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Confronting Order and Chaos in *2 Henry VI*

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Rebel
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by
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Abstract

This thesis is based upon the premise that critical and ideological conflict in a work of literature offers the opportunity to interpret and analyze in new ways. Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* provides fertile ground for analyzing conflict in the episode of Jack Cade's rebellion. I propose that by embracing our separateness from the work, by stepping back and applying our own set of informed guidelines—a construction I call a *cultural space*—we can generate more insight from analysis than if we were simply to perform close readings.

My argument is structured around Cade's rebellion, and utilizes historical reference for support. I argue that despite its radical expression, the social structure of a moral economy is well in place in Cade's rebellion, thoroughly justified both historically and dramatically. Alternately, I contend that the same social necessity which creates a moral economy creates also within the work a structure of domination, one in which Cade works as a noble and where Greenblatt's stabilizing subversion is not only present but vital. The tension between these contradictory modes creates in *2 Henry VI* an insightful social critique without declaring a winner. Finally, I devote my conclusion to a close examination of a single, tense scene that exemplifies the resolutions social conflicts I develop over the course of my analysis.

Chapter I confronts the disparity between the rebellion's chaotic portrayal and the rational nature of its participants in terms of historical conditions. I argue against the critical avalanche of criticism that condemns Cade as irrational and anarchic.

Chapter II resolves the opposition that develops between Cade's rebellion and the Elizabethan social order. Upon this conflict, I build my argument that the rebellion is an affirmation of necessity of a controlling force in *2 Henry VI* and the society it mimics.

Chapter III complicates and expands upon the question of social order by examining the origin of social power, authority, in the context of the rebellion. I will confront this conflict by examining the source of Cade's authority in light of his position as an agent of nobility.

This thesis is salvo of different 'ideologies' or modes of analysis, conducted in the confidence that rather than undermining one another, several views can only enrich the analysis originating from my cultural space.

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Short Titles

Greenblatt: Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

2 *Henry VI*: Shakespeare, William. *The Second Part of Henry VI*. Greenblatt, Stephen ed. *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

Harvey: Harvey, I.M.W. *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*. Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1991.

Tennenhouse: Tennenhouse, Leonard. *Power on Display: The politics of Shakespeare's genres*. New York: Methuen, 1986.

Walter and Wrightson: Walter, John and Wrightson, Keith. "Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England." *Rebellion, popular protest, and the social order in early modern England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Introduction. Not Being Shakespeare

Let's begin at the beginning, with the most recognizable line. "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers," snarls the Butcher in Shakespeare's *The Second Part of Henry VI* (4.2.68).¹ It is the opening scene of a rebellion led by a man they call Jack Cade, and Cade is surrounded by wild supporters preparing to enact a rebellion that will restore prosperity to England. The Butcher's sentiment is simple, vehement, and refreshingly familiar. It might easily draw a cheer from the audience at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Courtyard Theatre in modern-day Stratford-upon-Avon. But meaning is manifold and slippery, cobbled together from so many sources (textual, visual, cultural, gastronomical!) and from so many perspectives (The Butcher's, the lawyers', the audience's, mine) that it is nearly impossible to understand quite what motivates that cheer—or whether the audience is 'meant' to cheer.

Suppose the Butcher does not snarl, but whispers—there is no exclamation point in the line. Or perhaps we should gloss "lawyers" as law-givers, righteous pillars of order and justice, rather than with the somewhat rueful hatred that 21st century American culture does. Still further, the structure of the line itself is worth considering: While he normally speaks in short clauses, the Butcher's speech here is one rapid jumble of words—there is an element of panic, perhaps, of

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all textual quotations are from *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, Stephen Greenblatt ed.

an urgent need for the lawyers' demise.² And now, to make matters worse, which of these disparate impressions deserves the social affirmation of the cheer? "Ideology, it emerges, informs even the most 'neutral'" of analyses on the most obvious of lines, determined by precisely which selections we make from the staggering array of details and undercurrents which are available to influence our understanding.³

In this way, Shakespeare criticism is like attempting to recreate Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* using paint-by-number. *Impossible!* comes the gut reaction. Certainly, but why? After all, Seurat's work is just a composition of tiny dots. Couldn't a careful individual with exceptional patience simply follow a guide for placing dots in their appropriate positions? Couldn't an extraordinarily observant scholar, in reading Shakespeare, pinpoint the issues of contention—ambiguous meanings, particular meter, contemporary references, deliberate inaccuracies, particular staging and so on—and in some sense reproduce and understand the significance and force of the work? To manage such a thing would be almost to embody Shakespeare. As Borges asks in his meditations on time, "Do not the fervent readers who surrender themselves to Shakespeare become, literally, Shakespeare?" I am not Shakespeare, and to become him—or to recapture exactly the sense of his work—would be impossible.⁴ No amount of struggle to parallel, whether through text, social context or staging, can reproduce with real accuracy either the motivations behind or the effect of his *2 Henry VI*. This is not an admission of criticism's insignificance, nor a nod to some sort of meta-insignificance in view of

² The Butcher speaks earlier of Cade's lineage in a stalling artisan's argot, "Ay, by my faith, the field is honourable, and there was he born, under a hedge; for his father had never a house but the cage" (4.2.44).

³ Michael Hattaway, "Rebellion, Class Consciousness, and Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*," p. 13. I am also indebted to Hattaway for informing the style and form of this introduction.

⁴ Jorge Luis Borges, "A New Refutation of Time," p.20. In the conclusion to his essay, Borges writes wryly, "The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges."

the impossible “black hole” of criticism and accruing significance that Gary Taylor has warned us of.⁵ It is, instead, a declaration of strength.

There is enormous power in not being Shakespeare. Leonard Tennenhouse looks on this with some chagrin, writing, “By making Shakespeare other than myself in terms of his ‘context’ in effect I have authorized the production of criticism...contextualizing Shakespeare gave me a certain kind of power—resembling the Olympian perspective of most anthropology—over Renaissance culture.”⁶ Tennenhouse may well be right, but his concern is misplaced: the ability to separate ourselves from Shakespeare is what enables us to develop significance from his works and the cultural milieu in which they function. My thesis is an exploration of the opportunity offered by our separation from Shakespeare: ambiguity, duality, the conflict and *uncertainty* of meaning.⁷

The strength of the critical operation is in its ambiguous point of reference, an ambivalence that allows us to construct a sense of significance—and to question that significance—via the tension that produces it. This ambivalence is present not only in the text itself, but in the social practices and institutions mimicked onstage—in the very production of theatre itself.⁸ *2 Henry VI* was deliberately created as a socially contentious play, and Jack Cade as both strikingly incendiary and utterly constrained. Whatever Shakespeare’s intent, conflict is an opportunity to generate a new “ideology,” a new way of understanding his work.

⁵ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present*, pp. 410-11, 386.

⁶ Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power On Display: The politics of Shakespeare’s genres*, p. 7.

⁷ My sense and use of the term ‘ambiguity’ was strongly influenced by William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

⁸ I invoke the term ‘ambivalence’ in the spirit of A.P. Rossiter’s essay, “Ambivalence: Dialectic of the Histories.”

I will pursue “a means of turning the canonized Shakespeare into a window onto Renaissance social relations, a mirror of his times, a text that presupposes a context ‘outside’ of itself,” (Tennenhouse 2) not in simply historicizing, but in developing a space in which to analyze. It is my intent to mark out a *cultural space* (historical, institutional, social, dramatic) in which meaning can be generated from the raw materials of textual analysis. Only in such a space can drama can have force in a social milieu.

A famous quote from Queen Elizabeth may illustrate the presence of dramatic force into that cultural space: “I am Richard 2d. Know ye not that?”⁹ Her reference is to Shakespeare’s play, *Richard II*. Elizabeth makes this bitter comment a few months following a rebellion by the Earl of Essex, whose followers famously employed Shakespeare’s *Richard II* as mode of moving London’s public to their aid. In February of 1601, the day before his *coup* was to fail spectacularly, supporters of Essex approached the Chamberlain’s Men requesting a special performance of “the play of the deposing and killing of Richard II.”¹⁰ The move was almost certainly intended as an attempt to rally public support to Essex’s cause by dramatically “[demonstrating] that a king might be removed from the throne without incurring immediate divine wrath” (Hattaway 14). Elizabeth’s interpretation has force not because Richard II’s fate *is* an allegory for Elizabeth’s, but because it *could* be—because the possibility exists that we interpret it this way, yet at the same time, that we do not, as the oft-overzealous censors of the time apparently did not. Stephen Greenblatt has perhaps said it best:

⁹ British Museum Additional Manuscript 15, p. 664. Quoted in The Arden Shakespeare’s *King Richard II*, ed. Charles Forker. Her words are recorded as spoken in August of 1601 to bureaucrat William Lambarde, who responded, “Such a wicked Immagination was determined and attempted by a most unkind Gent,” that is, Shakespeare.

¹⁰ Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare: For All Time*, p. 73.

[Theatrical] values do not exist in a realm of privileged literariness, of textual or even institutional self-referentiality. Shakespeare's theater was not isolated by its wooden walls, nor did it merely reflect social and ideological forces that lay entirely outside it: rather the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was itself a *social event* in reciprocal contact with other social events.¹¹

My reading of *2 Henry VI* is based on this assumption, and my arguments array themselves around it. There must be the production of some energy—dramatic, historical, social—from the tension in the play, a tension that results from the ambiguous status of Cade's rebellion in Elizabethan society. In our not being Shakespeare, an analysis of this episode and the complex issues that attend it may stir up the dust of the library enough to reveal something that will aid our understanding of *2 Henry VI* and the social conflicts at work in Elizabethan England.

My critical method guides the organization of this thesis, and makes use of two approaches—two ideologies, to adapt Hattaway's term—to analyzing Shakespeare's text.¹² My goal in adopting more than one point of reference is to establish and take advantage of the ambiguity inherent in the text, sketching out a cultural space in which the text can produce meaning. In order to make this thesis and its approach somewhat more comprehensible, I will

¹¹ Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets," *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, pp. 45-46. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Stephen Greenblatt are from "Invisible Bullets."

¹² The first published copy of the play was titled *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, released in quarto in 1594. Two further editions were published before the significantly expanded iteration printed in the First Folio in 1623. There are large textual discrepancies between the quarto and folio versions, but they do not, I think, radically change the bearing of the rebellion, except to showcase even more strongly what I will argue is the rebellion's sense of hyperbole, of dramatic urgency and the complexity of using violence to create order. With this in mind, I will leave the manuscript analysis to the archivists and focus on the edition prepared by the Oxford editors.¹²

describe my approach to these categories of analyses as they inform the construction of a cultural space.

Richard C. McCoy is on to something when he writes, “While he does not escape from history altogether...Shakespeare’s stage...sustains a kind of utopian displacement, its distance from the pressures of immediate controversy allowing a more detached and lucid perspective on its social situation.”¹³ I could not agree more with his conclusion, and but with his understanding of the operation I disagree vehemently. Certainly Shakespeare achieves a “lucid perspective,” replete with otherwise unrealized nuances, but he does not do it by avoiding reality. *2 Henry VI* is not the work of a poet attempting to escape the “pressures of the present time,” (McCoy 6) but of a poet attempting to confront them.

Phyllis Rackin argues that “the heterogeneity of the audience and the discursive instability of the new institution provided a polyvalent discourse that resisted the imposition of a single narrator.”¹⁴ By the same principle, Shakespeare’s drama and the significance it produces cannot be related by a single individual, but only by embracing the shared history of its audience. His works “cast their audience as historians” (Rackin 25) and allow significance to spring from that audience’s received sense of historical weight. This is especially true for *2 Henry VI* in the enactment of rebellion as a social mechanism. Thus, my analysis of the historical events and institutions of Early Modern England will provide an ideology in which to way this historical weight.

As with its historical weight, the dramatic significance of *2 Henry VI* is invoked by the text. Performance, however, exerts independent force by combining the foundation laid by

¹³ Richard McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry*, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁴ Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, p. 25.

Shakespeare's words and the audience's willingness to build upon that significance.¹⁵ My use of the term "dramatic" is broad: I intend it to encompass not only literal staging or action, but also operations of the drama such as Cade's emergence as John Mortimer. Dramatic, then, I would define as anything that requires the complicity of an audience in order to signify. The audience's acknowledgment of this is evidence of the engagement which allows "the circulation of social energy," so convincingly argued for by Stephen Greenblatt.¹⁶ Thus my consideration of the dramatic will serve as a social ideology (in Hattaway's sense of the word) based in the signification of actions.

Each ideology informs the other, together providing the cultural space in which to resolve the conflicting forces in *2 Henry VI*. Although historical references and dramatic suggestions support my inferences, it is ultimately textual analysis that remains at the center of this study. Each of my first three chapters confronts a different interpretive possibility that springs from the text into this cultural space, and to resolve them, I will adopt new limitations to the space of my analysis.

My first chapter confronts the disparity between the rebellion's chaotic portrayal and the rational nature of its participants in terms of historical conditions. I argue against the critical avalanche of criticism that condemns Cade as irrational and anarchic. By questioning the assumption of his irrationality, I confront the avalanche of criticism that would decry the rebellion as farcical. These critics consider Cade nothing but a "cruel, barbaric lout," or argue

¹⁵ My concept of "dramatic force" was greatly influenced by William Worthen's *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*.

¹⁶ Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations* is devoted to the realization of this concept, "social energy," and its place in literature and drama. A fair summary of his ideas can be found on p. 6.

that his violence reduces him to “a mechanism of ideological containment.”¹⁷ My issue is not with the assertion of Cade’s violence, but with his reduction to a “mechanism,” a decision of criticism that abruptly limits the possible implications of the character and his rebellion. The position that Shakespeare’s presentation of Cade and his men is nothing but a condemnation wrapped in farce, I suggest, is too narrow. This perspective is summed up by Richard Helgerson’s denunciation that “By most accounts, the plays are all rabidly opposed to the popular rebellion they depict...mockery of Jack Cade, in particular, is open and unmistakable.”¹⁸

Such positions, that exaggerations are fundamentally invalid and that Shakespeare must only have intended one interpretation, in conjunction with E.M.W. Tillyard’s oft-modeled vision of a unified Elizabethan social prerogative, are treacherously exclusionary.¹⁹ Instead, I will adopt a viewpoint towards Cade’s apparent farce that reflects A.P. Rossiter’s comment: “It is hard to persuade everyone that what is laughable may also be serious; or that a man who laughs at something is ‘thinking’ or ‘as good as thinking’ (and maybe better).”²⁰ Cade may be something of a madman, but rather than moving the rebellion towards pure chaos he builds from motivated madness—rational madness, if the paradox can be sustained.

Having acknowledged this rational madness of the rebellion in the first chapter, my second chapter will resolve the opposition that then develops between Cade’s rebellion and the Elizabethan social order. *2 Henry VI* builds a stark conflict reflecting this problem: how can a

¹⁷ Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority*, p. 27 and Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History*, p. 213.

¹⁸ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 1994, p. 212.

¹⁹ E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays*. Tillyard argues for a socially homogenous underlying obsession with religion, or perhaps more aptly, providentialism. Those I have called ‘ideological’ scholars, while not necessarily adhering to Tillyard’s precisely religious viewpoint, adopt similarly exclusive arguments.

²⁰ A.P. Rossiter, “Ambivalence: Dialectic of the Histories,” p. 47.

figure like Cade, no longer dismissible as a crazed anomaly, be understood within the play's rigid structure of political control? I will resolve the dichotomy of the rebels' behavior by performing a reading of the social ambitions of the rebellion in light of the complex system of interdependence in Elizabethan England. History, in the hands of Keith Wrightson and John Walter, provides some perspective:

The position of the ruling class was upheld by a comparable complex of relationships and expectations between individuals and groups occupying different positions in the hierarchy of wealth and power: between governor and governed, landlord and tenant, master and servant, minister and people.²¹

The historical reality of Elizabethan social interdependence will guide my textual analysis, enabling me to explore the possibility that Cade's rebellion within the play was not a move against the standing authority of Henry VI, but a supplication for more able and informed rule.

