modeled.

Furthermore, in traditional Chinese medicine “excess and incongruence of seven kinds of emotions (happiness, anger, worry, desire, sadness, fear, and fright) are regarded as pathogenic.”⁴² In stark contrast to the Grecian and European tradition that stresses a therapeutic value of emotional catharsis, the “Chinese directed their efforts to avoid excesses of emotions and fit their emotional states to their natural and social milieu”⁴³ In other words, to display an excess of emotions while in pain—the grimaces, groans, and shouts typical to the Western viewer—would in itself be pathological, and therefore superfluous. Rather, when faced with a difficult emotional state, one is able to channel such feelings to the physiological function of the related organ.

In light of such knowledge, it becomes clear that Lam Qua’s depictions of his subjects’ serene and stoic

faces exist not to solely please the wishes of Parker. Instead, Lo Wanshun’s and Yang Kang’s portraits can be perceived as their individual exercises of control. Lam Qua omitted pain from their expression as to do otherwise would be redundant; Lo Wanshun’s and Yang Kang’s afflictions speak for themselves. Their expressions are therefore serene, not to suggest a barbaric insensitivity to pain, but an inner strength that prevented pain from further causing disease. Nonetheless, Lam Qua was still able to depict the uncomfortable nature of his subjects’ afflictions through the dark and claustrophobic backgrounds that “[echo] illness and health sympathetically, creating a pathological ecology.”⁴⁴ In other words, Lam Qua used the environment of the portraits to illustrate the pain and pathology of the subjects. Therefore, Lo Wanshun’s primarily dark background can be viewed as a reflection of the severity of her affliction and the sliver of window on the right side as the anticipation for relief from the darkness.

Therefore, when Parker declares that Yang Kang *coolly* remarks, “it hurts, doctor,” was this an accurate translation of Yang Kang’s pain? Or, to paraphrase Lam Qua, has Parker foolishly seen what was not there? With a lack of Western narrative cues, it is certainly possible that Parker was left unable to accurately articulate his patients’ experience—to understand that his patients’ legendary “fortitude” was one that existed to prevent an excess of emotions, not because of lack of feeling in the first place. I therefore believe that Yang Kang’s remark, no matter the manner of speech, was a rather loud attempt to express, and thereby validate, his pain in Parker’s eyes. However, guided by the misconception that the universality of

40 P.L. Rance, “Interactions between Chinese and Western Medicine in Hong Kong: Modernization and Professional Inequality,” in *Culture and Healing in Asian Societies: Anthropological, Psychiatric and Public Health Studies*, ed. Arthur Kleinman, et al. (Cambridge: Shenkman Publishing Company, 1978), 289-310.

41 Keh-Ming Lin, “Traditional Chinese Medical Beliefs and Their Relevance for Mental Illness and Psychiatry,” in *Normal and Abnormal Behaviour in Chinese Culture*, ed. Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-yi Lin (Holland, Boston, London: D Reidel Publishing, 1981), 101.

42 Lin, “Traditional Chinese Medical Beliefs,” 101.

43 Lin, “Traditional Chinese Medical Beliefs,” 101.

44 Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images*, 61.

pain manifests in equally standard expressions, Parker’s accounts and perceptions of his patients’ experience fall short in truly capturing such significant subtleties. Where Lam Qua strategically the complete personhood of his subjects, Parker instead saw amenability and the chance to make Chinese heathen, ironically through surgery, physically and spiritually whole.

The aftermath of such assumptions leads to both the creation and further crystallization of harmful stereotypes like those seen in the hierarchy of pain. In medicine especially, such stereotypes can lead to physical harm. Illustrative of this chain reaction, in 1849, Parker wrote of Lu-shu, aged 42, who suffered “hypertrophy of both breasts”:

“When she came to the operating table she was under high nervous excitement, which was rather increased by the first application of chloroform, and being a Romanist, invoked the name of the Virgin Mary as well as the Savior. And very soon after the second exhibition she became quite insensible... She came almost instantly under the influence of chloroform, which was administered at her own request, at first she seemed in a state of pleasurable excitement, chanting or singing, till she became silent and motionless... She complained rather more of the wound, than is usual when chloroform is administered.”⁴⁵

Compared to Yang Kang and Lo Wanshun, Parker’s account of Lu-shu’s surgical experience is markedly different, and not just because of the advent of anesthesia. Lu-shu was reported as being nervous and requesting chloroform, a clear indication of her distress. Prominently still, Parker made note of Lu-shu’s Roman Catholic faith. Lu-shu’s faith, combined with the presence of anesthesia, illustrates the increasing presence and influence of western culture in some regions of China. Nevertheless, although Lu-shu’s

outwardly emotional response should have been familiar to Parker, he still managed to ostracize the Chinese body in pain as something “other.” Parker suggested Lu-shu complained of her wounds more than she ought, and—earlier in the report—that “her impatient opium-smoking husband” was nothing but a bad influence.⁴⁶ Unlike Yang Kang and Lo Wanshun, whom Parker writes of in a more positive tone, Parker appeared exasperated and irritated at Lu-shu’s behavior. Whereas other patients are described as exhibiting a ‘fortitude,’ Lu-Shu was described as “insensible.” Therefore, Parker’s mistranslation of his patient’s pain—his assumption of a ubiquitous ‘Chinese fortitude,’—has created a circumstance wherein his patient suffered, If Lu-shu *herself* had not requested chloroform, who can say how painful the procedure would have been otherwise.

Parker’s reports, corroborated by his interpretation of the portraits produced by Lam Qua, ultimately provide insight into the ways in which expressions of pain, taken from their cultural background, are often misinterpreted and subsequently used to bolster power imbalances. Lu-shu’s portrait is no exception (Figure 3). For although Lam Qua does include elements such as Lu-shu’s jade earrings, a symbol of her high socioeconomic class, to illustrate her personhood, her face can again be interpreted as starkly indifferent to her condition. In light of Parker’s report detailing Lu-shu’s extreme awareness of the pain of her condition, the stoic portrait is then especially illustrative of Lam Qua’s attempt to create a sense of control and the infinite ways in which Parker can manipulate Lu-shu’s case to fit his larger narrative of the ‘Chinese character.’

45 Peter Parker, “Fifteenth Report,” *Chinese Repository* 15, (1850): 267-268.

46 Parker, “Fifteenth Report,” 267-268.



Figure 3: Lam Qua, *Lu-shu, Aged Forty-two, Woman wearing jade earrings (?)*, ca. 1850, oil on board, 61 x 47 cm. Courtesy of Yale University, Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library.

Parker was not unique in his calculated interpretations of his patients' pain. Especially when discussing the practice of foot-binding, medical missionaries were apt in exploiting pain to advertise their cause. For example, the pamphlet produced in 1906, by Ponasang Hospital, also known as Women's Hospital and Dispensary, includes a drawing of a Chinese lady's feet—no bigger than the width of her ankles—delicately adorned in red and white heeled shoes (Figure 4).⁴⁷ The quote “A Chinese proverb says each pair of bound feet costs a water jar of tears,” surrounds the image in an equally bold red font. The image and quote are intentionally shocking to evoke sympathy—ideally supplemented with charity donations—from a Western audience. Typical to many humanitarian efforts, the pamphlet fixates on the language of anguish with phrases emphasizing the “enormous amount

of useless and relievable suffering in China” while extolling the Western/Christian “gospel of healing... that makes its own way into the hearts of the people.”⁴⁸

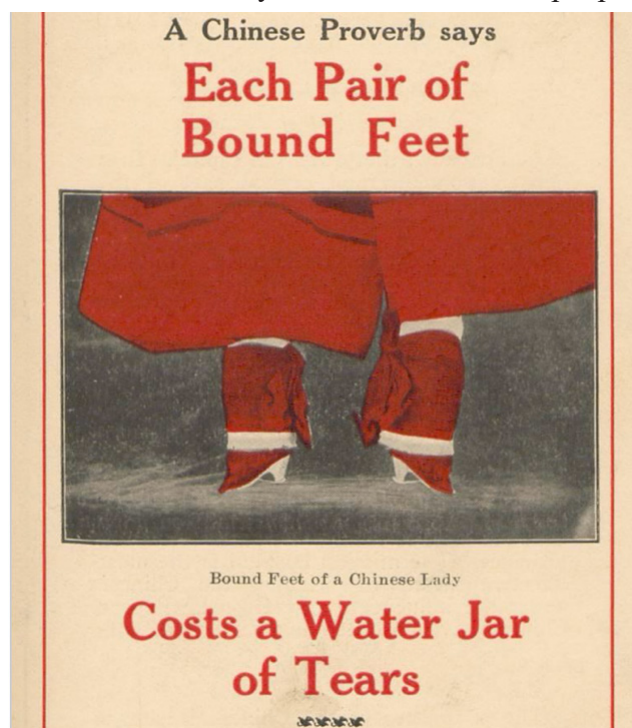


Figure 4: Cover image and quote taken from *Each pair of bound feet*, ca. 1906. Courtesy of Adam Matthew, Marlborough.

Chinese foot binding, a form of bodily modification associated with symbols of status and wealth, is often historically discussed in terms of gendered violence and control of women's bodies. Of course, one could easily argue that foot-binding is only one of many forms of bodily control women throughout the centuries have endured. In fact, in the late nineteenth-century, dress reformists and Victorian moralists avidly spoke against corsets and tightlacing, the practice of wearing a corset that has been tightly laced to achieve a “hyperbolic version of the curvaceous feminine ideal.”⁴⁹ To these moralists, tightlacing was both a threat to a woman's health and a sign of societal failure

47 Ponasang Hospital was founded in 1872 by the American Board of Foreign Commissioners for Foreign Missions (美國公理會) in the province of Fujian (福建).

48 Ponasang Hospital, “Each pair of bound feet,” 1906. Available through Adam Matthew, Marlborough. China: Culture and Society, http://www.chinacultureandsociety.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Z191_13_0799

49 Gretchen Riordan, “The Corset Controversy: Author(is)ing the Subject in/of Tight-lacing,” *Social Semiotics* 17, no. 3 (2007): 263. DOI: [10.1080/10350330701448553](https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330701448553).

for its promotion of vanity.⁵⁰ Despite the societal uproar surrounding tightlacing, fashion historians have argued that the practice was only briefly popular among women of higher social classes in the late-nineteenth century.⁵¹ Therefore, regardless of the differences in breadth of practice and constriction of movement presented by foot binding and tightlacing, surely the foreign missionaries at this *women's* hospital and dispensary felt a sense of genuine sympathy in unraveling social narratives of “beauty is pain.” However, what about this alleged “Chinese proverb” that speaks to the intense pain foot binding could bring about? I could find no credible source verifying the existence of such a proverb in Chinese culture. In fact, the only other locations this proverb is mentioned is in other foreign missionary documents. For example, in *China and Its People*, British author William Arthur Cornaby uses the same proverb to describe the “cruel custom.”⁵² He also adorns the proverb with an image (Figure 5). This time, two girls with sullen faces sit in a room and unravel bandages on their feet. An older aunt peers inside, her fist clenched around a stick and her gaze disapproving.

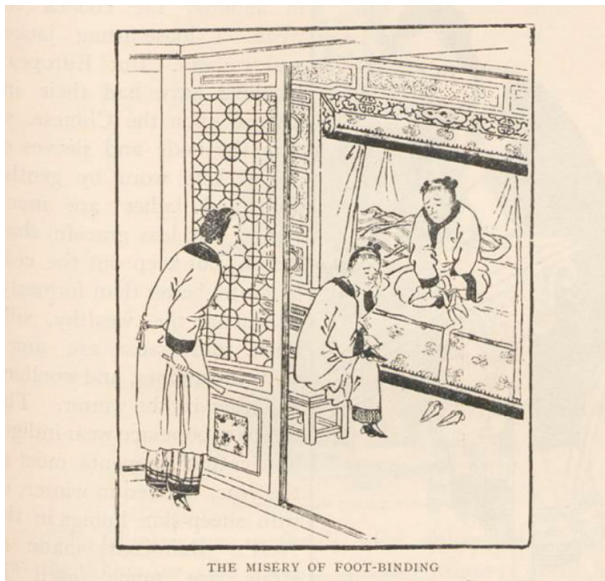


Figure 5: William Arthur Cornaby, *The Misery of Foot-Binding*. Taken from *China and Its People*, p 13, 1910.

Whatever the amount of pain involved in the practice of foot-binding, this “Chinese proverb” and the corresponding images nonetheless seem to have been fabricated and subsequently made popular to sell a Western narrative of the “cruel” or “useless” pain endured in China. The blood-red color of the woman’s shoes, the girl who reaches to wipe tears from her eyes, and the scorn of the second woman leave little room for impartial interpretation: foot-binding is depicted as a callous, unnecessary spectacle. While these exhibitions of “useless” pain stand in stark contrast to the “insensible” absence of pain noted by Parker, both representations illustrate a general pathologization of Chinese pain. In both cases the Chinese experience of pain, or lack thereof, is presented as wrong, and therefore, as in need of a cure. This “cure” being the enlightenment of Western thought and Christ that in like manner was used to discourage the practice of tightlacing in the West. Therefore, similar to Parker’s interpretation of his patients’ conditions wherein the absence of pain was used to propagate the Western theory of a hierarchy of pain, Ponasang Hospital’s and Cornaby’s use of such a proverb and the corresponding images are able to simultaneously reaffirm the “correctness” of Western thought and shun Chinese pain.

Conclusion: The Transformation of Pain and Doubt

I have shown how per the ideals of the largely European, white, and male elite, a metaphorical hierarchy of pain was created wherein class, race, and gender became metrics through which to standardize, and thereby stereotype, one’s pain response. The basis of this ideology incorrectly assumed that the universality of pain should translate into equally universal expressions. Under these “misconceived notions of commonality,” “abnormal” pain expressions, be they a lack of expression or “useless” expressions,

50 Lelia A. Davis, “Woman’s Dress: A Question of the Day,” *Toronto: Dept. of Hygiene and Heredity, Provincial W.C.T.U* (1894): 1-15.

51 Riordan, “The Corset Controversy: Author(is)ing the Subject in/of Tight-lacing,” 263-273.

52 William Arthur Cornaby, *China and Its People* (London, Madras, Colombo: The Christian Literary Society for India, 1910), 13.

were viewed as pathological and therefore curable. Such was the dogma with which Western medical missionaries like Peter Parker considered their Chinese patients. Therefore, Parker's frequent discussion and promotion of his patients' unique "Chinese character" is evidence of the fact that he viewed their stoic "fortitude" as proof of a vulnerability that could be cured through the superior knowledge of Western medicine and Christ. Such a perspective is seen easily in Lam Qua's corresponding portraits, but to solely interpret the pictures in such a manner would be to strip Lam Qua of his own instrumentality in creating the portraits. Instead, an understanding of the Chinese perception of pain elucidates how the stoicism of Lam Qua's subjects can instead be perceived as a source of strength in the face of pain. Despite the clear mistranslation of their patients' behavior, pain continued to be a vehicle in which to exploit the "barbaric" Chinese selfhood and philosophy, as seen through the selective administration of anesthesia and anti-foot-binding campaigns.

The Western perception of the Chinese body in pain continues to evolve, however. In 1975, respected medical anthropologist and psychiatrist Arthur Kleinman wrote of how the aesthetic, emotional, and symbolic levels of cultural reality have often been left out of Western medical practice as their "unscientific" nature posed a dangerous threat to the universality of Western thought. Herein we find acknowledgement of the subjective nature of biomedical science: "the symbolic context links illness, and its culturally patterned symptoms and responds to specific culturally-sanctioned healing activities: thus forming a bridge between biological, psychological, and social phenomena."⁵³ In similar fashion, the visual depictions of the Chinese body in pain underwent change to reflect a cultural understanding of the symbolic and highly diverse ways in which pain is felt and perceived.

The People's Medicine, a documentary film produced by the British Broadcasting Company in 1983, served to educate its audience about the philosophy behind Chinese medicine, the impact of Western medicine in China, and the PRC's healthcare system. While largely successful in its intent to provide a less prejudicial view of Chinese healthcare, the tone of the film occasionally reinforced the "alternative" nature of Chinese healthcare practices. It began with the telling question: "Is [Chinese medicine] all just bizarre herbs and exotic exercise or are there Western influences too?"⁵⁴ In pitting Western biomedicine against Chinese medicine in such a way, this question is a clear echo of Western biomedicine's assumed correctness.

Still, the film successfully illustrated the merits of Chinese medicine and went to lengths to depict the ways in which patients are actively treated. The film also recognized the pain of the Chinese patient as an equal experience to that of a Western patient. For example, a scene depicting open heart surgery begins in the operating room, where the constant rhythm of the heart monitor serves as background music for close-up shots of the Chinese surgeons' skilled hands and a mask administering oxygen and anesthesia to the patient. Such a scene is easily mirrored in any Western hospital, and the narrator makes clear acknowledgment of the "conventional" (i.e., correct) techniques of the doctors while consoling the Chinese patient for what must have been a painful condition with which to live. In such a scene, doubt towards the Chinese body in pain was converted into a solidified distrust of Chinese medicine, namely the use of acupuncture anesthesia, a practice the narrator dismisses as "Cultural Revolution propaganda."⁵⁵ In the 150 years between the creation of Lam Qua's paintings and creation of *The People's Medicine*, the Western understanding of pain underwent great transformation: doubt towards the existence or

53 Arthur Kleinman, "The Symbolic Context of Chinese Medicine: A Comparative Approach to the Study of Traditional Medical and Psychiatric Forms of Care in Chinese Culture," *The American Journal of Chinese Medicine* 3, no. 2 (1975): 115.

54 *The People's Medicine*. 1983. 1:21 <https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=100473&xtid=48772>.

55 *The People's Medicine*. 1983. 10:30-10:45.

correctness of a patient's pain was more fully transformed into doubt of the treatment of pain wherein Western medicine still found ground to boast superior knowledge.

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They Made the Rulers Run: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and the fight for a free and equal Nigeria

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Abstract

Women occupy an integral role as both targets and subverters of colonialism. In Nigeria, women faced the simultaneous loss of their historical power in society and the imposition of imperialist values. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti fought against both Western and traditional values of paternalism and subjugation, transforming the role of women's activism while articulating a national identity. Through her work in education, women's rights, and anti-imperialism at the regional, national, and international scale, Ransome-Kuti challenges our notions of both traditionalism and colonialism and demonstrates the central role of women in the battle for equality.

Introduction

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti existed at the intersection of contradicting ideologies: colonialism and traditionalism, paternalism and feminism, nationalism and ethnocentrism. Throughout her lifetime from 1900-1978, she saw two world wars, the independence of her nation, the rise of communism, and a Nigerian civil war. Yet Ransome-Kuti continued to push for change in education, in women's rights, and in class disparities. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti challenges the notion of both colonialism and traditionalism, representing and transforming the role of women's involvement in the creation of Nigerian independence, the long-term aspirations of a post-colonial nation, and the hope and empowerment of women across Africa and the world.

Women, Nigeria, and the Introduction of Colonialism

“We had equality till Britain came.”¹

Women lost their right to govern when the

British arrived. Before colonial rule, Nigeria was composed of regional governing entities divided roughly along ethnic lines, with women playing an important role in governance.² Regional conflicts and wars amongst ethnic groups and international actors, including slave traders, punctuated early history, shaping society, politics, and gender roles.³

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti belonged to the Egba ethnic group, a subset of the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria. Her birthplace, Abeokuta, was the capital of the Egba province. Years before the British empire arrived, the Egba had a thriving culture, one characterized by women's involvement. The region was governed by a ruler, the Oba, and a collection of chiefs, the Ogboni, who composed various societies in trade, hunting, military, and the Oro, a secret ancestral society advising the Oba. Women could serve as Ogboni, chosen by their merit, but they could not serve in the above societies. Instead, women had their own association, the Iyalode, allowing them to actively partake in the decision-making process.⁴ Years before

1 Ransome-Kuti, Funmilayo. “We Had Equality till Britain Came.”

2 George, Abosede A. *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015, 169-170.

3 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 1-6.

4 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 3.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was born, Lisabi, a resistance leader of Egba, led a series of militant attacks against the imperialistic Oyo Empire, leading to her title as hero and savior of the Egba. Ransome-Kuti was later referred to as both the daughter and “Lioness” of Lisabi for her similar approach and efforts to support her people.⁵

Women also occupied a specialized role in the division of labor: trade. In contrast to other African customs of the time, it was the Yoruba men who oversaw agriculture at home while the women served as tradesmen in the marketplace.⁶

Colonizers impose their values onto the colonized.⁷ British women in the 19th century did not occupy positions in the British government, nor did they have the right to vote.⁸ The British instituted those beliefs through their indirect colonial administration. Nigeria was divided into twenty-four provinces, roughly representing ethnic and regional divisions. A ruler was selected within the province — the Egba leader was known as the Alake — to serve as a proxy for colonial decisions. Each ruler was advised by a council, composed of male chiefs. Together they created the Sole Native Authority (SNA).⁹ Women’s positions were made largely obsolete. It was the “modernization” promised by British power that took away women’s political, social, and economic power in Nigeria. This process also developed a rewritten form of Nigerian traditionalism, one that emphasized social division and the historical superiority of the groups that backed the British regime.¹⁰

The history of women’s power in Nigeria challenges the definitions of Western traditionalism and colonialism. The background of Nigeria and its colonial

history sets the stage for the competing ideologies Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti must navigate in her quest to bring about independence, unity, and equality in Nigeria.

Early Life

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, née Frances Abigail Olufunmilayo Thomas, was born in 1900 in the colonial protectorate of Abeokuta. She belonged to a prominent Egba family, the granddaughter of a former slave, and the daughter of mission-educated parents.¹¹ She was raised in a household that was dually proud of its African heritage and identity and benefited greatly from Western education and the privileges it brought.

