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THE BIRTH OF BRITISH SELF-DEFENCE: 1604-1904

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the discourse of self-defence as it emerged and developed in the British context after the introduction of self-defence as a legal term in English common law in 1604. Twentieth century self-defence discourse is comparatively more well-researched than previous periods, but this study suggests that the concerns, contours and characteristics of current self-defence discourse were established much earlier, growing in the seventeenth, flowering in the eighteenth and maturing during the nineteenth centuries. The study traces this development by examining self-defence books published in Britain between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. This covers a 300-year period from 1604 (the year that the legal precedent for self-defence was set in England) to 1904 (the year in which publications on *jujutsu* mark an orientalist reconfiguration of a hitherto Eurocentric self-defence discourse). Key features of self-styled self-defence texts are discussed in order to clarify the concerns, approaches, and ideological investments of self-defence discourse through this period in this national context. This process reveals that self-defence discourse accrued a range of additional dimensions throughout this time period that remain common today. Self-defence began as a *right*, but soon began to be discussed as *something to be prepared for*. Such preparation implies *training*, and self-defence discourse soon morphs into a focus on training, and self-development, rather than an explicit focus on a potential future event. While discussing this, the article shows how and why 'self-defence' is an enduring discourse, with regularly reiterated patterns and features, one that can be picked up by multiple ideologies and for multiple purposes, because it is organised by the intimate melding of the enduring yet essentially variable and plastic notions of 'self', 'home', and 'threat'.

INTRODUCTION: SELF-DEFENCE AS DISCURSIVE ENTITY

The subject of self-defence is vast. It is a term used across multiple realms and registers, and equally appropriately applied in contexts as different as biology, economics, zoology, psychology, international relations, law, rhetoric, and more. In the world of human affairs, self-defence is evoked in contexts as diverse as justifying military strikes and declaring war, through to business or political strategies and decisions, across social situations, all the way through to its many potential literal and metaphorical uses in almost any context of everyday life. It is what can be termed a *discursive entity*: widely used, universally understood, and instantly intelligible [Foucault 1978; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Bowman 2007; 2021].

In many national contexts, self-defence exists as a precise legal plea or verdict that can exonerate a defendant or mitigate an action that would otherwise have been considered illegal. But its definitions and thresholds vary from (national, legal) context to context, and it exists in diverse relations to diverse criteria and considerations. As such, there cannot be said to be one fixed referent or one universal and univocally agreed definition of self-defence. Nonetheless, what unites its heterogeneous uses across many different language games or discursive contexts – disciplinary, national, and cultural – is the reference it relies on to some sense of action against another in the name of sovereignty and/or survival: reactive, responsive, defence of the self (however ‘the self’ is defined). Self-defence, as conventionally used across most contexts, overwhelmingly evokes an otherwise illegal or unacceptable intervention into another(s) realm of sovereignty, activity or survival, in the name of preserving one’s own, but only because of the threat posed by the other to the self. No action is inherently or automatically self-defence. For anything to be regarded as such, it must rely on a *representation*, an argument and an interpretation. One must make the case that one’s own sovereignty-transgressing action was a justified response to another’s sovereignty-transgressing action. As such, although self-defence is an ‘immediately intelligible’ and widely used discursive entity, it is actually subtle, slippery, and irreducibly complex.

Given its massive range of meanings and contexts of deployment, any study or discussion of self-defence must necessarily limit its scope. In what follows, the scope of discussion is limited by focusing on self-defence books which take as their explicit focus the individual (rather than, say, the group, the community, or an institution – even if a collective such as the nation is also invoked). As such, the focus is on books

advocating the self-defence of the embodied individual – the living, singular human subject.

In the British – actually, the English – context, this genre of writing began to emerge and develop after 1604, following a court case (‘Semayne’s Case’) in which ‘self-defence’ was given as an exculpatory verdict in a legal case [Coke, 1600, p. n/p; see also: Online Library of Liberty, n.d.]. This result set a precedent that became what Michel Foucault would regard as the foundation or founding of a new point of ‘discursivity’ [Foucault 1991]. That is to say, the legal concept planted a seed that would grow into an entire field informed and organised by it – new outlooks, worldviews, thought process and life practices. Self-defence developed into discursive constellation with many outcomes for the contemporary world: from reasons to take children to martial arts classes to the emergence of paramilitary communities of self-defined self-defence subjects, such as survivalists, whose entire lives involve constant training, vigilance, preparation for potential conflict, and the paranoid weaponising of self and daily life, in what Caroline Light calls the production of the contemporary figure of the ‘DIY self-defence subject’ [Light 2017]. This present study does not focus on twentieth century developments, but traces a genealogy that takes us to its threshold.

FOCUS, CAVEATS AND QUALIFICATIONS

This is not to suggest that the genre of self-defence texts discussed here came from nowhere, or that the texts and authors considered here were the first to write about preparation for combat.¹ To the contrary, many societies and cultures have long traditions of writing about various kinds of both hand-to-hand and military or group combat that stretch back far further than the seventeenth century – where this present study begins [Lorge 2012; Jaquet 2018].² But, my suggestion is that the practices we now know as self-defence, and particularly the types of writing that we now recognise as self-defence books and manuals, are all part of a field that was enabled by the birth of a stable legal concept in the seventeenth century.³ From there it grows into a prominent discursive entity. Put differently, it was neither simply duelling nor an interest in military strategy, and certainly not an investment in the notion of ‘sport’, that produced such cultural phenomena as the martial arts explosion of the late twentieth century (although these influences cannot be denied). It was rather a much more deeply rooted and long-running cultural preoccupation with interpersonal self-defence. This preoccupation was arguably born with urban modernity, and ac-

1 For further reflection on this point, please see footnote 2 (below) and the coda on the limitations of this study, which concludes this article.

2 For instance, long before the 1604 starting point of this study’s focus, there was an officially recognised company of fencing and ‘defence’ masters in England – the London based ‘Company of Masters of the Science of Defence’. This was first documented in 1540 and existed through to 1623 as a professional organisation. As noted by Dodsworth [2015, 96], George Silver’s *Paradoxes of Defence* was published in 1599 (i.e., before Coke’s Report), and there were fencing schools and ‘Masters of Defence’ teaching before this time [95]. Thanks to Eric Burkart and Francis Dodsworth for these points.