I will employ Greenblatt's model for subversion and containment to explore this dynamic, but my interpretation of the rebellion calls for broader, social containment. Greenblatt writes that "subversive voices are produced by and within the affirmations of order; they are powerfully registered, but they do not undermine that order" (Greenblatt, "Bullets" 52). My analysis will adjust this model by reassigning the primary agent of the containment function. I will use textual analysis to show that containment in *2 Henry VI* is the effect of an acknowledged dependence between the lower and ruling classes rather than an unacknowledged force acting only from an inviolable authority. This containment is a *structural containment*, the willing containment of a social system necessitated by the interdependence of the classes, rather than Greenblatt's containment of an authority figure. I intend this consideration to highlight

²¹ John Walter and Keith Wrightson, "Dearth and Social Order in Early Modern England," p. 118.

“[Shakespeare’s] constructional patterns, the nature of the institutions he anatomized,” (Hattaway 15) in order to provide some concept of the operation of the system of governance and dependence within *2 Henry VI*, as well as in the Elizabethan system it reproduces.

My final chapter of analysis complicates and expands upon the question of social order by examining the origin of social power, authority, in the context of the rebellion. Based on my analysis in the second chapter, power can only derive from a position within the containing social order—thus, Cade, in order to enact a meaningful rebellion, must occupy the position of a ruler in the context of the uprising. I will confront this conflict by examining the source of Cade’s authority in light of his position as a “substitute” (3.1.71) and as the product of Cade’s dramatically legitimate position as a noble in the role of John Mortimer.

My analysis of Cade’s royal theatricality will reflect the idea of Michel Foucault’s scaffold, a social tool used to “represent a culture where power worked more effectively through theatrical display than through writing,” (Tennenhouse 13) tying that power to Cade’s status as a human demonstration of Greenblatt’s containment theory. My analysis will determine the origin of the power that emerges from Cade’s performance of nobility by using Althusser’s theory of interpellation.

In my conclusion, framed as a final analysis, I will apply the implications of each conflict’s resolution to a reading of the densely packed scene in Alexander Iden’s garden. The scene acts as a microcosm not only for England as presented in *2 Henry VI*, but for all of the social and textual conflicts I confront throughout this thesis. In order to illustrate the final effect of embracing the seemingly paradoxical ideas at work in the play I will set the conflicts of the previous chapters at odds with that final, fully marked out cultural space.

The conclusion of the thesis will endeavor to use these different instances of textual analysis and social inference to shed some light on the operation of the play “as an organ for raising consciousness and raising fundamental and radical questions about political structure and the relationship between power and authority, law and justice” (Hattaway 14). Although the question may be—indeed, *must* be, as long as we are (fortunately) not Shakespeare—impossible to answer perfectly, my hope with this thesis is to develop some of the insights our own disconnection allows.

I. Desperate Times, Desperate Measures

Popular protest, in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern England, was a cornerstone of society. The practice was common enough that it became something of a tradition for apprentices to stage a vitriolic uprising each year on Shrove Tuesday. In 1617, their target was a new playhouse, the Cockpit, which charged sixpence for entrance rather than the traditional penny:

The Prentizes on Shrove Tewsday last, to the number of 3. or 4000 comitted extream insolencies; ...[a part of them], making for Drury Lane, where lately a newe playhouse is erected, they beset the house round, broke in, wounded divers of the players, broke open their trunckes, & whatt apparrell, bookes, or other things they found, they burnt & it & had not the Justices of Peace & Sherife levied an aide & hindred their purpose, they would have laid that house likewise even with the grownd.²²

Their purpose was not primarily disorder or violence, but social change, a protest against rising prices and what they probably saw as exclusion from one of their favorite pastimes, the theatre. Such protests were certainly wild and radical, yet to the citizens of London and England at large, they must have seemed fully necessitated, a way to respond to social imbalance. To establish the

²² G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, p. 54.

inherited Elizabethan impression of rebellion is to begin sketching out that *cultural space* for analysis.

The year 1450 saw the culmination of a decade of unrest and displeasure with Henry VI's conduct as a monarch. The historian I.M.W. Harvey writes disparagingly, "the constant underlying theme of [dissentious speech during the period] was that men simply did not regard Henry as fit to be a king. At best he was regarded as a hapless idiot, and at worst as a predatory menace to his country's domestic finances and its foreign affairs."²³ Social unrest had grown to tumultuous levels due to the wars with France, there were fears of worsening economic dearth, and the growing impression that the ruling class was fractured and internally contentious. These assumptions were, of course, correct. The maritime murder of Suffolk, an episode which Shakespeare records as the first action of the burgeoning rebellion, was, historically, the event which finally instigated it:

It was the circumstances of the duke of Suffolks death, which occurred whilst he was traveling out of the country into exile by ship, which caused such alarm in Kent as to turn discontent into open action.²⁴

Cade emerged in 1450, much as he does in Act IV of the play, as a near unknown. A contemporary manuscript calls him "the Capitayne of the oste,"²⁵ but there is little evidence of his origin, or of why he was chosen as 'Capitayne.' His name was a particularly thorny issue. Speculation over his true identity abounded, one source identifying him as the physician John Aylemere, another as an ex-partisan of the French. One went so far as to 'recognize' him as a sorcerer from Sussex (Harvey 78). None of these 'real' identities were of as much concern to

²³ I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, p. 31.

²⁴ R. Virgoe, *The Death of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk*, p. 34; quoted in Harvey p. 70.

²⁵ Historical Manuscripts Commission, v.1876, p. 520; quoted in Harvey p. 45.

Henry VI and his advisors as Cade's pseudonyms. Cade took several of these, among which were Jack Amendalle (Amend all) and John Mortimer. It was Mortimer which concerned the throne: The Mortimer line maintained strong claims to the throne from Edmund Mortimer, the 3rd Earl of March, and by taking the name of Mortimer, Cade was reviving an official claim.

Perhaps more importantly, it was a claim with strong ties to the Duke of York. As Harvey notes:

That they took the Mortimer connection seriously almost certainly means that during the course of the rising at least the king and his ministers chose to believe that the Duke of York with his Mortimer ancestry was involved in some way in the revolt (Harvey 78).

The monarchy feared that Cade had come as a representative of York from Ireland, where the house of Mortimer had some of its roots, and more importantly, where York was then serving the king's lieutenant. Nonetheless, Cade and his rebels repeatedly denied any intention of replacing the king, either with York or Cade himself.²⁶ They made point this particularly clear—clearer, in fact, than any rebellion before them: they wrote it down.

The rebellion of 1450 was the first popular uprising that recorded a set of demands for wide distribution in written form.²⁷ This implies that they were organized, that they were partially literate or at least in connection with literates, and that they were interested not simply in stirring up discontent but in having their ideas legitimately considered. The 'Complaints' exist in several copies. I have primarily considered two: First, the initial fifteenth century copy, (British Library Cotton Roll IV) which details a few of the precise economic and social issues with which the rebels were concerned, and second, a sixteenth century copy of another, slightly later, manifesto (Oxford MS Lambeth 306) which more clearly sets out complaints of corruption.

²⁶ Historical Manuscripts Commission, viii. (1881), p. 267; quoted by I.M.W. Harvey, p. 79. There is no definitive explanation for the choice of such a contentious pseudonym that remains, if there ever was.

²⁷ Ellen Caldwell, "Jack Cade and Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*," p. 19.

The existence of these demands, laid out formally as both social complaints and political assertions, allows close consideration of the fundamental motivations behind popular protest.

Cade's demands were articulated clearly and in an officially respectful tone, even openly asserting the legitimacy of King Henry's rule and the rebels' support of the throne:

First the Chapteyn of the same Comyns desirith the welfare of oure souraign lord the Kyng, and of all his trewe lordes spirituall and temporall, desiring of our soueraigne lord and all his trewe counseill to take ageyn all his demaynes, and he shall then raign lyke a Kyng Riall as he is born our trewe cristen Kyng anynted. And who saith the contrary we woll all lyue and dye in that quarell.²⁸

The Complaints are careful to point out that the various sources of corruption and incompetence in the court were treacherous nobles like Suffolk, not the King himself. Nonetheless, they did implicate him in allowing such treachery and degradation:

X. Item, we sey that our Soveraygne lorde may wele undurstand that he hath hadde ffalse counsayle, ffor his lordez ern lost, his merchundize is lost, his comyns destroyed, the see is lost, ffraunse his lost, himself so pore that he may not [pay] for his mete nor drynk; he oweth more than ever dyd kynge in Ingland, and zit dayly his traytours that beene abowte hyme wayteth whereevur thyng shuude coome to hyme by his law, and they aske hit from hyme.²⁹

Nonetheless, the scrupulously respectful tone of these demands, maintained even as they reprimand, reflects the uprising's repeated insistence that theirs was a movement inspired by the desperate need for reform, not rebellion.

²⁸ British Library Cotton Roll II 23, lines 2-7; quoted in I.M.W. Harvey, p. 81.

²⁹ Oxford MS Lambeth 306; quoted in B. Wilkinson, pp 82-86.

When Shakespeare wrote *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (which I will refer to, for convenience and by convention, as *2 Henry VI*) in the early 1590s, an understanding of popular protest and its motivations was ingrained in Elizabethan culture—a historically received concept of unrest.³⁰ This concept would have effected the judgments and perceptions of Shakespeare’s diverse audience a great deal, and it would be difficult to form a reasonable analysis of Jack Cade’s rebellion without considering such historically-received perceptions. Shakespeare drew deeply from the English chroniclers Holinshed and Hall—not just in their descriptions of Cade, but also in their considerations of the social and economic climate that sparked the rebels (Caldwell 68). In the following section, I construct a historical basis for understanding the desperate gravity Elizabethans attached to rebellion, and in that, Shakespeare’s Jack Cade. I will expand by describing the ways in which Elizabethans may have inherited perceptions of the literary rebel’s most critical motivations: economic dearth and the literacy problem.

The practice of rebellion was a mode of radical readjustment for a populace that lacked the modern conventions of the voting booth. Annabel Patterson argues convincingly that England had developed:

[A] cultural tradition of popular protest, a tradition in the sense of something that was handed down from the past, cultural in the sense that what was transmitted were symbolic forms and signifying practices, a history from below encoded in names and occasions, a memorial vocabulary and even a formal rhetoric.³¹

³⁰ The precise date of the play is uncertain. The editors of the Oxford edition place its performance in 1591. It is certainly performed sometime before Robert Greene publishes his famous denunciation of a man who considers himself the only “Shake-scene in a country” in 1592.

³¹ Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, p. 38.

This tradition seems to have been deeply ensconced in cultural artifacts such as literature and drama. Shakespeare's description of Jack Cade's rebellion is one of many events in that tradition, and the play's combination of distinct rebellions is typical for writers of the period. Shakespeare describes the men of Jack Cade's rebellion, but many of the events are from the 1381 Peasant's Revolt. Shakespeare's account becomes, as Patterson calls it, a "[collation of] the popular protests of the past, both with each other and with the issues of the day" (Patterson 38). The contemporary confusion between uprisings, most notably Jack Straw of 1381, Cade of 1450 and Kett's Rebellion in 1549, implies that common perception located the "issues," the motives, of these rebellions in one point, addressing a common ill that was widely understood by the society. There are other explanations for these conflation, all of them lacking. Allow me to consider the two most reasonable.

Undoubtedly chroniclers made mistakes, simply misrecording—or not recording—salient information like the precise date, location, and purpose of the rebellions. George Puttenham, a contemporary literary critic, records that:

[Many] insurrections and rebellions have bene stirred up in this Realme, as that of Jacke Straw, & Jack Cade in Richard the seconds time, and in our time by a seditious fellow in Norffolke calling himself Captaine Ket.³²

Here Puttenham has made an understandable error by placing Cade with Straw in the 14th century. There is also the matter of convenience, of grouping together like events, which might make the period's conflation of rebellions seem incidental, but neither does this seem to be the case. The rebellions are always distinguished by name as Kett's, Cade's, or Straw's, a

³² George Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, p. 218

delineation that resists the idea of purely haphazard lumping. Instead, only the details are confused, leaving the historical identity of each rebellion intact.

I would suggest that such minor confusions stem from an understood grouping of culturally similar events. These confusions imply that Elizabethans would have held that, many, and perhaps all, rebellions shared a similar motivation and a similar philosophy. Patterson observes something close to this in her evaluation of Richard Bancraft. Bancraft writes of “a like saying amongst a multitude of rebelles, viz: *When Adam digged and Eve spanne, who was then the Gentleman,*” (his emphasis) a phrase he incorrectly but critically attributes to “John Wall, or Ball in the time of Jack Cade’s rebellion, in Rich. 2 daies.”³³ His source for the phrase is meticulously correct, even while his date is not. Puttenham, too, notes that the rebellions are “lead altogether by certaine propheticall rymes” (Puttenham 218). This indicates, as Thomas Cartelli writes, a “common ideological source which helped define a succession of popular uprisings and rebellions,” and suggests that citizens of the time would have recognized rebellions as motivated by ideas.³⁴

There must have been, in 1590 and the period at large, a cultural awareness of popular rebellions as a recalibration of the rights and role of a lower class. The awareness of Ball’s phrase and its ideological ties to rebellion was so thick that Shakespeare was able to write with assurance:

STAFFORD Villain, thy father was a plasterer

And thou thyself a shearman, art thou not?

CADE And Adam was a gardener.

³³ Richard Bancroft, *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline*; quoted in Patterson, p. 39.

³⁴ Thomas Cartelli, “Jack Cade in the Garden: Class Consciousness and Class Conflict in 2 *Henry VI*,” p. 63.

Shakespeare was likely confident that his audience would recognize Cade's retort as the rallying call for their institution of rebellion. English society saw these rebellions as ripe for confusion not because of their date or their names, but because they shared a recognizable, perpetuated ideology of English society. This ideology would have supported an uprising that insisted upon similarly inherited ideas: the virtue of a lower class and the issues—economic, social, and political—accompanying the ideology and its rebellious defense. This idea of inherited values and according behavior is supported by E.P. Thompson's theory of a moral economy, which he ties directly to the "grievances" which sparked riots:

[These] grievances operated within a popular consensus... grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor.³⁵

Economic hardship was rife and regular in the 16th century, and more than a little hair was lost worrying over cyclical recessions. Historians Walter and Wrightson open their study on dearth with conviction, "It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which people in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century were conscious of the threat of dearth. Periodic harvest disaster and food shortage were the spectre which haunted early modern Europe," (Walter and Wrightson 108) making it abundantly clear that economic hardship was taken seriously. Although "dearth rarely gave rise to crises of subsistence...at this period...It did nevertheless entail very widespread suffering and suffering which was both regionally and socially selective in its impact" (Walter and Wrightson 108). The 'socially selective' nature of dearth would have

³⁵ E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the 18th Century," p. 79.

made it especially a bitter point with the lower classes who suffered from it while their lords remained relatively untouched.

More than 40 grain riots occurred during the period from 1585 to 1660.³⁶ That subsistence riots were practiced with such frequency indicates not only that there was indeed dearth in Elizabethan society, but also a cultural disposition to react to it through uprisings. The English of this period could scarcely “eliminate the spectre of dearth,” (Walter and Wrightson 128) and they could only have acknowledged the social significance of an uprising as a valiant sally against that spectre.

Literacy, too, was an issue of great concern to the Elizabethan lower classes, if more socially symbolic than physically practical. It acted as a lynchpin, a critical determinant of the authority and social standing of an individual, and as such was highly divisive. The social division of illiterate from literate was historically embedded and had been perpetuated for centuries, and it was a major metric in a stark system of social bias. In the 12th century, the word “rusticus,” meaning “serf” or “peasant,” implied the illiteracy of the working class, of workers for whom reading was functionally unimportant. As historian Brian Stock points out, “to speak *rustico more* was to communicate in an unlearned tongue for which there was no written counterpart based on grammatical rules.”³⁷ Nobles and government officials, conversely, found it important to read and write in order to perform their role—that of governing the working class. As Steven Justice writes of an influential contemporary chronicler, “Walsingham imagines writing as a single thing that unites all forms of authority...and distinguishes them all from the

³⁶ Walter and Wrightson argue that this number may vastly underestimate the number of protests, both in the lack of rigorous records and in the tendency of reports to “refer to more than one riot as single incidents.” p. 113.