One such privilege was the family’s emphasis on the value of learning, equally important for sons and daughters. This balanced access to education was not a common view at the time.¹² That belief of her parents would begin a lifetime bond between Ransome-Kuti and education. For the rest of her life, Ransome-Kuti would be an educator first, teaching students to look beyond their ethnic divisions, women how to protest, and the next generation of African leaders how to create a fair society beyond the limits of tradition and imperialism.

Her education began as the first girl to be admitted to the Abeokuta Grammar School. Her family sent her to continue her studies in England, where she attended the Wincham Hall School for Girls. At its conclusion, she dropped her English names of Frances Abigail, going only by Funmilayo. The action was a response to the racism she experienced abroad, and it solidified her unceasing commitment to Nigerian culture, even when doing so created significant

5 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 1-9.

6 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 5.

7 Afolabi, Comfort Yemisi. “The Invisibility of Women’s Organizations in Decision Making Process and Governance in Nigeria.”

8 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 11.

9 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 11.

10 Byfield, Judith A. *The Great Upheaval: Women and Nation in Postwar Nigeria*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2021, 66.

11 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 19-21.

12 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl. “For Their Freedoms.”

challenges to her personal and professional ambitions. All four of her children were also given only Yoruba names, and she would refuse to refer to any of her students by an English name.¹³ Though this decision was influenced by her exposure to racial and ethnic bias, her political beliefs considered race and ethnicity as only one factor among many in the inequalities of Nigeria.

She would return to Nigeria, serving as head teacher of the girl's branch of her former grammar school before marrying Reverend Israel Ransome-Kuti.¹⁴ Their marriage too was situated amongst the competing forces of Western and African values. They had an equal partnership, one that complemented both their efforts of advocacy and activism.¹⁵ Rev. Ransome-Kuti, a respected educator and leader, co-founded numerous education unions, as well as political organizations, with his wife. Funmilayo used his connections with British colonial officials to leverage political power in her fight for women's rights. This was an apparent conflict of Funmilayo's beliefs, conforming her agency to that of her husbands' and to the British system. However, this tactic reflects her ability to recognize an opportunity for progress and leverage the existing structure of power for Nigerian interests. Their marriage is an important defining aspect of Funmilayo's beliefs, at once rejecting traditionalist notions of subservience of the wife while actively pushing back against Western colonialism and paternalism.

Ransome-Kuti's personality was key to her actions and beliefs. From her childhood, her streak as a "rebel of nature" was well-known.¹⁶ She displayed what was characterized as "male" traits at the time: assertiveness, daring, cunning, and stubbornness.¹⁷

Having grown to see gender and ethnicity as no consequence, she would introduce a series of tactics and fights that would both defy the theories of traditionalism and Western ideologies yet was heavily influenced by each. Women took center stage in her protests, engaging in direct confrontation in their fight for a united and open society among genders and ethnicities. This approach was in direct contrast to previous female-involved movements and to the predominantly male, and often elitist, activists that embraced the revised Nigerian traditionalist view of gender and class distinctions.¹⁸

Education Advocacy

Education is a recurrent thread that runs through Funmilayo's eclectic life of public service, and it would only make sense that her journey into anti-colonial activism begins with schooling.

Central to Ransome-Kuti's view on education was her break with Western traditionalism. The traditionalism she was fighting was heavily influenced by both paternalist ideas introduced by the West as well as indigenous values. Her emphasis was on combating three ideas: women as second-class citizens, the poor marginalized from full citizenship, and ethnicity and race as legitimate grounds for determining rights.¹⁹

While running the Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta Grammar Schools, she and her husband aimed to eliminate biases and discrimination amongst the students. Pupils and faculty were barred from treating students of various ethnic groups differently.²⁰ She was a strong advocate of women's education, often going to the homes of parents who refused to send their daughters to school in an attempt to convince

13 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 30-31.

14 Olawale, Ronke. "GLOBAL FEMINISMS COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES."

15 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl. "For Their Freedoms."

16 Olawale, Ronke. "GLOBAL FEMINISMS COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES."

17 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 28.

18 Byfield, Judith A. *The Great Upheaval: Women and Nation in Postwar Nigeria*, 186 & 192.

19 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 58.

20 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 36.

them of the importance of learning for all.²¹ Both her and her husband also refused to observe the Yoruba custom of kneeling in the presence of elders or those of a higher status, simultaneously preventing their students from observing this practice with them.²² Many of these principles of division had been reinforced by the British regime, disguising repressive practices as legitimate traditional customs.

Overall, her philosophy of education was stressing a common-sense view of unity amongst all students, transcending gender and ethnicity. It was an extreme departure from historical Nigerian education, which had originally prioritized religion and region, as well as from many anti-imperial activists at the time who operated with the goal of regional sovereignty over a national identity.²³

Funmilayo's active approach to changemaking led her to create "Mrs. Kuti's Class," one of the first examples of Kindergarten in Nigeria. She would go on to establish and run her own primary school. Despite a changing emphasis on accessible education, schooling in Nigeria, especially at the primary level, was still reserved for those with the means to afford it.²⁴ The founding of Ransome-Kuti's school was one of her first forays transcending class lines and would establish an important precedent in the issues she chose to take on.

As prominent members in Nigeria's education system, Funmilayo and Rev. Israel became founding members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Student Union (NSU).²⁵ Here, she established a central tenet of her activist approach, working to create not only organizations that are truly nationwide, encompassing different ethnic groups and levels of education, but also persuading those organizations to take on matters outside of direct education, including class inequality and colonial

oppression. Indeed, NUT and NSU become important actors in Ransome-Kuti's fight for women's rights in the colonial regime, despite gender not being included in their mission statement. Throughout the remainder of her life, Funmilayo built on the approach she established working on education issues.

However, though she broke from many notions of traditionalism as well as colonialism in her teaching, much of the reason she was able to serve in these positions was shaped by Western ideas. Her authority to teach stemmed from her higher education in Britain, and many of her students, including all of her children, would go on to pursue further education in England. Ransome-Kuti lived in a world of contradictions, and Britain, despite its actions that caused the exclusion of women from public life, was also the path to higher education and the benefits that brings. Western ideas, including a nuclear family and emphasis on early schooling, also contributed to her ability to shape education. Funmilayo grappled with the competing force that her position and power stemmed from the very source she was fighting against. This predicament helped her form the pragmatic approach she took in order to transcend conventional approaches to reform and revolution.

Women's Activism

Colonialism not only destroyed Nigerian traditional powers and roles of women, but it also fused itself with history to create a new version of tradition. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was aware of this connection, refusing to separate women's rights from colonialism, imperialism, and nationalism. Her fight for equal treatment and women's right to political participation built on the past of Egba custom while creating a new convention. The following section discusses her work on women's

21 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 44.

22 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 42.

23 Ransome-Kuti, Funmilayo. "Lecture on Citizenship."

24 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 38.

25 Byfield, Judith A. "In Her Own Words," 107-127.

rights, which equated to the fight against imperialism.

Abeokuta Ladies Club & the Fight for Market Women
 “We educated women were living outside the daily life of the people.”²⁶

Despite a life spent working to break traditionalism, Funmilayo began her work with women through a more conventional and accepted path. She created the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC), geared mainly toward Christian, Western-educated, middle class women. Confronted by a woman who wished to learn how to read at her school, the club began offering literacy classes to market women. It was in these sessions, as the women began discussing their experiences at the hands of both colonial and local officials, that Ransome-Kuti took on a more radicalized approach to anti-colonialism.²⁷ Forced to reckon with her elite status, a result of having been brought up in a western-educated and fairly wealthy home, she began integrating women’s and class issues. From here on, she became a leader in the fight against the prejudices faced by the working class and worked to bring in market women and working-class individuals in every organization she joined.

Her first fight on their behalf concerned a series of stipulations enforced on market women. In the midst of World War II, the colonial regime, enforced through local government officials, all of whom were men, began placing price controls on and confiscating a quota of rice without payment, presumably to offset food shortages caused by the war. In response, Ransome-Kuti led a series of delegations of both the ALC and NUT to the District Officer, the Native Administration Council, and finally the press. Within a week of these

efforts, the rice seizures and price controls were lifted.²⁸

The early success galvanized Ransome-Kuti to begin taking on other and more wide-spread women’s issues, including those created by both traditional and western forces. The ALC became the Abeokuta Women’s Union (AWU), with Funmilayo as president and thousands of market women joining their ranks.²⁹ The use of the media convinced Ransome-Kuti that a public approach to protesting gave the best chance of victory.

Throughout this time, Ransome-Kuti was very aware that she came from a group that had historically benefitted from and escaped much of this exploitation. She was not a market woman. In fact, much of her legitimacy to serve as organizer and leader stemmed from her British education. Rather than avoid matters that had not directly impacted her or address concerns piece-meal, Ransome-Kuti chose to destroy the colonial system that allowed it.

As the ALC transformed into the AWU, Funmilayo fully rejected imperial values, abandoning the western style of dress, and speaking predominantly in the Yoruba language as opposed to English. Her goal was to take the issues faced traditionally by working class women and nationalize it, and she did this by “making women feel and know I was one with them.”³⁰

Women’s Tax & Abdication of Alake

Taxation on women has an important role in colonial history. As mentioned, Egba women chiefly worked in trade. Colonial administrators, not familiar nor used to this custom, imposed a separate tax on women, believing they were all wealthy traders.³¹ Two main consequences came from this decision: women were often cruelly targeted by local officials to extort this tax and women felt they

26 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 66.

27 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 64-65.

28 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 65-66.

29 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 72.

30 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 66.

31 Byfield, Judith A. “In Her Own Words,” 107-127.

had a greater right to participate in government administration since they were independently paying into it. Indeed, Funmilayo used the familiar phrase “no taxation without representation” in her protests’ rallying calls.³² Ransome-Kuti never shied away from demonstrating the hypocrisy of Western imperialists.

Funmilayo and the AWU took up taxation as both a significant abuse against Nigerian women, and as a fight against colonial power. Funmilayo placed significant emphasis on the latter. The Alake, the king of the region and proxy for the British empire, was the one charged with enforcing and collecting taxes. His administration, operating at the behest of the British, also refused to appoint or allow women representation in governing. For many Nigerians at the time, his administration was the only government they knew. Ransome-Kuti, however, was aware he was a figurehead for the empire, and knew that an attack on him was an attack on colonial power.³³

On the grounds that the tax on women was a violation of their rights, Funmilayo organized and led a series of marches, sometimes numbering 10,000 women, against the Alake. She would train women how to behave at marches, how to respond to tear gas, and what to do in the case of their arrest.³⁴ She simultaneously refused to pay her own tax and used the court hearings to gain more support and attention for the cause. In 1949, the Alake abdicated, with Funmilayo’s movement cited as the predominant reason for his resignation.³⁵ Though he would eventually return, his absence paved the way for the end of the women’s tax and allowed for women to serve in government once again.

Mainly seen as an attempt by the British to appease her, Ransome-Kuti was the sole woman appointed to

serve on the Western Provinces Conference to establish a new constitution. The British would be disappointed. In another example of her stubborn reputation, she would take her fight for women’s right to a national scale, transitioning the Abeokuta Women’s Union (AWU) into the Nigerian Women’s Union (NWU).³⁶

Once again, it is interesting to note the approach and issues Funmilayo chose to take on and how she was able to do so. Her Western background allowed for her to recognize the relationship between the Alake and the British, yet she directly advocated against their rule.

Nigerian Women’s Union & the Nationalization of Women’s Issues

The nationalization of the union led Funmilayo to divert significant efforts to establishing chapters across the country. Once again, Ransome-Kuti’s nationalist approach ran up against Nigeria’s traditional ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, she founded an organization consisting of thousands of participants, and in 1953, brought them together in the Federation of Nigerian Women’s Societies (FNWS). As president, she articulated a vision of national identity in which women had equal status to men.³⁷ This collective approach, in which women’s rights transcend class and ethnicity, was a unique trait of Ransome-Kuti, and would be replicated by many organizations after.

In this role, and with women now allowed, at least in theory, to serve in both elected and appointed positions, Funmilayo focused on raising female civic engagement. She became one of the first women in the region to serve in office as one of four women on the Egba Interim Council.³⁸

It is also while serving in this role that

32 Abiodun Aloba, ed. *The Fall of a Ruler or The Freedom of Egbaland*, 1.

33 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 72.

34 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 81.

35 Abiodun Aloba, ed. *The Fall of a Ruler or The Freedom of Egbaland*, 1.

36 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 94.

37 Ransome-Kuti, Funmilayo. “Women on Civic & Political Education,” 2–3.

38 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 93.

Funmilayo began integrating her efforts of reform with early Nigerian political parties. Funmilayo and her husband were founding members of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC).³⁹ In this position, she, along with the party, advocated for an independent democratic Nigeria. Ransome-Kuti was particularly vocal about involving women in the party. However, she took great efforts to keep the NWU separate from the NCNC.⁴⁰ Though they often overlapped, her approach to women's rights was that it surpassed all divisions, including party affiliation. This belief would become a major division when Funmilayo attempted to run for elected office.

Her fight for feminism in this case was indistinguishable from her fight for anti-colonialism, and she utilized a public and confrontational approach of women and marginalized groups to do so.

Later Anti-Imperialist Efforts

The nationalization of her women's movement saw Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti taking a much stronger role in national politics. In 1947, she was the sole female delegate sent to England on behalf of the NCNC to protest the Richards Constitution, a proposal retaining much of the colonial control of the past.⁴¹

Though the trip failed to prevent its ratification, Ransome-Kuti took full advantage of the opportunity. During her time in London, she developed connections with a series of highly influential people, including Ladipo Solanke, the founder of the West African Students Union (WASU), Arthur Creech-Jones, the future deputy Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Reginald William Sorenson, a Member of Parliament.⁴² She would

capitalize on their friendships to publicize her work in England and galvanize British government support. For the visit, her connections arranged for her to speak to a series of women's groups, including the London Women's Parliamentary Committee, as well as publish an article in which she called British rule of Nigerian women "slavery – political, social, and economic."⁴³ Though the delegation would return to Nigeria without a changed Constitution, Ransome-Kuti returned home one of the most famous African women's rights leaders with an international network of supporters.

Women's suffrage would eventually come for the Yoruba and Igbo peoples in 1954, as part of negotiations in the Lyttelton Constitution, though it would take another 25 years for women in the north to receive the right to vote.⁴⁴ With women, at least in the Abeokuta region, able to participate in politics and a new more democratic government, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was appointed to the Western House of Chiefs, the first woman to hold this position.⁴⁵

However, she did not have the same success in elected politics. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti won the primaries for a federal parliamentary seat under NCNC, yet lost her party's nomination at the next level of elections due to a combination of nepotism and NCNC's reluctance to run a female candidate.⁴⁶ It would take many more years until female representatives made up more than just a handful of candidates.

Angered over this betrayal, Ransome-Kuti both left and was simultaneously expelled from NCNC. In response, she formed her own party, the Commoner's People Party (CPP) and ran as an independent, splitting the ticket and causing both her and NCNC's

39 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 13.

40 Martin, Maria. "More Power to Your Great Self," 54-78.

41 National Council of Nigeria. "National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons press release."

42 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 125-127.

43 Ransome-Kuti, Funmilayo. "We Had Equality till Britain Came."

44 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 111.

45 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl. "For Their Freedoms."

46 Chadya, Joyce M. "Mother Politics," 153-157.

defeat.⁴⁷ Though her party is short-lived, her choice again reflects her approach to reform, rejecting the traditional values of ethnic partisan lines in favor of a nationalist approach to government. She would make a few more unsuccessful attempts for elected office, however, with the independence of Nigeria in 1960 came a return to a predominantly regional view of government.⁴⁸ Funmilayo's unified approach was too extreme, even for the women whose rights she worked to protect, to garner enough votes to win.

Ransome-Kuti's ideology was much more geared toward a collective fight against an enemy, be it colonialism, educational disparities, or gender inequality, then it was the ethnic divisions of Nigeria. When domestic politics failed her, Ransome-Kuti turned toward international activism.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's actions in politics appear almost contradictory, if not self-destructive. She not only developed friendships but consistently utilized British support to spur domestic change. Self-autonomy was central in her ideology against colonialism, yet she viewed England as legitimate battlegrounds for advocacy. These actions may appear incompatible, but they can coexist if Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti is approached as a pragmatist and not a fundamentalist. For Ransome-Kuti, the goal of her work was to improve the overall welfare for all of Nigeria, not just a specific party, gender, or ethnicity. Working with multiple groups in and outside of Nigeria to do so was therefore a smart strategy, not hypocrisy.

International Work

The NCNC delegation trip had left Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti an internationally known figure on Africa and women's rights. Subsequently, national and international feminist organizations sought

her out to serve as both their representative and a representative of Africa. Following Nigeria's independence, Ransome-Kuti's activism took her around the world to speak on women's rights and the greater implications of human rights.

Given her prominent role in education and her national women's organization, numerous other African nations were inspired by and based their own women's movement on her efforts. She was directly cited as the inspiration behind Ghana's Women's Movement and played an active role to support South African women following the Sharpeville Incident.⁴⁹ She was also in constant communication with national leaders and reformers, including Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah and Jamaica's activist Amy Ashwood Garvey. Ransome-Kuti often served in the position of conduit, connecting groups with resources and advice through her network of organizations and people.

Her strongest affiliation outside of Africa is with the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), an organization who had seen her speak in England. The aims of WIDF encompassed many socialist goals, including uniting women across all backgrounds, gaining national independence, ending racism, and achieving nuclear disarmament.⁵⁰ Following their encounter, WIDF created a commission to study the conditions of women in Asia and Africa. Ransome-Kuti wrote Nigeria's entry and the organization asked her to serve as the Nigerian delegate for upcoming conferences. Though initially hesitant to join due to WIDF's communist connections, Funmilayo accepted, going on to serve as a vice president and attending conferences in Vienna, Copenhagen, Geneva, China, and Russia.⁵¹

However, just as most of her life was characterized by balancing multiple competing forces, her international advocacy corresponded with the rise of

47 Chadya, Joyce M. "Mother Politics," 153-157.

48 "Nigeria Independence Act 1960."

49 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 150.

50 Byfield, Judith A. "In Her Own Words," 107-127.

51 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl. "'For Their Freedoms.'"

a new force: communism. Much of her travel occurred during the height of the Cold War, and Ransome-Kuti was forced to confront both growing fears of communism and subsequent views of racism and misogyny. Many Western democratic nations, as well as former Western colonies, Nigeria included, were extraordinarily concerned about communism's growing influence. Ransome-Kuti's connection to WIDF, considered a communist front, and her travels to communist nations already alarmed both Nigeria and England. Additionally, existing racist and sexist ideologies that women and Africans were more susceptible to persuasion meant Ransome-Kuti was a dual threat. An article titled "The Indoctrination of Africans" used Funmilayo as an example of Communist attempts to gain a foothold in Africa.⁵² Nigerian officials used the article and her previous trips to deny her passport, preventing her from further travel. National protests responded, while Ransome-Kuti maintained her affiliation as independent and called the act a clear violation of her civil rights.⁵³

Her trips to communist countries, and her willingness to work with communist-affiliated regimes appears to again contradict her views as a democratic socialist and as an anti-imperialist. Yet, this is further evidence of her practical approach to reform. Ransome-Kuti worked with groups whose ideologies were at odds with each other, or who historically served as colonizers, in her quest to achieve her goals. This included partnering with Russia and England to provide scholarships to her students for higher education, using an international platform to draw attention to women's conditions, and challenging the subservient position that characterized the intersection of being a black woman.

Death & Legacy

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's death is as controversial as her life. On February 18th, 1977, the Nigerian military authorized an armed raid on the home of Funmilayo's son, Fela. Funmilayo was thrown out the window by soldiers, and eventually succumbed to her injuries. To this day, the Nigerian government has never formally apologized for the assault.⁵⁴ Much speculation remains behind the reason for the incursion. Funmilayo and her children were all vocal and prominent critics of the military regime and Funmilayo, dating back to her days protesting the Alake, had no shortage of enemies within the federal government.

"Who did not learn from Mrs. Kuti?"⁵⁵

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti left behind an entire generation of leaders, many of whom she directly taught through education or example. Many of the schools she taught at, including Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta Grammar Schools, are still operational. She vigorously fought for access to education and voting before, during, and after Nigerian independence. Those inspired by her went on to form women's rights groups in their own nations. She helped create the foundation for a nationalist, united Nigeria, and remained an active proponent of this dream throughout her life. Ransome-Kuti revolutionized the way women were expected to participate in government, taking an aggressive and public approach to change-making. She is recognized by UNESCO, Google, and across Nigeria for her efforts.^{56,57} Her personality was certainly stubborn and intense, bringing its own challenges and contradictions, but ultimately Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti built a view that rejected paternalism, imperialism, and traditionalism,

52 FROM OUR DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT. "Indoctrination Of Africans," 9.

53 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl. "For Their Freedoms."

54 Agunbiade, Tayo. "Remembering Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti: Nigeria's 'Lioness of Lisabi'."

55 Johnson-Odim, Cheryl, and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and the Nation*, 174.

56 "Biography." Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti biography | Women.

57 "Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's 119th Birthday." Google. Google, October 25, 2019.

championing human rights not only in Nigeria, but for the entire world. She demonstrated what is possible when you educate and organize around injustice.

Conclusion

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's ideology was one of action in a world of contradictions. She did not separate women's rights from colonialism or traditionalism, nor did she distinguish human rights from feminism, class, or ethnicity. She rejected traditionalism, urging nationalism over regionalism. She rejected Western notions of paternalism in her public and private life. Yet she was also the product of each of these competing philosophies. Ransome-Kuti was pragmatic, and she survived the numerous competing forces of her time to leave her own path of revolution in her wake.