3 On the formation of new concepts and their impact on reality, see Barry [2001].

cordingly it may well endure, for as long as the features that produced it continue to prevail [Seshagiri 2006; Massumi 2010; Godfrey 2012; Little 2018; Bowman 2021].

The focus in this article is on English language 'self-defence' books,⁴ primarily published in England, although some mention is made of American texts where relevant. Despite its title, throughout this article, the term 'England'/'English' is used more than 'Britain'/'British', as the latter term is vague. It has shifting definitions, borders and meanings, and the national regions of Britain continue to have their own histories and laws. Furthermore, the history of book publication within Britain was long dominated by a few metropolitan centres, most notably London.

Of course, this is not to posit the idea that 'English' self-defence was a self-contained entity. There have always been numerous forms of regional and foreign influence, international information and cross-culturally shared ideas. Texts and practices on training with various weapons (most notably the sword), as well as boxing and wrestling, have long-nourished the nascent self-defence discourse in (what was most usually called) 'England' both before the seventeenth century and after [Aylward, 1949, 1956]. Influences came from diverse international and disciplinary quarters: the long traditions of European 'fight books', for instance, knowledge of military training, and amateur weapons-training, etc., have all informed English/British writings on self-defence.⁵ But, this study limits its focus to English language, British/English publications. It does so in order to trace the shifting contours and to glean an insight into the development of the genre of writing and the discourse of practice in one national context through time, regardless of how multicultural, cosmopolitan, or indeed parochial or isolated it may have been.

In doing so, however, my approach slices through the publication landscape at a potentially controversial angle, ignoring historically or currently agreed ways of categorising publications of the period, and also arguably projecting and looking for a contemporary genre of writing (self-defence books or manuals) backwards in time, into a period

when such a genre did not exist in quite the way we think of it now. I do so not in order to survey the tributary genres of writing that fed into the growth of today's genre of self-defence manuals, but in order to explore the features of the most blatantly obvious forerunners of modern self-defence manuals. My sense is that many of the insights gained here about the elaboration of self-defence discourse in Britain will be comparable to the situation in other national contexts of this period. But individual studies of discrete countries will be required to establish the true extent of similarities and differences.

My argument is that, in Britain, the key event that enabled the emergence of modern self-defence discourse as we know it takes place in 1604: a man is tried for an assault and exonerated on the basis of the judgement that he had a *right to defend himself in his own home*. These three conceptual coordinates – the self, the home, and the right to defend them – continue to prove important to any cultural analysis of self-defence [Coke 1600; Light 2017].

At the other end, my argument is that the most pertinent point at which to end this study is 1904. This is because 1904 is the year in which self-defence discourse and publication began to be overtaken and transformed by the publication of texts about and teachers of the Japanese art of *jujutsu*. Many transformations occurred at this point, including the arrival of many more women on the self-defence publication scene, and the growth of orientalism (and anti-orientalism) in and around self-defence and – by the 1970s – what were called 'martial arts' [on orientalism, see Said 1978]. To take all of this into consideration in the space of a single article would require a very different and more condensed approach. Furthermore, the histories of jujutsu, judo and other East Asian martial arts in the West have already been well documented and studied [Godfrey 2012; Krug 2001; Yabu 2018; Bowman 2021].

None of this is to suggest that what we would now recognise as 'self-defence' began in 1604 with this legal case and ended in 1904 with the arrival of jujutsu. It is simply to pinpoint two historical moments whose effects induced different kinds of tectonic shift in the landscape, each in

4 To use linguistic terms: the article follows a *semasiological* approach, i.e., proactively looking for the term 'self-defence'. It therefore omits publications that do not use this term but that we might, in a broader (*onomasiological*) perspective, still deem to be concerned with 'self-defence', qua physical training for interpersonal combat.

5 See for instance, Giacomo di Grassi: *Giacomo di Grassi his True arte of defence plainlie teaching by infallable demonstrations, apt figures and perfect rules the manner and forme how a man without other teacher or master may safelie handle all sortes of weapons aswell offensiue as defensiue: vvith a treatise of disceit or falsinge: and with a waie or meane by priuate industrie to obtaine strength, iudgement and actiuitie. First written in Italian by the foresaid author, and Englished by I.G. gentleman* [di Grassi 1594]; Vincentio Saviolo: *Vincentio Saviolo his practise. In two booke. The first intrating of the use of the rapier and dagger. The second, Of honor and honorable quarrels* [Saviolo 1595]; and George Silver: *Paradoxes of defence, : wherein is proved the true grounds of fight to be in the short auncient weapons, and that the short sword hath aduantage of the long sword or long rapier. And the weaknesse and imperfection of the rapier-fights displayed. Together with an admonition of the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant, and most braue nation of Englishmen, to beware of false teachers of defence, and how they forsake their owne naturall fights: with a briefe commendation of the noble science or exercising of armes* [Silver 1599].

their own way radically transforming the conceptual and practical coordinates of practices, and in fact generating, in the first case, a *paradigm*, and in the second, a paradigm *shift* [Kuhn 1962]. As such, our concerns are neither with the earlier tradition of ‘fight books’ nor with the much more recent phenomenon of ‘martial arts’. These have vastly different temporalities, histories and coordinates. The focus here is the growth of self-defence as a *discursive entity*. The argument is that the enduring contours and coordinates of this discursive entity were elaborated during the three-hundred-year period in question, and that this is registered in books that self-consciously style themselves as contributions to self-defence discourse.

INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

In using such terms as ‘discourse’ and ‘discursive entity’, this study is clearly informed by scholarship in the conceptual and theoretical tradition of Michel Foucault [also Laclau and Mouffe 1985; and Hall, Morley, and Chen 1996]. This theory and its vocabulary is applied to help conceptualise and interpret the nature of changes that can be seen within and across the pages of the various books discussed. Along with the theoretical notion of discourse, discursive entity, discursive constellation, etc., the study also makes use of a tripartite framework once proposed by Raymond Williams as a rubric for interpreting movements and changes of value and orientation in cultural history. This approach involves establishing whether a given practice or value is *dominant*, *residual*, or *emergent* within a context [Williams 1977].