³⁷ Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, p. 45.

mute idiocy of the peasant.”³⁸ The assumption that the peasant was a “mute [idiot]” was a dangerous one for Walsingham to make. The literacy issue may not have appealed directly to the bellies of Elizabethan peasants, but the division it enabled must have been bitter to their sense of moral entitlement, and as Thompson asserts, “An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action” (Thompson 79).

By the 1590s, the divisions—illiterate peasants versus literate noblemen—were scarcely absolute. Some lower-class men could likely write, and some gentlemen likely could not.³⁹ Nonetheless, the historically received perception remained overwhelmingly accurate: the lower classes were illiterate, and this placed them at a marked disadvantage to the literate in terms of governance and authority. For the lower classes, illiteracy meant subordination and adherence to “the prevailing ideology of order and authority” in a relationship that was seen to benefit only “the ruling class whose interests that ideology most clearly served” (Walter and Wrightson 109). The Peasant’s Revolt of 1381 was source of the association of literacy and rebellion, and its bold attempt to unseat the literate authority prompted scathing denunciations from chroniclers.

It is widely accepted that Shakespeare drew heavily from the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381 to feed Jack Cade’s assaults on literacy, and it is likely that Elizabethans in general would have absorbed the implications of the Revolt’s attacks on literacy into their own cultural consciousness (Caldwell 6). The Peasants Revolt saw a great deal of hostility directed at the literate, as well as its share of charred legal documents:

They forced the teachers of grammar to swear that they would never again teach that art.

...They worked to give old muniments [legal documents of ownership] over to the

³⁸ Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, p. 17.

³⁹ David Cressy’s detailed study of literacy during the period offers evidence for a slowly closing literacy gap. David Cressy, *Literacy*, pp. 16-17.

flames... . It was dangerous to be known a cleric; much more dangerous to be found with an inkwell.⁴⁰

This account illustrates the immense social stigma that was placed on writing and written documents, extending even to the instruments of the skill. The rebels of 1381 apparently saw these documents and their authors as serious threats and acted aggressively against them. In 1450, too, the rebels saw corrupt law represented in legal documents and writing. The first copy of their Complaints details the reasoning that Justice endeavors to prove for 1381—an association of writing and records with extortion and injustice, the peoples “undoing”:

Item they retorne in names of enquestys be wrytyng in to diverse sourtes of the kynges not Somenyd ne warnyd where thorou the peple lese dayly gret sommes of money or the value to here undoing⁴¹

Such contemporary accounts betray the cultural apprehension with which illiterate laborers of the 1590s must have regarded the literate. This received cultural stigma against the oft-misused authority of the literate would have weighed deeply upon upon cultural conceptions in late sixteenth century England.⁴² Even during a period that encouraged literacy more fervently than any before it, they could hardly avoided a deep-seated bias against literacy and the authority that accompanied it.⁴³ The historically-received concerns of the 16th century seem, at first, stretched far out of proportion by Shakespeare’s wild rebel.

⁴⁰ Thomas Walsingham, *Chronica*, p. 308; quoted and translated by Steven Justice, p. 61.

⁴¹ Manuscript of the British Library, Cotton Roll II 23; quoted in Harvey, p. 45.

⁴² Cressy suggests that “The gentry, clergy and members of the professions were so similar in their literacy that they can be regarded as inhabiting a single cluster at the accomplished end of the literary scale. Thirty percentage points or more usually separated them from the next most literate cluster, the yeoman or the tradesman.” Cressy, pp. 16-17.

⁴³ “The [literacy] situation began to change markedly in the sixteenth century. Protestantism placed a far greater emphasis upon lay literacy: for the sake of salvation, it was crucially important to be intimately acquainted with the Holy Book... Schools became less strictly bound

Jack Cade is an over-dramatic radical at best and a bloodthirsty madman at worst, but in either case, his madness begins and ends in theatricality. His role and that of the Butcher are unmistakably clownish—warped caricatures of the rebels they represent. While most of his actions are historically accurate, conjuring up the Elizabethan tradition of rebellion and protest, the manner in which Cade carries out his uprising is gross bordering on insane. This apparent madness of the rebel leader has driven many critics to dismiss the episode, as Greenblatt does, as “a grotesque and sinister farce, the archetypal lower class revolt both in its motives and in its ludicrousness” (Greenblatt, “Murdering Peasants” 23). Yet Greenblatt’s view, like the critics who precede and echo him, is smoothing the difficulties, ignoring the vital ambivalence of the episode. It is indeed a “archetypal lower class revolt,” but the historical revolts, as I have argued, were not farcical or ludicrous—to blend rational motives into farcical portrayal is an oversight. The conflict between Cade’s impossibly chaotic behavior and the distinct, historically-received understanding of the rebellion’s desperate motives arguably legitimizes the rebellion rather than dismantling it as farce.

Cade’s behavior in the play is bizarrely and deliberately radical, even when it could be rationally motivated and grounded in historical fact. When Cade confronts Stafford regarding his superior, Lord Saye, he turns what could be a reasonable critique of political corruption and treachery into a wild lynching:

CADE Nay, answer if you can: the Frenchmen are our enemies; go to then, I ask but
 this—can he that speaks with the tongue of an enemy be a good counselor or no?

ALL CADE’S FOLLOWERS No, no—and therefore we’ll have his head!

up with training for church and more linked to the general acquisition of “literature,” in the sense both of literacy and of cultural knowledge.” Stephen Greenblatt, “General Introduction,” *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 43.

Certainly, this isn't entirely absurd: to "[speak] with the tongue of an enemy" (4.2.154) is a blatant metaphor for betrayal, and Shakespeare leaves that interpretation available—and yet the crowd is concerned with nothing but Saye's death, merely to "have his head!" (4.2.156) The passage is a showcase of the wild and irrational bloodlust that Cade engenders, but even more so of the drastic, faulty reasoning he employs in clear dismissal of historical fact.

Cade yells that "Lord Saye hath gelded the commonwealth, and made it an eunuch," (4.2.149-150), an accusation of embezzlement couched among coarser implications. The accusations are correct; the historical Saye was a notoriously corrupt official and was charged with several estate crimes against his constituents.⁴⁴ His death, both historically and metaphorically, is fully justified, and there's the rub. The Saye of 1450 was every bit the corrupt official Shakespeare's Cade roughly implies he is—as Shakespeare would likely have known from the chronicles—but none of that is used to blood his followers. Instead, Cade's images of gelding and the commonwealth as a "eunuch" wildly sensationalize Saye's crimes. By making Cade so obviously, deliberately theatrical and irrational, Shakespeare has created a deep divide between the historical Cade and his dramatic double, building tension between the seriousness of Cade's reforms and his chaotic behavior.

The conflict between the historical rebellion, an organized uprising which disseminated their demands in writing, and Shakespeare's mad leader with his "ragged multitude / Of hinds and peasants" (4.4.31-32, 36) is telling. Certainly the men of 1450 were a ragged multitude by some measure, and a rebellious one, but as my historical perspective should illustrate, they were

⁴⁴ Harvey describes how "he and Stephen Slegge, a sheriff of Kent...allegedly expelled a man violently from his 250 acres," threatened other peasants into submitting their land, and "distraigned tenants in their lands so obliging them to pay an additional 50 per cent and more per acre than was their annual due." Harvey, p. 65.

by no means “rude and merciless” (4.4.32) as Shakespeare’s Messenger would have them. Shakespeare’s sources could easily have informed him as much: Edward Hall wrote almost glowingly of Cade, calling him “a young man of goodly stature and pregnant wit...a subtle captain [who was] sober in communication [and] wise in disputing.”⁴⁵ This is the observation that has caused such turmoil among critics: If Shakespeare knew that Cade was not a madman, why portray him as such?

The most obvious answer is that Cade’s theatrical behavior was geared to provoke opposition to him, his rebellion, and the entire Elizabethan institution of popular protest. This conclusion seems almost self-evident, for as Terry Eagleton writes in his very first line, “Even those who know very little about Shakespeare might be vaguely aware that his plays value social order and stability.”⁴⁶ This is what Helgerson argues when he says “If there was, as I have suggested, a special relation between popular revolt and public theater, it was...a relation of intense and unremitting hostility,” but he is making an unfair assumption. There is nothing to imply that “Shakespeare [was] making fun of him,” (Helgerson 212) or that the character was designed to work as a one-dimensional mockery. This viewpoint is to be balanced against that of Phyllis Rackin, who has suggested that there is real danger in this emphatic portrayal, bleeding from stage to house, of rousing a similarly downtrodden audience to protest:

Giving public voice to the grievances they shared with actual rebels in Shakespeare’s England, the actors threatened to produce in the real time of the audience the same disorder they enacted in the fictive time on stage (Rackin 208).

⁴⁵ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York*; quoted by Wilson, pp. 27, 29, 30.

⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Shakespeare*, p. 1.

This view, of course, would require some degree of sympathy from a variegated audience towards a figure who, as I have illustrated above, is often practically insane.⁴⁷ Neither of these seem plausible to me, and I would choose a third route, one which embraces Cade's theatricality and his insanity, as well as acknowledging the dire straits which were such a critical aspect of the Elizabethan conception of rebellion. Cade and his rebellion operate, I will argue, by invoking the hyperbole of desperation.

Cade's hyperbole is not for comic effect and ridicule, nor is it likely such a wildly chaotic character could stir sympathy in an audience. Instead, his is the hyperbole of desperation, a phrase I use in two senses. The first is as a vehicle for highlighting the immense pressure inherent in his tenuous position as a rebel leader. When he wildly rallies his men against Saye and the French, his mad yell is not incidental; such radicalism is a tool with which to stir his men, and they respond to this sense of urgency, "therefore we'll have his head!" (4.2.156). Although Shakespeare has turned what could have been a historically-supported trial of a treacherous noble into something far more radical, it is a mark of panic rather than farce. Cade is anything but laughable when he hisses at Saye, "because they could not read, thou hast hanged them when indeed only for that cause they have been most worthy to live" (4.7.37-38). Shakespeare's depiction does not retreat that way, but confronts head-on the rancor of a rebel driven by survival instinct as he enacts the ultimate revenge on his oppressor.

Unable to get out from under his pact with the Duke of York, Cade is caught in a swiftly escalating conflict almost certain to end in his death—a fact of which he is fully, urgently aware. Cade curses his pact with York, "I did but seal once to a thing, and I was never mine own man

⁴⁷ Contemporary author Thomas Nashe memorable writes that "'No play' to be seen in the London theaters of that time 'encourageth any man to tumults or rebellion but lays before such the halter and the gallows'; quoted in Helgerson, p. 212.

since” (4.2.73). And yet, although he has little choice but to press on to fulfill York’s demands, there is nothing to imply that he is sure of them. The connotation of the line, certainly, implies the opposite. Cade knows all too well that he is a position from which the only escape is to enact swift, unrelenting violence:

CADE Up Fish Street! Down Saint Magnus’ Corner! Kill and knock down! Throw them
into Thames!

Sound a parley

What noise is this? Dare any be so bold to sound retreat or parley when I
command them kill?

4.7.145-148

He is in mid-breath, screaming in wild passion, when the parley stops him cold. Cade’s response, “What noise is this?,” is the thinly-veiled bravado of a man terrified, a man who knows too well what a tenuous hold he has on his forces. Wilson’s “cruel, barbaric lout,” (Wilson 27) can merely question, helpless and defused, knowing that his desperate attempts to whip his rebels to a juggernaut frenzy have not stopped the axe from falling. When his men forsake him not one hundred lines later, it’s obvious his fear is well-founded. Indeed, their betrayal is a symptom of the second sense of the hyperbole of desperation: an unrestrained need for the fruits of the type of rebellion I have argued for in the Elizabethan cultural space.

Shakespeare’s Cade lacks something of the organization and literacy attributed to his historical double, but the serious demands of 1450 echo loudly and often in the dramatic rendition. First among these are the broad accusations of political corruption and the king’s hopeless ineptitude with foreign policy—namely, the loss of France. These themes, more than simply spoken by Cade or his rebels, vibrate throughout the play in the discontent that plagues

both commons and nobles. Act 4 begins with the Captain's wrathful words against Suffolk, who "smiledst at good Duke Humphrey's death" and who "By devlish policy art...grown great" (4.1.76, 82-83). Certainly he waxes overdramatic, perhaps even absurd, comparing Suffolk to "ambitious Sylla, overgorged / With gobbets of thy mother's bleeding heart," but he continues, icily severe, "By thee Anjou and Maine were sold to France" (4.1.76, 84, 86). This is no light accusation, and the Captain's curses may as well have been lifted directly from the 1450

Complaints:

VII. Item, hit is an evy thyng that the good Duke of Gloucester enpechid of tresone by on ffalse traytour alone was so sone merderud, and nevr myzt come to onswere.⁴⁸

Also the Realme of Fraunce, the Duchie of Normandy, Gasguyn, and Guyen, Angoy, and Mayn lost by the same traytours...which is gret pite and gret losse to our souraigne lord and distruccion to his Realme.⁴⁹

The result, too, is familiar: "the commons here in Kent are up in arms" (4.1.100-102). Scylla aside, the Captain's condemnations are historically sound, and faced with the prospect of a treacherous murder and dissentious nobles, his dramatics begin to seem desperate rather than absurd. The protestations and the behavior of Cade's rebels a scene later operate in the same way, working in the cultural space of 16th century England to enact sharp economic criticisms.

Many of Cade's wild claims and declarations are actually strikingly well-planned motions to adjust the Elizabethan economy. When Cade makes his declarations of reform, they are not haphazard or ludicrous:

CADE There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny, the three-

⁴⁸ Oxford MS Lambeth 306; quoted by Wilkinson, *The Constitutional History of England in the Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485*, pp 82-86.

⁴⁹ Manuscript of the British Library, Cotton Roll II 23; quoted in Harvey, p. 46.

hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer. All the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass.

4.2.57-61

William Carroll brushes these statements aside, calling them “comical,” but I disagree.⁵⁰

Although it may seem a tad absurd to declare that “the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops,” (4.2.58) when clearly it shan’t—Cade is hardly a magician—the implications of the statement are nothing of the sort. For all of Cade’s bravado, and with all of the untouchable radicalism of rebellion at his disposal, his great promise is not for gold or jewels, but quite literally a discount on food prices.

Indeed, Cade “is brave and vows reformation,” (4.2.57) and his reformation is to enact lighter economic policies for the lower class. What Cade proposes is price-fixing of consumable goods, an act intended to benefit consumers in an economy that was suffering enormously. In the late 16th century, the prices of food were disastrously high for the low-income worker.⁵¹ Cade’s promises are issued theatrically, but they are far more than careless vows: they are calculatingly appropriate to the economic conditions of England in the 1590s, and hardly swollen by the hyperbole that infuses the rebel leader himself.

Cade also demonstrates a striking awareness of working men’s issues, an awareness and specificity that is almost disconcerting given his other actions. Directly after a bloody battle in

⁵⁰ Carroll, William. “The Nursery of Beggary: Enclosure, Vagrancy, and Sedition in the Tudor-Stuart Period,” p. 57.

⁵¹ “The average prices of foodstuffs in southern England, which had remained fairly stable throughout the later fifteenth century, had trebled by the 1570s, and by the early decades of the seventeenth century, they had risen sixfold...the prices of cheaper foodstuffs rose more swiftly than those of more expensive foods...wages rose less swiftly in an overstocked labour market and real wages steadily declined, reaching their lowest point in the early decades of the seventeenth century (by which time they were half those of a century earlier).” Wrightson, Keith. *English Society: 1580-1680*. p. 133.

which both Staffords are slain for their resistance, Cade makes a trade concession to Dick the Butcher. For a coarse workman like the Butcher, it might be reasonable to offer glittering prizes or rewards of the flesh; later, when his fear of being betrayed and killed is at its height, Cade promises his men “these commodities following—item, a gown, a kirtle, a petticoat, and a smock” (4.7.135-136), but here there is nothing of the sort. Rather again than gold or women, Cade promises the Butcher that “the Lent shall be as long again as it is. Thou shalt have licence to kill for a hundred, lacking one” (4.3.5-8). During Lent, butchers were not normally permitted to slaughter meat; Cade offers the Butcher an 80-day monopoly and ninety-nine consumers.

