Contents

Introduction
Richard Burt and John Michael Archer

PART I: COMMON GROUNDS:
SEXUAL AND ECONOMIC DEMARCATIONS

1 Landlord Not King: Agrarian Change and Interarticulation
James R. Siemon

William C. Carroll

3 Jack Cade in the Garden: Class Consciousness and Class Conflict in 2 Henry VI
Thomas Cartelli

4 Foreign Country: The Place of Women and Sexuality in Shakespeare's Historical World
Phyllis Rackin

5 Shakespeare and the English Witch-Hunts: Enclosing the Maternal Body
Deborah Willis

6 Observations on English Bodies: Licensing Maternity in Shakespeare's Late Plays
Richard Wilson

7 The Poetry of Conduct: Accommodation and Transgression in The Faerie Queene, Book 6
Michael C. Schoenfeldt

8 Submitting to History: Marlowe's Edward II
Judith Haber

PART II: BOUNDARY DISPUTES:
CONSEQUENCES OF CONSOLIDATION

9 The 1599 Bishops' Ban, Elizabethan Pornography, and the Sexualization of the Jacobean Stage
Lynda E. Boose

10 This Is Not a Pipe: Water Supply, Incontinent Sources, and the Leaky Body Politic
Jonathan Gil Harris

11 The Enclosure of Virginity: The Poetics of Sexual Abstinence in the English Revolution
John Rogers

12 The Garden Enclosed / The Woman Enclosed: Marvell and the Cavalier Poets
Cristina Malcolmson

13 The Garden State: Marvell's Poetics of Enclosure
Jonathan Crewe

14 Dictionary English and the Female Tongue
Juliet Fleming

Notes on Contributors
Index
3. Jack Cade in the Garden:
Class Consciousness and
Class Conflict in 2 Henry VI

THOMAS CARTELLI

1

In Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI the notorious career of Jack Cade concludes with the starving rebel's defeat at the hands of Alexander Iden, a self-styled "poor esquire of Kent" whom Cade formally terms "the lord of the soil" that provides the setting for their notably unequal combat. The end of Cade's career ironically becomes the occasion for a sudden turn in Iden's fortunes when Iden is "created knight for his good service," given a reward of a thousand marks, and effectively transformed into a courtier. I say "ironically" because what may be termed the "garden scene" of 2 Henry VI is initially framed in the manner of a pastoral interlude as Iden enters and criticizes the lust for worldly advancement which has made Cade a desperate fugitive and encouraged many of Iden's social superiors to turn the "garden of England" into a site of fraternal bloodletting. The pastoral note is first sounded by Cade himself, whose representation of Iden's garden is, however, decidedly more utilitarian than conventional versions of pastoral:

"Fie on ambitions! fie on myself, that have a sword, and yet am ready to famish! These five days have I hid me in these woods and durst not peep out, for all the country is laid for me; but now am I so hungry, that if I might have a lease of my life for a thousand years, I could stay no longer. Wherefore, on a brick wall have I clumb into this garden, to see if I can eat grass, or pick a sallet another while, which is not amiss to cool a man's stomach in this hot weather." (4.10.1-9)

Cade proceeds in a casually self-depreciating vein to play on the word "sallet" in a manner that suggests a crucial difference between his version of pastoral and Iden's. While he curses the ambitions that have brought him there, Iden's garden offers Cade merely the possibility of refreshment and a temporary respite from his flight from a "country" that is "laid for me," not an Arden-like retreat from the stresses of life.

Iden's construction of his garden state is notably more idyllic and mines the same conventions as Thomas Wyatt's anticourt pastoral, "Mine Own Join Poinson." Like the disaffected speaker in Wyatt's poem, Iden is "in Kent and Christendom" where "in lusty leas at liberty" he may walk. Unlike Wyatt's speaker, Iden enjoys a liberty that is unenforced, apart, that is, from the constraint of "this small inheritance my father left me," out of which Iden makes a virtue of necessity:

Lord! who would live turmoil'd in the court,
And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?
This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and worth a monarchoy.
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.