The primary observation made within this historical survey of English self-defence books is that in this context, self-defence is a discursive entity validated by the legal right to defend one’s ‘self’ within one’s ‘home’. The ostensibly literal denotative terms ‘self’ and ‘home’ actually prove rather plastic or connotative, meaning that the ‘self’ and the ‘home’ to be defended can be constructed on any scale, from the most private (house) to the most public (society, the land, the people, the nation, etc.). In fact, tracing the development of this discourse provides a fascinating case of ‘function creep’, from the literal to the metaphorical, the private to the public. The subject of ‘how to defend yourself’ quickly becomes intertwined with cultural concerns as diverse as bravery, morality, honour, health, fitness, diet, nationalism, patriotism and even appreciation for the finer things in life, from ale and sherry to ‘fellow-feeling for our common nature’.

THE BIRTH OF LEGAL SELF-DEFENCE

To recap: the key event in the birth of the legal concept of self-defence in English common law (and initially thereafter also in America) occurs in a case that culminated 1604. It was definitively confirmed as law in 1628. What occurred is that a man was tried for assaulting an agent

of the law who had entered his house without identifying himself. At the culmination of the court case, the judge exonerated the man and decreed (in Latin): ‘The house of every one is to him as his castle and fortress, as well for his defence against injury and violence as for his repose’ [qtd in Light 2017: 20]. As a consequence of this verdict, thereafter in English law the context of ‘hearth and home’ became a location in which even lethal self-defence *could – perhaps –* be legal. This became known as the ‘castle doctrine’. Famous sayings such as ‘an Englishman’s home is his castle’, or ‘a man’s house is his castle’, and so on, principally refer back to this ruling.

In English self-defence law, a subject still often has an obligation to try to retreat or escape from an assailant. However, sometimes, at least, the one place you might justifiably stand your ground is in your own home. This idea was initially exported and instituted in the legal systems of America and other British colonies, but by the early nineteenth century, American law began to be modified in ways that were much more amenable to the rights of *certain kinds* of citizen to stand their ground and fight back – or even to pursue someone – regardless of where they may be.⁶

After passing into English common law, the term ‘self-defence’ began to appear in diverse contexts. The first usage given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1609. Thomas Hobbes refers to it in *Leviathan* in 1651 [II. xxi. 113]. And throughout the seventeenth century, the term increasingly appears in book titles. Initially, the term was used in ways that were chiefly allegorical. The books themselves were not about self-defence in the physical embodied sense. They were rather about such matters as the defence of a political or religious doctrine or institution. For instance, Abednego Seller’s 1680 work, *The History of Self-Defence, in Requit to the History of Passive Obedience* [Seller 1680], is a defence of the Church of England. Similarly, *An Argument for Self-Defence; Written about the Year 1687, Never before Published, and Now Offer’d to the Consideration of the Gentlemen of the Middle-Temple* [Anon. 1687] is a 16-page text that does actually discuss the justifications for self-defence, including the rationale for and right of an individual to kill an attacker in order to preserve their own life. However, it does so principally as an extended analogy: its ultimate interest lies in reflecting allegorically on the rights of the citizenry to depose a ruler who seeks to attack the social body politic.

In other words, although such early arguments incorporating ‘self-defence’ do employ the notions of physical, embodied, face-to-face self-defence, they do so chiefly as an image to help depict and discuss struggles that are social, political, institutional or ideological, rather than embodied and interpersonal. Nonetheless, what such books clearly demonstrate is the sense that lethal self-defence can be a justifiable action in extreme circumstances. *An Argument for Self-Defence* clearly compares the situation of a ruler who seeks to attack the body politic

6 Light argues, in her study of the history of US self-defence law, that the ‘certain kinds of citizen’ who have most been able to stand their ground or even pursue and kill supposed threats with impunity have always been propertied white men [Light 2017]. Other kinds of citizen, by contrast – i.e., non-white men and women – continue to be convicted for acting in the same way, in the USA.

of a society to the image of an attacker that an individual is forced of necessity to kill in order to stay alive. It insists on the necessary legality of such self-defence, appealing to notions of sovereignty, survival and a just law.⁷ The text makes this argument less than four decades after Thomas Hobbes first invoked the individual's 'inalienable right' to self-defence [Light 2017: 19]. As Light notes: 'Enlightenment thinkers, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke' were interested in self-defence principally in relation to challenging 'the monarchy's monopoly on lethal punishment' [Light 2017: 19]. In this light, the topic of individual self-defence emerges in relation to reflections on individual sovereignty, citizenship, the monarch or state, and the law. These have proven to be enduring coordinates for self-defence discourse in British and other national/legal contexts.

HONOURABLE CULTIVATION

By 1714, two publications illustrate a clear expansion and deepening of the discourse on and around self-defence. The first is Sir William Bart Hope's book, *A vindication of the true art of Self-Defence, with a proposal to the honourable members of parliament, for erecting a court of honour in Great Britain. Recommended to all gentlemen, but particularly to the soldiery. To which is added a short, but very useful memorial for sword men* [Hope 2005]. This text appeals not only to the right to self-defence, but also importantly to ideals of honourable conduct, behaviour and – significantly – the value of *training* for the development of self-defence capacities. In other words, in this text, self-defence is explicitly linked to self-cultivation.

In the same year, Sir Thomas Parkyns' book appears: *The Inn-Play, or Cornish-Hugg Wrestler Digested in a Method which Teacheth to Break All Holds, and Throw Most Falls Mathematically; Easy to be understood by all Gentlemen, & c. being an excellent Acquisition to the Science of Self-Defence, and of Great Utility to such who understand the Small-Sword in Fencing* [Parkyns et al. 1714]. This book draws strong connections between training, body, character and also diet. On the dedication page, the author enumerates a list of character traits and dietary habits necessary to become a successful wrestler, along with the entry requirements to be met before the author would accept someone as a student. These criteria include the delightful declaration: 'I'll scarce admit a sheep-biter, none but beef-eaters will go down with me, who have robust, healthy and sound bodies'.