The rationality of the promise is highlighted by the hyperbole—the air of violence—that dominates the scene. The context is bizarre; in the next line Cade apparels himself in the armor of his dead foes, declaring that “the bodies shall be dragged at my horse heels till I do come to London” (4.3.10-11), as rough and bloody as any declaration in the play. It is couched in casual terms, but the line is, every word, that of a policy-maker speaking to a constituent. Cade’s followers expect such favors from their political leader, so in some sense it may be unsurprising. While the tone of the episode does not lend itself to critical political thought, Cade and his men are clearly self-aware profit-maximizing actors.

There is a strong village mentality among the rebels, and although it may seem unreasonable to declare grossly that “All the realm shall be in common” (4.2.60-61) as Cade so boldly does, it makes excellent sense for the men he speaks to. Another perspective from the social sciences will be useful here in contextualizing the actions of the rebels. Political scientist James C. Scott extends E.P. Thompson’s idea of the “moral economy” to the determination to maintain village-wide subsistence:

Moral economists link the protest movements to a (presumed) loss of subsistence, security, and welfare by the peasantry...They interpret violence as a defensive action against capitalism and as an attempt to restore precapitalist structures that provided peasant welfare. ...They assume that peasants are antimarket, prefer common property to private, and dislike buying and selling. They also assume that peasant welfare depends on the closed corporate villages so common in precapitalist society...transition to villages with private property...they argue, force peasants into the market where their welfare invariably suffers.⁵²

Under this reasoning, any entry into a private market—in Elizabethan terms, the enclosures Cade opposes in line 61—was far from simply disorienting or upsetting—it was perceived as a threat to push villagers beneath the subsistence line. It is not an idle call, or jesting, when the First Rebel invites his fellow to “Come and get thee a sword, though made of a lath” (4.2.1-2). The call is one that expects a response exactly because of the meager resources—swords of lath rather than iron—of its subject. For a peasant in a moral economy, such a call could hardly be refused—each family was completely dependent upon the others for safety and security in a market with no surplus (Scott 7). Shakespeare may not have had the phrase “moral economy” in mind, but I would argue that his rebels bear the characteristics and concerns of the members of such an economy.

There is a tendency to evaluate Cade’s reforms based solely on Cade’s character, but resisting this, his economic platform is exceptionally strong and well thought out to please his constituents. The nostalgia these ‘rational peasants’ held for their moral economy could only have been stirred by Cade’s declaration that “there shall be no money. All shall eat and drink on

⁵² James Scott, *The Rational Peasant*, pp. 5-6.

my score,” (4.2.64-65), which were characteristics of such an economy. The rebels under Cade are acting with excellent reason and understandable motivation in disastrous, near-starvation circumstances. For rebels, they and their leader seem remarkably apprised of economic policies, and such acuity implies a conscious decision on Shakespeare’s part. The effect is one which conjures sympathy for a body of oppressed peasants, despite the seemingly incendiary and unreasonable actions of Cade. His attacks on literacy would potentially have diffused in much the same way.

To Shakespeare’s Cade, literacy is injustice, confinement, and corruption. Like their economic protests, the rebels’ position against literacy reflects the complex social climate of the 1590s. “The Clerk of Chatham—he can write and read and cast account,” announces the Weaver, to which Cade replies with a yell, “O, monstrous!” (4.2.75-76). Although the lines are delivered in a manner that is unmistakably farcical, the mode of farce does nothing to detract from their severity. The rebels are thorough with their accusations and specific in a manner that belies the apparent levity of the scene. The legal implications of the Clerk’s skills are critical: What truly condemns him is that “he can make obligations and write court hand” (4.2.82). In other words, the clerk can write bonds of service and prepare legal documents. He is in a position with the power to record the other men’s debts, taxes, and legal affairs—artifacts of a government that, in the tumultuous climate of the corrupt nobility, Cade’s rebels see as treacherous and self-serving.

Shakespeare’s portrayal of the rebellion brings the status of literacy as a means for political and social exclusion to the fore. Thomas Cartelli suggests that Shakespeare uses literacy as a device in general and the Cade episode is “symptomatic of Shakespeare’s representation of literacy as a crucial bridge between powerlessness and empowerment” (Cartelli 59). Indeed, Cade and his men treat the ability to read as nothing less than the social ball and chain it was,

striking out against a convention that threatened their households and their freedom. In Cade's stirring denouncement of Lord Saye, his last, most bitter accusation is that Saye "hast put [poor men] in prison, and because they could not read, thou hast hanged them when indeed only for that cause they have been most worthy to live" (4.7.36-40)—the line spills ragged passion. Cade is referring to what is perhaps the most concrete example of literacy-motivated social favoritism: benefit of clergy.⁵³ Benefit of clergy was a practice that allowed a literate man to avoid prosecution on one occasion by reading a Bible verse. Illiterate Englishmen had no such recourse. Cade, in making such a biting accusation, clearly ties the relationship between literacy and class to a sense of deep iniquity and social bias.

Jack Cade's judgments and actions are geared to highlight the oppression that was enacted through legal documents of the period. His is a sad question:

CADE Is it not a lamentable thing that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment? That parchment, being scribbled o'er, should undo a man? Some say the bee stings, but I say 'tis the bee's wax. For I did but seal once to a thing, and I was never mine own man since.

4.2.69-72

Cade is quite accurate; yeoman and laborers in Early Modern England were at the mercy of written law (Justice 13-61). Unable even to read their own taxes and bonds, they were forced to pay what the literate demanded and forced into servitude by the same token. Even Cade, the "headstrong Kentishman" (3.1.356) has been entrapped by a document—his fatal pact with

⁵³ There were several details attending this rule. It passed through many iterations between the times of Henry II and Henry VIII, each time with varying details. For most of these periods, those that pleaded benefit of clergy had their left thumb branded to prevent a second instance. For a full explanation, see: Burtzell, Richard. "Benefit of Clergy." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 2. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907.

York. English rebels saw the destruction of parchment and the men who wrote on it was a critical way of undermining a state they perceptively identified as corrupt and oppressive. Shakespeare's Cade, for all his dramatic bravado, is dealing with the same issue in the only way he can. It is an act of reversal, a pitiless sortie that is fully justified despite its harshness. As Thomas Cartelli argues, "Illiteracy was surely not a capital offense...but it would be disingenuous to contend that Cade radically misrepresents the legal implications of a social structure in which illiteracy could have mortal consequences" (Cartelli 59). For Cade and his men, eliminating the literate is as much self-preservation as it is symbolic protest.

The grim seriousness of the economic and political issues Cade addresses is in distinct conflict with his chaotic personality, creating a sense of last-ditch hyperbole, a theatricality that may be the only way to address the issues that might otherwise crush the rebels. I have argued that Cade's social reforms are distinctly rational actions enacted on the behalf of the working class and are far from the farcical chaos attributed them by certain critics. The hyperbole of desperation is constantly at work in the episode; while I have conceded that Cade is indeed hopelessly overzealous, his desperation is not to be confused with simple bloodlust, and the issues faced by his followers are similarly nuanced.

Nothing in the rebellion calls for its dismissal, and the critics who have done so are placing too much weight, as I have said, on Cade's brash personality. In view of the historical context and the textual evidence I have presented in the arguments above, Cade's rebellion is a daring declaration of the right of the working class to protest and a cry against the crushing iniquity under which many Elizabethans suffered. Reinforced by the hyperbole of their desperation, the social pressure the rebels exert is impossible to deny. The operation of social change, Shakespeare seems to suggest, is not without its complexities, and even his rebels are not

merely a one-dimensional rabble, but reasoning agents, though they reason in mockery. Still, there is more at work in *2 Henry VI* than an unequivocal affirmation of the oppression and justified rebellion of Cade and his men.

I will contend in the next chapter that there is another conflict emerging from the same issues—the desperate, theatrical need of the rebels—which resolved the first. That the catalysts of rebellion are dire cannot change the fact that the peasants *needed* to be ruled, or that Shakespeare’s rebellion ultimately confirms the necessity of governance. I will use historical references to sketch the borders of *2 Henry VI*’s cultural space a bit darker, then build new conclusions from the conflict of the text within that space. Cade’s rebellion, in this way, is less a ruthless insurgency than it is a vehement declaration of the need for effective rulers. I will argue for an understanding of the uprising as a cry for stronger governance, as a stabilizing act rather than a revolutionary one.

II. Order From Chaos

The relationship between elites and the working class, for the bulk of the 16th century, acknowledged the importance of maintaining a structure of control for the prosperity of both groups. Tenants depended upon the power of the landowner to manage regional land use and back them in times of dearth. These rulers acted like a safety net for those who lived within the reach of their power, “[serving] above all to provide protection against the myriad insecurities—economics, social, and ritual—of a hostile environment.”⁵⁴ This is not to suggest the relationship was one-sided; the upper echelon benefitted immensely. Still, theirs was a precarious perch:

The position of the ruling class was upheld by a comparable complex of relationships and expectations between individuals and groups occupying different positions in the hierarchy of wealth and power: between governor and governed, landlord and tenant, master and servant, minister and people (Walter and Wrightson 109).

Without the careful maintenance of those relationships in the form of support and the fulfillment of established expectations, the ruling class would not only have lost their control, but also produced the sort of social turmoil for which the 1590s are notorious. Archer acknowledges the possibility of unruliness when he notes that the “loyalties of the artisans were essentially

⁵⁴ Walter and Wrightson, p. 109. Also, Ian Archer provides an excellent overview of this relationship in his introduction to “The Pursuit of Stability,” pp. 1-14.

conditional, dependent on the rulers being sufficiently responsive to their demands to ensure their continuing obedience” (Archer 17).

In many cases, the expectations of the lower classes were honored. In return, farmers and artisans were willing to sacrifice their personal sovereignty to their lords and the institutions that stood behind them. Walter and Wrightson’s account of the grain riots of the late 1590s describes how the populace not only accepted harsh intervention, but encouraged it as a reinforcement of the established structure of control:

In a series of increasingly elaborate directives...it required the justices to control the activities of middlemen ... It reinforced these measures with an at times powerful campaign to increase the availability of grain by suppressing unnecessary alehouses (Walter and Wrightson 118).

Working-class Elizabethans supported such action, and they did so for various reasons, not the least of which was the form of paradoxical control it enabled by making governmental dominance, through the threat of upheaval, a means of indirect influence:

It allowed the poor to manipulate the fears of their betters through formal petitions and indirect threats in order to galvanize them into action, to persuade them to fulfill those moral and legal obligations in defense of the weak which legitimized their authority.⁵⁵

The ability of the Elizabethan artisan class to influence their rulers became exceptionally important in the later part of the 16th century as the economic and political climate grew increasingly stormy.

⁵⁵ Walter and Wrightson, p. 118. E.P. Thompson also points out the power of the moral economy and the “paternalist traditions of the authorities...[traditions] which the people re-echoed so loudly in their turn that the authorities were, in some measure, the prisoners of the people,” p. 79.

The 16th century, and especially its final decade, has long been seen as a period of near-disaster: E.P. Cheyney described it as “a period of crisis characterized by plague, repeated harvest failure, massive price inflation, heavy taxation, depression both in overseas trade and in the volume of domestic demand, [as well as] large-scale unemployment.”⁵⁶ This turmoil altered the priorities of lords and landowners, making cooperation between the classes more difficult while that cooperation only became more critical. Walter and Wrightson describe how “dearth underlined for many the necessity and value of relationships and practices which were, for the principal beneficiaries of change, increasingly inappropriate” (Walter and Wrightson 109). These ‘principal beneficiaries,’ were the same privileged individuals for whom enclosures had proven convenient: lords and wealthy landowners. Through the intervention and acceptance of these landowners, there emerged what James Siemon calls “a transitional social formulation characterized by an ‘articulated combination’ of feudalism and capitalism,” a formulation otherwise known as enclosure.⁵⁷ As Siemon’s description implies, the phenomenon was as much economic as social, and our modern economic models may be useful for interpretation.

Those in power, bestowed with resources—and therefore options—adjusted rationally to combat decreasing market returns by increasing technology and minimizing risk. Thomas More dramatized the changing social policy of landowners as unforgiving, applied by men who were “greedy, insatiable gluttons [who] may enclose many thousand acres of land within a single hedge.”⁵⁸ While his indictment may not be entirely false, it is far from entirely true. On the contrary, the character Hythloday’s voracious “sheep”—Elizabethan lords—are merely rational,

⁵⁶ E.P. Cheyney, *A History of England from the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth*. Quoted in Archer, p. 18.

⁵⁷ James Siemon, “Landlord Not King: Agrarian Change and Interarticulation,” p. 19.

⁵⁸ Thomas More, *Utopia*, pp. 14-16.

profit-maximizing actors attempting to make the most of their pastures. As William Carroll shrewdly notes:

The reason for enclosure was often technical agricultural innovation and improved efficiency of tillage rather than the wish to pasture sheep; and some acts of enclosure, as Roger B. Manning has shown, were initiated by gentry against other gentry as part of more complex political, religious, or personal feuds (Carroll 35).

Encouraged by the opportunity for greater profits, landowners chose to ignore the “obligations of neighborliness and the traditional interpretation of customary rights” that had guided the moral economy of rural England for generations.⁵⁹ Enclosure was only one aspect of the changing climate of social and political conduct of the period, but it was becoming increasingly common for lords to dismiss their “paternalist traditions,” (Thompson 79) of support, sometimes with dire consequences. In such situations where the structure of control and the attendant obligations of the ruling class faltered, the lower classes took advantage of the mechanisms available to them to “galvanize [their rulers] into action” (Walter and Wrightson 118). The absolute form of this manipulation was popular protest—often riot and eventually rebellion—geared towards reclaiming the more comfortable, familiar relationship of ages past. On this, Thompson is clear: “Indeed, one may suggest that if the rioting or price-setting crowd acted according to any consistent theoretical model, then this model was a reconstruction of the paternalist one” (Thompson 98).

Riot was a method of temporarily circumventing authority to enact change without denying or dismantling that authority. Ian Archer succinctly and aptly identifies riot as “[a] negotiating strategy,” (Archer 7) and even the royalty of 1613 recognized it as “the complaynt of

⁵⁹ Walter and Wrightson, p. 109 and Thompson, p. 79.

a multitude and to concerne the common good of the poorer sorte.”⁶⁰ Often, rioters were respected as an influential body for political reform. Historians record that “the magistrates took seriously the warnings from the crowd that they were failing to discharge their duties properly, for the repression of rioters was accompanied by measures to tighten the machinery of market regulation.”⁶¹ The Elizabethans who engaged in such protests did so with a sense of purpose and strong economic reasoning. Archer calls them “disciplined crowds,” and John Stowe, a contemporary chronicler, records that:

It is true that in the food riots the apprentices appropriated some of the magisterial functions in the markets. The 300 apprentices who assembled in Southwark on 13 June took upon themselves the office of clerk of the market, selling butter at 3d. per pound whereas owners demanded 5d. They also issued a proclamation demanding that butter be brought to the markets and not sold in inns or private houses.⁶²

The power assumed by the apprentices in this case is significant in several ways. As my preceding discussion of their fragile interdependence would predict, they “took upon themselves the office of clerk of the market” rather than upsetting that position or instituting a new power structure. They operated fully within the structure of dominance already established by the upper classes, and even if they—for a moment—upset that dominance, it was clear that it would be re-established swiftly. In this way, the flexibility accorded by the acknowledgment of lower-class complaint was also a means of perpetuating, evening strengthening, the control structure. This was the case for the fragile social balance in late 16th century London.

⁶⁰ Acts of the Privy Council of England 1613-1614. p. 653; quoted in Archer p. 61. The Privy Council was a group of advisors to the English Monarch. King James I, in this case.

⁶¹ Ian Archer, Caroline Barron, and Vanessa Harding, *Hugh Alley's 'Caveat': the London Markets in 1598*, p. 54.

⁶² John Stowe, *Annales or a generall chronicle of England*, p. 769. Quoted in Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 56.