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Not So Revolutionary: Impacts of Two World Wars and Origins of British Welfare State

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Acknowledgement

Most political science scholars are children of the Enlightenment, insofar as we believe human life can be improved through actions guided by knowledge. I am indebted to Professor Joseph Grieco for his continued support in the past year. In his classes, I was taken up to a vast intellectual domain that holds together my fragmented knowledge and beliefs. I did not feel particularly ‘supervised’ in writing this thesis -- Professor Grieco treated me as an equal. It was as if we were two scholars with a shared aspiration of understanding an important question. Although the thesis was written in an accelerated semester during the COVID-19 pandemic, the research experience is one of the best I have ever had in college.

Lastly, I would like to thank Youpeng Tang. I would not be who I am without him. I will be forever grateful for his presence in my life.

Abstract

The period after 1945 has gone down in the world history as the epoch of Britain’s national solidarity, yet this paper finds that two world wars did not put the British modern welfare state on a fundamentally different path from the pre-war period. Time-series regressions suggest that social expenditure as a proportion of the national budget and national economy had been growing at a consistent pace between 1900 and 1975. The extension of insurance coverage and the establishment of the NHS after the Second World War were not powerful enough to cause statistically-significant discontinuities. Instead of using the year 1945 as a default starting point, scholars should set their clock back four decades.

The quest for an origin is a never-ending task. But to the extent that landmarks can be labelled, the 1908-11 Liberal reforms constitute a remarkable breakthrough toward the modern welfare state, which laid the institutional foundation for the welfare state’s sustained growth until 1975. It then becomes clear that developments such as working-class pressure and war-induced changes that took hold after the Second World War could not be principal explanations for the initial take-off of the British welfare state. Instead, this paper supports a state-centric approach that underlines the interaction between a strong bureaucracy and programmatic political competition. In other words, the British welfare state emerged from counterbidding among parties for working-class votes.

Introduction

The period after the Second World War has gone down in our history as the epoch of Britain's national solidarity: all political factions put aside their peacetime agenda, the right recruited the left, and elites fought alongside commoners. In the fascination of many contemporary studies, World War II marked a decisive, watershed moment where the foundation of British politics was profoundly transformed. According to the warfare-welfare thesis, the birth of the welfare state in Britain emerged out of a heightened sense of solidarity and enhanced state capacity created by two world wars. At the same time, a substantial and expanding body of research highlights the continuity, rather than the discontinuity, of ideas and policies throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The warfare-welfare thesis is regarded as a misapprehension or a myth in the modern conception of twentieth century Britain.

This paper contributes to the conversation by providing a new set of evidence that allows for quantitative analysis of Britain's social spending between 1900 and 1975. It finds that the Liberal REform is the key to the development of the British modern welfare state. Two world wars did not put Britain on a fundamentally different path from the pre-war period. Indeed, further examination suggests that a considerable source of the sustained growth between 1945 and 1975 was the maturing of rights and claims of the pension schemes instituted in the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms. Had two world wars not happened, Britain would have observed a similar, though perhaps less robust, trajectory of growth anyway.

The results highlight the impact of the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms, which is the key to understanding the origins of the modern welfare state in Britain. Instead of using the year 1945 as a default starting point, scholars should set their clock back four decades. These results yield significant implications. Using the year 1945 as a starting point, mainstream theorists may naturally

reach to the conclusion that national solidarity and social rights consolidated in wartime were not principal drivers for the initial take-off of social reforms. On the other hand, using 1908 as a starting point underlines the role party politics played in Britain's social reforms.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the warfare-welfare debate. While some scholars believe two mass warfares had altered the landscape of British social policies by inducing social changes that eventually found expression in revolutionary legislation, revisionist scholars issue warnings against such simple causal inference. Having laid out the discussion, I conduct regression analyses to investigate if the share of social expenditure as a percentage of public expenditure and GDP had been growing at a constant rate in the pre-WWI, inter-war, and post-WWII periods. In light of my conclusion, I re-evaluate several classic explanations for the British welfare state.

The Warfare-Welfare Debate

The idea that inter-state politics is a cause as much as an expression of domestic structures can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who claimed 'war is the father of all.' Two thousand years later, Gourevitch (1978) formalized this approach as second-image-reversed. The warfare-welfare thesis, a component of this strand of research, argues that mass-mobilizing warfare was indispensable for the birth of the modern welfare state in Britain. This thesis has become so influential that the year 1945 is taken 'as the natural starting point for our histories' (Glennerster 2020: 2; see also Timmins 2001; Lowe 1998).

The Warfare-Welfare thesis comes in many variants, but it generally consists of two elements: (1) war-induced solidarity and (2) institutional innovation. The former resulted in 'demand for social reform sprang up suddenly as a gust of wind on a still day and continued to blow with increasing force' (Addison 1975: 104). The latter emerged in the post-

war era marked a considerable step forward such that ‘the people of England in their long pilgrimage have come at least to the top of the hill called Clear, whence they can see opening before them the way to freedom with security’ (De Schweinitz 1943: xii). The following part of this section gives an overview of the warfare-welfare thesis and the revisionists’ criticism.

War-induced National Solidarity

Political Scientists often believe war-created national solidarity can provide a broad basis of political support for a nationwide collective provision of welfare. The most famous account was offered by the British sociologist Richard Titmuss (1958). He points to two significant moments of the Second World War. The first is the evacuation of schoolchildren from vulnerable conurbations in the last 1930s. The ‘unkempt, ill-clothed, undernourished and often incontinent’ (Fraser 1973: 195) children exposed the chronic deprivation of the working class. This led to calls for addressing the issue of urban poverty and, ultimately, the establishment of the National Health Service. Titmuss also underscores how the Dunkirk Evacuation and the following threat of invasion shaped the public’s consciousness. An unprecedented sense of desperation united the British society and brought about an unprecedented sense of solidarity and spirit of self-sacrifice. The phrase ‘the Dunkirk spirit’ entered into the English dictionary as a reference to the willingness to help each other in a hopeless situation. This spirit eventually found expression in legislation shortly after the war. Titmuss’s account has exercised an enormous influence on the study of the British welfare state. It immediately became received wisdom after its publication.

This interpretation of Britain’s wartime experience was repetitively reaffirmed by popular recollections of politicians and writings of historians of the time. According to one Minister of Labour, ‘a revolution’ had

taken place ‘in the minds of the people at the end of the Second World War’ (Fyfe 1994: 5). ‘Individualism is bound to give place to social action’, written by another (Bevin, 1942: 10). The rationing system is seen as an embodiment of ‘a revolution in the attitude of the state to the feeding of its citizens’ (Hammond 1951: 353-9). Compulsory saving and progressive taxation are ‘manifestation[s] in the financial sphere of the national change of heart that marked the summer of 1940’ (Sayers 1983: 108). To sum up, ‘the mood of the people changed’, according to Titmuss, ‘it was increasingly regarded as a proper function or even obligation of Government to ward off distress and strain among not only the poor but almost all classes of society’ (1950: 506-8).

As social reforms were demanded by the above ideational changes, state capacity enhanced by mass mobilizing wars made them institutionally possible. The pervasive wartime intervention had permanently altered the balance between state and society. The state acquired the administrative capacities, policy jurisdiction, fiscal powers, and experience in managing the economy that are necessary to run a welfare state. It came to know ‘how to steer the economy, to orchestrate public opinion and to manage the lives of their citizens... a task which not long since had still appeared so formidable’ (De Swaan 1988: 224). On the fiscal side, massive military commitments pushed the tolerable threshold of taxation to a new high, and large-scale wars concentrated public spending in a previous decentralized politics. Wartime taxation and expenditure never returned to their pre-war levels due to the ‘displacement effect’ such as habituation, institutional rigidities, path dependency, and new spending obligations (Peacock and Wiseman 1961). Recent studies by Scheve and Stasavage (2010, 2012) suggest a link between war-induced solidarity and progressive taxation. Mass-mobilizing wars require a great sacrifice of time, income, and lives for a collective cause. For them, progressive taxation was effectively a new social

contract that equalizes the cost and benefit of war.

This dominant narrative has been challenged by revisionist scholars. Macnicol (1986) reexamines the evacuation of schoolchildren. Quite the opposite of what Titmuss finds, he concludes that it might have reinforced the existing negative view of the inter-city working-class. Our Towns, a heavily referenced materials in the 5 May 1943 House of Lords debate, blames the cause of the children's condition to their families that are 'always on the edge of pauperism and crime, riddled with mental and physical defects, in and out of the Courts for child neglect, a menace to the community of which the gravity is out of all proportion to their number' (Jones 1943: xiii). With regard to the Dunkirk Evacuation, Marwick concedes that the belief that Dunkirk has brought about a meaningful transformation of public attitude is a myth (1984: 4). The revisionist position is clearly summarized by Harold Smith -- 'the war and social change thesis should be identified as one of the two prevalent types of misapprehension in the current conception of twentieth-century British social history' (1986: ix, see also Harris 1981; Hay and Mommsen 1981; Welshman 1998).

Harris (1992) questions the methodological basis upon which the recollection of wartime experience was built. Evidence such as speeches, podcasts, pictures, press reports that convinced historians the image of solidarity in the first place were themselves part of the solidarity-building process. In fact, regulation 39B under the Emergency Power Act made it a criminal offense to publish material 'likely to be prejudicial to the prosecution of the war or the defense of the realm.' Empirical surveys also throw some doubt upon the idealized portrayal of national unity. When the same participants of the wartime Mass Observation survey took an interview a quarter of a century later, their responses typically differed widely from their original stories (Summerfield 1985). The interview results again support the revisionist argument: two

world wars have not created a level of national solidarity that was strong enough to serve as a basis for a nationwide collective provision of welfare.

War-induced Legislative Innovation

Another important element of the warfare-welfare conversation is institutional and legislative innovation. When proponents of the warfare-welfare thesis claim the post-war reforms are revolutionary, they often dwell on three major outcomes. First, the National Health Service was established to ensure all citizens had equal access to whatever medical treatments they required. Second, the 1940s was the first time Britain had her entire population covered by a universal insurance plan. Third, the central government started to play a much bigger role in the national economy as much of the social security was financed by general taxation and introduced policies to maintain full employment. Therefore, Britain after 1948 deserves to be referred to as a welfare state, while Edwardian Britain and inter-war Britain do not (Boyer 2018).

On the contrary, revisionists underline the continuity of ideas and policies throughout the twentieth century. From an institutional perspective, the 1940s marked the end rather than the beginning of institutional innovation. All the key designs - a contributory insurance system financed by employees, employers, and the government - were already established in the Liberal Welfare Reforms at the beginning of the century (see Appendix 1). Indeed, in a radio address, William Beveridge, the architect of Britain's post-war welfare system, appealed to Prime Minister Churchill that his plan:

is a completion of what was begun a little more than thirty years ago when Mr. Lloyd George introduced National Health Insurance, and Mr. Winston Churchill, then President of the Board of Trade, introduced Unemployment Insurance. . . . The Minister

who thirty years ago had the courage and imagination to father the scheme of Unemployment Insurance, a thing then unknown outside Britain, is the man who is leading us to victory in this war; I'd like to see him complete as well the work that he began in social insurance then (Cmd 6404: 86).

Beveridge's own biographer, Jose Harris (1981), similarly believed that the breach with the past was less abrupt (see also Thane 1996). The Beveridge plan should be viewed 'as a set of incremental changes to social security, rather than as the birth of an entirely new system' (Hatton and Bailey 2000: 536). In contrast, the Labour party's truly radical scheme solely financed from taxation was never seriously considered on the ground that it would be 'a departure from existing practice' (Cmd 6404: 273).

Empirical Analysis

Scholars who became involved in the conversation on the origins of the welfare state in the twentieth century were generally constrained by the data and statistical techniques available at the time. Most arguments were presented in the form of case studies or historical narratives, leaving the debate balanced and the puzzle unsolved. This paper contributes by quantitatively assessing the impact of a series of welfare reforms in the first half of the twentieth century with statistically informed inferences.

Regression Specification

Figure 1. presents the trajectory of social expenditure in Britain between 1900 and 1975. It is clear that a growing proportion of total public spending and GDP had been devoted to social causes. While social expenditure as a percentage of GDP might have grown at a slightly accelerated rate after the two world wars, one could notice the remarkable

similarity in the slopes of social/public expenditure ratio among the 1900-14, 1920-39, 1948-75 periods. The share of social expenditure in the national budget and national economy is a measure of a government's commitment to the public provision of welfare. If the post-war reforms had a transforming and long-lasting effect, that is, if the warfare-welfare thesis holds, the following hypothesis could be formulated:

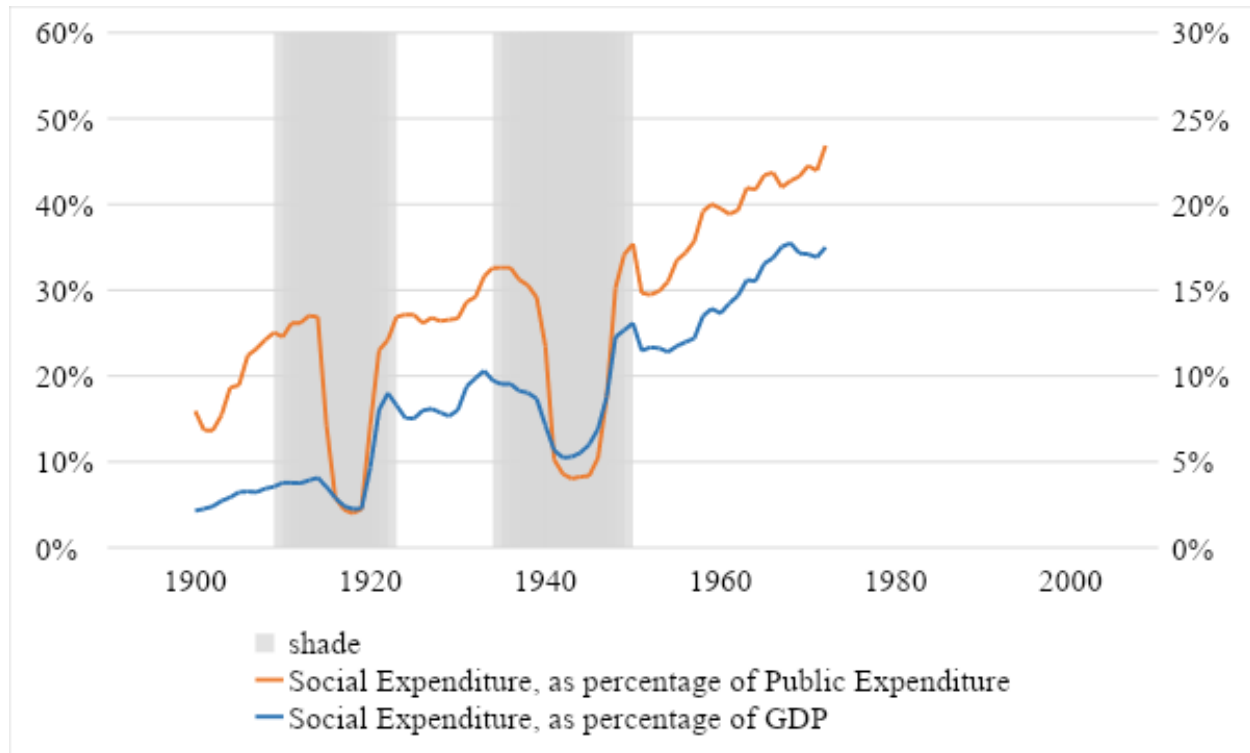
H: Social spending as a percentage of public expenditure or of GDP is expected to grow at an accelerated rate since 1945.

This hypothesis is promised on an underlying assumption that, had two world wars not happened, the share of social expenditure would have grown at a constant pace from 1900 until 1975. Indeed, one could dispute this counterfactual and argue that two world wars are indispensable for sustaining the growth.; had they not occurred, the fruit of earlier reforms might gradually die out like the United States' civil war pension scheme.

The data come from Mitchell's British Historical Dataset (1988). It had been widely recognized and used by various research groups including the Bank of England. Interpretations should be drawn with caution, however. Expenditures might be 'epiphenomenal to the theoretical substance of the welfare state' (Esping-Andersen 1990, 19–21). On the one hand, social spending may exaggerate the government's commitment to social causes because it includes transfer payments, the money being transferred from one individual to another. Unlike military spending that involves purchasing weapons and training soldiers, the cost of transfer payments incurred on the part of the government was largely administrative. On the other hand, expenditure-based measures may not capture all salient policy designs. For example, they do not distinguish contributory and non-contributory pensions. Overall, the hypothesis is by no means sufficient to falsify either

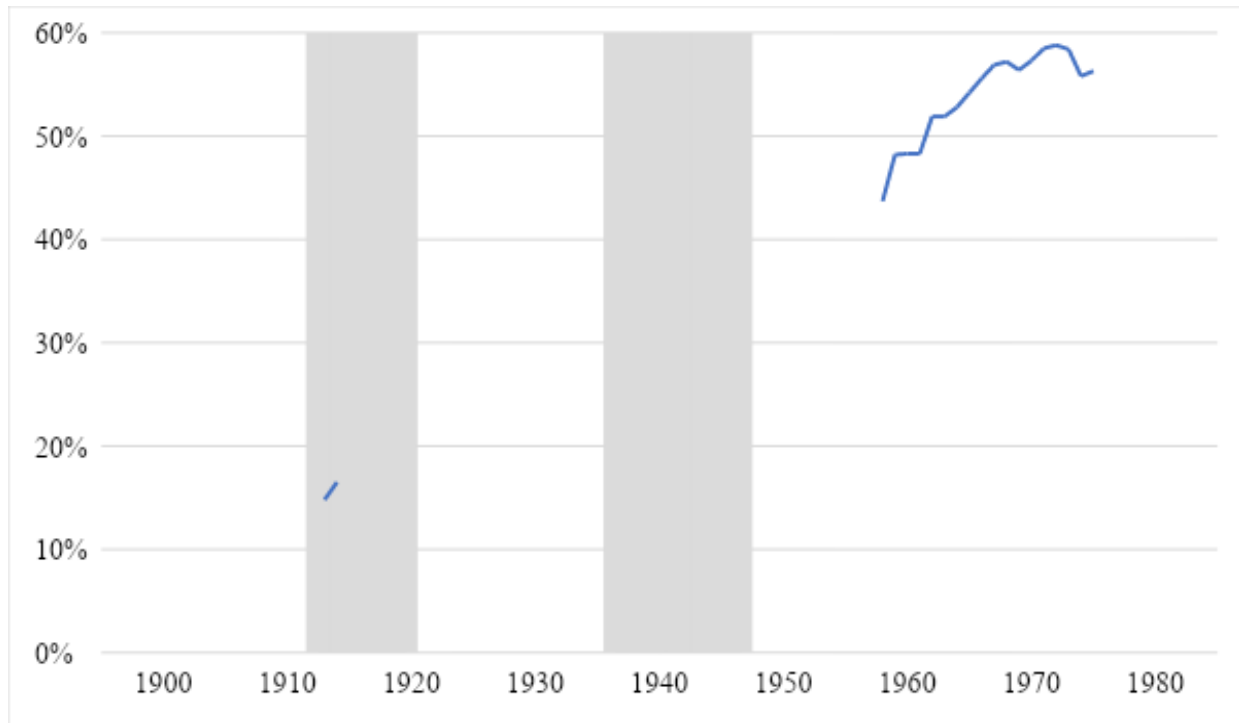
the warfare-welfare thesis or the revisionist thesis, but the presence or absence of a radical change after the Second World War may shed more light on the debate.

Figure 1. Social and Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom, 1910–1975



Source: Mitchell, Brian R. 1988. British historical statistics. CUP Archive.

Figure 2. Social Expenditure as a Percentage of Public Expenditure in Sweden, 1910–1975



Source: Flora et al. (1981)

The trajectory of Sweden, an industrialized European country that remained neutral in two world wars, might serve as a justification of the assumption. Ignoring wartime fluctuations (marked in grey), it is reasonable to maintain that the share of social expenditure in Sweden had been increasing at a consistent pace where the data is available. Sweden is an appropriate benchmark for Britain because ‘differences are not so great as to smother the points of comparison’ (Hecló 1975: 15). Indeed, comparative studies between the two countries have been extensively featured in the literature (Hecló 1975; Kaufmann 2013). Both were industrialized nations with a homogeneous population. Citizens have shared racial and cultural backgrounds. While Germany might come to the fore based on the above criteria, the special role Germany played in two world wars and the loss of territorial integrity and national independence make it less suitable for the comparison in this study. Having justified its assumption, the

hypothesis could be assessed by the following model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 PreWWI + \beta_2 Interwar + \beta_3 PostWWII + \gamma X_t + \varepsilon_t$$

where, Y_{it} are variables of interest, including the growth rate of social spending/public spending ratio and social spending/GDP ratio. The dummy *PreWWI* is 1 for the period before the outbreak of First World War; *Interwar* is 1 for the period between 1920-1939; *PostWWII* is 1 for the post Second World War period starting from 1947¹. X_{it} is a metric of control variables such as suffrage extension, the incumbent government, GDP per capita, and military spending. ε_{it} is the error term that is assumed to be uncorrelated with other variables and with a mean of zero.

1 The periodization does not strictly follow the history book. It left out one or two years for the indicators to adjust to normal levels immediately before and after the war.