(4.10.17-23)

As William Empson has taught us, pastoral effusions of this variety are seldom free of contextual qualification. In this instance we may observe that the self-congratulatory note Iden sounds harbors a discernible compensatory component, as if Iden were cheering himself up for his small inheritance by disparaging the profane pleasures the court offers those who can afford them and by overstating the worth of what the court would sneer at. Two additional qualifications are noteworthy. The first concerns Cade's altogether more material appraisal of Iden's "quiet walks" and "small inheritance." To Cade, Iden is less a poor esquire grazing on the pastoral margins of political life than the walking embodiment of established authority. Whereas Iden conceives of his walk in the garden as one in a series of daily demonstrations of an un-turmoiled life neatly balanced between private pleasure and social obligation, Cade believes that "the lord of the soil" has walked forth expressly "to seize me for a stray, for entering his fee-simple without leave" (4.10.24-25).

Cade's legalistic and oppositional estimate of his imminent encounter with Iden demonstrates both his incapacity to appreciate Iden's version of pastoral and his complete exclusion from the privileged position that enables it. Unlike the poor who are sent "well pleased" from Iden's gate, Cade appears to be a complete stranger to the custom of
feudal hospitality, of the mutual obligations that obtain, or are supposed to obtain, between prosperous giver and impoverished receiver. As befits the leader of a popular rebellion, Cade approaches his encounter with Iden from a thoroughly class-conscious and class-stratified position. For Cade, all possible relations between himself and Iden are construed in terms of the normative positioning of "stray" and "lord," hence in terms of mutual suspicion and hostility. From his perspective as a threatened stray, Iden's garden is "enclosed private property, not in any sense... a public or common domain." And anyone in Cade's position would know that "a poacher could be... hanged for invading a park in search of what previously could be had for the taking in open countryside." Cade's estimate of his position thus reveals the extent to which Iden's version of pastoral operates as a deeply privileged ideological construction.

Iden's effusion is further qualified by his own behavior during and after his encounter with Cade. Although Cade's aggressive challenge—"Ah, villain, thou wilt betray me, and get a thousand crowns of the King by carrying my head to him; but I'll make thee eat iron like an ostrich, and swallow my sword like a great pin, ere thou and I part!" (4.10.26-29)—understandably discourages Iden from sending this particular poor man well pleased from his gate, the speed with which Iden confirms Cade's legalistic estimate of their relationship profoundly qualifies Iden's more placid conception of relations between rich and poor:

Why, rude companion, whatso'er thou be,  
I know thee not; why then should I betray thee?  
It's 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,  
But thou wilt brave me with these saucy terms?  

(4.10.30-35)

Iden's initial effort to allay Cade's anxieties suggests that Iden may be a more complex figure than Cade imagines, as does his subsequent reluctance to engage "a poor famish'd man" in combat. But as the passage moves—without further provocation from Cade—into a more magisterial restatement of Cade's own estimate of his transgression, Cade is summarily cast in the unvarying likeness of a "thief" who has "come to rob my grounds." Stephen Greenblatt notes, with respect to this encounter, 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." Although Greenblatt is certainly right to notice the crucial role that property plays in this transaction, Cade's braving of Iden with "saucy terms" seems to arouse Iden more than does his mere transgression of freehold boundaries. I would submit that it is primarily Cade's obstreperousness—his offensive refusal to maintain the habit of servility Iden expects both from "strays" who break into his fee-simple and from the poor who leave his gate well pleased—that motivates the violent turn in this encounter and consequently transforms Iden's pastoralized estimate of his garden state into a spirited defense of property rights.