It is not empirically true that the capital was free of conflict in the late 1590s. In fact, historian Brian Manning records that “Between 1581 and 1602, the city was disturbed by no fewer than 35 outbreaks of disorder,” an exceptionally high number for a city that experienced on average less than one a year.⁶³ Still, as Steven Rappaport implies, the events that did occur were not “riots” in the modern sense. Rappaport dismisses the London riots of the 1590s as “chiefly the antics and brawling of apprentices and journeymen,” arguing that, in the absence of any ‘serious’ unrest, London was fundamentally orderly.⁶⁴ While I would strongly disagree with his explanation of the unrest—“boys will be boys,” he writes glibly—his conclusion, that London experienced “relative peace” during the period, is a demonstratable fact.

The uprisings which occurred were, in a strictly revolutionary sense, negligible. They were abrupt, radical reinforcements of an established social order—reinforcements that, rather than undermining an order that forced artisans and peasants to depend solely on their lords for progress and reform, simply gave it room to breathe. The major rebellions of the age—the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381, Cade’s in 1450, and Kett’s in 1549—were conducted in much the same manner with the same motivations. The events that occurred in the Early Modern period were not evidence of anarchic revolt, of sustained disorder. Instead, I would call them instances of *reordering*.

That popular unrest in the 16th century can be thought of as reordering rather than disordering is a necessary provision for my reading of Cade’s rebellion in *2 Henry VI*. The next section of my thesis will explore the many-layered structure of control in *2 Henry VI* using Greenblatt’s model of subversion and containment as a basis for understanding the

⁶³ Brian Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640*, p. 187.

⁶⁴ Stephen Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London*, 1989, p. 6-17.

containing power of the structure and its operation in the play. Our analyses contend only in the source of this containment: while Greenblatt proposes that containment originates in the authority figure—also the source of subversion—I will argue that for *2 Henry VI*, containment works from the bottom up. Thus I will argue that the portrayal of Cade’s rebellion is consistent with the Elizabethan operation of social control, and far from intending to unseat the King and his order, hopes instead to renew and strengthen it.

There is a sense of interdependence between the classes in *2 Henry VI* that mimics history in the relationship between ruler and ruled, as well as in the disastrous failure to maintain that relationship. When Cade’s rebels are on the verge of desertion, he rages, “I thought you would never have given out these arms till you had recovered your ancient freedom. But you are all recreants and dastards, and delight to live in slavery to the nobility,” (4.7.167-169) unaware that this “ancient freedom” never existed. To adapt Kafka’s famous phrase in the style of Stephen Greenblatt, Cade may as well realize, “There is freedom, no end of freedom, only never for us.”⁶⁵ The freedom he envisions, a freedom from the nobility and their laws and their economic pressure, combined part and parcel with the agricultural England he knows, is nothing more than a fantasy extended too far from the paternalist notions of the moral economy. Instead, the rebellion is fully contained within the Elizabethan social order, operating merely as a mechanism for regaining stability. It is a mechanism which corresponds to that described in Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of subversion and containment.

In his essay, “Invisible Bullets,” Greenblatt describes the operation of authority in the histories as it moves through “force and fraud,” to simultaneously produce a subversive vein and

⁶⁵ Franz Kafka, in a conversation with Max Brod, once said: “There is hope, no end of hope, only not for us.” Stephen Greenblatt adopted this phrase to subversion in his “Invisible Bullets” essay. Stephen Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets,” pp. 39, 65.

contain that subversion (Greenblatt 65). It is the answer to a complex problem, a seeming paradox: “Shakespeare’s history plays,” Greenblatt asserts, “have been described with impeccable intelligence as deeply conservative and with equally impeccable intelligence as deeply radical” (Greenblatt 23). The conflict seems irresolvable: If Cade’s rebellion is understood as desperate and justifiable, can it be anything but radical, subversive? And, against that, how can the eventual death of Cade at the hands of the up-and-coming gentleman, Alexander Iden, be anything but validating for the supremacy of the Elizabethan monarchy? Greenblatt’s theory stems from the fundamental idea that “in the discourse of authority a powerful logic governs the relation between orthodoxy and subversion,” (Greenblatt 23) resulting in social equilibrium. This “logic,” in *2 Henry VI*, harnesses Cade’s rebellion, with its culturally acknowledged hyperbole of desperation, to reinforce the internal operation of the Elizabethan system of governance.

Containment can work as a theatrical or a social phenomenon, I would argue. Here, for Cade and for England, it is both. Greenblatt describes containment as the operation that occurs when “[the] subversive voices are produced by and within the affirmations of order; they are powerfully registered, but they do not undermine that order,” (Greenblatt 52). Greenblatt imagines the affirming value of containment as it works for monarchical authority’s theatricality, but little else. He argues that it is Hal’s ability to engage in “force and fraud” which gives him the Machiavellian, “princely power” he so skillfully wields in *Henry V* as the ruthless commander of England’s armies. Henry’s victory, achieved through morally questionable means, is ratified by his success, contained in the implied approval of the play itself and the likely

approval of Elizabethan audiences (Greenblatt 65).⁶⁶ Audience approval, if it was as we suspect, was inevitable for such a celebrated king despite his reprehensible actions against the French: “Besides, we’ll cut the throats of those we have, / And not a man of them that we shall take / Shall taste our mercy” (*Henry V*, 4.7.55-57). Greenblatt argues that “the subversive doubts the play continually awakens originate paradoxically in an effort to intensify the power of the king and his war,” (Greenblatt 62-63) and that effort, just as paradoxically, is successful. The play seems to discount Henry’s brutality in favor of recognizing it as acceptable, even laudable. Greenblatt regards the English as masterful in “[their] ability to account for almost every occurrence, even (or above all) apparently perverse or contrary occurrences” (Greenblatt 38). Although Cade, in some ways, mirrors Henry’s brutality, there is no deception about the structure of control in *2 Henry VI*—the social order is open, acknowledged, and even invited.

As it applies to Jack Cade and the rebellion of *2 Henry VI*, Greenblatt’s idea of containment is not sufficient explanation. I would not throw my idea at odds with Greenblatt’s, but extend it: The issue is no longer one of subversive moral containment to cement one man’s authority, but the open, necessary ratification of an entire social order. The subversion and containment that operates on the broad range of an entire society must be reinforced by operations of that society itself rather than the “force and fraud” of a single individual. For *2 Henry VI*, that operation is Cade’s rebellion.

Containment in *2 Henry VI* and in the society it mimics might better be qualified as *structural containment*. The act of rebellion need not be validated, as Henry’s actions must be—
 “Let there be sung *Non nobis*” (*Henry V*, 4.8.117) indeed—but subsumed into the order of

⁶⁶ By “the play’s approval” I do not mean, necessarily, “by its portrayal in a positive light,” as this is hardly the case. Nonetheless, Shakespeare has Henry hailed as a hero of the highest order and successful in wooing the princess of France, throat-cutting antics aside. This, I would suggest, is evidence of dramatic “approval.”

things.⁶⁷ The system of control is ever-present; rebellion is no escape hatch. Rebellion here, just as in the Elizabethan period itself, is merely “a negotiating strategy,” (Archer 7) within the much larger discourse of Elizabethan governance. Not only do both rulers and ruled approve of rebellion as fundamentally restorative, they are *proactive* in its production as such. Though Greenblatt argues for a group of people and ideas that are not “self-consciously wicked,” (Greenblatt 38) self-consciously subversive, I would qualify. In *2 Henry VI*, both nobles and commoners are indeed self-conscious, even *dependent* on the mode of containment that includes rebellion as part of their society. It is a necessary performance of reordering, and its inclusion in the system is a demonstration of complicit, willing containment. It is containment through a cultural commonplace, the classes’ inviolable interdependence.

The structure of control is so all-encompassing that Cade’s rebels are unable to think outside of it. Indeed, for rapacious, overzealous hoodlums, the men of Cade’s band have a surprisingly strong desire to fulfill their civic duty:

FIRST REBEL⁶⁸ O, miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handicraftsmen.

SECOND REBEL The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons.

FIRST REBEL Nay more, the King’s Council are no good workmen.

SECOND REBEL True; and yet it is said ‘Labour in thy vocation’; which is as much to say as ‘Let the magistrates be labouring men’; and therefore should we be magistrates.

⁶⁷ “*Non nobis*” is Psalm 115, beginning “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory,” gloss the Oxford editors. Henry speaks this line after the battle of Agincourt, committing his deeds to God in order to validate the terrible violence his men have committed.

⁶⁸ The Folio has “Bevis” here, and “Holland” for the second rebel. However, as Helgeson and the Oxford editors convincingly argue, these are likely the names of Shakespeare’s actors rather than the characters.

FIRST REBEL Thou hast hit it; for there's no better sign of a brave mind than a hard hand.

4.2.8-17

The Second Rebel's logic is questionable, and his vision of the office probably involves more lounging than paperwork, but the specificity of his aspiration—'magistrate'—is significant. The rebel, in this spout of fanciful dreaming, could choose the role of emperor or that of cleric (a figure separate from the political structure), but he reasons instead that he should assume the role of a civic judge, a lawmaker, a "inferior governor" who is one of the primary cogs in the Elizabethan mechanism of control.⁶⁹

The magistrate, at his best, served to regulate and support the lowest members of the commonwealth. Sir Fulke Greville of Warwickshire was revered as a worthy example of the ideal magistrate, and in his funeral oration he was called by a peer:

[S]uch a chosen man as Jethro advised Moses to chuse⁷⁰...a man of courage, [who] delte truly & hated covetousness. Nether was he a respecer of persons in judgment, but there with Job was the feete to the lawe & eyes to the blind...for he plucked the poore out of the teath of the mighty.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Richard Cust, "Reading for Magistracy: The Mental World of Sir John Newdigate," p. 199. Cust offers an insightful and thorough exploration of the magistracy to which I only allude to here. They continue: "the prince was not to rule alone. He was expected to seek the assistance of lesser magistrates. ...[As Elyot remarks], 'that in a publicke weale should be inferior governers called magistrates which shalbe appointed and chosen by the soveraigne governer'".

⁷⁰ From Exodus 12:21 of the King James Bible, Jethro speaks to his son Moses: "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."

⁷¹ Warwickshire Record Office, Newdigate collection, CR 136, B/701; quoted in Cust, p. 202.

If the accounts of the period are to be given credence, the position to which the two rebels aspire is not one of strict power, but one that—ideally—provided benevolent rule and regulatory guidance.

The issue, of course, is that the magistrates have failed at this—they are allowing the economic and social stability of the commonwealth to erode in their ineptitude.

FIRST REBEL Nay more, the King's Council are no good workmen.

SECOND REBEL True; and yet it is said 'Labour in thy vocation'; which is as much to say as 'Let the magistrates be labouring men'; and therefore we should be magistrates.

FIRST REBEL Thou hast hit it; for there's no better sign of a brave mind than a hard hand.

4.2.11-16

This is not to say that they are lousy carpenters, or at least not entirely. As the Second Rebel implies, the expectation is simply that they do the work of their own role—"labour in thy vocation" (4.2.12)—yet they are shoddy builders there as well, and the commonwealth crumbling around them. The First Rebel's admonition against the Council is not that they are not peasants, but that they are not fulfilling their duties as benevolent overseers of their constituency. Richard Cust argues that the role of magistrate included 'quasi-republican' fail-safes within it, and it is exactly this mechanism the rebels are endeavoring to engage:

Newdigate and his fellow magistrates were loyal monarchists, perhaps never more so than in 1605 when the Gunpowder Plot threatened to bring their political world crashing down. But their loyalty was never unquestioning, and they were guided by their political education toward a view that monarchy was ultimately a public office, subject to the

same presumptions about the rule of law, the need for wisdom and justice and the obligation to serve the *respublica* as any other form of magistracy. If there was a danger of these being overlooked, then it was the duty of lesser magistrates to speak out with courage and conscience (Cust 199).

That these efforts have fallen on deaf ears only increases the rebels' desire for the strong reinforcement of order, as the use of the phrase "a hard hand" (4.2.17) implies. "Calloused," the Oxford editors gloss for "hard," but it works too well as "harsh" to ignore the possibility of the second signification. Thus, to "hit it" with a "hard hand" is to rule with an iron fist—something at Henry VI, that ineffectual pacifist, is failing spectacularly. These lines, I would argue, are an unapologetically lively affirmation of a desire for the strong rule that has recently been lacking. That the two rebels would be the ones holding the staff of office is functionally irrelevant—in their desire for magisterial power, the rebels place themselves firmly and comfortably within the structure of control that has already been established.

Even as Cade himself asserts control, he and his men are unable to remove themselves from the conventions of Elizabethan governance:

CADE So, sirs, now go some and pull down the Savoy; others to th' Inns of Court—
down with them all.

BUTCHER I have a suit unto your lordship.

CADE Be it a lordship, thou shalt have it for that word.

BUTCHER Only that the laws of England may come out of your mouth.

4.7.1-5

CADE I have thought upon it—it shall be so. Away! Burn all the records of the realm.

My mouth shall be the Parliament of England.

JOHN Then we are like to have biting statutes until his teeth be pulled out.

CADE And henceforward all things shall be in common.

4.7.11-14

In the midst of an act of rebellion—pulling down the Inns of Court—there comes a request for a new iteration of control, albeit at the cost of another. This is precisely the operation I have called reordering—exchanging one agent of control for another with a slightly different set of priorities, yet a part of the same structure of control. The King’s Parliament is now Cade’s; he doesn’t even change the name.

As with the rebels’ bid for public office—“magistrates”—it is very choice of terms that defines the limits of their thought, a limit well within the bounds of the Elizabethan structure of control.⁷² The Butcher asks for new “laws of England,” only to have Cade qualify his request: “My mouth shall be the *Parliament* of England,” (4.7.5,11; my emphasis), not just creating new laws, but creating them in the sense of the Parliament. A drop of satire? Perhaps, but neither man seems to find it remarkable that the only terms in which they can envision the construction of laws are the terms of governance which the King and his nobles have already established: that of a Parliament.

Cade, these lines imply, will become the harsh, demanding force of government their current Parliament, so tolerant of the corruption in court, is too weak to be. “And henceforward all shall be in common,” (4.7.16) he claims, and although this is normally glossed as a reference to enclosure or broad socialism, I would suggest that it makes far more sense, placed as it is among the discussion of law, Parliament and statutes, to refer to common law—a nod to the disastrously untouchable nobility. The corruption of the nobility runs rampant through *2 Henry*

⁷² I owe the conception of language as defining thought to Ferdinand De Saussure and his *Course in General Linguistics*, 1916.

VI, and the king is far too meek act against it. The commons suffer increasing limitations and demands while new-blood nobles like Suffolk parade around unhindered. But under Cade, these lines imply, even the laws “shall be in common” (4.7.16), finally extending to the corrupted nobles who poison the commonwealth. It is an expression of the power of the play’s social order that even rebels think in terms of the law: their only hope for stability is to remove the leadership they see as corrupt—to replace their rulers, restore the balance. Despite their violent flourishes, they remain, ultimately, merely dramatic images of their historical counterparts, and as Archer has noted, they are not unrestrained madmen, but “disciplined crowds operating according to values...in actions designed to remind the magistrates of their duties” (Archer 6). Reordering, not disordering.

The mechanism of containment is unavoidable even on the level of the rebels’ speech as a literary artifact—it extends into the structure of their rhetoric, the very heartbeat of the rebellion. Cade’s own speech is subject to this—perhaps he is cynically aware of it—when he declares:

CADE And you that love the commons, follow me!

Now show yourselves men—‘tis for liberty.

We will not leave one lord, one gentleman—

Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon,

For they are thrifty honest men, and such

As would, but that they dare not, take our parts.

BUTCHER They are all in order, and march toward us.

CADE But then are we in order when we are

Most out of order. Come, march forward!

This speech appears to be a rousing cry to rebellion and disorder, but this would make the orderliness of the lines themselves decidedly strange.⁷³ The structure of the lines and their verbal signification are at odds: their structure affirms order as a conscious choice of the playwright by satisfying poetic conventions of meter; their verbal signification seems to decry order as an oration of resistance. I would suggest that the final two lines, like a sonnet's couplet, resolve the paradox of Cade's rebellious call into a reflective social commentary rather than a mindless rant.