*Results and Discussion***Table. 1** Regression on the growth rate of social spending as percentage of public spending and GDP, United Kingdom, 1900-1975

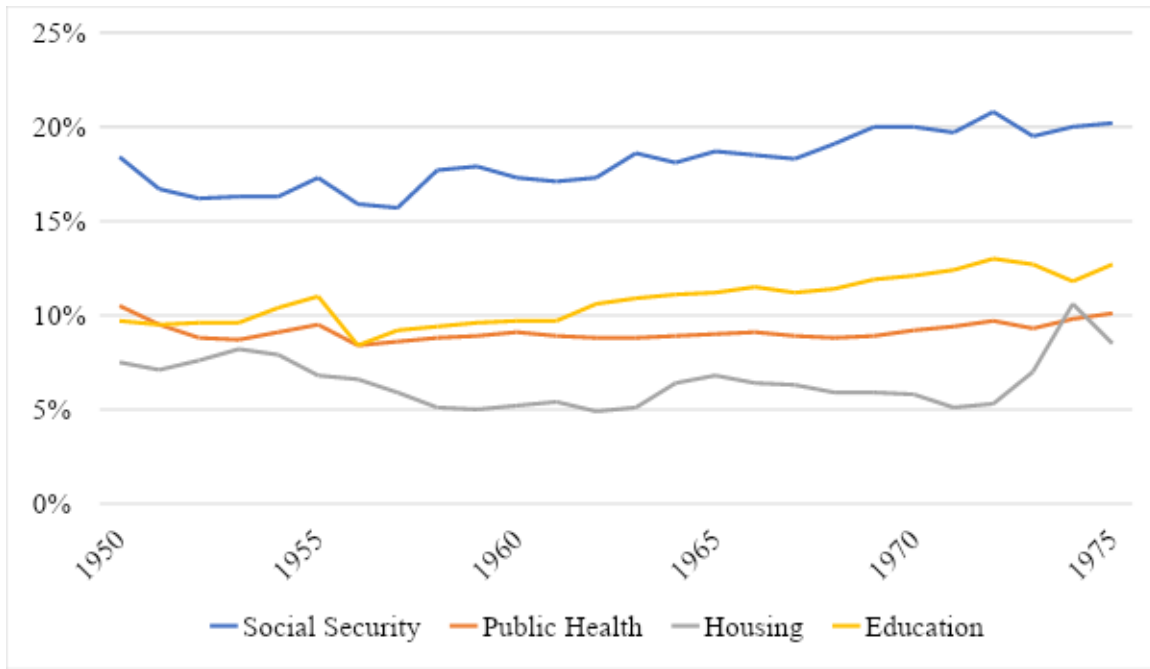
	(1) Social spending/Public spending	(2) Social spending/GDP
Pre-WWI (Before 1914)	0.379*	0.179*
	(0.194)	(0.109)
Inter-war period (1920-39)	0.0869*	0.0639*
	(0.125)	(0.0698)
Post-WWII (1947 onward)	0.0170*	0.0326*
	(0.109)	(0.0608)
Universal Suffrage	0.406**	0.153
	(0.172)	(0.0964)
Left Government	0.00790	-0.0100
	(0.0645)	(0.0361)
GDP per capita	-2.42e-06	-6.05e-07
	(1.23e-05)	(6.88e-06)
Military Expenditures (in real U.S. 1984 dollar)	-0.00234	-0.000653
	(0.00223)	(0.00125)
Constant	-0.328*	-0.129
	(0.185)	(0.104)
Observations	96	96
F-value	0.05	0.28
Prob > F	0.9466	0.7550
Conclusion	No Discontinuities	No Discontinuities

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The coefficients for the pre-1945, interwar and post-1945 periods are positive and significant. The F-tests fail to reject that the growth rate of social spending as a percentage of public spending and GDP differ significantly among three time periods. This is consistent with Christopher Pierson's assessment that the 'most consistent and remarkable feature of the welfare states in the whole of the period down to the mid-1970s, that is... the dynamics of sustained growth' (1998: 108-3

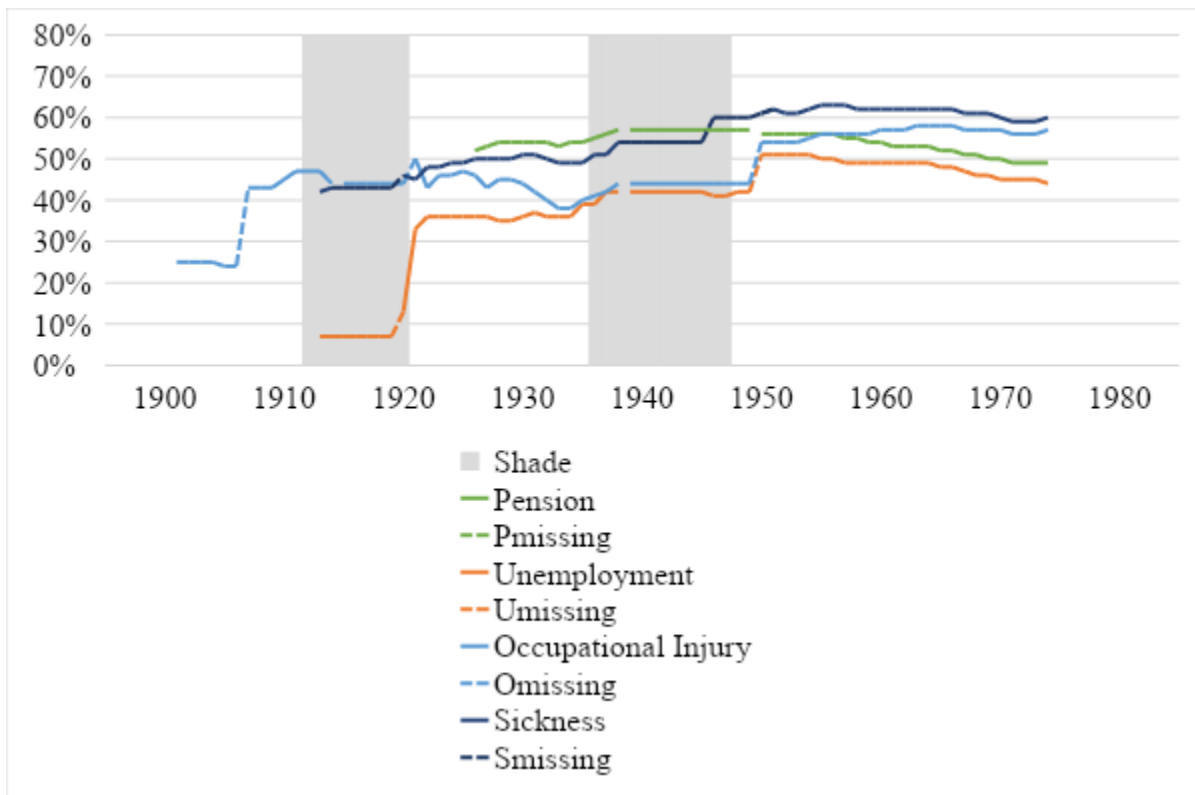
5). Furthermore, the value of the coefficient of the pre-WWI period is the largest among all three, which highlights the role of the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms.

Figure 3. Breakdown of Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom, 1950–1975



Source: Flora et al. (1981)

Figure 4 Social Insurance Coverage, United Kingdom, 1900-1975



Source: Flora et al. (1981), missing data are connected with dotted lines

A closer look at the breakdown of public expenditure in post-war Britain reveals why two world wars did not put Britain on a fundamentally different path from the pre-war period. There were two major spending-related developments after the Second World War as discussed earlier: the establishment of the National Health Service and the extensions of national insurance. Figure. 3 shows the share of four major welfare programs in total public expenditure since 1950. First, the trajectory of public health barely fluctuated even with the NHS. It might be deduced that its establishment in 1948 might have shifted the trajectory of the social/public expenditure ratio up in a parallel fashion, but it did not contribute to the change in the growth rate. The second observation is that social security dominated the post-war social expenditure, which requires further attention.

Figure. 4 suggests the biggest jumps in social insurance coverage across all schemes took place either before the outbreak of the First World War or immediately after it. This is driven by the Old Age Pension Act 1908, the National Health Act of 1911, the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920. In the post-war period, only unemployment and sickness insurance experienced a significant increase in coverage as an outcome of the National Insurance Act of 1946, but the pace of expansion was nowhere as substantial.

Table. 1 presents the composition of Social Security between 1950 and 1977. Lines 1-7 were paid to recipients qualified through the payment of insurance contributions; Lines 10-13 and 15 are financed out of general taxation with means-tests; Lines 8-9 and 17 are also tax-financed benefits but all qualified people were automatically entitled (Lowe 1998). The National Insurance Act of 1946 was not reflected in the data of social expenditure as a percentage of public expenditure because unemployment and occupational injury accounted for very little in total

social security expenditure. In the sheer number of citizens involved and the volume of funding, old-age pensions are the largest single social undertaking in post-war Britain, the share of which has grown from 60% in the 1950s to 70% in the 1970s. Given the fact that pension coverage and generosity saw very modest changes, it comes as no surprise that the growth rate of social expenditure as a percentage of public expenditure since 1945 is not significantly different from the inter-war and pre-war periods.

Nevertheless, to say the post-WWII reforms in Britain were not revolutionary is not to downplay their historical significance. They were more than simple extensions of the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms. Although principal reformers who designed the post-war British welfare system had been calling for the same arrangements before 1945, two world wars certainly turned the public and politicians more receptive to the idea of social welfare. Evidence presented in this section merely suggests that the Liberal Reforms in the early twentieth century laid in the transformation of government's role in the provision of welfare, and WWII reaped what has been sown. If one were to study the origins of the modern welfare state in Britain, one should set the clocks back at least four decades from 1945.

Table 1 Composition of Social Security, United Kingdom, 1951-77

	1951-2		1956-7		1961-2		1966-7		1971-2		1976-7	
	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%
National Insurance												
1. Retirement pensions	281	40.0	455	42.7	800	47.8	1290	48.8	2091	45.7	5573	48.3
2. Widows' benefit and guardians' allowances	25	3.5	40	3.7	83	5.0	146	5.5	203	4.4	439	3.8
3. Sickness benefits	66	9.4	101	9.5	161	9.6	271	10.3	434	9.5	1091	9.5
4. Maternity benefits	9	1.3	15	1.4	25	1.5	38	1.4	44	1.0	72	0.6
5. Death grants	3	0.4	3	0.3	6	0.4	8	0.3	14	0.3	15	0.1
6. Unemployment benefits	16	2.3	24	2.3	41	2.4	85	3.2	250	5.5	578	5.0
7. Industrial injuries benefit	16	2.3	35	3.3	60	3.6	95	3.6	117	2.5	250	2.2
8. War pensions	77	10.9	91	8.5	103	6.1	118	4.5	136	3.0	290	2.5
9. Non-contributory o.a.p.	25	3.5	17	1.6	10	0.6	3	0.1	-	-	-	-
Supplementary Benefits												
10. Old	34	4.8	61	5.7	89	5.3	167	6.3	286	6.2	489	4.2
11. Unemployed	6	0.9	9	0.8	22	1.3	32	1.2	155	3.4	601	5.2
12. Sick	18	2.6	23	2.2	32	1.9	54	2.0	84	1.8	518	4.5
13. Other	16	2.3	17	1.6	25	1.5	52	2.0	140	3.1		
14. Old person's pension	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	0.5	38	0.3
15. Family income supplement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	0.1	20	0.2
16. Attendance allowance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0.1	144	1.2
17. Family allowances	66	9.4	119	11.2	140	8.4	156	5.9	359	7.9	564	4.9
18. Administration	45	6.4	56	5.3	78	4.6	116	4.4	230	5.0	845	7.3
Total public expenditure on social security benefit	703	100	1066	100	1675	100	2642	100	4578	100	11527	100

Source: Lowe (1993)

Revisiting the Origins of the Welfare State

Besides the absence of a radical change in the post-1945 period, another finding of the previous regression estimations points to the historical prominence of the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms. The beginning of the century witnessed a concentrated burst of activity that seemed to run counter to the laissez-faire ideology of the nineteenth century. Britain, for the first time, saw substantial public provision for need outside the Poor Law. The national social policy took new directions and initiated lasting structures such as old-age pensions, free school meals, school medical inspection and treatment, trade boards, health, and unemployment insurance, labor exchanges, urban planning mechanism, and the probation system (Thane 1984), capable of extensions by succeeding governments (Harris 1972; Fraser 1973; see also Appendix 1). As the Beveridge Report, the blueprint for postwar Britain's welfare system, puts it, 'the scheme proposed here [in the report]... is a natural development from the past' (Cmd 6404: 31).

If it was the 1908-11 Liberal Reforms that truly transformed the landscape, the question that concerns the origins of the British welfare state turns into a quest for the drivers behind the Liberal Reforms. War-induced solidarity, war-enhanced state capacity, and the idea of social rights established in the Second World War might well have played a role in deepening the social reforms and sustaining the growth of welfare programs. Yet using 1908-11 as a reference point, it becomes clear that, chronologically, they could not lay the foundation for the initial welfare reform. In light of my conclusion, I re-evaluate several classic explanations for the origins of the British welfare state.

Democratization and Class Struggle

The combination of suffrage and working-class pressure is widely assumed to be the main contributor to the breakthroughs of the welfare state (Marshall 1963; Gilbert 1966; Flora et al. 1981; Wilensky 1975; Castles

1978). Viewed from this perspective, if the Liberal Reforms were not Bismarckian precautionary measures that prevent workers from turning into hasty, revolutionary socialist solutions, they were at least welcomed and supported by the growing working class and allowed politicians to gain electoral popularity. However, this cannot explain the time-lag between the extension of the franchise in 1867 and the Liberal legislation.

In fact, popular elections were never fought on social welfare before the First World War. Even in the 1906 election, so often hailed as a victory for progressive policies, the subject of state pension and insurance played no discernible part as a respectable electoral issue (Russell 1973). "Ministers probably had no more idea than the general public that such a major initiative was in the offing" (Searle 2005: 368). Not only so, politicians had been carefully avoiding any reference to the possible welfare programs (Hecllo 1975). Until the year the Old Age Pension Act was passed, Liberal candidates, including Churchill himself, were still greeted with laughter and sarcasm in by-elections, when they brought up the forthcoming pension scheme at meetings of workers, who saw little chance of living until 70 (Churchill 2015: 263).

There existed a widespread reluctance for the working class to join such social schemes in the nineteenth century: the Poor Law carried a social stigma of a loss of self-respect and independence; compulsory education deprived poor families of vital earnings from their children; local authority housing and clearance policies dis-housed as many as housed. As Henry Pelling puts it:

[T]he extension of the power of the state at the beginning of this century, which is generally regarded as having laid the foundations of the welfare state, was by no means welcomed by members of the working class, was indeed undertaken over the critical hostility of many of them, perhaps of most of them (1968: 2).

Although the Labour Party's landslide victory in 1945 might be an outcome of the working class's enthusiasm for publicly provided welfare, most workers had been indifferent or even hostile to publicly-funded welfare until the actual introduction of old-age pension and national insurance in the Liberal Reforms. If the starting point of the modern welfare state is assumed to be 1945, one might wrongly attribute its origin to the demand and strength of the working class. Quite the opposite: the result of this paper suggests that the welfare state's initial take-off should not be seen as a by-product of a larger process of industrialization and democratization (Huber and Stephens 2001).

State Bureaucracy

An emphasis on the Liberal Reforms is consistent with a state-centered approach that underlines the role of administrative officials and state organizations in the making of public policies. Hecló (1975) has argued that the civil-service reform in the 1870s foreshadowed Britain's welfare state. The civil service restructuring grew out of the demands for less political corruption since the Napoleonic Wars and drew upon experiments with a European-type centralized administration in India. Between 1815 and 1900, the civil service had grown from 25,000 to 116,000. A consultation partnership was established between ministers and senior civil servants. As a result, in addition to the inputs from democratically elected Members of Parliament, civil servants became heavily involved in policy making, parliamentary proceedings, and legislative activities (Hecló 1975; Gowan 1987; Roseveare 1969). These high-level public officials were strategically positioned to formulate new policies with existing administrative resources. Most influential of them were Sir George Askwith, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, and Sir Ernest Aves, who 'played a part [in the Liberal Reforms] probably more important than the great political figures who occupied the stage while they worked in the wings' (quoted in Hay 1983).

Because bureaucracies exert tremendous influence in shaping the direction of social legislation, civil servants' preconceptions and values played a role. These Oxbridge-educated officials saw their responsibilities as developing social policies that integrate the working class into the establishment in a way that would preserve individual liberties while mitigating class conflict (Harris 1972). William Beveridge, one of the architects of the British welfare system, described in his autobiography how his inspiring tutor Eduard Caird urged his students to "discover why, with so much wealth in Britain, there continues to be so much poverty and how poverty can be cured" (1955: 4).

Party Politics

With a reformed civil service that aims to prevent the 'corruption' of patronage politics, political parties were forced to compete programmatically in an expanding electorate from the 1870s onward (Douglas 1971). This theory is in line with Flora et al.'s cross-sectional observation that stronger state bureaucracies significantly influence the initiation of welfare programs (1981), and echoes Skocpol et al.'s agenda of 'bringing the state back in' (1985) in analyzing the development of welfare states in general. In the case of Britain, decades around the turn of the century saw a blooming of social studies on poverty and living standards from scholars, civil servants, statisticians, and government agencies. Concerns on the "respectable poor" cut across the party line. Welfare programs emerged from counterbidding among parties for working-class votes.

To be sure, the actual competition between the Liberal, Conservative, and Labour party was relatively modest, but the growing presence of the Labour party served as a threat that ensured the 'marketplace' was competitive. The Liberals came under particular pressure as the increasing strength of the Labour party may upset previous delicate balance between them. In the past two decades, Liberals agreed not to put

up candidates in certain districts where independent Labour candidates were running. In return, the elected Labour candidates maintained the party discipline of the Liberals (Moore, 1978:18). More Labour MPs began to doubt the profitability of the deal. Although there existed no specific demands from voters for welfare programs and the actual popularity of which was open to debate, in the eyes of the Liberal government, welfare reforms presented themselves as a valuable opportunity to consolidate its base and evoke further electoral payoffs.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper suggests that the series of social legislation after the Second World War does not constitute a decisive break with the past. The received wisdom is that 1945 marks the breakthroughs of Britain's welfare state. The Second World War created heightened national solidarity which provided a broad basis of political support for a nationwide legislative and institutional innovation. Using regression analysis, this paper suggests that, on the contrary, two world wars did not put Britain on a fundamentally different path. The true breakthroughs toward the modern welfare state took place at the beginning of the century under the Liberal Reforms, which laid the institutional foundation for the welfare state's sustained growth until 1975. Therefore, studies on the origins of Britain's modern welfare state requires us to set the clocks back at least four decades from 1945.

The implication is that, chronologically, developments such as working-class pressure, war-induced changes, and the idea of social rights that took hold only after the Second World War could not be the origins of the welfare state. Taking the 1908-1911 Liberal Reforms as the starting point, it then becomes clear that it was civil service reforms and party competitions that laid in the transformation of the government's role in the provision of welfare. The

Second World War merely reaped what has been sown.

There are still gaps in knowledge to fill. This paper explains how previous socio-political contexts gave rise to social reform in general, but not why the reform took its particular shape. There were several competing proposals for social reform at the time. For example, Liberal Unionists sought to solve similar problems but with different fiscal and legislative means. The question is why it was the Liberal solutions that got implemented. Solving this puzzle is key to understanding why the early modern welfare state emerged as it was in twentieth century Britain.

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Appendix

Legislation on Social Security for the First Half of the Twentieth Century, United Kingdom,

Old Age Pension Act, 1908.	This granted non-contributory pensions ranging from one to five shillings a week to be paid from national funds, subject to a mean test, at the age of 70, where income was under £31 p.a.
National insurance Act, 1911	This was the first part of an act providing insurance against both ill-health and unemployment. The Act covered all those between the ages of 16 and 70 who were manual workers or earning not more than 160 p.a. (This income limit was raised in 1920 and 1942.) The self-employed, non-employed, and those already provided for by other health insurance schemes were not insurable under this Act. The scheme was administered through independent units, or 'approved societies'. Local insurance committees were set up. The insurance included benefits for sickness, maternity, and medical needs. A weekly contribution was made by the insured person, his employer and the government. The basic weekly sickness benefit was 10s. for men, 7s. 6d. for women. It also net up general medical and pharmaceutical services.
Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act, 1925.	This provided for a contributory scheme, covering almost the same field as the national health insurance scheme. Pensions were payable to the widows of insured persons, and to insured persons and their wives over the age of 70. This age limit was reduced to 65 in 1928. The weekly rates were 10s. for widows, with additional allowances of 5s. for the first child and 3s. for each other child, 7s. 6d. for orphans and 10s. for old age pensioners.
Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act, 1929.	This Act provided pension at age 55 for certain widows who could not satisfy the conditions of the 1925 Act
Widows'. Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions (Voluntary Contributors) Act. 1937.	This Act created a new scheme of voluntary insurance for old age, widows' and orphans' benefits open to certain persons who were not within the scope of the main scheme.
Old Age and Widows' Pensions Act. 1940.	This reduced to 60 the age at which a woman who was herself insured or who was the wife of an insured man could become entitled to an old age pension. The Act also introduced supplementary pensions in cases of need for widow pensioners over the age of 60 and for old age pensioners. The Unemployment Assistance Board was renamed the Assistance Board and became responsible for payment of these supplementary pensions.