Cade brings to Iden's garden a fully developed habit of resistance to even the most liberal ministrations of those who tower over him in the social order. His defiance rests partly on an overestimation of his notoriety, but largely on a conviction in his self-worth which has been fueled by his leadership of a rebellion that has already successfully leveled competing claims to distinction: "Brave thee! ay, by the best blood that ever was broach'd, and beard thee too. Look on me well: I have eat no meat these five days; yet, come thou and thy five men, and if I do not leave you all as dead as a door-nail, I pray God I may never eat grass more" (4.10.36-40). It is this that finally forces the issue between Cade and Iden, while Iden's response and the brief combat that follows ironically reveal the "true" nature of the relationship between social unequals:

Nay, it shall ne'er be said, while England stands,  
That Alexander Iden, esquire of Kent,  
Took odds to combat a poor famish'd man.  
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;  
My foot shall fight with all the strength thou hast;  
And if mine arm be heaved in the air  
Thy grave is digg'd already in the earth.  
As for words, whose greatness answers words,  
Let this my sword report what speech forbeares.  

(4.10.41-53)

Iden's speech fully appreciates and elaborates on the social disparity between the combatants by rendering it physical. Its comparative inventory of body parts casts Iden in the likeness of a giant and reduces Cade to the proportions of a dwarf. Although Iden's defeat of Cade may be accounted for—as Cade asserts—by the latter's current status as a starving fugitive, the text suggests that Cade is undone "naturally" in daring to contend with someone whose social superiority also makes
him his superior in strength and skill. Iden’s conscientiously degrading treatment of Cade’s body—which Iden says he will drag “headlong by the heels / Unto a dunghill,” leaving Cade’s “trunk for crows to feed upon” after cutting off his head (4.10.75–83)—offers a last ironic gloss on the futility of Cade’s defiance and on the curse that Cade lays on Iden’s garden: “Wither, garden; and be henceforth a burying-place to all that do dwell in this house, because the unconquer’d soul of Cade is fled” (4.10.62–64).

This culminating act of enclosure also radically reorients Iden’s attitude toward his own, previously celebrated, social position. Iden will “cut off [Cade’s] most ungracious head” and “bear [it] in triumph to the King,” thereby exchanging his garden state as a “poor esquire of Kent” for the status of a knight, having clearly “waxed great” by another’s “waning,” despite his earlier admonitory remarks. Cade’s misadventure in Iden’s garden thus becomes the medium through which Iden exercises his own desire for social advancement, one that may be said to be modeled on Cade’s status as a very different kind of stray than Iden initially imagines. As Iden leaves his garden behind for what he has earlier appraised as the “turmoiled” life of a courtier, the notion of the garden itself as an unturmoiled place apart, untouched by the social strife that reigns elsewhere, also becomes radically qualified. In bringing to his encounter with Iden a deeply rooted, polarized, and polarizing consciousness of class, Cade elicits from Iden a response premised on the same which effectively demystifies Iden’s conception of a private space where rich and poor can meet on common ground. Cade’s violation of Iden’s pastoral does not summarily transform Iden’s garden into a site of social contestation; rather, it reveals the extent to which its unbreached walls had previously functioned as a facade of the imaginary, both for Iden himself and for the poor who came as supplicants to its gates. In contesting the ideological hold that the garden has heretofore maintained over all concerned parties, Cade effectively unlocks its actual status as a space intersected by mutually exclusive and competing class interests.

II

By assigning to a dramatic character a consciousness of something as problematic as our modern notion of class, I run the risk of being discredited on both interpretive and historical grounds. But I believe that a politically motivated class consciousness was capable of being both experienced and represented in early modern England, and that Jack Cade constitutes the most realized example in Shakespeare’s work of a character who is able to transform his political subjection into something amounting to our modern sense of class-based resistance. The few historians daring or reckless enough to use the word class in their representations of the period are usually careful to distance themselves from the implication that its use indicates “either the existence of a class society in the period or of class conflict.” Most seem content to accept Peter Laslett’s argument that in early modern England “there were a large number of status groups but only one body of persons capable of concerted action over the whole area of society, only one class in fact.” Where Laslett’s argument falls flat is in its determination that a social class must possess power commensurate with that of a ruling party in society. Class conflict, for Laslett, requires the capacity or potential of an oppositional party to contest successfully the ruling party’s privileges or prerogatives: a formulation that—given the alleged lack of a duly qualified opposition—appears always and ever to guarantee the presence and predominance of a single class. R. S. Neale, by contrast, subscribes to E. P. Thompson’s view “that class struggle precedes class.” In Thompson’s words, “Class defines itself as, in fact, it eventuates.” Neale concludes that “the absence of a contemporary language which would enable men to express such relationships [as class] should not prevent historians from categorizing the past in ways unknown or only vaguely understood by men in the past.”