One phrase, "are we," decides it—here is Shakespeare at his most self-aware, rearranging his rebel's words to fit into iambic pentameter. Had he written 'we are,' stressed-unstressed, the meter would have faltered, and the meaning he introduces with it would have remained a foggy possibility. Iambic pentameter—the alternately stressed ten-syllable line—is its own enforced structure, albeit a textual one, Shakespeare's choice to adhere to it is deliberate. In those two words, by using "are we," unstressed-stressed, rather than "we are," Shakespeare bridles Cade with the conventions of English meter in a nudge towards an interpretation of lines that favors structure over disarray.

In this case is not history but the text itself that darkens the boundaries of the cultural space in which analysis must occur. The meter of Shakespeare's lines does not define their meaning, but it does give definition to this space. In a space so informed, it would be unreasonable to interpret the lines as an affirmation of anarchy—the meter, so deliberate, fails to agree. Instead, it appears that the rebels do indeed "take part," (4.2.171) as Cade would have it, in the drama of social reform and reordering. Just as Cade's individual words comprise ten

⁷³ By my count in the Oxford Edition he speaks in blank verse for exactly twenty lines (of which I have quoted nearly half here), and only near the end of 4.2.

iambic syllables despite themselves, so do the rebels, whatever their immediate objectives, ultimately reinforce the Elizabethan structure of governance.

Thus, what seems to be a contradiction between metrical order and demonstrative chaos is merely an ambiguity to be resolved. The ambiguity obtains its own meaning by reframing the term “order” in each case, exercising the flexible signification Shakespeare must have anticipated when he wrote the word ‘order’ thrice in three lines. Rather than reading the “order” of line 172 as echoing the Butcher’s “order”—he means “in organized ranks”—Cade’s term can be read as “in our proper place,” or better, (as the question must come: our proper place in relation to what?), “our proper place *in society*.” The second can then be read a third way, (and here I agree with the Oxford editors’ gloss) so the phrase “out of order” means “rebellious,” or more precisely, “disorderly.” Thus, the lines refer to men who fulfill their social responsibility in being rebels, and in doing so, fitting snugly into the social order by unbalancing it. The men who appear to be agents of chaos are willing prisoners of order.

More than submitting to their structural containment within the system of governance, Cade’s men are determined—indeed, the rebellion is the enactment of their struggle—to remain there. The rebels are not ignorant pawns, nor are they delusional about their own autonomy. Even with his episodic irrationality, their leader is at least right about one thing: His men do “delight to live in slavery to the nobility” (4.7.170). Nowhere is this clearer than in the final confrontation between the rebels and the forces of Buckingham and Clifford. It takes only a few lines and a promise of pardon from two old men to persuade the rebels to give out their arms:

CLIFFORD What say ye, countrymen, will ye relent

And yield to mercy whilst is offered you,

Or let a rebel lead you to your deaths?

Who loves the King and will embrace his pardon,
 Fling up his cap and say 'God save his majesty.'
 Who hateth him and honours not his father,
 Henry the Fifth, that made all France to quake,
 Shake he his weapon at us, and pass by.

They [fling up their caps and] forsake Cade

4.7 149-161

The rebels show hardly a shred of reluctance before returning to the protective comfort of their superiors to reassume their static position in the Elizabethan social structure. Their move may be somewhat hasty, but it is not fickle. It is Robert Ornstein's view that "Shakespeare sees the commoners more as the victims of disorder than as its many-headed beast and senses that their instinct is for survival, not for giddy change," an assertion I broadly agree with, but which is not sufficient.⁷⁴ The rebels are not flighty, helpless "victims," but agents working to engender disorder in order to regain the security called for by their "instinct...for survival," and, as Ornstein writes, more than satisfied to give up any pretense of championing "giddy change."⁷⁵ Thus, Clifford's dialogue of restoring domestic safety and economic stability recall precisely the social motivations for the rebellion:

CLIFFORD Is Cade the son of Henry the Fifth

⁷⁴ Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays*, p.50.

⁷⁵ Ornstein here is guilty of the same "crass reductionism" E.P. Thompson complains of when, "at some point this infinitely-complex social creature, Melanesian man, becomes (in our histories) the eighteenth-century English collier who claps his hand spasmodically upon his stomach, and responds to elementary economic stimuli." To view these commoners, so well-apprised of political and economic implications as merely "victims of disorder," is no different.

That thus you do exclaim you'll go with him?
 Will he conduct you through the heart of France
 And make the meanest of you earls and dukes?
 Alas, he hath no home, no place to fly to,
 Nor knows he how to live but by the spoil—
 Unless by robbing of your friends and us.

4.7.176-182

Henry hath money; you are strong and manly;
 God's on our side, doubt not of victory.

4.7.193-194

The survival impulse in Cade's men must be sparked when Clifford prods that Cade "hath no home" (4.7.180). The rebels have none now, and they will have none for as long as they stay with Cade, Clifford implies. His economic rhetoric is even more scathing, for Cade "knows [not] how to live but by the spoil," (4.7.181) and the rebels, wisely, have no desire to make a living as criminals. And yet, as Clifford reminds them, "Henry hath money," (4.7.193) and in his service, under his control and the control of his vassals the nobles, so will they. Ornstein makes an astute distinction, reasoning that "since they are not revolutionaries and they do not want Cade as their king they quickly return to obedience when Clifford reminds them of the spoils they can win in France."⁷⁶ Although Ornstein does not raise the issues of domestic stability and subsistence

⁷⁶ The implications of Ornstein's statements here seem to be in conflict, and I have not considered in my reasoning those I found inconsistent with his larger argument. In the spirit of full disclosure, here is the context: "Shrewd, good-humored, and clear-sighted about their leader, the rebels want excitement, booty, and some revenge on those with money, privilege and education. Since they are not revolutionaries..." To me, this implies the rebels are merely rancorous and somewhat haphazard—I find his other assertions, which imply an economically rational body of rebels, more compelling. Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage*, p. 50.

which I have located as pivotal for the rebels, his distinction between ‘rebel’ and ‘revolutionary’ here implies an adoption of the Elizabethan sense of willingness for rule I have proposed. The rebels, as Ornstein suggests, are not interested in overturning the social order. Instead, their primary desires are reliable shelter, sufficient food, and the sense of old, familiar political stability found in being well-ruled, a sense of paternalism that Clifford invokes by calling upon “Henry the Fifth” and “England...your native coast” (4.7.176, 192).

The conception of reordering *within* the social hierarchy—restoring equilibrium—has motivated the rebellion from the beginning. When Cade cleverly, ruefully speaks in iamb of being most “in order when we are / Most out of order” (4.2.172-173) he understands this. But in the culmination of his rebellion, Cade’s speech has fallen out of iamb and his ideas no longer fit within the Elizabethan dynamic of rebellion. He raggedly curses his men for adhering to their original goal and conjures up an irrational, fantastic Eden of antiquity:

CADE And you, base peasants, do ye believe him? Will you needs be hanged with your pardons about your necks? ...I thought you would never have given out these arms till you had recovered your ancient freedom. But you are all recreants and dastards, and delight to live in slavery to the nobility. ...For me, I will make shift for one, and so God’s curse light upon you all.

4.7.164-174

His concept of “ancient freedom,” (4.7.170) as I asserted earlier, is one that has never existed in England as “England”—that is, while it has maintained a monarchy and an agrarian society. On the contrary, a historically accurate English “ancient freedom” in this context would refer to something closer to a moral economy. The denial of the precepts of moral economy—violations in the form of arbitrated trade, enclosure, and government taxes—was, as Wrightson

notes, an encouragement to growing unrest: “Government prohibitions on the movement of grain in times of dearth reinforced popular views on the primacy of local need,” (Walter and Wrightson 119). As far as his rebels are concerned, their retrieval of “ancient freedom” would be complete in recovering the “agricultural system of mutually interdependent conditional owner-tenants” (Siemon 30) they have lived in for generations. The rebels’ concept is very different from the fully anarchic, freedom-of-the-wind idea which Cade begins to entertain—They will happily live in that which Cade calls “slavery,” “[following] the King and Clifford” (4.7.196) for as long as “Henry hath money” (4.7.193) to support them.

Thus it is not an acknowledgment of the rebellion’s justified motivations—nor even their outright absolution—that finally brings about the end of Cade’s reordering effort. It is simply the need for rule, of being ruled and being better for it. Buckingham, so committed to maintaining proper Elizabethan stability, commands fraternally, “Follow me, soldiers, we’ll devise a mean / To reconcile you all unto the King” (4.7.210). The use of the word ‘reconcile’ here is deliberate and telling: This is not exculpation, but the “restoration of a relationship” of power in which the rebels’ pardon is the first act.⁷⁷

The reconciliation and the rebel’s active participation in it is the enactment of the dependence called for by Elizabethan culture. The King outlines the operation of their dependence transparently:

KING HENRY Soldiers, this day have you redeemed your lives,
 And showed how well you love your prince and country.
 Continue still in this so good a mind,

⁷⁷ OED. Reconcile, 1.v.a. “restore friendly relations between.” In calling it the “restoration of a relationship” I have paraphrased for clarity and flow, but precisely, I think, in the spirit of their definition.

And Henry, though he be infortunate,
Assure yourselves will never be unkind.

4.8.16-19

So this is to be the result of their rebellion: Continue to obey, he offers, and I will continue to provide. It is precisely the restoration of the rebels' perception of "ancient freedom," that I asserted above. The rebels are accordingly pleased, cheering "God save the King!" (4.8.22) and exiting in orderly grace. Being so "reconciled" with King Henry and pardoned only after the reconciliation establishes the importance of the relationship. It is one in which the ruler, very conspicuously, bestows prosperity. Importantly, the offer of reconciliation is gleefully accepted, not forced; two old men simply offer an alternative route in direct contrast with wild rebellion and the rebels agree, willfully placing themselves again securely in their position in the Elizabethan system of governance (as if they ever left it). At the heart of the issue of the Elizabethan social order, reconciliation underlines the power of the *operation* of rebellion to reorder.

Cade alone never has the power to stabilize,. The social order is contained and reinforced by the rebellion as a social event rather than the man who leads it, however evocative his staging. While I have argued that Cade does to some extent personify the ideals of the rebellion, it is important to make a distinction: the containment enacted by *2 Henry VI's* structure of control is implicit in the maintenance of the social order, not in Greenblatt's "ideal image" of one man.⁷⁸ In

⁷⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets," p.41. The full quote may be helpful for context: "My point is not to dispute this interpretation of the prince as, in Maynard Mack's words, "an ideal image of the potentialities of the English character," but to observe that such an ideal image involves as its positive condition the constant production of its own radical subversion and the powerful containment of that subversion."

the uprising's rational upheaval and inevitable end, the Shakespeare offers his audience a conclusive enactment of the power of social containment.

As I have argued in this chapter, rebellion—even stage rebellion—is a movement through avenues of control rather than freedom. What I have not resolved is the origin of the power exerted in that containment—from the bottom up, I suggested, but this conflicts with the tense social order I have been defending. In the next chapter I will suggest that the dramatic development of the rebel leader himself functions as the centralizing mechanism for the containment of the play. As he dons the trappings and the suits of the nobility, Cade appropriates their power—not as the subversive rebel he could be, but as the very figure his rebellion supports by resisting.

III. Gestus of a King

The struggle of Cade's men, no less desperate as *reordering*, is conducted without ever leaving the control of the nobility. Only, for them as for the audience, the function of 'nobility' is performed in one man: Jack Cade. I do not suggest merely that Cade 'ruled' his men and was 'noble' in being a leader. He adopts more than the title and rule of a noble, taking on nobility's conduct, customs, and traditions as well. He begins to inhabit, in dramatic terms, a new position entirely. Cade, as John Mortimer, is the personification of what Greenblatt describes as the "[appropriation] for the theatre [of] the compelling energies at once released and organized by [the practice]" of containment. By this appropriation, Cade confronts the conflict of power's origin—the tension between the bottom-up origin of power and the inviolable containment of the Elizabethan social order.

Cade is a constructed figure, fashioned into a crude imitation of nobility before he ever steps onstage. The Duke of York confers a title and position upon Cade in a passage I quoted earlier:

YORK And for a minister of my intent,
 I have seduced a headstrong Kentishman,
 John Cade of Ashford
 To make commotion as full well he can,

Under the title of John Mortimer.

3.1.355-359

That Cade is to be a “minister of my intent,” (3.1.355) is innocent enough, but still forceful—Cade will be York’s agent. The declaration itself carries the force of authority, and confers that authority onto Cade in a traditional, ceremonial way: by assigning him “the title of John Mortimer” (3.1.359). Titles, for Elizabethan society, were far more than names. When York gives him the name Mortimer, Shakespeare conjures up from history a powerful spectre. As I described in the first chapter, the monarchy of 1450 was deeply concerned with the man who called himself John Mortimer, in part because of the name itself. To reiterate Harvey’s comment, “[the king and his advisors] took the Mortimer connections seriously” (Harvey 78). Their fear then, as here, was not that Cade was ancestrally a Mortimer, but that the title itself would give him power and legitimacy, however false.

Shakespeare expands upon history, and York does more than give Cade a title—he creates for him a new identity. The rhetoric York uses is distinct. He is more than a lord empowering his liegeman; he is a demon creating his avatar:

YORK This devil here shall be my substitute,
 For that John Mortimer, which now is dead,
 In face, in gait, in speech, he doth resemble.

3.1.371-373

Cade is thus made into a metaphysical mimicry of York and his ancestor Mortimer. David Riggs points out a multitude of instances in which Cade doubles his puppet master:

York is Jack Cade’s silent partner...Cade himself ensures that the connection is not forgotten by imitating his patron’s claims to royal ancestry (IV.ii.37-50), his intention to

purge Henry's court of "false caterpillars" (IV.iv.36; see also IV.ii.61-67; IV.vii.28-30)...his distaste for "bookish rule" (IV.ii.81-104), [and] insistence of martial eminence as requisite for aristocratic station (IV.vii.76).⁷⁹

Cade's authority is made possible exactly because he becomes York's doppelganger in rank, identity and behavior. Cade takes on this role completely, playing it "to the hilt; not wisely but too well" (Riggs 125)—a fact he acknowledges ruefully when he admits that "I was never mine own man since" (4.2.73).

Cade seems to understand the inviolable tie between himself and York which enables his authority, but also that his power is *produced* elsewhere. One of the most potent lines in *2 Henry VI* is Cade's crackling response to the accusation by Stafford's brother, "Jack Cade, the Duke of York hath taught you this" (4.2.139). Cade's line is an aside, at once a realization and an icy promise of passionate tenacity: "He lies, for I invented it myself" (4.2.140). The line can be read any number of ways—as a simple reference to Cade's lineage argument (4.2.123-132), a direct denial of York's hand in the rebellion, an introspective affirmation of some inner nobility—it is ambiguous, but in every case, the signification implies that Cade ultimately produces his own authority.

Critical opinion tends to reject—or overlook—Cade's position as York's metaphysical "substitute," (3.1.371) subjecting him to the textual limitations which place him as a "general" (4.4.12) at best and a "barbarous [villain]" (4.4.14) at worst. These limitations support a stubborn critical insistence that he can be no more than the parody of a noble.⁸⁰ Ronald Knowles suggests that, "As if to surrender subversion to inconsistency, to surrender the social critic to anarchic

⁷⁹ David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories*, p. 124.

⁸⁰ Wilson, pp. 26-28; Helgerson pp. 210-215; Rackin pp. 214-218; Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants," p. 23.

clown, Shakespeare also shows Cade as a feudal monarch manqué.”⁸¹ The issues of political hyperbole and legitimate enfranchisement in the ruling class are certainly connected, but (as I have argued regarding the hyperbole of social and political issues within the episode), there is no reason to assume that there is devaluation in the rawness of Cade’s nobility. Knowles’ conclusion hides behind his word, “manqué,” suggesting that Cade never fulfills his potential to become a ruler, but I disagree.

The cultural space in which the play signifies is wider than these textual limitations would suggest—the dramatic, too, plays a part. Within this space, Cade’s position as a noble is far from unrealized. Rather than discrediting his nobility, Cade’s theatrical behavior allows him to embody precisely the patriarchal, demonstratively powerful spirit of rule the rebellion is seeking to recapture by upsetting the status quo.⁸² This signification is implausible through text alone, or even with history, but by enlarging the cultural space to account for the dramatic significance of actions, Cade operates not as a “monarch-manqué,” but a dramatically potent noble.