<p>National Health Insurance, Contributory Pensions and Workmen's Compensation A 4 1941.</p>	<p>This raised the income limit for compulsory insurance of non-manual workers for pensions purposes to £420 p.a.</p>
<p>Family Allowances Act, 1945.</p>	<p>This granted a non-contributory allowance, to be paid to the mother, for each child other than the first. 1945-52 5s. per week; 1952-68 8s. per week; 1956-68 10s. per week for third and subsequent children; 1968 15s. (75p) per week for second, £1 per week for third and subsequent children.</p>
<p>National Health Service Act, 1946.</p>	<p>By this Act, hospitals were transferred from local authorities and voluntary bodies and were to be administered by the Minister through regional hospital boards, general medical and dental services through executive councils, and other health services by county and county borough councils. Health centres were to be provided by local authorities for general, mental, dental, and pharmaceutical services, but few were built. Almost all services under the Act were to be free.</p>
<p>National Health Service (Amendment) Act, 1949; National Health Service Acts, 1951 and 1952; National Health Service Contributions Acts. 1957-1958.</p>	<p>These made modifications in the original scheme by imposing charges for certain parts of the scheme (prescriptions, dental treatment, etc.).</p>
<p>National Insurance Act, 1946.</p>	<p>This Act provided a new scheme of insurance replacing the National Health Insurance and contributory pensions schemes with effect from 5 Jul 1948. All persons over school-leaving age, except certain married women, became compulsorily insurable. In addition to provisions for unemployment, benefits payable were retirement pension, widow's benefit, and death grant.</p>
<p>National Insurance Act, 1951</p>	<p>This Act introduced an allowance payable with widow's benefit for each dependent child in the family.</p>

Source: Butler et al. 2016. British Political Facts.

The Southern Underground Press: Regionalism and Repression

By Alanna Miller, Duke University, Class of 2023

Introduction

Throughout the late 1960s into the 1970s, radical left activists established independent newspapers, often in college towns, as a means of organizing New Left thought. To my knowledge, before now there has not been an analysis of the Vietnam War-era underground press that is specific to the South. In consulting the archives of three publications, *The Rag* from Austin, Texas, *Great Speckled Bird* from Atlanta, Georgia, and *The Kudzu* from Jackson, Mississippi, three prominent Southern underground papers with robust records, I was struck with two observations. First, many of the staffers were keenly aware of how their Southern perspective affected their writing and activism. Southern papers shared a sense of “Southern nationalism,”¹ benefitted from their proximity to the Civil Rights Movement, and were surrounded by the opposition in a way that led to clear regionalism. Secondly, there was clear evidence of the extensiveness of the campaign against the underground press, and I began to identify a pattern in which Southern papers faced additional obstacles as a result of their being below the Mason-Dixon Line. As such, this paper is broken into two parts. The first focuses on the construction of regionalism that influenced the Southern underground press. The second part seeks to understand the political, cultural, and ideological reasons for why Southern papers faced such significant repression. Ultimately, I argue that Southern underground newspapers experienced a unique set of circumstances that make the regional youth movement distinct from the rest of the broader New Left movement.

Part 1: Regionalism

Because of intense feelings of Southern nationalism, their relationship to the Civil Rights Movement, and their proximity to oppositional forces, underground papers in the South developed characteristics more similar to each other and more unlike those outside of the region. Their tone was often antagonistic and prideful, while their positions were at times more moderate than papers in the West and Northeast.

Southern Nationalism

One defining characteristic of the Southern underground press was its strong identification with being Southern, which had the effect of creating a regional voice that did not exist elsewhere. Rather than shed their relationship with the historically oppressive region entirely, Sally Gabb of the *Great Speckled Bird* writes that the staffers of the Atlanta paper were, “joined by a certain lesson: The South.”² Indeed, the Southern label became a source of pride and humility. While the writers of the Southern underground press could relate to the national New Left movement, they were aware of the nuance that being Southern gave both their writing and activism. David Doggett of *The Kudzu* recalls the sense of “Southern nationalism” that Jackson activists felt. They empathized with the youth rebellion movement, but they also held empathized with the regions’ feelings of being subjugated to the North.³ In other words, Southern radicals felt they belonged to the leftist community, but they also felt disillusionment with what they often referred to as “Yankee imperialism.” Oftentimes, they felt that

1 Described as “strong feelings about the economic, political, and cultural subjugation of the region” by Ken Wachsberger in his book *Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*

2 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 92

3 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 135

the youth rebellion movement was tone-deaf to the reality of Southern life, contributing to their defense of the region. Marianne Vizard expressed such frustration with the left in an early issue of *The Rag*:

There is a popular myth in the Movement today which says that one of the reasons that Americans are so blasé about the war is that America has never suffered a defeat. Bullshit! The South was not only defeated in a war, but plundered, burned, occupied militarily, and has been exploited economically for over 100 years.⁴

The Kudzu published a near-identical article in 1968 by Cassell Carpenter:

The South has known the totally un-American experience of submission, military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction...The Southern heritage, as distinct from the American tradition, is more closely in line with the common lot of mankind. They too have known poverty, defeat, guilt, have been powerless to control their own destinies, and many have been victimized by Yankee imperialism.⁵

Both Vizard and Carpenter refused to separate their involvement in the radical youth movement from their Southern upbringing, instead recognizing how these two identities can exist simultaneously. These excerpts reflect the way in which Southern papers held the contradiction of being Southern and being radical in a way that others outside of the region did not experience. Southern underground writers had to reckon with their political beliefs and heritage at once. As such, Southern papers developed a

forceful regional tone that reflected this nuance.

Proximity to the Civil Rights Movement

Another unique aspect of Southern underground papers was their proximity, physically and temporally, to the Civil Rights Movement. Indeed, radicalism in the region could certainly be attributed to this history. Doggett of *The Kudzu* draws the connection between leftist activism to Civil Rights: “in the Sixties...people from urban intellectual centers came to Mississippi with the [Movement].”⁶ As a result, the South was injected with a degree of open political and moral dialogue that it arguably had not experienced ever before. While Northern activists read about Civil Rights organizing, Southern activists were witness to it. Sally Gabb explains how Civil Rights distinguished the Southern press from the rest of the country: “Like the New Left nationally, we were Socialist explorers, but our Southern experience gave us a fortunate depth not available to many in the North.” Namely, this existed in the form of access to “a network of political and social justice organizers.”⁷ In other words, Southern underground papers benefitted from belonging to a community of resistance that gave necessary inspiration and direction. One example of this relationship between the two movements can be found in the *Great Speckled Bird's* interview with staffer Gene Guerrero:

‘The first direct experience I had with a system of ultimate concern which explicitly rejected violence was the civil rights movement. Since my initial involvement I have been constantly searching myself within on the question of violence.’⁸

The Civil Rights Movement had a direct effect on the philosophies of Southern writers such that their papers were often reflective of the political thought of

4 *The Rag*, Volume 2, Issue 1, pg. 6

5 *The Kudzu*, Volume 1, Issue 5, pg. 4

6 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 122

7 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 94

8 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 1, Issue 20, pg. 3

the racial justice activists that preceded them. Much of the “depth”- as Gabb called it- that characterized Southern papers was found in the degree to which they should be loyal to the prominent Civil Rights activists’ position of nonviolence. In this quote, Guerrero expresses respect for Civil Rights thinkers, whilst still wrangling with how much he agreed. As the national New Left movement began to explore the possibility of militancy, Southern writers were reluctant to embrace such a position.⁹ This hesitancy can certainly be traced back to Civil Rights Movement influences.

Surrounded by the Opposition

In a similar vein, Southern papers were distinctively close to the “opposition”- or the politicians, people, and institutions that countered the New Left. Just as Southern writers were heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, they were also greatly affected by their conservative environment. Doggett laments: “How does anyone, anywhere rise above the overpowering flow of one’s native culture, the suffocating, vise-like grip of the familial and communal, birth-to-death universe view?”¹⁰ This description reveals how the oppressive environment of the South often beleaguered its defectors. The feelings of otherness are clear. Some writers, like Doggett, saw the underground press as a vehicle for escaping the mainstream, while others were intentional in surrounding themselves with the enemy. Victoria Smith Holden explains how the founders of *Space City!* chose to relocate to Houston to start an underground paper because the city had, “big oil, big banking, and big construction” to challenge.¹¹ Regardless of the conditions that led to the location of Southern underground papers, the awareness of their outsider status was reflected in their writing. Take this article by Carol Nieman from the very first issue of *The Rag* as an example:

“Yeah, babes, you’ve finally hit the

bigtime rah rah scooby dobro beat the hell outa SMU these are the best few years of your life so...make your place in society be a phi beta kappa sigma chi omega doo wah. Hello?? I dunno about you but that really turns me off... Most people tend to remain turned off, unplugged, and militantly apathetic members of the soggy green masses.”¹²

Nieman’s somewhat unintelligible rant expresses the general frustration felt by Southern radicals with their immediate environment. While Southern papers may not have been initially militant, they were certainly confrontational and unafraid to express their dissatisfaction. Being continuously surrounded by oppositional forces meant that Southern papers developed a tone of constant indignation. This certainly existed elsewhere in the New Left, but perhaps nowhere as strong as the South.

Part 2: Repression

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover’s campaign against the underground press is well-known, but for a number of reasons, Southern underground papers frequently faced a number of additional barriers to their freedom of press.

Southern Politics

Repression in the Southern underground press is well-documented and was often a result of what I label as “Southern politics,” or the political reasons for why the ideas and activities of the underground press were perceived negatively and thus, met with hostility. These motivations to suppress the voices of the underground typically originated from the fact that leftist publications threatened otherwise conservative strongholds. In the Sixties, Dallas was a right-wing haven. The local economy was driven by financial and commercial interests. The political climate was controlled by conservative figures like mayor J. Erik

⁹ *The Rag*, Vol 2, Issue 12, pg. 3

¹⁰ *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 121

¹¹ *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 300

¹² *The Rag*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pg. 1

Johnson, Congressman Bruce Walker, retired General Edwin Walker, billionaire H.L. Hunt, and Congressman Joe Pool who collectively pushed anti-liberalism.¹³ Joe Pool is of particular relevance to the history of the Southern underground press. After he was arrested in a drunk driving incident that involved a car full of American soldiers, the underground paper *Dallas Notes* was the only Dallas-based newspaper to write about the story. In response, the Congressman called for the House UnAmerican Activities Committee to investigate underground newspapers.¹⁴ In a public statement, Pool declared, “these smut sheets are today’s Molotov cocktails thrown at respectability and decency in our nation.”¹⁵ Subsequently, *Dallas Notes* experienced a number of setbacks including mail interference, phone line disconnection, arrests, and even shots fired at editor Stoney Burns’s car.¹⁶ Because Dallas was under so much conservative control, the attack of one politician meant that underground papers felt the full wrath of a Republican response.

Another way in which the region resisted threats to existing power structures was through campus censorship. The Southern underground press drew attention to the unethical dealings of the corporations that funded the universities located in the towns they published in. *The Rag* exposed the University of Texas at Austin’s financial relationships with companies like AT&T, Gulf Oil, and IBM which “[profited] from the war.” They also called out the Board of Regents, the governing body of the University of Texas system, for having members with backgrounds in law enforcement, the military, and big banking.¹⁷ Similarly, the *Great*

Speckled Bird published an article condemning Emory University for its extensive ties to Coca Cola and the Candler family for their alleged imperialist practices.¹⁸ Southern universities are particularly close to industries like big oil and donors with religious convictions like the Clanders such that they were perhaps both more prone to criticism and more quick to take offense. This meant that the underground press faced an especially uphill battle there. In Austin, *The Rag*’s countercultural picnic coined Gentle Thursday was banned on UT’s campus.¹⁹ Eventually, the university sued to keep the paper from being sold on school grounds, a case that the ACLU took all the way to the Supreme Court.²⁰ The *Bird* was banned at Georgia State, which writers observed was “indicative of larger issues of administrative suppression.”²¹ *Bird* writers acknowledge that the paper “[irritated] power structures which is only comfortable with a well-controlled press.”²² The political atmosphere that these papers encountered on campus was one that was hostile to criticism, especially when directed toward the rich and powerful that made up a significant portion of university funding.

One characteristic of the areas that made such Southern politics all the more relevant was the “small-town” infrastructure that gave groups with unfavorable opinions of underground papers disproportionate, unchecked power. In Jackson, *The Kudzu* averaged several arrests per month.²³ In one incident, a dozen vendors were arrested at a local high school under a fabricated charge of “obstructing traffic.” After attempting to return to the same site later on, two vendors were violently beaten, and the staffer that

13 *Stoney Burns and Dallas Notes: Covering the Dallas Counterculture*

14 *The Campaign Against the Underground Press*

15 *Smoking Typewriters*

16 *The Campaign Against the Underground Press*

17 *The Rag*, Volume 6, Issue 24, pg. 9

18 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 5, Issue 17, pg. 18

19 *The Rag*, Vol. 1, Issue 21, pg. 1

20 *On the Ground- An Illustrated Anecdotal History of the Sixties Underground Press*

21 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 1, Issue 10, pg. 3

22 *Great Speckled Bird* Volume 5, Issue 7, pg. 6-7

23 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 133

was photographing the encounter was arrested and his camera confiscated. The judge who oversaw the case was the state attorney's older brother and the concocted charges were upheld.²⁴ These conditions meant that oppositional forces often had the power of law enforcement and legal consequence on their side, with little recourse available for the underground press. The recognition that repression was driven by such Southern politics was not lost on the papers. The *Great Speckled Bird* published a satirical article describing the fictional arrest of Jesus Christ to compare the persecution of hippies and New Left activists to a story of martyrdom that Southerners were more than familiar with.²⁵ By comparing the youth rebellion to Christ, the *Great Speckled Bird* writers sought to provoke the Southern attitudes that motivated the campaign against them.

Moral Righteousness

Another reason for the unique pressure placed on Southern papers was the region's strong allegiance to moral righteousness. Geoffrey Rips, author of *Campaign Against the Underground Press*, makes the argument that law enforcement was able to subvert the political rights of the New Left by appealing to, "people already uneasy about growing family and community instability."²⁶ Nowhere were these moral anxieties more potent than in the South. In the book *The Burden of Southern History*, C. Vann Woodward explains that the South had for centuries a long-held fear of losing its regionalism and of becoming indistinguishable.²⁷ Moreover, the South had traditionally established such an identity by contrasting itself from "Yankee morals."²⁸ In other words, the underground press was particularly

offensive in the Bible Belt because it was ostensibly immoral, which threatened the very basis on which the South based its superiority. Indeed, when slavery as an institution fell victim to outside criticism one hundred years earlier- and the identity of the South was under siege- the region's response was to curtail freedom of speech so as to protect itself from attack.²⁹ The Vietnam War-era repression of the underground press on moral grounds was a continuation of that same history.

Two of the most common methods that the opposition used to point to the immorality of the underground press were the drug use that surrounded the papers and the objectionable material they published. Marijuana in particular was associated with "minorities and subcultures" in a manner that "seemed threatening to mainstream America."³⁰ As such, association with drugs became a way in which local governments and law enforcement could paint papers as deviant. Indeed, Stoney Burns of *Dallas Notes* was sentenced to ten years in prison for the possession of one-tenth of an ounce of marijuana.³¹ In Mississippi, the Jackson Vice squad occupied an apartment on the same grounds as *The Kudzu* office because they believed the paper was responsible for the drug culture in the city.³² High school administrators in Atlanta felt the same way about the *Bird*.³³ Obscenity charges were leveraged in a similar manner. The Atlanta mayor issued a warrant that called for the arrest of *Bird* staff with the charge of, "distribution of obscene literature to minors and public profanity."³⁴ Needless to say, the public belief that underground papers were immoral often made their distribution more difficult. *The Rag* had trouble

24 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 133

25 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 1, Issue 3, pg. 11

26 *The Campaign Against the Underground Press*

27 *The Burden of Southern History*, pg. 8

28 *The Burden of Southern History*, pg. 109

29 *The Burden of Southern History*, pg. 62

30 *Smoking Typewriters*

31 *Smoking Typewriters*

32 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 143

33 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume, 2, Issue 1, pg. 3

34 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 95

finding a printer and complained that, “no one in Austin would touch us.”³⁵ In appealing to Southern hysteria over moral sensibilities, law enforcement was largely successful in limiting the abilities of underground papers.

Organized Opposition

Whereas law enforcement had boundaries regarding its repressive tactics, organized vigilante groups did not. One of the prominent obstacles the underground press faced was the effectiveness of the opposition’s violence against them. Indeed, Geoffrey Rips argues that police involvement with the underground press emboldened oppositional groups to do the same. For example, Dallas police waged a war against *Dallas Notes* before the office was eventually raided twice by right wing groups.³⁶ In the late Sixties and early Seventies, the Klan was firmly integrated in the Houston area and even managed to infiltrate the Houston police force. In fact, the FBI administered lie detector tests that resulted in the firing or resignation of over 200 police officers who belonged to the Klan.³⁷ This is not to say that hate is confined to any one place, but right-wing groups were far more established and organized in the South than other places.

As a result, Southern underground papers experienced no shortage of violence. *Space City!*’s office in Houston was hit by a pipe bomb deployed by the Klan. The paper also suffered frequent break-ins and tire-slashings.³⁸ Staffers remember the paper as “under siege from the KKK.” Its officers were shot up, as was anybody who dared to advertise with them.³⁹ *The Kudzu* often received threatening phone calls, and its office windows were shot through.⁴⁰ George Vizard, the notorious *Rag* salesman, was found

murdered.⁴¹ In a particularly serious incident, the *Great Speckled Bird*’s office was firebombed in 1972:

“We know the bombing is not isolated from the hassles we had during the three weeks preceding the fire... Our stories on slumlords, City Hall practices, and most particularly the selection of Police Chief John Inman have earned us the wrath of Mayor Sam Massell... It’s very possible that someone reading or hearing about the mayor’s recent comments and recognizing the police harassment for what it was, figured they’d do the mayor a service by doing the dirty work.”⁴²

Underground papers often publicly challenged local politicians. In the South, however, the presence of an organized opposition movement meant that the consequences of doing so were often severe.

Prejudiced Attitudes

I would be remiss to overlook the role that Southern belief systems had in constructing the ideologies necessary for repression to occur. While the Sixties and Seventies were characterized by a dynamic movement on the left, the strength of that movement varied by location. In Austin, right-wing extremism was the popular school of thought at UT. Social deviance had consequences, which meant that *The Rag*- which stood in direct opposition to the mainstream-was bound to face some sort of backlash.⁴³ In Houston, the political and social climate was “inhospitable” toward radicalism and instead overtaken by a far-right wing of conservatism.⁴⁴ Mississippi was perhaps the most extreme. Segregation was state law,

35 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 2, Issue 1, pg. 2

36 *The Campaign Against the Underground Press*

37 *Edit International*, Laytern

38 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 309

39 *On the Ground- An Illustrated Anecdotal History of the Sixties Underground Press*

40 *Insider Histories*, Part 2

41 *The Rag*, Volume 6 Issue 1, pg. 10

42 *Great Speckled Bird*, Volume 5, Issue 19, pg. 2

43 *Smoking Typewriters*

44 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 307

and the overarching environment was “oppressively anti-intellectual.”⁴⁵ The FBI, knowing that the South was still home to more right-wing attitudes, visited the parents, friends, neighbors and employers of *Kudzu* staffers with the hope that their conservative convictions would compel them to pressure the radical writers into submission.⁴⁶ This tactic could be considered evidence of the general population’s beliefs at the moment.

The Sixties were a turbulent time marked by violence and upheaval. While positive progress was made with the Civil Rights Movement, the period immediately afterward still included those with racist and prejudiced attitudes, particularly in the South— a region that has historically resisted change. Gabb of the *Great Speckled Bird* explains that the world was characterized by, “reckless war, labor struggle, racist violence, sexism, and economic oppression [but the response] was filled with hope for social and political change.”⁴⁷ The outside world that the Southern underground press encountered was hostile, but its staffers knew that going in. Rather than acquiesce to the forces that fought to keep the papers from circulating, underground papers were often invigorated by staunch opposition. Victoria Smith Holden remembers the incidents of violence directed toward *Space City!* as “exciting, exhilarating, and almost fun at times.”⁴⁸ Indeed, Southern underground papers were a shining example of resilience and resolve.

Conclusion

C. Vann Woodward writes the following about the complicated history of the American South: “The experience of evil and the experience of tragedy are parts of the Southern heritage that are as difficult to reconcile with the American legend of innocence and social

felicity as the experience of poverty and defeat are to reconcile with the legends of abundance and success.”⁴⁹

Southern history is one defined by contradiction. There is tension between the American dream of economic success and the reality of poverty in the region; just as there is tension between the American story of victory and the South’s past with defeat. These contradictions shaped the underground press in a way such that the Southern papers developed a degree of regionalism in their writing and in their beliefs not present elsewhere in the New Left. The difference between the radical movement and the rest of the South is that the New Left found ways of living with Southern contradiction. They rejected the myths of innocence and abundance in favor of challenging institutions and people to take responsibility for the future they believed everyone deserved. Meanwhile, the Old South held on to the possibility of these unattainable goals and perceived the New Left’s discontent with the present order as a threat rather than a sign of hopeful possibility. In retaliation, Southern underground papers faced a high amount of repression. However, rather than accept defeat, staffers of Southern papers were often brought closer by such incidents and continued producing content for years.

45 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 122

46 *Insider Histories*, Part 2, pg. 150

47 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 91

48 *Insider Histories*, Part 1, pg. 309

49 *The Burden of Southern History* pg. 21

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“The Blasphemy of the Damned Will Stop in the End:” The Universalism of Hans Denck (1500-1527)

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In 1527, around eight months before his death, the popular yet controversial Anabaptist leader Hans Denck privately confessed to Nicolaus Thomae Sigelsbach, a Protestant pastor in Bergzabern, that he believed that it was “evident that the blasphemy of the damned will stop in the end,” allowing for people in hell to enter into heaven.¹ In that same meeting, Denck expressed his conviction that God is “a fire – an eternal fire – who consumes whatever ought to be consumed; and that which ought to be consumed is that which is resistant to God.”² Therefore, according to Denck, hellfire does not only torture dead souls for the sake of God’s commitment to retributive justice—as was the dominant opinion among Christians in Denck’s day. Rather, God uses hellfire to purify souls from sin so they can be reconciled with God. Hell – a place or state wherein God is said to punish forever and ever humans who reject him – was a very real threat in the minds of Denck’s contemporaries. A perpetual refugee, he was thus exiled from city after city for, among other things, his universalism. From where, then, did Denck’s confident assurance that people need not fear that at their death God would irreversibly condemn them to be burned in supernatural fire come? In this essay, I will summarize his theological outlook and examine his contemporaries’ response to his controversial teaching. Finally, I will consider more recent scholarly

assertions that Denck did not in fact believe all people would eventually be reconciled to God in the afterlife, and I will contend that these arguments are unconvincing because they do not take into account key sources and offer unsatisfying explanations for Denck’s reputation as someone who taught that the damned’s punishment will not go on forever.