In her own recent essay on 2 Henry VI, Annabel Patterson demonstrates that “there was a cultural tradition of popular protest” in early modern England, “a tradition in the sense of something 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.” In so doing, Patterson incisively redresses the traditional neglect of the incipiently class-based ideologies of oppositional movements without, however, specifically nominating class as a discursive focus of her own. Nonetheless, 2 Henry VI is sufficiently abundant in examples of a contemporary language expressive of class relationships to satisfy the evidential demands of the majority of critics. Most of this language is spoken by or through Jack Cade and his confederates, who supply a variety of statements expressive of a deep and divisive consciousness of class. Although Shakespeare draws from these statements no explicitly class-interested conclusions of his own, his characters frequently do, as, for example, Jack Cade does in this exchange with Lord Say:

Cade. . . . Thou dost ride in a foot-cloth, dost thou not?
Say. What of that?
Cade. Marry, thou ought'st not to let thy horse wear a cloak,
when honester men than thou go in their hose and doublets.
(4.7.44-49)

I choose this early moment in what soon becomes a notoriously violent
evening to demonstrate how commonplace signs of social distinction
can be made to appear symptomatic of social inequity in 2 Henry VI. In
this instance a seemingly negligible privilege enjoyed by a representa-
tive of the ruling class is subjected to the sharp-tongued scrutiny of a
representative of the class that both suffers and provides for it. By
being placed in direct relation to the impoverishment of workingmen, the
previously freestanding and therefore “innocent” social distinction is
transformed into a corrupt social practice.

Although it could be argued that Cade’s subsequent execution of a
character who pleads “so well for his life” retrospectively cancels any
incursion Cade may make against the ruling order’s mystification of so-
cial injustice, such an objection would be hard to sustain in the context
of a play that is largely devoted to dramatizing the predatory behavior
of England’s ruling establishment. In 4.2, the first scene in which
Cade’s rebellion is represented, the ruling order is arraigned in a par-
cularly resonant manner by two of Cade’s confederates, one of whom
proclaims, “Well, I say it was never merry world in England since
gentlemen came up” (4.2.7-9). The wording of this statement notably antici-
pates a presentment made several years after this play’s initial
performance by a producer in the 1596 Oxfordshire rising. According
Buchanan Sharp, “The miller Richard Bradshawe was reported to
have declared ‘that he hoped that before yt were long to see some of
the ditches throwne downe, and that yt wold never be merye till some
of the gentlemen were knocked downe,’” a sentiment, Sharp notes,
“which occurred frequently in the examinations of the principal
suspects.” Rather than claim that Bradshaw and his fellow suspects
got their language from Shakespeare, one may more reliably assume that
Shakespeare was appropriating an expression that would have been
familiar to many well before the Oxfordshire rising and the initial
performances of 2 Henry VI.

By having his character rehearse a rallying cry that may well have
been a contemporary commonplace, Shakespeare was bringing the
successive histories of past risings and rebellions (beginning with ac-
counts of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, which he deploys throughout
his dramatization of Jack Cade’s rising) into direct contact with latter-
day representations of class conflict, thereby giving added currency to
an apparently old complaint. As Sharp observes: “Popular feeling in
the Tudor-Stuart period reserved its most intense outbursts for... the
rich.” As expressed in anonymous libels, seditious utterances reported
from alehouses, and the few surviving examinations of rioters and in-
surrectionaries, the opinions of common folk reveal a deep hatred of
the people possessed of the power, social standing, and landed wealth
denied to them. Shakespeare, of course, balances his representation of
the poor’s complaints against the rich by emphasizing the rashness
and brutality of the rebels in his play. But in also choosing to emphasize
the derisive manner in which characters such as Suffolk speak of “the
rascal people”—for example, he calls his pirate captors “paltry, servile,
abject drudges” (4.1.104)—and the indifference with which they hear and
address the common people’s seemingly modest petitions (see,
e.g., 1.3), Shakespeare demonstrates that the hatred of poor for rich is
but “the mirror image of the contempt and fear with which their su-
periors regarded the poor.”