Cade’s actions are more than physical motions made by an actor onstage, they are dramatic enactments of his condition and his social status. There is a distinction here which Peter Womack makes very handily using an example from Brecht’s direction of Marlowe’s *Edward II*:

‘No, no,’ shouted Brecht, ‘Baldock is a traitor.’ He explained: ‘You must show the attitude of one who betrays. Baldock goes up to the one who is betrayed with friendly outstretched arms, gives him the cloth submissively, tenderly, with a broad, sweeping gesture—which at the same time is an alibi for the king and his friends. You must show

⁸¹ Ronald Knowles, “The Farce of History in ‘2 Henry VI,’” pp. 168-186.

⁸² Stephen Orgel’s seminal work, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* describes the way in which Elizabethan authority derives from performance. Greenblatt, too, discusses this operation in *Henry IV and Henry V* in “Invisible Bullets.”

the *Gestus* of a betrayer. The audience must note the behavior of a betrayer and be struck by it. Betrayal!’⁸³

Thus it is not empty theatricality when the leader of the rebels pulls himself up to cry, with his men so close to abandoning him, “What, Buckingham and Clifford, are ye so brave? / And you, base peasants, do you believe him? / Will you needs be hanged with your pardon around your necks?” (4.7.163-165). Cade’s speech is that of a once-powerful leader in his last moments of slipping control, and his actions must reflect that, show the *gestus* of a ruler betrayed by his forces.⁸⁴ Following Brecht’s idea of this forceful *gestus*, I will argue that the production of Cade’s dramatic and social power occurs in his *performance* of nobility, conceived of as the inherited practices and rituals of an Elizabethan ruling class.⁸⁵

When he is confronted by Stafford, Cade reacts by promptly inducting himself into the Elizabethan hierarchy of authority as a knight:

MESSENGER Fly, fly, fly! Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother are hard by with the King’s forces.

CADE Stand, villain, stand—or I’ll fell thee down. He shall be encountered with a man as good as himself. He is but a knight, is a?

MESSENGER No.

CADE To equal him I will make myself a knight presently.

⁸³ Bertolt Brecht, *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England: Vorlage, Texte, and Materialien*, pp. 257-8; quoted in Peter Womack, *English Renaissance Drama*, p. 262. I take this example largely from Womack, whose treatment I found exceptionally clear and good for explaining.

⁸⁴ Womack describes *gestus* as “the full, significant action...it is single-mindedly about the nature of the action itself. *English Renaissance Drama*, p. 262.

⁸⁵ Louis Althusser describes that ‘ideology’ (here the institution of nobility) operates as “actions inserted into *practices*...[that are] governed by *rituals* in which these practices are described.” Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp. 1501-1505. I owe thanks to Cathy Sanok for reminding me of Althusser and these terms as a way of describing this dynamic of exchange.

[He kneels and knights himself.]

Rise up, Sir John Mortimer.

[He rises.]

Now have at him!

4.2 105-108

The stage directions, here added by the Oxford editors, are implied in the text: Cade physically kneels, perhaps using a sword to dub himself. Although he may appear to mock the institution by administering his own knighthood, he engages in the ceremony willingly, even enthusiastically; the action hardly seems to signify mockery. The ceremony of kneeling, the physical signifier, works as an expression of emblematic deference to the King and to the social order the King embodies. There is clearly tension between his violence toward the King's man, "Now have at him!" (4.2.108) and the deference I have suggested, but such contrast between service and ferocity was expected for a knight. Richard McCoy writes that knighthood was a mechanism for resolving this aggressive contradiction:

Its ceremonial forms constitute a kind of cultural resolution of one of the central contradictions in Elizabethan politics, the conflict between honor and obedience, the "customary rights" of knighthood and the duty to "right royal majesty." Through its conventions of feudal loyalty...Elizabethan chivalry affirmed Tudor sovereignty (McCoy 2-3).

The physical act of conferring his own knighthood embraces an integral role in the structure of Elizabethan governance, one that both empowers Cade and confirms the power of the king.

Cade could endeavor to subvert the role of knighthood, to engage in the "arbitrary brutality" that Helgerson accuses him of, behave and speak with wild abandon as might befit a

“rude and merciless” (4.4 32) peasant, but he does not (Helgerson 212). Cade’s speech signifies audibly, at the moment he assumes knighthood, that his class affiliation has changed. His reply to the messenger is deliberately colloquial, “Stand, villain, stand—or I’ll fell thee down. He shall be encountered with a man as good as himself. He is but a knight, is a?” (4.2.102-104). The syntax of the lines calls for a choppy, brash vernacular, a delivery which would be audibly distinct as the words of a commoner. After Cade’s dramatic induction, this parlance morphs instantly and symbolically into that of a knight even as he denounces Stafford and his elitism:

CADE [*to his followers*] As for these silken-coated slaves, I pass not.

It is to you, good people, that I speak.

Over whom, in time to come, I hope to reign—

For I am rightful heir unto the crown.

4.2.115-118

These lines are blank verse, the language of Shakespeare’s dukes and kings. The change is bold and deliberate: Shakespeare transparently uses small phrases and commas in otherwise simplistic sentences to make his iamb obvious. Suddenly, “Stand, villain, stand,” (4.2.102) is replaced by “silken-coated slaves,” (4.2.115) as vaunted a phrase as any Stafford might use. Shakespeare, I would suggest, has made this distinction deliberately *audible*—dramatic, then—and in doing so, has made affirmation of the audience an unavoidable consequence simply of listening to this distinction. Cade’s new status as a member of the ruling class has been signified not by York’s authority, but his own dramatic action. Let me now suggest an editorial note that might strengthen this observation further.

Perhaps the Oxford editors have made an error here. The line they have as “Over whom, in time to come, I hope to reign” (4.2.116) is metrically flawed: “Over whom” is not in iamb,

while the rest of the line very deliberately is. I would argue that what we have as “Over” would have been spoken in performance as “O’er,” a construction Shakespeare often uses to bend difficult phrases into his metrical mold. Wouldn’t it be odd, for all of Shakespeare’s comma-laden rearranging, if he were to leave this easily-corrected flaw in lines that, otherwise, are such a blatant move into iamb? The First Folio, too, has “Over,” making the Oxford editors’ error not of transcription—although perhaps the Folio’s compositors are guilty—but of dramatic insight.⁸⁶ It may be a stretch, but it fits too closely to ignore—as “O’er,” the lines work crisply into the demonstrative iamb Shakespeare seems to have aimed for. Whether or not my supposition is true, these lines in performance are an obvious demonstration of Cade’s new mode of speech, a figurative fanfare for the rebel’s new position in society. By so speaking, Cade introduces himself socially and verbally into the social order he professes to oppose.

Cade’s nobility, like his knighthood, becomes a dramatic reality, enforced by the spectacle of his authority. The realization is all the more powerful for its abruptness and uncompromising force:

CADE And now henceforward it shall be treason for any that calls me otherwise than
Lord Mortimer.

Enter a SOLDIER, running.

SOLDIER Jack Cade, Jack Cade!

CADE Zounds, knock him down there!

They kill him.

BUTCHER If this fellow be wise, he’ll never call ye Jack Cade more; I think he hath a
very fair warning.

⁸⁶ William Shakespeare, *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: Published according to the true originall copies*, Early English Books Online, p. 249.

The act is brutal. It might seem irrational and unsupportable, and it is certainly not meant to arouse audience approval. But it does carry force, if only in the terror it produces. Michel Foucault deals with such merciless spectacle in his study, *Discipline and Punish*, describing the punishment of a prisoner on a scaffold who is killed first, then carefully dismembered and mutilated. It is an operation “designed to be spectacularly horrible, out of all proportion to the crime,” (Tennenhouse 13) in order to confer dramatic pressure. Here, the soldier’s exclamation, “Jack Cade, Jack Cade!” (4.6.6) is performative, signifying the act of treason itself, and he is punished accordingly, with no consideration of the man’s ‘intent.’⁸⁷ Cade’s response certainly extreme—perhaps even insane—but it is also established as a spectacle meant to give “fair warning” (4.6.9) to the rebels who observe it.⁸⁸ As Tennenhouse argues, “it was not the punishment so much as the *spectacle* of the punishment that enforced the power of the state” (Tennenhouse 14). Cade’s behavior here, however unrestrained and shocking, works as an appropriate affirmation of his dramatic nobility.

Cade’s theatricality is deliberate; it is vital for his ascension into kingship. Tennenhouse describes this operation in the ratification of Shakespeare’s acting monarchs:

⁸⁷ Shakespeare asserts the deadly force of titles throughout the Histories. In *Richard II*, just lines after Bolingbroke declares that “[he’ll] ascend the regal throne,” the Bishop of Carlisle addresses him as “my lord of Hereford here, whom you call king” (*Richard II*, 4.1.104, 125) and is promptly arrested for “capital treason,” for which the punishment was nearly always death. When, in *1 Henry IV*, Hotspur rails against the king, his rebellion is exemplified in his refusal to use Henry IV’s title. Instead, he vows that, “All studies here I solemnly defy / Save how to gall and pinch this Bolingbroke” (*2 Henry IV*, 1.3.226-227).

⁸⁸ This is so not bizarre even historically: Based on contemporary accounts, the historical Cade made efforts to rein in his force. Harvey writes that “On 30 June he had one of his under-captains, Parys, executed at Blackheath for disciplinary reasons” in an apparent attempt to make an example of a senior officer engaged in fostering disorder. Harvey, p. 90.

In the Elizabethan history play, art authorizes genealogy. That is, to legitimize blood one must acquire the signs and symbols of authorization, which is to question the iconicity of the king's body and entertain the possibility of its arbitrary relation to the laws and ceremonies of the state (Tennenhouse 99).

The same possibility of ratification exists for Cade, struggling mightily in his transformation into John Mortimer to authorize his own "genealogy." And yet I would oppose Tennenhouse; the actions associated with the monarchy are far from arbitrary. They are signals established by a long series of historical actions which have saturated Elizabethan culture with the expectation of certain types of behavior and symbolic actions. Cade seizes that possibility, grandly fulfilling it at every opportunity through behavior replete with the "signs and symbols"—Louis Althusser's *rituals* and *practices*—associated with a rising king.

Cade stands at London Stone, rudely triumphant, only to make what seems like an absurd proposition:

CADE Now is Mortimer lord of this city. And, here sitting upon London Stone, I charge and command that, of the city's cost, the Pissing Conduit run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign. And now henceforward it shall be treason for any that calls me otherwise than Lord Mortimer.

4.6.1-5

Except, of course, that his declaration is just the opposite: a culturally recognizable, dramatically transparent indication that Cade is assuming the role of a monarch. It is tempting to assume that the role of the "Pissing Conduit" must be related to human waste (part of what makes Cade's announcement so bizarre), but this assumption is bent by the refraction of time. In fact, the Pissing Conduit's purpose was to serve lower-class Londoners as a water supply, and the

conduits of London often ran with wine in celebration of a coronation or military victory (Caldwell 41). Robert Fabyan describes the rich coronation of Edward VI in his *Chronicles*:

And the ninetene daie of February he rode solemnly with his vncler sir Edward Seimour, lorde gouernour, and protector duke of Somerset, with the nobilitie of the realme, from the Toure to Westminster, throughe the citee of Londo, whiche was richly hanged with clothe of silver and gold, every conduict running with wine, pagentes of childre beyng richly apparelled, to receiue hym at eury place, with orations of his praise.⁸⁹

Other descriptions of similarly ostentatious coronations are common. Holinshed records that “the conduit in Cornehill ran wine,” during Queen Mary’s coronation, an account that Shakespeare almost certainly read.⁹⁰

Cade’s declaration, that the “Pissing Conduit run nothing but claret wine,” (4.6.1-5) is all the more powerful as a monarchical ritual in its apparent peculiarity. There can be no confusion here; only an English monarch could command such a thing, and Cade’s move can only be realized as a perfect-pitch echo of legitimizing nobility. Importantly, it is a ritual distinctively associated with Early Modern coronation, a performative act enacting his own entrance into kingship in the same way he ushered himself into knighthood.

The performative nature of Cade’s words asserts his power as a member of the nobility, even as a player-king. “And here, sitting upon London Stone, I charge and command,” (4.6.1-2) he says, and proceeds, of course, to command indeed. His declarations are deliberately staged in order to maximize their dramatic force, their ability to effect his audience. For his initial, triumphant conquering speech, Cade places himself deliberately, transparently, atop London Stone. This move not only gives him dramatic authority by placing him physically above his men

⁸⁹ Robert Fabyan, *Chronicles*, p. 709; quoted in Caldwell, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles*, p. 1091; quoted in Caldwell, p.42.

and his audience, it calls to another well-established practice of the nobility—this time of kingly oration. Knowles notes that “The real King Henry VI, returning to London from his coronation in Paris, first assembled his entourage on Blackheath before the entry” (Knowles 185). To enter and speak from London Stone is not a rebellious fluke but a monarchical tradition, a ritual which works to entrench Cade in his position as a noble. In describing these “*rituals*” (Althusser 1501) I have courted Althusser’s theory of ideology and interpellation—let me now be precise.

Cade interpellates the audience in order to ratify his own position as a noble.

“Interpellation,” as Althusser describes it, is the function of an “ideology” (here, nobility) that “‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals,” involving those subjects in the perpetuation of the ideology (Althusser 1504). Cade’s containing power as a noble ultimately relies on the force of his performance, a force that is conferred by his audience-subjects rather than intertextually by York. Cade’s actions interpellate the audience in his nobility, and they accordingly authorize that nobility. It is something like the operation described by Tennenhouse, who suggests the operation of authority in Elizabethan culture in which “[the aristocratic body] authorized other symbolic forms of power, so that they in turn might authorize that body.”⁹¹

Greenblatt makes a similar note about Henry V’s role as the ideal king:

The audience’s tension, then, enhances its attention; prodded by constant reminders of a gap between real and ideal, the spectators are induced to make up the difference, to invest in the illusion of magnificence, to be dazzled by their own imaginary identification with the conqueror. The ideal king must be in large part the invention of the audience, the

⁹¹ Tennenhouse’s comment shares a strange coincidence of meaning with my own intent. We refer to different phenomena: He describes Renaissance authority’s role in perpetuating its own power through theatre and spectacle (much as Greenblatt suggests), but his words are equally appropriate for describing my own ideas. Tennenhouse, p.16.

product of a will to conquer that is revealed to be identical to a need to submit (Greenblatt 63).

There is little of the “illusion of magnificence” at work for Jack Cade—it is more an illusion of his identity itself. The audience is aware of his origins, aware that he is the son of “a good bricklayer,” (4.2 35) and aware that he has been “seduced...to make a commotion as full well he can” (3.1 356, 358) by the treacherous, scheming Duke of York. Moreover, they are aware that the man on the stage whom others are referring to as “my lord” (4.6 10) is an Elizabethan actor, likely penniless and dirty under his elaborate costume. Yet as Althusser describes, they are “*always-already subjects*,” (Althusser 1505) ratifying Cade’s nobility tautologically, simply by being an audience, by engaging with the dramatic production and, in Greenblatt’s words, “[making] up the difference” between what they know and what they believe. By the Elizabethan mode of containment, it is only fair that the noble whose performance the audience enable should be the one to contain the force of the rebellion he leads.

Cade’s dramatic authority does not remove him—or his men—from the Elizabethan structure of control. Rather, it ushers them even more tightly into it. When Cade adopts the mantle of knighthood, he does it first for spectacle—itsself a form of containment (Greenblatt 63-65)—but also out of necessity. He relies upon the strength of his action and its signification of authority to provide a vehicle by which to resist other members of the higher echelons of the Elizabethan social structure. Cade chooses his words carefully after becoming a knight: first, of course, he declares himself “Sir John Mortimer,” (4.2.105). Only then, after he has become a knight, is he able to yell, “*Now* have at him!” (4.2.108; my italics) when moments ago, not yet ratified by the interpellation of the audience in his ritual dubbing, he was dramatically powerless. Cade is unable to take any action—aggressive or otherwise—until he enters properly into a

higher position in the social order. It is a distinct reinforcement of that order's containing power. Indeed, the operation of knighthood as Cade mimics it here provides a helpful parallel for the paradoxical containment of Cade's authority in general.