Hell

When speaking of postmortem punishment, the New Testament often places it in γέεννα (Gehenna), an actual valley to the southwest of Jerusalem which took on eschatological meaning because of its association with child sacrifice (Jeremiah 7:31, 19:2–6). Gehenna is described as a place of punishment “where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched” (Mark 9:48) and is characterized by darkness and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12, 22:13). Although this fire is described as “eternal,” the image is taken from Isaiah, where these punishments are inflicted on corpses rather than conscious people (Matthew 25:41; Isaiah 66:24).³ The final outcome seems to be that the wicked will die permanently, whereas the righteous will be resurrected to everlasting life.

The earliest extant description of what we have come to recognize as Christian hell is, according to Dimitris Kyrtatas, in the second-century *Apocalypse of Peter*, not the canonical New

1 “Hic dicit manifestum esse, damnatorum blasphemiam tandem oportere cessare.” “Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527,” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads: Zum Vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum der Basler Reformation II: 1527-1593*, ed., Ernst Staehelin, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationgeschichte, vol. 19 (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1934), Nr. 479, p. 51-55.

2 “Deum ignem esse et æternum ignem, et qui consumit, quicquid est consumendum; consumenda autem sunt, quæcumque adversantur Deo.” “Nicholaus Thomae” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*.

3 “And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” The idea seems to be that the fire or its effect will be eternal, not the suffering it induces along the way.

Testament.⁴ There were some in the early church who believed this text to be inspired scripture and thus included it in the New Testament canon. It narrates Jesus revealing truths about the afterlife to St. Peter:

And behold another place. And there is a pit, large and full. In it are those who have rejected righteousness. And the angels of punishment will keep watch [and] there in it and light the fire of their punishment (Apocalypse of Peter 7:3-4).

The subsequent depictions of various torments meted out based on sinners' various transgressions rival Dante's *Inferno* in their grotesqueness. By the fifth century, Augustine, the most influential Father of the Western Church, insisted that in hell, "by a miracle of their most omnipotent Creator, [the damned] can burn without being consumed, and suffer without dying."⁵ In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas, wrote that "a place is assigned to souls in keeping with their reward or punishment, as soon as the soul is set free from the body it is either plunged into hell or soars to heaven."⁶ And so, by the sixteenth century, a great deal of the average Christian's traditional beliefs and practices

were related to belief in an everlasting hell of torment. With a predilection for the legendary and the fabulous, Catholic preachers in Denck's day warned of souls tortured in eternal fire.⁷ Also, a popular devotion that began in the eleventh century focused on the "four last things:" death, judgment, heaven and hell.⁸ Preachers often encouraged their parishioners to fear an unprepared death, for such a circumstance might cause someone to wake up in never-ending flames.⁹ Alongside such sermons, medieval mystery plays dramatized the Last Judgment. In these public performances portraying Christian themes, performers characterized hell as a place whose determining qualities were God's absence¹⁰ and torture that lasted forever.¹¹ In addition, church buildings in this period more and more began to contain "horrifying scenes of hell's torment" painted on the walls.¹² Thus, the concept of hell held sway in the popular imagination. Every time a loved one died, the faithful would experience the church's rites for the dead which prayed,

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of hell and from the bottomless pit: deliver them from the lion's mouth,

4 Dimitris Kyrtatas, "The Origins of Christian Hell," *Numen* 56, no. 2-3 (2009): 282-297, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852709x405017>, 288-9. See also Jan N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife: The 1995 Read-Tuckwell Lectures at the University of Bristol* (London: Routledge, 2009); Richard J. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research," in *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt*, ed. W. Haase, vol. 2.25.6 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 4712-4750.

5 Augustine, "City of God XXI," in *Augustine: City of God, Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods, vol. 2 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

6 Thomas Aquinas, "Matters Concerning the Resurrection, and First of the Place Where Souls Are after Death (Supplementum, Q. 69)," in *Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd ed., 1920, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/5069.htm#article2>.

7 Erwin R. Gane, "Late-Medieval Sermons in England: An Analysis of Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Preaching," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Autumn 1982, Vol. 20, No. 3, 179-203, 192.

8 Teresa McLean, "Thinking on the Last Things," *New Blackfriars* 69, no. 821 (1988): 497-503, 498.

9 Juanita Feros Ruys, "Dying 101: Emotion, Experience, and Learning How to Die in the Late Medieval Artes Moriendi," *Parergon* 31, no. 2 (2014), 55.

10 Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 78.

11 Jill Stevenson, "Poised at the Threatening Edge: Feeling the Future in Medieval Last Judgment Performances," *Theatre Journal* 67, no. 2 (2015), 273-293, 286.

12 Pamela Sheingorn, "'For God Is Such a Doomsman': Origins and Development of the Theme of Last Judgment," in *Homo, Memento Finis*, 15-58.

that hell not swallow them up...¹³

It is clear how icons like Denck and his contemporaries would have seen in their churches depicted hell swallowing damned souls are based on prayers like this one.¹⁴

Outside of the liturgy, anxiety over their souls' fates led wealthy Christians to fund charitable endeavors and church building as well as to establish trust funds for chantries to ensure believers would pray for them once they had died.¹⁵ Despite the absence of the word “purgatory” in liturgical texts or scripture, the existence of a place separate from hell where Christian souls would be purified before entering heaven had become more settled by this time, but all the imagery of fiery punishment was the same.¹⁶ Nevertheless, hell was still a possibility even for Christians if they died unprepared, so practices hoping to aid oneself in escaping hell remained relevant. As the iconography of the period shows, hell was clearly presented as an option for everyone—those in power most especially. The figures taking up the most prominent position in demon's mouths and those most clearly engulfed in flames are often kings and bishops—not just commonfolk. Though this may have just been cunning realpolitik, reading these icons in good faith leads to the conclusion that the teaching of the doctrine of hell was not merely for the sake of controlling the populace. It was seen as

God's great meting out of justice at the end of time, making sure every single criminal got his just deserts.

For those recognized as outside of the Christian fold, hell was obviously an even livelier threat. Authorities would burn heretics at the stake both to mimic the hellfire in which the executors believed the blasphemers would awake and to warn onlookers that not only temporal earthly punishment but never-ending divine punishment awaited those who espoused heterodox doctrines.¹⁷ And the belief in hell had major consequences not just for sacred but also temporal power. After Denck's death, religious wars would be fought not only to maintain temporal power but also, in the minds of those who fought them, to save men's souls. Denck's assertion that a fate of never-ending fiery pain need not be feared could classify all this struggle as, if not unnecessary, excessive. A great deal could be unsettled by Denck's belief that God is love “not anger and is therefore always merciful.”¹⁸

Universalism through the Ages

Next, it is helpful to gain some understanding of the history of the doctrine of universal salvation's reception among Christian thinkers leading up to Denck. He was not, of course, its first proponent. Already in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (the same text which introduced frightful images of postmortem torture specific to the transgression), there is also the

13 Catholic Church, *Missale Ad Sacrosancte Romane Ecclesie Usum*. Lyon, 1520. <https://login.proxy.lib.duke.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/missale-ad-sacrosancte-romane-ecclesie-usum/docview/2090313654/se-2?accountid=10598>. On lay understanding of the liturgy: Virginia Reinburg, “Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France.” In *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Autumn, 1992, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Autumn, 1992), 526-547.

14 Johannes Pommeranz, “Die Hölle Und Ihr Rachen: Gedanken Zur Alltäglichkeit Eines Christlichen Bildmotivs,” in *Monster: Fantastische Bilderwelten Zwischen Grauen Und Komik Begleitband Zur Gleichnamigen Ausstellung Im Germanischen Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg Vom 7. Mai Bis 6. September 2015*, ed. Peggy Große, G. Ulrich Großmann, and Johannes Pommeranz (Nürnberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum Abt. Verlag, 2015), 378-405.

15 Gary Richardson, “Craft Guilds and Christianity in Late-Medieval England: A Rational-Choice Analysis.” *Rationality and Society* 17, no. 2 (May 2005): 139-89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463105051631>.

16 Brian Patrick McGuire, “Purgatory, the Communion of Saints, and Medieval Change.” *Viator* 20, (1989): 61-84.

Hannah Weaver, “A Pilgrimage to Purgatory: Overcoming Doubt through Vernacular Narrative Conventions in the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 1 January 2021; 51 (1): 9-35. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-8796222>.

17 Michael D. Barbezat, “The Fires of Hell and the Burning of Heretics in the Accounts of the Executions at Orleans in 1022,” *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 4 (February 2014): 399-420, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2014.953194>.

18 “Item I. Jo[hannis] 4 [, 8]: “Deus charitas est;” id est: non ira est, sed omnium miserebitur.” “Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527,” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*.

teaching that the righteous in heaven will have mercy on the wicked in hell and ask God to free them.¹⁹ Yet ‘Peter’ is warned that he was told this that he “might not reveal it but scare them with the judgment of burning fire so that they will repent from the sin”—it seems fears about the consequences of such a hope were already present. In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, three Church Fathers, themselves believers in an everlasting hell, recorded that many if not most Christians in their day supported the idea of universal salvation in one form or another. In *Commentary on Jonah*, Jerome (c. 342-420), who translated the Bible into vernacular Latin and is thus a key figure in the formation of Christianity in the West, admits that he knows that *plerosque*, “most people,” believed that the devil would repent and be restored to his former position as a good angel.²⁰ Basil the Great (330-379), a bishop from Asia Minor who played an essential role in the formation of the Church’s vocabulary for the doctrine of the Trinity, reports that τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “the masses of the people”—perhaps intending the majority of *at least* the laity—believed there would be an end to any punishments in the afterlife.²¹ Augustine of Hippo (354-430) too, *the* preeminent theologian of the Western Church (as opposed to the Greek-speaking

East) who had been a universalist earlier in his life but later became a firm believer in a perpetual hell, conveys that at his time many Christians disagreed with the idea of unending postmortem punishment, writing that

It is in vain, then, that some, indeed *very many*, make moan over the eternal punishment, and perpetual, unintermitted torments of the lost, and say they do not believe it shall be so; not, indeed, that they directly oppose themselves to Holy Scripture, but, at the suggestion of their own feelings, they soften down everything that seems hard, and give a milder turn to statements which they think are rather designed to terrify than to be received as literally true. For “Hath God,” they say, “forgotten to be gracious?”²²

In fact, Augustine outlines six different types of Christian universalism in *City of God* 21.17-25, and—with the exception of Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–c. 253) and his followers who include the devil and his fallen angels in redemption—the bishop of Hippo

19 “I will give to my called and my elect whomever they ask of me out of punishment, and I will give them a good baptism in the salvation of the so-called Acherusian Lake in the Elysian Field, a part of righteousness with my holy ones. And I will depart, I and my elect, rejoicing with the patriarchs to my eternal kingdom. And I will accomplish with them my promises, which I promised to them, I and my father who is in heaven” (Apoc. Pet. 14:1–3). Eric J Beck, “Perceiving the Mystery of the Merciful Son of God: An Analysis of the Purpose of the Apocalypse of Peter,” A Thesis Submitted to The University of Edinburgh, New College, 2018.

20 “I know that many understand this... to be the devil, who at the end of the world, since no creature that is rational and which was made by God may perish, will come down from his pride and repent and be restored to his former place.” Timothy Michael Hegedus, “Jerome’s commentary on Jonah: Translation with introduction and critical notes” (1991). *Wilfrid Laurier University Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)*. 115, 51. T.M. Hegedus interestingly mistranslates *plerosque* as “many.” Original available in “Commentariorum In Jonam Prophetam Liber Unus,” in *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 25 (Paris, 1845), 1117-50, 1141.

21 “...many human beings, by disregarding such weighty and solemn words and declarations of the Lord, award to themselves an end of punishment in order that they may sin with greater bravado.” Anna Silvas, *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 418-9. Again, Silvas gives a translation of τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων that, though correct, does not quite convey the numerical sense οἱ πολλοί usually connotes. Literally “the many,” it signifies “the masses,” which for Basil most likely means “(the vast majority of) the laity.” Original: “Regulae Brevis Tractatae,” in *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 31 (Imprimerie Catholique, Paris, 1847), 1051-1321, 1264-5.

22 Augustine, “The Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J.F. Shaw, vol. 3 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), §112, italics mine. Original: “Enchiridion de fide, spe et charitate Liber Unus,” in *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 40 (Paris, 1845), 231-90.

does not view those who hold to these positions as heretical.²³ In this passage, Augustine, seemingly with a note of mockery or condescension, refers to such Christian universalists as *miseri cordes*, “tender-hearted.” Alongside these testimonies, Italian scholar Ilaria Ramelli contends that she has demonstrated that universalism “was present in more thinkers than is commonly assumed... and was in fact prominent in patristic thought, down to the last great Western Patristic philosopher, Eriugena” in the ninth century.²⁴

This apparently widespread doctrine fell into decline in later centuries. In the East, Emperor Justinian (482–565) took steps to undermine its supporters, especially the followers of Origen.²⁵ In the West, the powerful influence of Augustine of Hippo meant that his ideological descendants eschewed the universalist hope. Indeed, it seems that for many “at a certain point theories of apokatastasis (universal salvation) were perceived as socially and politically destabilizing.”²⁶

A Universalist

By Denck’s time, the belief in a hell of never-ending conscious torment for the wicked was the unquestionable orthodoxy.²⁷ Just as Justinian saw universalism as dangerous politically, so too Denck’s Lutheran opponents saw his teaching as damaging to their social project, with figures like Vadian expressing in a letter that “neither the Pope nor the Sophists nor

the hypocrites have done so much harm to solid piety during so many centuries as those [Denck and his fellows] have been harmful in a few years.”²⁸ Their resistance to Denck was first of all because of what they saw as his heretical beliefs, not only about the afterlife but about so many other topics as well. Yet Denck’s universalism, the “opinion of Origen,” stands out again and again as one of his ideas that caused them particular concern. For them, “children of the devil and the world are eternally rejected,” and to suggest otherwise could cause all sorts of issues.²⁹ For example, even reformers more friendly and sympathetic to Denck like Nicolaus Thomae Sigelsbach, Denck’s confidant in Bergzabern, worried very much about Denck’s belief that everyone would one day be saved, cautioning that

In my view, it would be better not to spread this opinion, even if it were true; for the believers who, after godlessness and false trust in works have been suppressed have already begun to be more fully born again through the Word, would become lukewarm; but those who have made more progress will, as it were, repent of repenting and of having spent too much time on the mortification of their flesh, while they see the others

23 Richard Bauckham provides a helpful table listing the seven universalist positions with the accompanying favorite scripture texts in *The Fate of the Dead* (Brill, 1998), 150-51.

24 Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, “Reply to Professor Michael McClymond,” *Theological Studies* 2015, Vol. 76(4), 827-35, 833.

25 Justinian had a provincial synod condemn Origenism: “If anyone claims or maintains that the punishment of demons and of impious people is temporary, and that it will cease sooner or later, or that the complete restoration of demons and impious humans will take place, be it anathema.” Ilaria Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis a Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 734.

26 Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, “Christian Apokatastasis and Zoroastrian *Frashegird*,” *Religion & Theology* 24, no. 3-4 (2017): 350-406, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15743012-02403007>, 351.

27 And it remains so for most Christians today. Many Christians have become uncomfortable with this and explain the doctrine in as irenic a manner as possible—no longer believing that *most* humans will end up in hell. On how such developments have grown and are a real change in Christian thought, see Guillaume Cuchet, “Une Révolution Théologique Oubliée. Le Triomphe De La Thèse Du Grand Nombre Des Élus Dans Le Discours Catholique Du XIXe Siècle,” *Revue D’histoire Du XIXe Siècle*, no. 41 (2010): 131-148, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rh19.4054>.

28 Vadian, *Letter to Zwiccius* (1540), 20. Quoted in Jan J. Kiwiet, “Life of Hans Denck (Ca 1500-1527),” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 31, no. 4 (1957): 227-259, 243n126.

29 “Kinder des teufels vnd der welt seind alleyn die ewig verworffenen.” “1524 [April-August].—Ausführungen des Laienpredigers Clemens Ziegler über das Abendmahl und die Taufe,” *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), 95.

so willfully living in fleshly indolence and luxury, and, having not yet fully denied themselves on account of God's forbearance, will thus become indignant at God's indulgence [secret judgment]."³⁰

Sigelsbach also wrote that he wondered what the point was of exhorting a Christian congregation toward holy living if there were no threat of unending punishment in the hereafter "since in [Denck's] opinion it is certain that they would be saved even without it."³¹ Other magisterial reformers, similar to Sigelsbach, likely worried that without the threat of everlasting torture in hell looming over them, most people would have little reason to apply themselves toward self-improvement—just as the author of the *Apocalypse of Peter* and Justinian had.

So, Denck's beliefs were highly controversial. For example, Rhegius, Augsburg's main Lutheran reformer, was furious that Denck had "hid his teaching from [him] for more than a year and denied it from [him]."³² When Rhegius found out, he "sent for [Denck]... and asked him why he had brought [universalism] here, because it was a poisoned Origenian error, by which all God's power was at once extinguished..."³³ Denck first denied this accusation,

"but then he began to weep and confessed to [Rhegius] that he believed that no devil or man was eternally damned."³⁴ Denck attempted to defend himself, arguing that "it is written... that God wants all men to be saved, that he does not want the sinner to die, and he brought forth a number of sayings about God's mercy, thinking that they apply to all men and devils."³⁵ Rhegius shot these points down and emphasized that universalism was a heresy. Rather than meet with the council for a public disputation, Denck fled the next morning, knowing what punishment he could expect otherwise. Rhegius soon recommended "*Folter und Richtbeil*," martyrdom or torture and execution, for Anabaptists in Augsburg.³⁶

In the last two years of his life, Hans Denck published five major theological treatises.³⁷ None of these is devoted entirely to what our current study is focusing on, *i.e.*, humans' final fate in the afterlife. Nevertheless, they give us an adequate picture of his overall religious outlook. For Denck, the Word of God and the Bible were not identical because "those who actually have the truth [in their hearts] can recognize it without any Scriptures."³⁸ He believed that an "Inner Word" dwells in everything, as opposed to the outer word found in the Church's scriptures. While this may sound mystical, and surely it is, Denck did not mean by the

30 "Satius meo iudicio foret, opinionem hanc, etsi veram, non vulgari. Credentes enim postergata impietate et fiducia operum, iam plenius verbo renasci incipientes, tepescunt, perfectiores vero pœnitent quasi pœnitentiæ et nimis in tempore susceptæ mortificationis carnis, quando alios tam licenter in carnis ocio et luxu agere vident et sic longanimitate divina nondum plene semetipsis abnegatis et omnibus Deo eiusque occulto iudicio resignatis torquentur." "Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527," in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, Nr. 479, p. 51-55.

31 "Tum, cur in tantum adhortetur ad sui mortificationem homines, cum absque ea eos salvari sit certum, interrogatus respondit, se malle una morte cito mori quam mille mortibus lente torqueri." Ibid.

32 "Johann Denck hat mir mehr denn ein ganz Jahr verborgen seine Lehre und sie vor mir verleugnet; mittlerweile hat er in Winklen nichts desto minder gelehrt und getauft." Rhegius, "Zween wunderseltzan Sendbrief" in Heberle, *Theol. Studien u. Kritiken* 1851/1/121. Cited in Bauman, 12.

33 "...do ichs nun erfur / beschickt ich ihn im 15.26. jar / und fragt in warumb er es herte gethon / dieweyl es aynn vergiffter Origemscher irechum were / Durch welche alle gotß forcht auff ain mal außgereut..." Urbanus Rhegius, *Ein Sendbrieff Hans huthen etwa ains furnemen Vorsteers widertauferordem verantwort* (Augsburg: A. Weysenhorn, 1528), E i v.

34 "...zum erst leugnet er seyner leer / ye doch zum leisten hub er an zu waynen und bekennet mir / er hieltees also das kayn teuffell und mensch ewigklich verdampft wurde." Ibid.

35 "Er Antwort. Es stehet geschrieben / Got wir nicht imer dar zurnen / er will das ale menschen selig werden / er will des sunders tod nicht / und der gleych etlich spruch die von Gottes barmhertzigkeyt lauten / bracht er herfur und vermaynt sie giengen auff alle menschen und teuffel..." Ibid.

36 Bauman, 13.

37 *Whether God is the Cause of Evil* (Augsburg 1526), *Concerning the Law of God* (Augsburg 1526), *He who Truly Loves the Truth* (Augsburg, Summer 1526), *Concerning True Love* (Worms: Schöffler, 1527), and *The Order of God* (Worms: Schöffler, 1527).

38 "On the Law of God," in *The Radical Reformation*, 143.

Inner Word some ecstasy or vision. Rather, it describes for him an unspectacular, spontaneously occurring internal realization that comes once a person makes way for the voice of God’s spirit in his heart. This voice of the Inner Word lives, according to Denck, in every single human being, “including pagans and Jews, and indeed all creation, ‘the dumb, deaf and blind, indeed, unreasoning animals, yes, foliage and grass, stone and wood, heaven and earth, and all that is.’”³⁹ It may be that focus on the inner disposition of the believer rather than on outward ceremonies and on the obedient lifestyle of the believer versus intellectual belief in theological constructs moved Denck to think that all people, including non-Christians, could please God despite any number of differences in religious belief and practice.