Thus, it is apparent that by the time of the appearance of these texts, self-defence is no longer simply a potential legal right that a defendant could plead in court *after an event*. Rather, self-defence can become

the pretext justifying a process or a project of training, long *before* any potential event. Along with this switch from retrospective to future-facing in the status of self-defence, the sense of *honour* attached to it has grown. Honour was perhaps always implicitly attached to the legal concept, given the connotations of the word 'right'. But now it is also explicitly connected with bravery.⁸

Combining these coordinates: honour is by now not merely something deriving from a *spontaneous act* of bravery. Rather, it has become something that can (and 'should') be *trained and developed*. The key point here is that – even if self-defence is given as an alibi, pretext or 'end-goal' of training (or 'preparation for violent conflict', as Wetzler puts it [Wetzler 2015; 2018]) – such 'training' is no longer *simply* a future-orientated teleological or eschatological preparation for a possible future problem. Rather, training is now open-ended. It is training in the sense of *cultivation*. Self-defence training is now said to cultivate honour. Honour has thus itself grown to become part of the organising and orientating rationale. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with technical know-how (*savoir-faire*), honour is now another quality that will be developed via (to echo Foucault [1977]) 'the means of correct training'. The cultivation of honour further justifies the practice of training, along with technical skill and improvements in physical health and strength. As such, although it is the term 'self-defence' that is elevated to prominence in such book titles, in a sense, *literal* self-defence is by now only one of the growing number of potential *cultural* values and virtues to be accrued via self-defence training. By now, extra ('supplementary') values are appearing, in the realms of moral and physical character. To use Sloterdijk's terms, this kind of activity (training 'for' self-defence) now becomes an anthropotechnic lifestyle choice [Sloterdijk 2013], one based on a variant of the injunction 'you must change your life!' and that generates what Sloterdijk calls the 'accumulation of subjectivity' [Sloterdijk 2020: 16–17].

HAGIOGRAPHIC NOSTALGIA

Given the emergence of honour as a theme of self-defence orientations, it is unsurprising that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also see the fusing of hagiography with self-defence manuals. Fighting manuals are combined with biographies, such as Donald McBane's *The Expert Swordsman's Companion: or the True Art of Self-Defence with an Account of the Authors life and his transactions during the Wars with France. To which is annexed the art of gunnerie of 1728* [McBane, Duncan, and Duncan 1728], through to Henry Angelo's *Treatise on the utility and advantages of fencing: giving the opinions of the most eminent authors and medical practitioners on the important advantages derived from the knowledge*

7 Indeed, as criminologist Francis Dodsworth puts it: 'fighting was commonplace and historical research on duelling and boxing (see, e.g., the work of John Carter Wood or Bob Shoemaker on later periods) suggests that even where deaths occurred in fights, if it was considered a fair fight, prosecution and punishment were rare or minimal. Lower-level assault in general was often treated as a civil issue as a dispute between private persons, rather than something the Crown should be involved in (see Peter King, 'Punishing Assault' [1996]). Most assaults were not, after all, fatal. Equally, most people travelling long distances, or at night, seem to have routinely armed themselves against footpads / thieves etc.' [Dodsworth: personal communication].

8 In personal communication, Dodsworth notes: 'These self-defence manuals were part of a much wider literary culture of self-help which seems to me to have targeted a socially aspirant readership, or to have provided handy instruction for tutors, etc. It's difficult to escape the social significance of the concept of honour and its initial relation to gentility, both in terms of duelling and social differentiation from the vulgar, in a period in which gentility was relatively in flux and ideas about self-shaping and gentility as behaviour not breeding were important' [see also Dodsworth 2015, 95–99; 2019, 172ff].

of the art, as means of Self-Defence, and a promotor of health, illustrated by forty-seven engravings. To which is added a dissertation on the use of the broad sword (with six descriptive plates), in 1817 [Angelo 2019].

It is interesting that McBane's hagiographic account of a life of 'der-ring-do' has attracted recent republication in the twenty first century [McBane, Kerr, and Farrell 2015]. It is likely that this is either because the kinds of interest that certain demographics or readerships have in such tales endures to this day, or because this structure of interest has recently returned. Such texts certainly feed some contemporary kinds of nostalgia for times lost, as can also be seen in the interest that has grown in Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA) over recent decades. This interest is a comparatively recent phenomenon, one that cannot therefore be divorced from the possibility that it reflects a symptomatic nostalgic yearning for lost cultural roots [Chow 1995; Pitcher 2014; Bowman 2021].

However, even without diagnosing the question of the contemporary interest in such historical material, nostalgia can actually be detected in the very fabric of these texts. For instance, Angelo's *Treatise* begins with a sustained reflection on the values and virtues of fencing for the improvement of health and physique. This is not merely articulated 'in general'. Rather, the author explicitly connects what he regards as a kind of epidemic of problems related to health and posture with the growth of industrialisation and urbanisation. Fencing and combat training will help to remedy these diseases of modernity, insists the author. As such, the focus on the ancient art of fencing in an age of burgeoning industrialisation already clearly smacks of nostalgia. This is not to say that Angelo's sword-focused self-defence manual is not an 'authentic' text of an ancient and venerable tradition. Rather, the fact that the author pitches sword training as a ('residual') way to remedy modernity's ('emergent') problems transforms its status: the sword self-defence manual itself, orientated in this way, can be read as a *symptom* of cultural change. Its valorisation of a former residual culture is a functional kind of cultural nostalgia – a symptomatic response to modernity [Williams 1977].

SPORT AS SELF-DEFENCE

As the nineteenth century progresses, boxing becomes the focus of many self-defence books. For instance, 1819 sees the publication of Robert Cruikshank's *The Art and Practice of Self-Defence; or, Scientific Mode of Boxing, Displayed in an Easy Manner, Whereby Every Person May Comprehend This Most Useful Art, without the Aid of a Master: To Which Is Added, Descriptions of Pugilistic Attitudes, Also the Art of Attack, as Practised by the Most Celebrated Boxers of the Present Day. Got up under the Superintendance of a Celebrated Pugilist. With an Index* [Cruikshank 1819].

As evinced by this title, boxing is undoubtedly positioned here as a *sport*. (And 'sport' is widely recognised as having been of the British Empire's major cultural contributions to nineteenth century physical culture [Elias and Dunning 2008].) Yet this *sport* is also positioned as representing the pinnacle of *self-defence*. Doubtless this is because of a conceptual conflation that still exists – a spurious equation, that remains extremely tenacious, reappearing frequently whenever people attempt to appraise combat sports in terms of their utility for self-defence. The essential form of this amphibology runs as follows: *this looks like (how we imagine) a 'real fight' to look; therefore it must be useful (or at least advantageous) in a 'real' fight*. While any Venn diagram covering the similarities and differences between such a combat sport and *some* (socially structured) forms of 'real' combat *may* overlap in *some* contexts, there is of course a world of difference between many possible violent/attack scenarios and the closed context of the boxing ring [Miller 2008].