Richard McCoy explains knighthood as a regulating mechanism for the contentious upper class of the Elizabethan court. The position was one of natural conflict between the "customary right" of knighthood to seek honor in violence and the need to uphold the order in English society. McCoy notes that "The chivalric ideology thus combined deference and aggression, accommodating these dangerously incompatible, often contradictory impulses within its codes and customs" (McCoy 2-3). Knighthood acted as a necessary mode of regulation for Elizabethan nobles, allowing necessarily independent power to be controlled by the structure of authority which existed in the culture. The resolution of the conflict inherent in Cade's nobility is similar.

In his unique position as a dramatically ratified noble, Cade is able to satisfy the conflict inherent in the bottom-up production of force within the containing structure of the Elizabethan social order as it exists within *2 Henry VI*. Shakespeare takes advantage of Foucault's "culture where power [works] more effectively through theatrical display than through writing" (Tennenhouse 13) to empower Cade through the dramatic interpellation of the audience, while simultaneously allowing him to enact "the powerful containment" (Greenblatt 41) of the force his rebellious nobility produces in a social order where strong rule is a necessity.

Conclusion. The Garden

Staging spectacular, overblown conflicts is the *modus operandi* for a theatrical noble like Cade, but the tense, short scene in Iden's garden exemplifies the social conflicts at the heart of *2 Henry VI* better than all the hyperbolic demonstrations and ritualistic spectacles that go before it. Not only is the garden "worth a monarchy," (4.9.17) acting as a synecdoche for all of England, but for all of England's—and the play's—issues of social legitimacy and order. Iden's garden is the stage for the play's most comprehensive display of the implications the social tension, order, and chaos. It will be a fitting point at which to end my analysis of *2 Henry VI*.

Alexander Iden's garden is a material embodiment of the Elizabethan social order and Iden himself the picture of a regulating authority figure. Iden thinks of himself as a sort of benevolent provincial naturalist:

IDEN Lord, who would live turmoiled in the court

And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?

This small inheritance my father left me

Contenteth me, and worth a monarchy.

I seek not to wax great by others' waning,

Or gather wealth I care not with what envy;
 Sufficeth that I have maintains my state,
 And sends the poor well pleased from my gate.

4.9.15-21

His garden is the picture of peace and order. It is a haven without turmoil home to a noble without ambition—a self-contained system, a microcosm of Elizabethan society “worth a monarchy” (4.9.18) in itself. Although Iden seems to see himself as a purist, isolated from the intrigues of the court, I would emphasize instead the vision of Thomas Cartelli, who asserts that “To Cade, Iden is less a poor esquire grazing on the pastoral margins of political life than the walking embodiment of established authority” (Cartelli 49). His perfectly-assured authority is reflected in the stability of the garden and in Iden’s own placid worldview.

Everything in Iden’s garden appears regulated and assured. Iden himself is literally oblivious to disorder, as he naively announces to Cade, disorder’s harbinger:

IDEN Why, rude companion, whatsoe’er thou be,
 I know thee not. Why then should I betray thee?

4.9.28-29

Iden’s response carries symbolic weight. When he refers to Cade he makes a careful distinction—not ‘whosoe’er,’ but “whatsoe’er,” (4.9.28).⁹² The phrase is likely a colloquial address, and importantly, it is one that connotes status—‘what’ as in ‘what rank, class, or craft’—over identity. It also leaves space for what follows. “I know thee not,” (4.9.28) Iden asserts, and his denial is not simply of Cade’s identity, but of what he also does not know—that

⁹² The Oxford editors add a gloss here that supports my point. To call Cade a “rude companion,” (4.9.28) they write, meant he was a “low-born fellow.” This too is a reference to position over identity.

is, Cade's status as rebel and a fallen noble. Iden is literally and symbolically unaware of the chaos that Cade has figured in; disorder does not enter his garden. Even in their confrontation, Iden acts every inch the benign gentleman. At first he graciously and firmly refuses to fight Cade:

IDEN Nay, it shall ne'er be said while England stands
 That Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent,
 Took odds to combat a poor famished man

4.9.39-41

Iden's sense of order as it is realized through the 'maintenance of his state,' is tied directly to maintaining and reaffirming the equilibrium of his position in the broader Elizabethan social structure. When Iden haughtily announces his own rank, "Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent," (4.9.40) he is also attempting to verbally stabilize the escalating conflict between the two men by reminding Cade of the social order. The stability of his garden is Iden's primary concern, precisely as it should be for such an embodiment of the Elizabethan social order.

Iden is utterly content "sufficeth that [he has] maintains [his] state" (4.9.20) of social and financial stability. Yet, as with the maintenance of the Elizabethan social order, Cade's peaceful garden is not achieved without an exchange of social energy. Even before Cade's disruption, Shakespeare is not prepared to let the garden escape social conflict entirely. In order to ensure this stability, Iden must engage personally in Greenblatt's "constant production of [his] own radical subversion and the powerful containment of that subversion" (Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets" 41). Iden acknowledges this practice himself, although not in those words—it is his habit to "send the poor well pleased from my gate," (4.9.21) with alms in order to preserve the idyllic tranquility of his "state" (4.9.20). This almsgiving is an meaningful act, a blatant

affirmation of poverty and class distinction within the culture, an enactment of Iden's social precedence over those to whom he so graciously gives. Almsgiving holds a historically significant position in Elizabethan society, and Ian Archer notes it as a primary stabilizing—controlling—function of the nobility:

[The] rich in general were constantly reminded that they held their wealth as stewards and therefore that they had an active duty to care for the poor, in giving alms, in not rack-rending their tenants, and in showing forbearance to poor debtors (Archer 53).

In *2 Henry VI* too, Iden's generosity is a form of control, as his description of the act subtly implies. The poor do not "leave" well-pleased nor does Iden "humbly supply the poor." Instead, he "*sends* the poor" (4.9.21; my emphasis) from his gate, and his dominance over them is performed in their obedient departure. It is a deliberate act of eviction from "my gate," (4.9.21) the threshold of Iden's power. His charity in the form of material wealth is a palpable indicator of his own supremacy; Iden may see it as simple generosity, but it reflects the same stabilizing behavior that was so necessary in Elizabethan England. In *2 Henry VI*, as in history, this necessary relationship between ruled and ruler provides the crack in the social order even as it holds the state together.

Cade's discordant physical presence, a perverse reminder of performance's influence in establishing the origin of power, is the first hint of that crack. Wearing Stafford's ruined armor, blathering, nonsensical, and near starvation, Cade is a grotesque caricature of authority. Indeed, his armor is a symbolic metric for measuring his social status: first, in appropriating it from Stafford, his rise, and now his degenerative slide to become an impoverished, powerless

beggar.⁹³ Cade deliberately calls attention to his armor's battered remains and its utter uselessness when he puns on his helmet, or “ ‘sallet’ [which] was born to do me good...now the word ‘sallet’ must serve me to feed on” (4.9.9, 12-13). The armor that Cade once called a “monument of the victory” (4.3.10) over corrupt nobles, a dramatic symbol of Cade's newly-minted enfranchisement in the Elizabethan social hierarchy, is reduced to nothing but a bowl of greens. That Cade has made a striking departure from the social order that Iden's garden embodies is made visibly—dramatically—obvious in his physical disarray.

Performance, or *gestus*, retains its influence in the origin of power, but here the dramatic force which once made him noble now reduces him to almost worm-like status. Cade's physical position evinces his rapid descent down the social hierarchy—Shakespeare's blocking reads “*lies down picking of herbs,*” (4.9.~13) placing him literally scrounging in the dirt. The lordly fellow who once sat easily upon London Stone in the perfect confidence of his own authority (4.6.1-2) now lies prostrate on the ground, nothing but “a poor famished man” (4.9.41). Cade no longer takes part in Althusser's *practices* of nobility; the only position ratified here is his prostration. If anything, he is performing “once-noble,” or “Outcast!” as Brecht might put it.

Not only is Cade dramatically stripped of his elevated position in the social order, he defies that order in the most fundamental way: by resisting containment. His actions reveal the space—the garden as synecdoche for England—as home to class interests which normally coexist rather than compete. Thomas Cartelli argues that the garden naturally represents a space of class-conflict which would confound structural containment:

⁹³ Phyllis Rackin makes a similar point about Joan of Arc's attire in *1 Henry VI*, “Assuming a coat of arms, she represents a threat to the entire social order,” Rackin, p. 202.

In bringing to his encounter with Iden a deeply rooted, polarized, and polarizing consciousness of class, Cade...[contests] the ideological hold that the garden has heretofore maintained over all concerned parties...[unlocking] its actual status as a space intersected by mutually exclusive and competing class interests (Cartelli 52).

Certainly Cade brings a polarized class-consciousness to the encounter, but the incongruity of that polarization only establishes and emphasizes the garden's former social stability. What Cartelli calls the garden's "actual status as a space intersected by mutually exclusive and competing class interests," is not its "actual" status, but the result of Cade's polarizing influence. The equilibrium of Iden's miniature monarchy depends on his ability to maintain control. When Cade implicitly rejects the dominating charity of the "lord of the soil," (4.9.22) it upsets the equilibrium of a space which normally confirms the containing structure of cross-class interdependence.

The polarizing force that Cade exerts in the garden is not the result of simple trespassing or social bias, but the crime of confounding Iden's mechanism of control. While Cade certainly employs "saucy terms" (4.9.33) and "[breaks] into [Iden's] garden" (4.9.30), their fight is not hot-blooded. Iden is essentially nonviolent, more fond of "quiet walks" (4.9.15) than battles, and he briefly attempts to dissuade Cade from pressing violence (4.9.40-50). Instead, Iden's fundamental motivation for the battle is to safeguard his own authority within the social order and maintain the tranquility of his state.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Greenblatt champions enclosure as the primary conflict, suggesting that "status relations...are being transformed before our eyes into property relations, and the concern...for maintaining social and even cosmic boundaries is reconceived as a concern for maintaining freehold boundaries." Stephen Greenblatt, "Peasants," p.25. In opposition to this, Thomas Cartelli writes that "it is primarily Cade's obstreperousness—his offensive refusal to maintain the habit of servility that Iden expects—that motivates the violent turn in this encounter." Thomas Cartelli, p. 51.

Iden emphasizes the disruption of his garden's stability when he reprimands Cade for "entering his fee-simple without leave" (4.9.23):

IDEN Why, rude companion, whatsoe'er thou be,
 I know thee not. Why then should I betray thee?
 Is't not enough to break into my garden,
 And, like a thief, to come to rob my grounds,
 Climbing my walls in spite of me the owner

4.9 28-33

Although his lines are in some ways strikingly merciful, Iden cannot ignore that Cade has acted "in spite of me the owner" (4.9.33). The use of the term "spite" (4.9.33) allows for a degree of ambiguity, and to disambiguate will be useful for understanding Iden's motivation. Certainly Cade climbs the walls "notwithstanding," Iden's property rights. He also climbs, "in contempt of" Iden, and most critically, "[thwarting] in a spiteful manner" Iden's rights and responsibilities as a gentleman.⁹⁵ What irks Iden and his overdeveloped sense of order as much as anything is that Cade is circumventing the system, choosing to "break into [his] garden," (4.9.30) to "eat grass" (4.9.7) rather than to beg for alms at the gate as he should. The material result is the same—Cade gains some food, Iden loses some—but the implications for the social order are far more dire. Cade, by circumventing the practice of almsgiving, undermines the power of Iden's hospitality as a mechanism of control.⁹⁶ By acting "in spite" (4.9.32) of Iden, Cade places

⁹⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. *spite*, n. 5. and *spite*, v. 2. respectively.

⁹⁶ James Sieman's argument, that "Iden takes pride...in his own hospitality" and that "Cade's intrusion...appears not only theft and an insult to his authority of ownership but as an affront to his capacity to send 'the poor well pleased from my gate,'" fails to capture an important distinction: Iden is not miffed at losing the opportunity to be charitable, but the control that his charity accords him. Sieman, 191.

himself in direct opposition to the garden's structure of control and outside the structure of governance that regulated Early Modern England.

Cade's rejection of the interdependence that is so central to the Elizabethan system of governance puts him in a precarious position. As the conflicts dealt with in my first and second chapters suggested, the lower classes could not prosper without their lords, and Cade is no different. Historically, exiting the structure of control meant dearth and likely death; without the protective wing of the nobility, the commons were apt to go hungry:

[The relationships of the ruling class with the commons] derived their binding force from the fact that they served above all to provide protection against the myriad insecurities— economic, social and ritual— of a hostile environment.⁹⁷

The garden scene is Shakespeare's acknowledgment of the mortal criticality of social order and its containment in a society guided by a moral economy, an acknowledgment achieved by demonstrating the inevitable failure of a man who has broken free of that containment. Iden unabashedly describes the hopeless condition of the newly-humbled rebel in a string of cutting images:

IDEN Oppose thy steadfast gazing eyes to mine—
 See if thou canst outface me with thy looks.
 Set limb to limb and thou art far the lesser—
 Thy hand is but a finger to my fist,
 Thy leg a stick compared with this truncheon.

⁹⁷ The grain riots offer additional evidence for this. Again, the occurrence of “no fewer than 35 outbreaks” point to a deep unrest over contemporary mismanagement of sustenance on the part of the upper classes. This is covered much more thoroughly in chapters I and II. Walter and Wrightson, “Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England,” p. 109. Corroborating data in greater detail can be found in Brian Manning's *Village Revolts*.

My foot shall fight with all the strength thou hast,
 And if my arm be heaved in the air,
 Thy grave is digged already in the earth

4.9.42-49

The same model applies here as in my first chapter: Despite obvious exaggeration—Cade’s hand cannot possibly be “a finger to my fist,” (4.9.44)—Cade’s condition is dire. The realities of Cade’s desperation are set out both dramatically and textually: he must appear onstage as a gaunt man, battered and starving, with legs that are “[sticks] compared with [Iden’s truncheons]” (4.9.46). If there is any doubt remaining about the destitute condition of the commons, it can only be resolved in this last dramatic enactment of dearth. Cade dies, at least symbolically, of starvation—and worse, in the middle of an enclosure, distinct evidence of the failure of his promised reform that “All the realm shall be in common” (4.2.61). The end is much like the beginning: His final, insistent cries, “Famine and no other hath slain me!” and “I...am vanquished by famine, not by valour” (4.9.58, 71-72) are unmistakable affirmations of the conditions of economic tension which so often motivated Early Modern rebellion.

Cade’s cry is also a signpost for omission. His attempt to deny Iden’s role in his death represents a last-minute attempt to escape the grasp of the Elizabethan social structure on his life. Cade’s denies Iden’s authority until his last breath: “I, that never feared any man, am vanquished by famine, not by valour,” (4.9.72) where valor is a behavior, a practice of the ruling class. Even in death, Cade’s “unconquered soul” (4.9.62) is proof of his frantic need to minimize the spectre of control. And yet, despite his insistence, he has not been slain by “famine and *no* other” (4.9.58; my italics)—the sword protruding from his chest should be evidence of that. He has been slain by both, or rather, by the relationship between the two.

Cade dies for his unwillingness to fulfill his role in the social structure. Once, he gained the mantle of nobility by willfully taking appropriating the nobles' rituals as ruling members of the structure of control. Now, after rejecting that structure in full, Cade is lord of the worms. Had he been content to remain under control, behaving as a poor peasant, entering by Iden's grace through the gate and accepting Iden's alms, he might have escaped death. That he does not—that he dies onstage—is a final, gory reminder of the necessity of the Elizabethan structure of governance in light of the era's severe economic and political strife.

It would be a denial of the premise behind this thesis to *conclude*. The cultural space I have created is my own—distinctly my synthesis of historical references, dramatic suppositions, and close reading. The analysis is not powerful because it is correct, but because it *might* be correct. That *2 Henry VI*'s conflict between order and chaos can find resolution in my cultural space is not a testament to my analysis, but Shakespeare's versatility. Helgerson poses an excellent challenge when he writes, "If Cade's rebellion forces a choice between two mutually exclusive groups, it is clear which of the groups Shakespeare has chosen"(Helgerson 213). I do not think that Cade's rebellion requires such polarization, and the fact that Shakespeare has not chosen is more significant than if he had.

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