The predictability of the terms that rich and poor employ to speak of
each other in 2 Henry VI has a contemporary Elizabethan analogue in
the development of a “language of sorts,” which, according to Keith
Righton, “appears to have been used primarily to express a dichot-
omic perception of society.” As Righton notes:

Such language clearly reveals a world of social meanings unapted by
the formal social classifications of the period—and arguably it was so widely
used because it was of greater practical significance. Its utility lay above
all in the fact that it was a terminology of social simplification, sweeping
aside the fine-grained (and highly contested) distinctions of the hierarchy
of degrees and regrouping the English into two broad camps which
were clearly held to reflect the fundamental realities of the social and
economic structure and the basic alignments of social relations. ... It was
a language of radical differentiation, cleaving society into the haves and
have nots, the respected and the contemned. It was a language pregnant
with conflict, aligning the “richer” over against the “poorer,” the “better”
over against the “meaner,” “vulgar,” “common,” “ruder” or “inferior”
sorts. It was also a language of radical dissociation, usually found in the
mounds of those who identified themselves with the “better” sort and
stigmatised those whom they excluded from that company with a bar-
rage of pejorative adjectives.

In 2 Henry VI the “better sort” variously refer to the commons as “the
abject people” (Duke Humphrey, 2.4.11); “an angry hive of bees / That
want their leader, [who] scatter up and down, / And care not who they
sting” (Warwick, 3.2.124–26); and as “rude unpolish’d minds” (Suffolk,
3.2.270). But what is perhaps more notable is the extent to which the
rising commons themselves appropriate the stigmatising function of
the language of sorts to “align” themselves in prosecuting their
rebellion.
Their initial, generalized animus against gentlemen is, for example, soon extended to include “all scholars, lawyers, [and] courtiers,” other “false caterpillars” such as magistrates, those who “can write and read and / cast account” (4.2.81–84), and anyone who speaks Latin (4.7.55). Reacting against the “scorn” the nobility reserve for those who “go in leather aprons” and the lack of regard shown to “virtue in handcraftsmen,” the rebels invert the criteria by which honor is measured by contending that “there’s no better sign of a brave / mind than a hard hand” (4.2.10–20). For his part, Jack Cade brings this tendency to its logical conclusion when he calls the Staffords “silken-coated slaves” (4.2.122), traces his artisanal nobility back to Adam, who “was a gardener” (4.2.128), and identifies “such as go in clouted shoon” as “thriftiest honest men”:

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 thriftiest honest men, and such  
As would, but that they dare not, take our parts.”

(4.2.175–80)

What is especially revealing about Cade’s call to arms is that its direct challenge to the very people Cade presumes to represent—namely, “the commons”—expresses a tolerance for (and expectation of) their failure to respond to it. Cade attempts to claim here a representative political character for his rebellion by presuming to speak on behalf of those who “dare not” join in it but are joined to it both by their status as workers and by their unvoiced allegiance to its aims. Although Cade’s confident assumption that he speaks on behalf of those who dare not speak for themselves may well be mistaken, it bespeaks a consciousness of collective interests and shared goals that is, for all rights and purposes, a consciousness of class. And it also demarcates that pivotal moment when “a class in itself” becomes[a] class for “itself.”