Related to this, and as if implicitly anticipating Norbert Elias's arguments about the 'civilising process' *avant la lettre*, many nineteenth century authors who advocate boxing as a form of self-defence do so primarily via a conceptual sleight of hand, or register-switch – one that we have already seen. This involves arguing that self-defence training leads to the development not only of healthy bodies, but also of moral character. At the same time, however, aside from such considerations of honour and vigour, there is very little in these texts that relates to anything that contemporary readers might recognise as *psychology*. The manuals present *techniques*, and through training in these techniques what will be learned is 'self-defence' *ability* and – somehow – also *honour*. Yet, there is no discussion of any of the psychological dimensions currently associated with conflict. So, where one might expect to find in a contemporary self-defence book or study of interpersonal violence some kind of considerations of factors such as (pre-)fight fright or freeze, and/or post-conflict traumatic aftermaths, etc., one only finds discussions of honour versus degeneracy.

FOREIGN BLADES AND MORAL DEGENERACY

This is not to say that something akin to 'fear' is never evoked in these texts. Such affects are often incorporated rhetorically by authors. For instance, Owen Swift's 1840 *Hand-book to Boxing Being a Complete Instructor in the Art of Self-Defence* [Swift 1840] is initialised and orientated in terms of a declared sense that there is a worrying increase in knife crime. In his preface, Swift explicitly connects the use of bladed weapons with dishonourable Southern European tendencies, suggesting that the provision of more boxing training for British youth would strengthen the nation, both figuratively and literally, in terms of developing the literal physical strength, technical ability and (crucially) the honourable characteristics of the people.⁹

⁹ Swift would go on in 1848 to publish the radically auto-didactic text, *The Modern English Boxer, or, Scientific Art and Practice of Attack and Self-Defence: Explained in an Easy Manner That Any Person May Comprehend This Useful Art without the Aid of a Master with Descriptions of Correct Pugilistic Attitudes as Practised by the Most Celebrated Boxers of the Present Day*. Obviously, the claim that a book could substitute for a living breathing teacher, instructor or master is one of the two main ways to justify the publication of a manual – the other being that the text is a *supplement* to the 'primary' pedagogical scene of face-to-face teaching.

Even more clearly in this vein, Egan Pierce develops the theme in *Every Gentleman's Manual. A Lecture on the Art of Self-Defence* [Pierce 1845], first published in 1845 and republished in 1851. Pierce's earlier book on pugilism, *Boxiana; Or, Sketches of Ancient and Modern Pugilism* [c.1824] had been a somewhat sprawling and rambling affair [Egan 2013], but by the time of *Every Gentleman's Manual*, he had evidently found his focus and warmed to the theme of the wider significance of boxing. Thus, from the outset, the text is preoccupied with the advocacy of fair play and of articulating this with British character and from there on to the promotion of nationalism. As with Swift's earlier text, Pierce's preface begins with a discussion of what we would now call the *moral panic* around 'stabbing' in the 1840s [Godfrey 2012; 2010; Thompson 1998]. The very first paragraph of the book proper declares:

The Art of Self-Defence viewed as connected with Health, and renovation of the Human Frame to its natural quality – the excellence of it as an Exercise – also its advantages on the Spirits; but above all to infuse a noble Spirit in the Mind of Man, to act nobly on all occasions – to curb the passions – and to put a stop to the assassin-like conduct of introducing the knife! [2]

Beyond his claim that a boxing habitus would minimise the chance of a trained pugilist introducing a blade into a conflagration, along with idealistic and ideological pronouncements about character, Pierce also focuses on some of the more verifiable outcomes of regular training. He argues that the 'advantages attendant upon it as a manly science' include 'the promotion of good health' [9]. In a passage that bears many features that are still present in contemporary self-defence texts, we read:

With the use of the dumb bells for a few minutes every day, and an hour's exercise with the gloves, the formation of the chest expands, the wind is altogether improved, and loose fat is avoided increasing upon the frame. The mind becomes cheerful because the spirits are improved. Additional vigour of body is obtained from such exertion; an individual also gains activity upon his legs, he loses sight of fear, his courage improves daily, and he like wise becomes a more animated and energetic creature in society. But the grandest point of all is, that he is always prepared for an enemy, – I repeat it, he is always prepared for an enemy, – let the latter appear before him when he will. [9]

To the literary, historical or cultural studies scholar whose work consists in discovering and exposing the ideologies that permeate texts and contexts, searching Pierce's text for its ideology is like shooting fish in a barrel. This is because Pierce wears his heart on his sleeve to such an extent that the work of 'ideology critique' is almost redundant. He spells it out for us: his object is to use pugilistic training 'to keep alive the principles of courage and hardihood which have distinguished the British character, and to check the progress of that effeminacy which wealth is too apt to produce' [14]. Pugilism also offers an alternative to duelling with weapons, which Pierce finds barbaric and unjust in many ways. As he argues, one 'ought to deprecate the consequences of duelling in society, the reflection is dreadful to read of the prevalence of STABBING, in a country distinguished for its love of fair-play' [23].

Weapons, he believes are often guilty of 'uniting cruelty with cowardice, and too often assumes the shape of murder' [23]. On the other hand: 'athletic exercises have done much towards giving a sort of perseverance and never-tiring courage to the army of England – and with a coolness of demeanour that defies the pen to do justice to' [30].

Enthused by his topic, Pierce hesitates, almost wavers, but then takes the plunge into suggesting what he most wants to suggest:

Perhaps it is not too much to assert, that owing to the pugilist's anxiety to acquire celebrity in the prize ring, we may have been indebted in some degree for the glorious victories of Trafalgar, Waterloo, &c. &c., and I feel assured that athletic sports have had a direct tendency to inspire additional confidence and courage in the breasts of our soldiers and sailors. [27]

Even so, the key virtue or value singled out for special note is not related to the stimulation of competitive, sporting or military zeal. Rather, Pierce proposes that pugilistic training can inculcate and promote 'gentlemanly' qualities, that help enrich and deepen the bonds between 'men':

Men of rank associating together learn to prize the native and acquired powers of human nature; they thus learn to value other distinctions, besides those of fortune and rank; and by duly estimating them in persons of inferior stations of life, they imbibe the principles of humanity and fellow-feeling for our common nature. [14]

SELF-DEFENCE AS HOLISTIC TECHNOLOGY OF THE SELF

By the mid-nineteenth century, as evidenced by such published accounts as these, the discourse of self-defence was becoming 'holistic'. That is to say, 'self-defence' becomes a fully-fledged *discursive entity* [Bowman 2021] – ever expanding, 'ever-unfolding' – akin to Knorr-Cetina's description of the ever-deepening and ever-unfolding behaviour of 'objects of knowledge' in the eyes and hands of those who study them [Knorr-Cetina 1981; 2003; Spatz 2015]. A discursive entity grows in more than one dimension, realm or register. We can see this in the change that takes place in the shift from self-defence articulated as *simple pragmatic aim or alibi for training* to self-defence as *becoming nothing more than the process of that training*.