Denck was confident that God worked directly in people’s hearts instead of through rituals—and that God did not give up on saving people – all people – after they died. To Denck, an unending hell would make little sense because, as he told Nicholas Thomae Sigelsbach, “God teaches and preaches through Christ [that we should] love [our] enemies, which would by no means happen if he himself did not do so; for then the essence of God would contradict his teaching.”⁴⁰ Sebastian Franck (1499-c.1543) corroborates this testimony with a similar report that Denck taught that “God has shown his mercy and grace to all men, otherwise the merciless or the wicked would be innocent

and excused.”⁴¹ In other words, to Denck, it does not make sense for God to command people to forgive their unrepentant enemies if God is not willing to do so himself, *i.e.* forgive the damned in hell. Therefore, Denck’s idea of hell could be likened to the medieval concept of purgatory. According to him, “God is a fire, an eternal fire, which consumes whatever should always be consumed... that which is repulsive to God.”⁴² In Denck’s scheme, the traditional doctrine that hell burns the damned forever is not consonant with the purpose of fire, that is, to consume. Once this fire has consumed the damned’s sins and thereby accomplished its purpose of purification, the souls in hell need not remain there any longer. As Jeremiah 3:5 asks, which Denck cites to Sigelsbach along with 13 other Bible verses, “will [God] be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?”⁴³ Thus, for Denck, hell must be a tool God uses to correct people because “God sincerely and paternally intends to do good for us when he brings about such evil things.”⁴⁴ Even in hell, “he persists, everywhere and in every way, in making us hungry.”⁴⁵ The reason drastic methods like hellfire are necessary is “because we are now so perverted,” so that “God uses perverted means to deal with mankind.”⁴⁶ While humans obviously perceive such punishment as severe, it is precisely “because [they] seek salvation that [God in his power] seems like damnation”⁴⁷ For Denck, “God’s breaking, as it appears to us, is the best making.”⁴⁸ “The

39 Hans Denck, “Was Geredt Sei, Das Die Schrift Sagt,” in *Hans Denck: Schriften*, ed. Walter Fellmann and Georg Baring (Bertelsman: Gütersloh, 1956), 99.

40 “Deum per Christum docere et præcipere dilectionem inimicorum, quod minime fieret, si idem ipse non faceret (pugnaret enim natura divina cum doctrina)...” “Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527,” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, Nr. 479, 51-55.

41 “Gott geusst sein Gnad und Barmhertzigkeit über alle Menschen auss, sonst weren die Gnadlosen oder Gottlosen unschuldig und entschuldigt.” Ludwig Keller, ed., “Sebastian Francks Aufzeichnung Über Joh. Denck (1527) Aus Dem Jahre 1531,” *Monatshefte Der Comenius-Gesellschaft* 10, no. 3 & 4 (1901): 173-179, 178.

42 “Deum ignem esse et æternum ignem, et qui consumit, quicquid est consumendum; consumenda autem sunt, quæcumque adversantur Deo.” *Ibid.*

43 The 13 other verses: Isaiah 28:21, Ezekiel 18:23, Psalm 77:7, Romans 5:18, Romans 11:32, 1 Corinthians 15:22-25, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20, 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Peter 3:19; 4:6, 1 John 4:8, Matthew 25:41, Genesis 6:7b.

44 “On the Law of God,” in *The Radical Reformation*, 132.

45 *Ibid.*, 132.

46 *Ibid.*, 134.

47 “Whether God Is the Cause of Evil,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 95.

48 *Ibid.*, 95.

only way to salvation,” the only way for humans to exit hell, therefore, is “to lose oneself” in God.⁴⁹

Denck outlines this system in a more philosophical way in his “Etliche Hauptreden,” Propositions. There, Denck proclaims that “GOD is one, and unity derives and issues solely from him and yet not of him, otherwise, it would diminish and become inferior.”⁵⁰ Indeed, “This ONE [i.e., God] wills oneness and opposes all duplicity.”⁵¹ Therefore, it would follow that God cannot allow for the universe to be everlastingly at odds with him in some corner of hell. Thus, “In order that *everything* might be rightfully restored soon, the ONE presents itself so perfectly as to set aright all that was divided within itself.”⁵² The life of the Christian is to willingly submit to this process of unification. According to Urbanus Rhegius (1489-1541), the head reformer of Augsburg, Denck used this same concept to argue for universalism when confronted about the subject. Rhegius wrote that “...[Denck] has raised a fantasy, how God was one, and that in the same unity, all things contrary to God would be united.”⁵³ Everything, therefore, is about “returning from all duplicity to the ONE; that must be pursued throughout all life. Whoever will, can do it; whoever does not believe it, let him try it.”⁵⁴

Such surrender, *gelassenheit* in German, to the divine is possible, according to Denck, for all people—not just Christians.⁵⁵ He reprimands those who would say otherwise, asking, “Has [God the Father] not,

however, given [to Jesus] all pagans and Jews? Why do you, then, close to them the way which you yourself do not want to follow?”⁵⁶ It is evident here that Denck’s emphasis is on people following in the good life of Jesus. Denck and other Anabaptists denied salvation by faith alone, which they condemned as leading to a lack of effort toward holiness. If salvation only happens insofar as one faithfully walks in Jesus’ footsteps and obeys God, then it is natural to conceive of that process as possibly continuing into the afterlife. Thus, the image Denck presented to Sigelsbach is much like the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, only with the caveat that all peoples undergo this postmortem purification, not just Christians who die in a state of grace.

It is necessary to clarify here that Denck is not merely saying that all religious paths are equal and everyone gets into heaven regardless of confessional affiliation or morality. Many Anabaptists, including the great Münzter before Denck, already believed that non-Christians could be saved, in accordance with their idea of the “gospel of all creatures.” Anabaptist proponents existed for such a view among Italian Spiritualists like Johannes Baptista Italus, who believed after visiting Turkey that the predestined could include good pagans, Muslims, and Jews.⁵⁷ A Roman Catholic such as Erasmus also seems to suggest that the pagan philosopher Socrates will be in heaven, giving an interlocutor in the dialogue *The Godly Feast* the line “St Socrates, pray for us!”⁵⁸ Even Zurichers

49 Ibid., 95.

50 Bauman, 263.

51 Bauman, 263.

52 Bauman, 265, emphasis mine.

53 “Auff dise schriftt unnd gotliche warheytt wisset Hans Denck nichts zu anntworten / Sonder zoch herfur ain phantasey / wie Gott aynig were und in der selben aynigkeit / mochten alle zwytrachtige ding veraynt werden...” Urbanus Rhegius, *Ein Sendbrieff Hans huthen etwa ains furnemen Vorsteers widertaufferordem verantwort* (Augsburg: A. Weyssenhorn, 1528), E ii v.

54 Bauman, 267.

55 Denck calls this “*gelassenheit*,” yieldedness, letting be, or submission, which has become a very important part of Anabaptist piety. Johannes Aakjær Steenbuch, “Kærlighedens Dialektiker: Karakteristik Af Hans Dencks Kritiske Spiritualisme,” *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 77, no. 3 (October 2014): 217-234, <https://doi.org/10.7146/dtt.v77i3.105719>.

56 Ibid., 95.

57 “Whether God Is the Cause of Evil,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 843.

58 Desiderius Erasmus, “The Godly Feast,” in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, ed. and trans. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 170-243, 194.

Protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli, in the dedication of his commentary on the Lord’s Supper which he sent to King Francis I, urges the monarch to rule well so that he would be able to join exalted kings in heaven:

Then you may hope to see the whole company and assemblage of all the saints, the wise, the faithful, brave, and good who have lived since the world began. Here you will see... Hercules, Theseus, Socrates, Aristides, Antigonus, Numa, Camillus, the Catos and Scipios... In short there has not been a good man and will not be a holy heart or faithful soul from the beginning of the world to the end thereof that you will not see in heaven with God.⁵⁹

So, if even a major reformer like Zwingli can include pagan Greeks and Romans, Denck’s inclusion of non-Christians in salvation is not too improbable. Moreover, though figures like Luther rebuked Zwingli on this point, it shows that such a belief was not confused with universalism. Denck’s contribution is that, because of God’s love, not only does every individual human have the opportunity open to her as far as she cooperates with the light of reason, rather, this *will* happen for everybody. And it will come through the true God’s purification, making Denck’s universalism ‘exclusive’ in that it depends on the veracity of one religion rather than including all religions as equals. As Franck

outlined Denck’s position, “as all things fell in Adam, they must be restored and brought again *in Christ*.”⁶⁰

Controversy

In the last century, however, whether or not Denck actually believed in universal restoration has come into question. In quite a few letters sent back and forth between magisterial reformers, they often negatively identified Denck as spreading the perfidious doctrine of universal salvation. The issue is, though, that Denck nowhere in his extant writings gives explicit credence to the doctrine of universalism⁶¹ – as scholars Jan J. Kiwiet, William Klassen, William Estep, and Morwenna Ludlow have sought to emphasize. So, were these antagonistic reports merely rumors? Were his accusers slandering him? Or did they simply misapprehend the preacher’s thought?

Klassen and Ludlow have argued that universalism does not accurately describe Denck’s thought, mainly pointing to the fact that his surviving writings lack any explicit statements asserting humanity’s eventual total reconciliation with God.⁶² Ludlow, the more recent of the two, argues that Denck’s opponents “would have found it genuinely difficult to understand how one could claim on the one hand that God wills all to be saved, Christ died for all and all are free, and on the other that some people may escape salvation.”⁶³ And so, “it was precisely because his opponents had not fully grasped his arguments that they assumed that they entailed the positive assertion that all would be saved.”⁶⁴ Thus, Ludlow argues that Denck’s reputation as a universalist is an example of

59 F. Bruce Gordon, *Zwingli: God’s Armed Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 238. This obviously angered Luther.

60 “Dann wie es alles in Adam sei gefallen, muß es in Christo erstattet und wider bracht werde...” Sebastian Franck, *Chronick: Geschichte Und Zeitbuch Aller Nammhafftigsten Und Gedechtnuszwardigsten Geystlichen Und Weltlichen Sachen... Von Anbegin Der Welt... Bisz Auff Das Gegenwertige Jar Christi M.D.LXXXV Verlengt... Zusammen Getragen... Durch Sebastian Francken... Bisz Auff... Das Jar 1531*, (Frankfurt, 1585), p. cclxxiiij, emphasis mine in translation and original.

61 Also called *apokatastasis*, its traditional Greek name taken from the Greek of Acts 3:21. In German, *Wiederherstellung aller Dinge* or *Wiederbringung alle Dinge*.

62 See William Klassen, “Was Hans Denck a Universalist?,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 39 (1965), 152–4. Citing W. F. Neff’s entry ‘Universalism,’ in H. S. Bender and C. H. Smith (eds), *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Scottsdale, Penn. 1959. And Morwenna Ludlow, “Why Was Hans Denck Thought To Be a Universalist?,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, no. 2 (2004): 257-274, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s002204690400990x>.

63 Morwenna Ludlow, “Why Was Hans Denck Thought To Be a Universalist?,” 273.

64 *Ibid.*, 273.

“first, the tendency to associate one’s opponents with a known heresy and secondly the tendency to associate a doctrine which one holds to be false with a group which is famously supposed to be extreme or heretical.”⁶⁵ This is indeed a possibility. Still, with so many figures roundly condemning him for publicly espousing universalism, there is not sufficient evidence to eliminate the possibility of Denck’s support for the idea. It will help us to take a close look at some other parts of Denck’s published works. Denck makes several remarks about God’s mercy that could conceivably alarm his contemporaries. In *Vom gesetz Gottes (On the Law of God)*, published in Augsburg in 1526, Denck assures that “God cannot be other than merciful, even when he is most wrathful.”⁶⁶ Again, “God sincerely and paternally intends to do good for us when he brings about such evil things.”⁶⁷ According to Denck, God only ever allows evil or only ever punishes humans as a teaching aid in order to help them realize their faults and turn to God for mercy.

So far, Denck’s views about salvation seem rather optimistic. Nonetheless, Denck also writes passages that seem to directly contradict these hopeful statements. In *On the Law of God*, he says, “God is indeed merciful, and one reads that he has forgiven many great sinners. But however merciful he is, one seldom reads about people who sin after knowing the truth and who are again forgiven.”⁶⁸ Not so encouraging a statement. Furthermore, Denck preaches that there will come “the time when, although they seek him, they will not be able to find him; although they flee him, they will not be able to escape him.”⁶⁹ Indeed, he warns in *Whether God Is the Cause of Evil*, “If you do not return while the Lord gives you opportunity and time, then you will have part with him who from the beginning

bore forth the lie out of his own substance [John 8:44]. This inheritance is the gnawing worm that none can kill and the eternal fire that none quench [Mark 9:44].”⁷⁰ Where is the infamous universalism in these lines?

After all of Denck’s earlier appeals to God’s mercy which makes up for every moment of human unrepentance, he has here a final and short appeal to his reader to repent before it’s too late. This feels a rather jarring move in both treatises. In such lines, he does not even seem to have a particularly optimistic view of the majority’s fate. The question, then, is how to reconcile the seemingly definitive—though contradictory—statements for and against God’s mercy preserved in his published writings with each other and with the views he is reported by his contemporaries to have espoused. If these statements cannot be reconciled, then perhaps the multitude of reformers accusing Denck, as Ludlow suggests, were simply mistaken.

What do his accusers actually say, though? For example, in his history of heresies, Swabian radical Sebastian Franck (1499–1543), someone favorable to Denck, outlines how

Some hold the opinion of Johannis Denck and Origen, long ago condemned, that finally all will be saved, even the lost spirits, and that through Christ all will be brought back into that from which it came out: Then as all things fell in Adam, they must be restored and brought again in Christ. They point to many scriptures about this, speaking of it in different ways; they conceive of a terrible hell, in which the ungodly are tortured in their spirits eternally—which

65 Ibid., 274.

66 “On the Law of God,” in *The Radical Reformation*, 131.

67 Ibid., 132.

68 Ibid., 140.

69 Ibid., 146.

70 “Whether God Is the Cause of Evil,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 110.

they consider means a long time.⁷¹

Next, Vadian (1484-1541), reformer of St. Gall, says in a letter to Zwiccius, after positively describing Denck as “that remarkable young man, whose talents were so extraordinarily developed, that he surpassed his years,”⁷² that

[Denck] so misused his mind that he defended with all efforts the opinion of Origen concerning the liberation and salvation of those who are condemned. The bountiful love of our God was praised so much... that he seemed to give hope even to the most wicked and most hopeless people that they would obtain salvation, which would be granted to them someday however distant it might be.⁷³

Vadian’s fellow St. Gall reformer, Johannes Kessler (1502-1574) wrote that

He held steadfastly that no man in hell nor the Devil himself were eternally lost, but after a time past all were saved, because Paul says: ‘God wants to save

all people and let them come to the knowledge of the truth,’ [1 Timothy 2:4] and Christ says: ‘There is one shepherd and one sheepfold,’ [John 10:16] and through the prophet Hosea: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory, death where is thy sting?’ [Hosea 13:14] etc.⁷⁴

Finally, Peter Gynoraeus offers a congruent accusation:

A certain author, John Denck, who acts here, outlawed at Nuremberg, because of some strange factions, a remarkably toxic and slick man, who deceives not a few, as the people of Augsburg are inquisitive. And, among other things, he says, “Scripture is by no means necessary to us”; ‘The demons will also be saved in the end, according to Origen’s teaching’...⁷⁵

All of these men were pastors in the towns that Denck had lived in for varying periods of time, men who had come into contact with and knew whom they were accusing. Many others testify to hearing Denck making similar pronouncements in public and

71 “Etlich halten die Meinung Johannis Denck und Origenis, vor langem verdampt, daß endlich alles selig werde, auch die verlornen Hosen Geisten, und werde durch Christum alles wider in das gebracht, davon es sei außgangen: Dann wie es alles in Adam sei gefallen, müß es in Christo erstattet und wider bracht werde: zeigen darauff viel Schrift, reden seltzam und unterschiedlich darvon, machen ein grawsame Hell, darinn die Gottlosen geplagt werden mit jhren Geystern ewig, daß sie auff ein lange zeit deuten.” Sebastian Franck, *Chronick: Geschichte Und Zeitbuch Aller Namnhafftigsten Und Gedechnuszwierdigsten Geystlichen Und Weltlichen Sachen... Von Anbegin Der Welt... Bisz Auff Das Gegenwertige Jar Christi M.D.LXXXV Verlengt... Zusammen Getragen... Durch Sebastian Francken... Bisz Auff... Das Jar 1531*, (Frankfurt, 1585), p. ccclxiii, emphasis mine in translation and original.

Elsewhere, Franck wrote that “Among others, he held the opinion of Origen that God will finally have mercy on all, that God will and may not be eternally angry or displeased, and that in sum all will finally be blessed, even the displeased spirits and devils.” Ludwig Keller, ed., “Sebastian Francks Aufzeichnung Über Joh. Denck (1527) Aus Dem Jahre 1531,” *Monatshefte Der Comenius-Gesellschaft* 10, no. 3 & 4 (1901): 173-179, 174.

72 “Joach. Vad. Ad Jo. Zuiccium Constant. ep.,” *Füsslin Beit.*, (Cal. Aug. 1540), V.p., 396.

73 *D. Joachimi Vadiani ad D. Joannem Zuiccium epistola*, Zurich 1540, fo. 19r-v; Kiwiet, “The Life of Hans Denck,” 242.

74 Johann Kessler, *Johannes Kesslers Sabbata Mit Kleineren Schriften Und Briefen*, ed. Emil Egli and Johann Kessler (St. Gallen: Fehr’sche Buchhandlung, 1902), 151-152.

75 “*Johanne Denckio* quodam authore, qui hic agit, *Norimbergae* proscriptus, ob nescio quas factiones, homo mire pestilens ac lubricus, qui non paucos seducit, ut sunt *Augustani* curiosi. Et inter caetera dicit, Scripturam minime nobis necessariam; Daemones in fine etiam salvandos, iuxta Origenis dogma...” *Epistolae MDXXII*, 531-2. [Also Peter Gynoraeus to Zwingli, 22 August 1526, *ZW*, VIII, No. 520, p. 689.]

private. Knowing this can allow us to further reconcile Denck's thought in a more convincing manner.

As we have seen, for Denck, God does punish—but *only* for the sake of correction. He thought that “Because we are now so perverted, God uses perverted means to deal with mankind.”⁷⁶ Particularly illuminating is that, according to Bullinger's account of Denck, he professed that God can indeed be angry but not forever and that “eternal” only means for a very long time.⁷⁷ Kessler says the same.⁷⁸ In a clear demonstration of his linguistic genius and likely because of his knowledge of Hebrew—and likely familiarity with Origen—Denck seems to have anticipated the modern revival of arguments about how exactly the Greek word for “eternal,” αἰώνιος, ought to be translated.⁷⁹ With this in mind, Denck's written warnings about eternal punishments have much less bite than they might at first seem. The terrifying and seemingly final “eternal fire that none quench” is actually a penal fire extremely protracted in time. This is exactly what Sigelsbach says Denck told him about his view. Denck told him that “God is a fire, an eternal fire, which consumes whatever should always be consumed... that which is repulsive to God.”⁸⁰ Like the extenuated period of time Christian souls were thought to spend in purgatory, in Denck's mind all souls would spend time being purified by God in hell—which is only “a long time” rather than “everlasting.” And this is precisely the accusation that made its way all the way up to the official confessions of the Lutheran

and Anglican churches, who respectively condemned Anabaptists who believed that “that to damned men and devils there will be an end of punishments”⁸¹ and “that al menne, be thei neuer so vngodlie, shall at lenght bee saued, *when thei haue suffered paines for their sinnes a certaine time appointed by Goddes iustice.*”⁸²

All these testimonies seem to amount to solid secondhand evidence. The report of Denck's opinion on αἰώνιος (eternal, age-enduring) is a particularly specific detail, an odd thing to include if it were untrue and a distinction, though implicit, nowhere explicitly delineated in prior sources. Nevertheless, scholars like Ludlow contend that such reports cannot be trusted, arguing that the men describing their understanding of Denck's thought were simply mistaken. One reason why scholars arguing Denck was not a universalist may have concluded that his accusers' reports do not represent convincing enough evidence is that they do not engage with all the witnesses. In her essay, Ludlow nowhere acknowledges Nichlaus Thomae Sigelsbach's account of his private conversation with Denck. As I have pointed out, this letter is dedicated to the matter of Denck's opinions on the afterlife and includes claims that seem to irrefutably attest to his universalism. Sigelsbach is thus our clearest witness to Denck's universalism, giving a detailed account which lines up well with all the reports of Denck's doctrine, associating it with Origen's, and thus offering these other sources enhanced credibility. If a comprehensive

76 “On the Law of God,” in *The Radical Reformation*, 134.

77 Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Wiedertäufer Ursprung*, etc., Fol. 64B, 65B. Heberle, *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1855, 827-29.

78 Johann Kessler, *Johannes Kesslers Sabbata Mit Kleineren Schriften Und Briefen*, ed. Emil Egli and Johann Kessler (St. Gallen: Fehr'sche Buchhandlung, 1902), 151-152.

79 αἰώνιος is simply the adjectival form of αἰών, lifetime/eon/epoch/world. Therefore, it could mean something like “age-enduring” rather than “forever”—especially depending on the noun it modifies. See Ilaria Ramelli and David Konstan, *Terms for Eternity: aiōnios and aidios in Classical and Christian Texts* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013). Also David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 444-448.

80 “Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527,” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, Nr. 479, p. 51-55.

81 “Damnant Anabaptistas, qui sentiunt hominibus damnatis ac diabolis finem pœnarum futurum esse.” Philipp Melancthon, “Die Augsburger Confession,” ed. Theodore Mayes, Gutenberg, February 1, 2021, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/607/pg607.html>.