It is, of course, commonly held that Cade is represented as “a cruel, barbaric lout, whose slogan is ‘kill and knock down,’ and whose story as the archetype of disorder” is one long orgy of clownish arson and homicide fuelled by an infantile hatred of literacy and law.” Shakespeare’s decision to degrade the figure “whom [even the historian Edward] Hall respects as ‘a young man of godly stature and pregnant wit’... whose advisers were ‘shoemasters’ and ‘teachers’” may well reflect his own negative appraisal of Cade.19 But it does nothing to diminish the delegation to his character of an acute consciousness of class. Indeed, by separating his radically disorderly Cade from Hall’s more respectable figure, Shakespeare may be said to have foregrounded class distinctions which a more accurate (or less prejudicial) estimate of the historical Cade would have occluded.20

The class distinctions Shakespeare foregrounds are almost exclusively those that distinguish the “better sort” from the “meaner sort,” those who are socially and culturally privileged from those who privilege their own social and cultural dispossessions. The “middling sort” play a much more negligible role in the physical conflict represented onstage, as the following example suggests. After announcing that “Jack Cade hath almost gotten London Bridge,” a messenger to the king reports that “the citizens fly and forsake their houses,” while “the rascal people, thirsting after prey, / Join with [the traitor; and... jointly swear / To spoil the city and your royal court” (4.4.48–52). In addition to distinguishing the (victimized) citizens of London from the (victimizing) people, this passage implicitly draws a connection between the interests of “the city” and those of the “royal court.” This connection is elaborated in the brief scene (4.5.) that ensues, in which a textually identified “citizen” (apparently speaking at the behest of the Lord Mayor) exchanges information with Lord Scales, who urges the Londoners to “fight for your king, your country, and your lives” (4.5.11). This they apparently do under the leadership of Matthew Goffe. But apart from the evidence provided by a stage direction that reads “Alarums. Matthew Goffe is slain, and all the rest” (4.7.), Shakespeare appears to have chosen not to stage at any length the bloody battle between citizens and rebels for London Bridge which Hall represents in graphically lurid detail:

The multitude of the rebelles drave the citizens from the stolupes at the bridge foote, to the drawe bridge, and began to set fyre in divers houses. Alas what sorrow it was to behold that miserable chance: for some desyryng to eschew the fyer, lept on his enemies weapon, and so did: fearfull women with children in their armes, amased and appalled, lept into the river: other doubtinge how to save them self betwene fyer, water, and swourd, were in their houses suffocat and smoldered.21

Shakespeare not only fails to include a single dramatic reference to Hall’s account in the text of 2 Henry VI, he also fails to provide the kind of detailed commentary on undramatized action that would have lent a great deal more judgmental fervor to his representation of the episode in question. Conjoined with Cade’s subsequent (and wildly anachronistic) order for “some” to go “and pull down the Savoy” (4.7.1) and “others” to do likewise to the Inns of Court—both references to actions undertaken during the rising of 1381—Shakespeare’s deviations from
Hall appear to repress the role played by citizens of "the middling sort" as opponents and victims of Jack Cade and as allies of the royal party. Rather than emerging as an "enemy of the people," whose conception of class warfare pits the commons against the citizens of London, Cade is consequently represented in a manner that more closely approximates his own self-estimate as protector or defender of "the people" against the depredations of the high and mighty.

The negligible role played by the citizen class or "middling sort" in Shakespeare's dramatization of Cade's rebellion does not, however, entirely mystify the position Shakespeare adopted in staging a conflict that primarily pits rich against poor. In largely choosing to remove citizens from the scene of Cade's rebellion and, for that matter, from the far more numerous scenes that portray the struggles between royalty and aristocracy which eventuate in civil war, Shakespeare may well be representing, as well as promoting, the point of view of the one component of English society that presumably remained both stable and reliable in the face of wholesale social disorder: namely, the literate, industrious, law-abiding citizen class. In identifying the point of view of 2 Henry VI with the interests of what we today would term the "middle class," I am attempting to give some ideological basis to this play's author function while at the same time avoiding the facile equation of biography and ideology which makes Shakespeare a reactionary mouthpiece for the historically inevitable triumph of what Richard Wilson calls "the literate bourgeois." Wilson detects nothing but "animus" in those episodes of the play that record "the people's garbled testimony or labourers' puns" and that dramatize their "long orgy of clownish arson and homicide fuelled by an infantile hatred of literacy and law." I detect, on the contrary, a politically astute reckoning with a long list of social grievances whose inarticulate and violent expression does not invalidate their demand for resolution. And I attribute the astuteness of that reckoning to a playwright whose manifest literacy and identification with citizen values may actually have made possible his sympathetic appraisal of the people's claims.