The initial and initialising alibi, rationale or justification (defence of the self) accrues new travelling companions. Training becomes no longer simply a pre-emptive protective measure focused on a possible future event in which self-defence might be needed. This would be what Peter Sloterdijk would call an 'auto-immune' response to a perceived potential existential threat. In this sense, training for self-defence would be akin to the taking out of an insurance policy [Sloterdijk 2013; see also Wetzler 2018]. Rather, training becomes a process of *self-development* – rewarding for its own sake, enjoyable for its own sake. In psychoanalytic terms, the discourse of self-defence at this point moves decisively

from *desire* to *drive* [Žižek 2005: 10]. That is, it is no longer approached with direct reference to a clear and present, immediate achievable goal (*desire*); instead, its practice becomes more focused on the pleasure and pride to be taken in perfecting the practice itself (*drive*).¹⁰ 'Preparation' for self-defence becomes an ongoing process – a habitus, a discipline, a way of life, with its own world of values. It becomes rewarding and absorbing in and of itself.

In the textual description of physical training practices, we see training regimes expanded in scope to include supplementary extras, such as weight training and aerobic activities, to the keeping of regular daily routines, to adhering to specific dietary considerations. Self-defence training becomes explicitly connected with the promotion of improved musculature, posture, vigour, vitality and health, and is thereby implicitly connected with the nascent physical culture that emerged in the late nineteenth century in the USA, as well as European and other nations [Chaline 2015; Miracle 2016]. But it is equally explicitly connected with the development of the ideal gentleman: honourable, brave, nationalistic, and full of 'fellow-feeling for our common nature'.

Variants and versions of this were maturing in many modern(ising) national(ising) contexts, albeit in different ways and at different 'speeds' [Alter 1992; Morris 2004; Chaline 2015; Miracle 2016]. To glance briefly at America, for instance, in 1867 Edmund Price published *The Science of Self Defence: A Treatise on Sparring and Wrestling including complete instructions in training and physical development, also several remarks upon, and a course prescribed for the reduction of corpulency* [Price 1867]. This fascinating book claims the status of being 'the first' in many respects, few to none of which are true. This in itself is noteworthy, because it suggests either an inability to access earlier publications on self-defence (whether from the UK, the US or elsewhere), or a lack of interest in reading or referring to them. If the former (lack of access), this suggests that self-defence discourse was emerging and developing in different isolated individual contexts, *but in similar ways*, presumably for shared reasons, most likely related to the growth of urban modernity in diverse countries. If the latter (lack of interest in reading around the subject), this would certainly not be the last time that someone writing on the subject of self-defence – or, more recently, 'martial arts' – would do so without carrying out even the most perfunctory literature review, while yet claiming to be the very first to write on the subject.

In any case, this often inadvertently hilarious text proceeds in apparent ignorance not only of earlier works on the same subject, but also in absolute ignorance of all discourse on diet, body mechanics, physiology and training principles *per se*. Again, this has remained a characteristic of much self-defence and martial arts writing: there are still authors who not only claim to be the first to write on the subject, but who also feel compelled to comment on topics that fall far outside of their competence and knowledge.

¹⁰ As Slavoj Žižek explains: 'let us imagine an individual trying to perform some simple manual task – say, grabbing an object that repeatedly eludes him: the moment he changes his attitude, starts to find pleasure in just repeating the failed task (squeezing the object, which again and again eludes him), he shifts from desire to drive' [Žižek 2005, 10].

Thus, in *The Science of Self Defence: A Treatise on Sparring and Wrestling*, we encounter such idiosyncratic features as the book being organised in terms of *limbs* – with one chapter focusing on one limb, the next chapter focusing on another limb, and so on. Thus, there is a chapter on the leg, a chapter on the arm, a chapter on the head, and a chapter on the torso – each considered in isolation. There is no overarching sense of the body as one coherent functional unit. Rather, we are told that it is the arms that punch and the feet that move (not the whole body). The head, we are told, should be positioned 'carefully' (with no further clarification); and, we are told, the body (torso) should definitely not be 'irksome'!

In this way, the book provides a cornucopia of entertaining and irreducibly quaint formulations. For instance, of the right cross punch, we are told: 'At a cross-counter or in fibbing, the right hand is the more destructive of the two; this arises from the greater precision and strength which that hand, arm and shoulder generally possess' [43]. Elsewhere, Price claims: 'No book on training that has yet appeared attempts to give a physiological account of respiration' [104] – before proceeding to give nothing of the sort, while demonstrating almost absolute ignorance of any kind of science of respiration (for which, see Williams [2021]). And, perhaps most delightful of all, within the many wide-ranging discussions of diet and exercise, a favourite theme frequently engaged is the perhaps unfairly neglected topic of precisely when and how much ale and sherry needs to be drunk, before, during, and after training.

A GATHERING STORM

Many of the self-defence publications of the final decades of the nineteenth century focused on the traditional European staples of boxing and wrestling, along with occasional sword and more frequent stick and staff manuals. Clayton's 1878 publication captures this nexus in its title: *The Three Arts of Self Defence: Fencing, Broadsword Exercise, Boxing* [Clayton 1878]. Similarly, 1880 gave titles such as Ned Donnelly and John Musgrave Waite's *The Science of Self Defence, or, The Art of Sparring or Boxing Taught Easily without a Master: With Illustrations Showing the Various Blows, Stops, and Guards* [Donnelly and Waite 1880] and anonymous titles such as *Boxing and Wrestling: or, The art of Self-Defence* published by De Witt in New York and Griffith, Farran & Co. in London.