82 Church of England, *Articles Agreed on by the Bishoppes, and Other Learned Menne in the Synode at London, in the Yere of Our Lorde Godde, M.D.LII. for the Auoiding of Controuersie in Opinions, and the Establishment of a Godlie Concorde, in Certeine Matiers of Religion*. (London, Richardus Craftonus [sic] typographus Regius excudebat. Londini, 1553), 25.

account like Sigelsbach’s did not exist, the reports of the hostile magisterial Reformers could be attributed to a sort of mass hysteria, a set of ‘good ol’ boys’ simply trusting one another’s word. But with a precise first-hand witness of Denck’s own arguments for universalism such as Sigelsbach’s in our possession, these reports are validated, their consistency and unanimous character proving their reliability. Ludlow says one should not be fooled by the specificity of Denck’s opponents’ accusations.⁸³ But some of these accounts are specific not only in terms of doctrine but also in terms of the encounters they narrate. Figures like Sigelsbach and Rhegius recount not just the common details about Denck’s teaching but the dates and places in which they personally spoke with Denck about his universalism. To deny the truthfulness of these testimonies simply because such figures were religious rivals is unconvincing. Rhegius – like the majority of authorities at the time – may have supported and practiced punishment for those he viewed as heretics, but examples of actual dishonesty on his and others’ parts would be necessary to prove that they were committing libel in accusing Denck of universalism.

Now, Sigelsbach is an admittedly marginal figure, so it would make sense for his letter to escape notice. In Anglophone scholarship, only Jan J. Kiwiet and Werner O. Packull reference this letter. In his 1957 “Life of Hans Denck,” Kiwiet cites the letter but only says that Sigelsbach was “very much impressed by Denck’s teaching on redemption and pondered over the various Scripture passages which Denck had given him,” without letting the reader know that Denck’s “teaching on redemption,” according to

Sigelsbach, was explicitly universalist.⁸⁴ The more recent scholarly reference to this letter is by Packull in *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525 – 1531* from 1977. There, however, Packull does not directly quote Sigelsbach either and only notes that he read J.P. Gelbert’s German translation of the Latin letter.⁸⁵ Thus, the clearest attestation to Denck’s universalism is not available in English and so may be yet more easily overlooked.⁸⁶ Still, Sigelsbach is an open-minded and sympathetic witness to Denck’s universalism, and rejecting his testimony as either libel or erroneous is unwarranted.

Be that as it may, the testimonies of Denck’s other contemporaries are quite explicit in what they maintain Denck believed about the afterlife. Why should the testimony of so many, which includes persons also willing to testify to Denck’s superior virtue, be so systematically distrusted? Scholars dismissing these accusations assume they must have misunderstood what Denck was saying, mistaking his belief that all *could* be saved with the belief that all *would* be. To them, surely Denck’s “theology was not so much an echo of Origen [the early church father who taught everyone make their way into heaven] as an anticipation of Jacobus Arminius [a seventeenth-century Dutch theologian who denied strictly “unconditional” predestination].”⁸⁷ Perhaps Denck’s accusers were unable to grasp the complexities of his non-predestinarian schema. Most of them believed that only a select number of people that God had chosen before time began, or “predestined,” would make it into heaven, with everyone else doomed to burn in hell for eternity. Indeed, in the next century English and Dutch Calvinists a few generations

83 Morwenna Ludlow, “Why Was Hans Denck Thought To Be a Universalist?,” 274.

84 Kiwiet, “Life of Hans Denck,” 251.

85 Werner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525-1531* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977), 194n63.

86 I do not mean to be presumptuous. These scholars are obviously not monolingual, I am only wondering why this source has not been attended to.

87 William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 111. Dutch theologian Arminius broke with traditional Reformed thought on predestination, provoking uproar and leading to the Synod of Dort where an international group of Reformed theologians condemned his ideas. Since then, people who believe Jesus died for everyone, not just the elect, are often called Arminians.

later would condemn the Arminians of their day for believing that any and every person had salvation on offer to them if they believed—not just those unconditionally predestined to it. Exponents of this view were in fact so many in number that the view was regarded as a real threat to orthodoxy. Consequently, many ecclesiastical leaders denounced “that erroneous, detestable, and damnable doctrine of the Arminians, dreaming of an vniuersall grace as they call it.”⁸⁸

It seems unlikely that Denck’s intelligent interlocutors could not understand his non-predestinarian schema and thus mistook it for the idea that everyone will make it into heaven, however. Denck was by no means the only or first to support such a view and confusing the idea that anyone can be saved with the idea that one day every human – and the devil – *will* be saved is quite a feat. Other dissidents who believed that Jesus died for everyone rather than just for the chosen few were not similarly arraigned. More specifically, Hubmaier, Denck’s fellow Anabaptist and probably the man who rebaptized him, also denied Luther’s doctrine of the bondage of the will and predestination,⁸⁹ but he is nowhere accused of universalism. The same is the case for another “Arminian” Anabaptist, Melchior Hoffman, who, being far more radical than Hubmaier, could have caught more fire. Hoffman denies that God unconditionally elects some to salvation leaving others side, instead saying that everyone has a free choice;

The noble and high testimony of God
is this: that God is no respecter of

persons... [so that] that [every man] from this time on might be prepared to have his own choice or election whether he would now taste of good or evil, whether he would choose life or death, whether he would walk in the way of God or remain the property of Satan.⁹⁰

Despite this clearly non-predestinarian stance, Hoffman was not accused of universalism. In fact, his magisterial counterparts seem to have understood him clearly. Martin Bucer, in a tract outlining the matters they disagreed over, wrote under the heading “Of God’s will, the salvation of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the free will or inability of our nature to do good”⁹¹ that Hoffman taught “that Christ redeemed all mankind from the sin of Adam and that God desired all men to inherit eternal life.”⁹² Bucer thus describes Hoffman as teaching that Jesus made atonement for all human beings but that this salvation must be actively received through the use of each individual’s free will (magisterial reformers typically denied the reality of free will). Hoffman did not extend this universal possibility of salvation to the afterlife as Denck had though, and magisterial reformers like Bucer and others in England were able to discern this.

Of course, both the reformers of Nuremberg and Strasburg complained that his manner of speech could be opaque; the Nurembergers gave up on trying him because he “was so skillful that dealing with him verbally was seen as useless”⁹³ and the Strasburgers found public disputations with him worthless because

88 William Name, *Christ’s Starre* (London, 1625), 281. Cited in C. A. Patrides, “The Salvation of Satan,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28, no. 4 (1967): 467-278, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708524>, 474.

89 Bucer seems quite upset that Anabaptists “praedestinationis et electionis Dei certitudinem rident,” “certainly laugh at predestination and the sovereign choice of God.” *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), Nr. 99, 127.

90 *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, V, 188, 194. Translation: George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 839.

91 Martin Butzer, *Handlung inn dem öffentlichen gesprech zu Straszburg... gehalten, gegen Melchior Hoffman* (Strassburg, 1533), A ii.

92 Irvin Buckwalter Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1972), 172.

93 “Johann Denck, schulmaister bei S. Sebold, dermassen geschickt gewest, das mundlich mit ime zu handeln fur unnutzlich ist angesehen worden.” *Denck Schriften*, 3. Teil, p. 136.

“he covered everything in astonishing darkness.”⁹⁴ Denck’s “admirable obscurity” agitated Bucer and the Strasbourg preachers.⁹⁵ When summoned to a disputation with the Augsburgers ministers after his views were found out, Denck found himself cornered, and when he did not know how to answer, he lay down and cried, and confessed to his Anabaptist views.⁹⁶ Therefore, it is clear that Denck could be inconsistent in how he presented his beliefs. Denck could flop back and forth on things based on whom he was speaking with and the respective levels of danger they brought with them – as Peter Gynoraeus derided him for (*quanquam nebulo post mutarit verba*, “although the rascal later changed his words”) – or he could intentionally veil his thoughts with obscure language.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, these reports come from interactions where Denck was under intense pressure to prove his orthodoxy so that he would not be exiled or imprisoned. It seems Denck knew that his views if revealed forthrightly would get him in trouble, so he shrouded them in difficult language. Testimony from men with whom he spoke in confidence, however, does not include the same frustration. With a relatively politically weak pastor like Sigelsbach, he seems to have felt free to unburden his true thoughts on the matter of universal salvation. Sigelsbach quite clearly testifies that Denck told him in private that the Anabaptist believed “that the blasphemy of the damned must finally stop,” allowing for them to enter heaven.⁹⁸ Either way, the magisterial reformers did not need to come up with fantastic accusations in order to discredit or punish men like Denck—they executed a vast

number of Anabaptists for far less. Unless there were some vast magisterial Protestant conspiracy seeking to falsely tar Denck with an odd and ancient heresy, it does not make sense to so wholly distrust their witness.

It may be – if scholars like Ludlow are correct in denying that Denck wrote anything arguing for the salvation of all people and arguing that his accusers are not to be trusted – that Denck’s seemingly contradictory passages demonstrate that he was struggling with these ideas himself and could not come down strongly either way. Or perhaps he was trying to hedge his bets and not go too far in his writing. Some Anabaptists did approach their universalism in this way. Johann Bader reported that “the blind Anabaptists are now confessing (some openly, *but others secretly* out of great mischief) that the devil, together with all his people and unbelievers, will finally be saved.”⁹⁹ This would make sense, as Nicodemites – individuals who pretended to be orthodox in public but espoused heretical beliefs in private – abounded in the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it was not required of Denck to put down words professing universalism anywhere in his writing. He wrote when occasion arose, usually on account a particular argument with the reformed clergy where he was living. Furthermore, Denck does not shy away from yet more controversial ideas concerning the nature and authority of the Bible. It would seem odd for him to draw back from proclaiming his true thoughts on the matter.

Instead, it appears that Denck, in an idiosyncratic way, took the opposite course of Origen. Rather than writing about universalism in secret and not publicly

94 “Nur verhüllte er Alles in erstaunliche Dunkelheit.” J.P. Gelbert, “10) Johann Denck in Strassburg. Sein Gespräch mit den dortigen Predigern und seine Berweisung aus der Stadt,” *Magister Johann Bader’s Leben und Schriften, Nicolaus Thomae und seine Briefe Ein Beitrag zur Reformationgeschichte der Städte Landau, Bergzabern und der linksrheinischen Pfalz*, (Neustadt: 1868), 156.

95 Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History*, 397.

96 Bauman, 12n19.

97 Epistolae MDXXII, 531-2. [Also Peter Gynoraeus to Zwingli, 22 August 1526, *Zwingli Werke*, VIII, No. 520, p. 689.]

98 “Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527,” in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*, Nr. 479, p. 51-55.

99 Johann Bader, *Brüderliche warnung für dem neuen Abgöttischen orden der Widertaeuffer...* (n.p., 1527), K iv v. “Syhe über solch strenge offenbarlich wort Gottes / kumen yetzundt die blinden Tauffstürmer / und bekenen (etlich öffentlich / die anon aber / uß sonderlicher lüstigkeit / heymlich) das der teüfel / sampt aller seiner geselschafft und uungläubige entlich selig werde.”

100 J. Martin in “Nicodemismo,” *Dizionario storico dell’Inquisizione vol. II*, Adriano Prosperi, Vincenzo Lavenia, and John Tedeschi, eds., (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010).

preaching it to the common people like the Alexandrian, Denck decided to preach it confidently out in the open or in private conversation but to refrain from explicitly defending it in his writing.¹⁰¹ As Hubmaier had said about Erasmus on the similar topic of purgatory, Denck may well have ‘spoken freely but written narrowly.’¹⁰² This might have been a survival tactic, *i.e.*, if his accusers could not directly point to an unquestionably universalistic passage in his writing, the charge based off of his spoken professions could likewise be explained away with his infamously crafty language.

Influence(s)

Several influences could lead a Bavarian Christian in the early 1500s to embrace universalism. Unlike those of many sixteenth-century reformers, Denck’s library or information about its contents are no longer extant. In any case, once Denck’s doctrine and ministry had caused him to become an almost constant refugee, his access to literature would be almost impossible to trace with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, as a university student and broad-minded scholar (associated with groups like Veit Bild’s or the “Godless Painters”) and as a proofreader in one of Europe’s busiest presses, Denck would have been exposed to any number of sources and ideas that could have led him to question the doctrinal status quo. And, despite his lack of citations, traces of other authors’ thoughts and phrases in Denck’s writing are clearly evident to the informed reader. Therefore, considering what sources were available to someone of Denck’s expertise in the

1520s can provide us with a solid impression of how Denck could have formed his opinions on the topic of universal salvation. Hans Denck was most likely influenced to embrace universalism by five sources: his familiarity with lexical factors (e.g., the translation of αἰώνιος), Jewish insights, patristic *ressourcement* (especially Origen), Rhenish mysticism (particularly Tauler and the *Theologia Deutsch*), and Hussite teaching.

In terms of Denck’s influence on others, his student Clement Ziegler stands out. Ziegler was an uneducated gardener, a simple sharecropper, who before meeting Denck had been a leader peasant riots in Strasbourg—the Anabaptist movement was bringing all sorts of people into its fold and into its leadership.¹⁰³ Some years after having met Denck, Ziegler changed from a negative to a positive view of Origen—going so far as to write two treatises dedicated to arguing for universal salvation in 1532, *Of the Eternal Salvation of All Men’s Souls* and *A Substantial Explanation of the Preceding Booklet on the Eternal Salvation of All Souls*.¹⁰⁴ *Of the Eternal Salvation of All Men’s Souls* is truly a remarkable text. Ziegler, who had published tracts on controversial subjects before, was not afraid to air his beliefs in the public square. *Of the Eternal Salvation of All Men’s Souls* stands—as far as I can tell—as the first extended written defense of the doctrine of *apokatastasis* in the West since Book III of John Scottus Eriugena’s (c.800–c.877) *Periphyseon* in the 800s.¹⁰⁵ Ziegler argues for universal salvation, saying “God has created man in his image, therefore

101 Mark S. M. Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen’s Universalism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Volume 18, Number 3, Fall 2010, 347-368, <https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2010.0007>, 347, italics mine.

102 “Libere loquitur Erasmus, sed anguste scribit.” Letter to Adelphius, June 23, 1522 (Veesenmeyer, 1826, 233 f.) Cited by Jarold Knox Zeman, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia: a Study of Origins and Contacts* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 125n10.

103 See Rodolphe Peter, “Clement Ziegler the Gardener, The Man and His Work: A Translation of ‘Le Maraîcher Clément Ziegler, L’Homme Et Son Oeuvre’ (1954),” trans. John Derksen and Cynthia Reimer, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 69, no. 4 (October 1995): 421-451.

104 Cited in Kiwiet, “Theology of Hans Denck,” 425n16. Available in *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), 563-574. I have been unable to access the second treatise.

105 Johannes Scotus Erigena, *Periphyseon: The Division of Nature*, ed. John J. O’Meara, trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams and John J. O’Meara (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 2020).

all are called.”¹⁰⁶ According to Ziegler, even though non-Christians do not explicitly know Christ, they can still reap the benefits of his atonement “just as bread nourishes those who do not know anything about agriculture, milling and bakeries.”¹⁰⁷ Defending himself to the Strasbourg synod in 1533, Ziegler retorted that the announcement made to the shepherds at the first Christmas (“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” (Luke 2:14)) could not actually be good news if it did not include a certain number of people.¹⁰⁸ Despite his courage before the synod, Ziegler passed the last twenty years of his life in prudential silence about such matters.¹⁰⁹

Finally, we know that wandering Anabaptist preachers like Denck, after arriving in a village, first visited the pastor and asked him to discuss religious matters. If they came to a disagreement, the Anabaptist pilgrim would request a public disputation, which the local pastor usually refused. Afterward, the wanderer would feel free to spread the Gospel among the people in the area.¹¹⁰ Therefore, as Denck went up and down the Rhine, he likely practiced this evangelistic pattern over and over again, influencing any number of men and women in small towns and in the countryside. In 1528, some heretics were imprisoned in Baiersdorf. One of them, Wolfgang, an 18-year-old farmhand from near the River Zenn in northern Bavaria, explained his views on the end of time in this way:

There will be a new kingdom on earth, which will not be eternal but so long that it would be called “eternal”; the damned must suffer until they have had enough, always one after the other. After that, the Son will give the Father his kingdom back, just as he inherited it. After that there will be a shepherd and a sheepfold.¹¹¹

Here in a prison confession is an instance of the theological controversy we have been investigating—not from a trained theologian or a pastor but from a teenage farm laborer in rural Bavaria. Wolfgang’s testimony includes Denck’s distinctive parsing of “eternal,” *ewig*, αἰώνιος; Origen’s favorite biblical passage for universalism (1 Corinthians 15:24-28);¹¹² and Denck’s narrative of one “shepherd and sheepfold.”

Conclusion

It is impossible to say how many other Anabaptists subscribed to universalism. For every outspoken proponent, there may have been a corresponding individual held to the universalist hope in a more private, covert manner. Denck left no institutional legacy behind, no organized group of faithful subscribing to his doctrines or to his universalism. Yet large bodies of Christians backed by their respective princes devoted space in their confession to denouncing the doctrine of universal salvation, which

106 „Ich sprich, got hab den menschen geschaffen noch sim bild..., dorum sint... alle berieft...” *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), 563-574.

107 „wie auch das Brot den nährt, der im Ackerbau, Mühlenu. Bäckergeschäft keinen Bescheid weiß.” *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), 563-574.

108 Peter, “Clement Ziegler the Gardener, The Man and His Work: A Translation of ‘Le Maraîcher Clément Ziegler, L’Homme Et Son Oeuver’ (1954),” 447.

109 *Ibid.*, 448.

110 Kiwiet, “Life of Hans Denck,” 251.

111 “Volk hab in und andre gelert: es werd ein neu reich uf ertrich, werd nit ewig, aber solang weren, das es wol “ewig” haiß; müssen die verdamten solang leiden, bis sie gnug ton, immer einer nach dem andern. Darnach werd der sun dem vater sein reich wider geben, wie ers im eingewanturt hab. Darnach werde ein hirt und ein schafstall sein.” “82. Bekenntnisse der Baiersdorfer Gefangenen 1528,” *Markgraftum Brandenburg (Bayern I. Abteillung)*, ed. Karl Schornbaum, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer*, vol. II (Leipzig: Nachfolger, 1934), 78-94, 83.

112 “...When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all” (NRSV).

Denck had resurrected after a long period of dormancy. The confessions of the Lutheran and Anglican churches were formed, in part, in response to the preaching of Hans Denck and are still relevant to millions of Christians in their communions across the globe today.

Either way, if only numbers mattered, Denck could be overlooked, yet his contribution to the shaping of so many western Christian conversations is unavoidable. South German Anabaptism, under the influence of Hans Denck and others, embraced a medieval mystical conceptualization of suffering which prepared its followers to accept the physical suffering inflicted by their persecutors for, as they saw it, simply following Christ. Many Anabaptists broke down under pressure and recanted, but many others kept the faith and went to the stake praying for their judges and executioners.¹¹³ Furthermore, Denck's ideas, especially his universalist position or tendencies, caused himself and influenced others to champion toleration and the individual right to choose faith long before Enlightenment liberalism. In many ways, he and his fellow radical Protestants seem "eerily modern" with their embodiment and defense of the solitary quest for eternal truth hidden within the self rather than in the pages of a book.¹¹⁴

For this reason, Hans Denck's life was a tempestuous one. Magisterial Protestant reformers of all sorts feared him, regarding his life and teaching as a threat to their project of societal transformation. Had he not died of the plague at around twenty-seven, he would have either been tortured and executed in some creative fashion as so many of his brethren were or spent his days wandering about the countryside as a perpetual refugee. For Denck's opponents, "children of the devil and the world are eternally rejected," and

to suggest otherwise could have serious side effects.¹¹⁵ Out of obedience to their interpretation of scripture, magisterial Protestants viewed belief in eternal hell as necessary. Indeed, those who disagreed with Denck seem to have been worried that without the threat of everlasting torture in hell looming over them, most people would have little reason to apply themselves toward self-improvement.¹¹⁶ Despite the ire of these detractors, however, Denck was confident in his trust that in time God would save every human being and thus earned lasting recognition in the denunciations of various defining magisterial Protestant confessions.

Hostility to this doctrine that every human – perhaps even the Devil – would eventually find a place in God's kingdom shaped all the established and most of the nonconformist churches of Europe as a key tenet. Encountering a man like Denck who stood outside this overwhelming current allows us to appreciate the courage of such individual thought and imagine an alternative history. In addition, the contemporary theological world is vigorously debating the strengths and weaknesses of a belief in universal salvation.¹¹⁷ Scholar David Bentley Hart's *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation*, for example, has engendered numerous responses, most of them either highly complimentary or intensely hostile. Analyzing an earlier incarnation of the controversy, especially in a Radical Protestant context, can broaden the conversation. Finally, while the Christian question of humanity's final salvation may seem rarefied or irrelevant in the ever-secularizing West of today, there remain millions of individuals across the globe whose lives are shaped by their belief in an everlasting hell. And for those who do not fear such a fate, the basic

113 Goertz Hans-Jürgen, *The Anabaptists* (London: Routledge, 2008), 125.

114 *Ibid.*, 285.

115 "Kinder des teufels vnd der welt seind alleyn die ewig verworffenen." "1524 [April-August].—Ausführungen des Laienpredigers Clemens Ziegler über das Abendmahl und die Taufe," *Elsaß, I. Teil: Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans George Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. VII (Heidelberg: Gütersloher verlagshaus gerd mohn, 1959), 95.

116 "Tum, cur in..." Quoted above. "Nikolaus Thomae an Oekolampad, Bergzabern, den 1. April 1527," in *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads*.

117 For an extended bibliography, see <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/essential-readings-on-universalism/>.

query accompanying it is always pertinent: What will become of outsiders, those whom we deem outside the possibility of aid, whose causes we view as hopeless?

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