Perhaps the key feature of this now mature discourse are the growing connections made between self-defence training and an ever wider orbit of physical and cultural 'technologies of the self' [Foucault 1988]. This is made apparent in works such as Henry Llewellyn Williams' 1883 *The art of boxing, swimming and gymnastics made easy, giving complete and specific directions for acquiring the art of Self-Defence, swimming, and a large variety of gymnastic exercises enabling any one to become an expert boxer and athlete without the aid of a teacher* [H. Ll. Williams 1883]. Also

immediately visible here is another dimension that is echoed across numerous titles in this canon: namely, the regularly reiterated but essentially pedagogically subversive claim that one can 'learn without a master' [Rancière 1991; Bowman 2016]. The discourse of self-defence was to continue in all of these directions, even after the arrival of the gathering storm of the paradigm shift that would take place at the birth of the twentieth century.

But, until the final years of the nineteenth century, familiar forms of texts continued to appear, through the 1880s and 1890s, including titles such as Owen Swift's *Boxing without a Master, or, The Art of Self Defence* from the USA in 1885 [Swift 1885], and 1889's *Broadsword and Singlestick, with Chapters on Quarter-Staff, Bayonet, Cudgel, Shillalah, Walking-Stick, and Other Weapons of Self-Defence* by Rowland George Allanson-Winn and C. Phillipps-Wolley [Headley 1890; Headley and Phillipps-Wolley 2006]. As is by now predictable, such books frequently open with a discussion of Englishmen/gentlemen as exemplary sportsmen, and of sports' ability to be turned to the as-if self-evidently valuable end of saving or advancing the nation. *Broadsword and Singlestick* even opens with what might now be recognised as a 'hopological' (i.e., pseudo-scientific) quasi-sociobiological argument which proposes that, it was stones that were first used as weapons by cavemen, and that immediately thereafter something like the quarterstaff was the next weapon of choice adopted by all humans, and that therefore the quarterstaff is to be regarded as the origin of all weapons. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the history and style of different swords. This kind of essentialist pseudo-scientific origin story remains a stock feature in much amateur scholarship on what is sometimes called hopology or indigenous martial/combat history. However, the work also includes an advocacy of the importance of what we would now call situational awareness and body-language in self-defence – matters that would be allotted increasing importance in self-defence discourse in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The final words of the book are:

In the environs of our big cities there is always a chance of attack by some fellow who asks the time, wants a match to light his cigar, or asks the way to some place. When accosted never stop; never draw out watch or box of lights, and never know the way anywhere. Always make a good guess at the time, and swear you have no matches about you. It is wonderful to notice kind-hearted ladies stopping to give to stalwart beggars who are only waiting for an opportunity to snatch purses, and it would be interesting to know how many annually lose their purses and watches through this mistaken method of distributing largess.

Let me conclude by saying that, if you want to be as safe as possible, in a doubtful neighbourhood, your best friends are a quick ear, a quick eye, a quick step, and a predilection for the middle of the road. The two former help you to detect, as the two latter may enable you to avoid a sudden onslaught. [Headley 1890, p.116]

Such publications were by now the 'business as usual' stock in trade of a well-established genre of self-defence publishing. This continued uninterrupted in its European focus until 1898. However, this penultimate

year of the nineteenth century saw the appearance of what we might now regard as a kind of 'transitional' text – or what Fredric Jameson might call a 'vanishing mediator' [Jameson 1973]. This was Georges d'Armoric's *Les Boxeurs français's treatise on the French method of the noble art of self defence: with a short chapter on 'canne'* [d'Armoric 1898]. This book is 'transitional' in that it introduces the Swiss cane and walking stick method of fighting ('la canne') to an English readership. La canne was one of the key European 'ingredients' to the then-emergent combat style, as was being promoted by Edward William Barton-Wright in London, known as Bartitsu. Thus, d'Armoric's text was a vanishing mediator in the sense that what it introduced was immediately surpassed and overwritten or erased by the very thing it enabled. In this case, it was Bartitsu, which eclipsed both savate and la canne as popular approaches to combat in Britain. Bartitsu first fully appears in book form the following year, 1899, which sees the publication of Barton-Wright's text, *The New Art Self-Defense – How a Man may Defend Himself against every Form of Attack*. The ultimate irony, however, is that Barton-Wright's own Bartitsu would itself quickly go on to 'mediate' and then 'vanish' – washed away from view by the explosion of interest in the Japanese jujutsu that Barton-Wright himself was largely responsible for introducing to the British public [Godfrey 2012; Bowman 2021].

These books – especially the latter – are significant because, although 'older' styles of self-defence text continued to be produced, from this point on, an increasing number of self-defence books began to focus on approaches to hand-to-hand combat and self-defence drawn not merely from other European countries (such as Switzerland and France) but also from 'the mystical East' – primarily Japan. Thus, although through early twentieth century self-defence books continued to appear that would make absolutely no reference to Japanese 'jitsu' or 'jutsu' dimensions – it was only very much later (in the 1970s) that such practices would come to be widely referred to as 'martial arts' [Bowman 2021] – the seeds were nonetheless sown for, first, the jujutsu and, thereafter, the judo paradigm revolution in self-defence discourse [Godfrey 2012; Yabu 2018; Brough 2020]. Self-defence discourse through the twentieth century would become increasingly 'orientalised' – or, rather, *orientalist* [Krug 2001; Bowman 2017; 2021].

However, all texts are products of their times. This means that even self-defence books that (whether accidentally or intentionally) made no reference to the new Japanese 'jutsu' and 'judo' influences arriving on the scene in the early twentieth century could not avoid registering wider cultural changes in one way or another. A case in point is Robert Fitzsimmons and Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle's *Physical Culture and Self-Defense* of 1900 [Fitzsimmons and Biddle 1900]. This book explicitly connects self-defence training to the growing 'physical culture' movement, signalling the maturation of immanent trajectories first clearly visible in the early nineteenth century [Miracle 2016].

Similarly, 1903's *Self-Defence: being a guide to boxing, quarter-staff and bayonet practice, the walking-stick cudgel, fencing, etc. ... With fifty outline illustrations and diagrams* by Rowland George Headley, Allanson-Winn Baron, and Charles Edward Angler Walker [Winn and Walker 1903] arguably demonstrates the complex intermixing of what Raymond

Williams would call different *dominant*, *residual* and *emergent* cultural forces, textures and patterns [Williams 1977]. This is because the book clearly references the older (but still *dominant*) traditions of boxing beside the (*residual*) practices of sword and quarterstaff, along with practices that simultaneously carry both older (*residual*) and then-fashionable (*emergent*) statuses, such as stick fighting – which innovators such as Barton-Wright had recently made popular by hybridising them with jujutsu.

AFTER 1904

Viewed from our current vantage point, it is crystal clear that the then-emergent force to be reckoned with at the dawn of the twentieth century was first jujutsu and then judo. This emergence onto the Western European scene immediately began to enrich and transform the discourse of ‘self-defence’. 1904 saw Yae Kichi Yabe’s *Course of Instruction in Jiu-Jitsu, the Japanese system of physical training and Self-Defence*, and Skinner Kuwashima’s *Jiu-Jitsu: a comprehensive and copiously illustrated treatise on the wonderful Japanese method of attack and self-defence ... Poses by B. H. Kuwashima*. In 1905, Edward Drayton published *Ju Jitsu, the Japanese physical training and Self-Defence*. By this time, the floodgates were well and truly open.

To be clear, this is not to suggest that publications connecting boxing and wrestling with self-defence simply ceased. For instance, 1906 saw texts including *Spalding’s Boxing Guide: an accurate instructor of the science of self defence. Rules of boxing*, by Albert Goodwill Spalding [Spalding 1906]. Nor were all books that engaged with jujutsu and subsequently other (first Japanese, then Korean, then Chinese) arts wholehearted endorsements or celebrations of these new imports. Some authors attempted to reconcile the new Japanese approaches and techniques with older European styles of fighting. Thus, 1906 also saw the first of what would go on to see very many editions and republications of Percy Longhurst’s *Jiu-Jitsu and other methods of Self-Defence ... Profusely illustrated*, along with *Jiu Jitsu: the effective Japanese mode of self defence. Illustrated by snapshots, etc.* In such works, Longhurst carries out evaluations of jujutsu in comparison with other fighting styles, and although he does not renounce Western approaches, he is very clear that there is much for the wrestler or pugilist to learn from them.

But the tide had definitively turned by 1904, and self-defence discourse throughout the twentieth century became increasingly subsumed into, hegemonised by, and translated into the terms of what ultimately became known as (Asian) martial arts. I have written at length elsewhere about the invention of ‘martial arts’ as a discursive entity in the late twentieth century. In the process I necessarily discussed in some detail the practices and ideas active throughout the twentieth century, beginning from around 1900. The first two thirds of the twentieth century

was the immediate prehistory of the birth of ‘martial arts’ as a discursive entity in Western popular culture [Bowman 2021]. Accordingly, I will not re-tread the same ground here. However, it seems pertinent to emphasise a point that may have been subordinated by my different focus in that earlier work. This is the following: that the late twentieth century appearance of East Asian (predominantly Japanese, Chinese and Korean) martial arts was not a ‘boom’ that emerged out of the blue. It was rather a very visible translation and spectacular reconfiguration of a long-established discourse reflecting deeply entrenched concerns: self-defence.

As I have sought to show elsewhere, ‘martial arts’ emerged *cinematically*, and Asian martial arts styles had such an immediate and captivating appeal and practical uptake because they were so visually spectacular and imaginatively seductive [Krug 2001; Bowman 2010]. But the space they occupied – the terrain they hegemonised – the discourse they reconfigured – was not previously uninhabited. It was largely (but not entirely)¹¹ that which in the European and North American context had been defined previously by and as self-defence discourse, since at least the birth of the seventeenth century.

‘Martial arts’ as we recognise and understand them today have, from the outset in the West, always been defined by reference to a much older and weightier term, and they are best understood as only one of the most recent iterations of a far longer discourse: namely, self-defence. As I note throughout *The Invention of Martial Arts*, one of the most regularly featured terms in the titles of martial arts books of the late twentieth and early twenty first century is ‘self-defence’. As such, it is clear that – in Britain, at least – the discourse of self-defence is far older, more entrenched, more foundational, and undoubtedly more enduring than that of the much more recently popular term, ‘martial arts’.

Doubtless, self-defence existed before my starting point of 1604, and it goes without saying that self-defence flourished – and will continue to flourish – way beyond 1904 (and 2004, 2024, and many more). Nonetheless, the dates that have demarcated this discussion define a clear three-hundred-year period during which self-defence discourse as we know it today was sown (in English law), emerged as disciplinary practices and skill-sets, matured into anthropotechnic ‘technologies of the self, available equally to what Sloterdijk would call the individual(ist) ‘accumulation of self’ (or what Pierre Bourdieu would call cultural capital) and/or ideological nationalism, *for the same reasons and by the same token*. This is doubtless because ‘defence of the self’ has from the outset always been heavily defined through reference to ‘house and home’, a relation which means that not only ‘self’ but also ‘defence’ and certainly our ‘castles’ and ‘safest refuges’ are both our permanent properties and yet irreducibly shifting referents, calling out for any number of different forms of ‘defence’.

11 The martial arts boom of the late 20th century was clearly not merely about self-defence. As many have argued in recent years, a kaleidoscope of desires, fantasies, and cultural functions can be seen in the popular practice of ‘Asian’ martial arts that exploded in the 1970s and 1980s.

CODA: LIMITATIONS

This work has not tried to paint a rich and textured picture of what English or British culture and society looked like at any point between 1604 and 1904. It has not attempted to give a 'thick description' (Clifford Geertz) or carry out a 'conjunctural analysis' (Stuart Hall) of moments or movements in time. Its method was, to use Bruce Lee's phrase, 'simple and direct': to study books that use the term 'self-defence' as an organising theme. In proceeding in this (semasiological) manner, the approach necessarily excludes a far older and wider history of works dealing with military, weapons, duelling, prize fighting and pugilism. It does so specifically in order to establish what 'self-defence' was taken to mean by authors dealing with interpersonal, physical, embodied aggression and defence. Thus, this work has proceeded by 'reading out' from an almost violently circumscribed selection of texts, rather than 'reading into' a more nuanced range of potentially relevant works, drawn from a broader pool. Hence, the status of the methodology selected is both double and ambivalent: on the one hand, it is entirely defensible (you have to draw a line *somewhere*); on the other hand, it is entirely indefensible (*this* boundary excludes and remains blind to so much). As such, this work is both a contribution to our knowledge of self-defence history, and also an invitation to further development. This work necessarily excluded a great deal. The question now is one of establishing the ways that including more of this overlooked material might change – enrich or transform – our understanding of the development of self-defence as a discursive entity in this context and others.

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