Garbled though they may be, the people's grievances are not, in any event, first expressed in the context of Cade's rebellion. They are, in fact, repeatedly addressed in the long series of events that lead up to it in the life of this particular play, beginning with the abortive petition of the petition against the enclosure of Long Melford (1.3.) and with Simcox's wife's testimony that she and her husband pursued their fraud "for pure need" (2.1.250). Even within the context of Cade's rebellion, powerful appraisals of social injustice are attached to ostensibly more intertemporal diatribes against schooling and literacy, as is the case, for example, in Cade's rambling indictment of Lord Say:

It will be prov'd to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun, and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear. Thou hast appointed justes of peace, to call poor men before them about matters they were not able to answer. Moreover, thou hast put them in prison; and because they could not read, thou hast hang'd them; when, indeed, only for that cause they have been most worthy to live. (4.7.36–44)

Whereas Wilson employs such examples to demonstrate Shakespeare's revulsion toward those members of his audience and his society who, like his own father, lacked the capacity to write, we would do better to view such passages as symptomatic of Shakespeare's representation of literacy as a crucial bridge between powerlessness and empowerment. Cade and his cohorts repeatedly revile the practices of reading, writing, and printing, and the collateral institution of grammar schools and printing mills, less out of ignorance than out of an assured belief in the role they play in dividing society into haves and have-nots. They read into such practices and institutions their own marginal status as dispossessed subjects ("because they could not read") of all-possessing masters ("thou hast hang'd them").

Illiteracy was surely not a capital offense in Shakespeare's England, but it would be disingenuous to contend that Cade radically misrepresents the legal implications of a social structure in which illiteracy could, indeed, have mortal consequences. As late as 1663 George Swinhoe noted that "some for want of reading their neck-verse have lost their lives." And as David Cressy notes with respect to more fortunate participants in the customary reading of the neck-verse, "the opportunity remained in Tudor and Stuart England for the literate felon to claim 'benefit of clergy' and escape the full severity of the law." Cressy also reminds us of the social consequences of membership in that class of subjects, Jack Cade claims to represent—a grouping that closely resembles what Thomas Smith identified as that "fourth sort or class" that had "no voice nor authority in our common wealth," which comprised "day labourers, poor husbandmen, yea, marchants or retailers which have no free land, copholders, and all artificers, as Taylers, Shoomakers, Carpenteres, Brickemakers, Bricklayers, Masons, &c." The evidence assembled by Cressy suggests a close correlation between illiteracy and the lack of "voice or authoritie" of the majority of subjects in this class. In a ranking of trades by illiteracy, Cressy's samples indicate that approximately half the tailors, blacksmiths, joiners, wrights, and butchers in rural England in the period 1580–1700 were functionally illiterate. Between 60 and 75 percent of the carpenters, glovers, shoemakers, masons, and bricklayers fall into this category as
well (pp. 132-33). In virtually all the samples assembled "labourers" and "husbandmen" vie with women of every class for the claim to complete illiteracy.

Cressy also supplies evidence that helps explain the connection between Jack Cade's animosity toward literacy and its enabling institutions and his specific singling out of "all scholars, lawyers, courtiers, [and] gentlemen" as enemies of the people. A division of early modern English society into discrete classes on the basis of literacy would, for example, directly link members of the clergy, the professions, and the gentry in ways that other measurements—say, on the basis of property, wealth, or political power—would not (pp. 119-21). According to Cressy: "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 literacy scale. Thirty percentage points or more usually separated them from the next most literate cluster, the yeoman and tradesman" (p. 124). Cressy's findings offer a possible rationale for what is often construed to be Jack Cade's irrational and indiscriminate attack on citizens who would initially appear to operate at some remove from the most obvious structures of power. If, as Cressy's evidence suggests, Cade and his followers are correct in perceiving a connection between those who appear to be only culturally privileged and those who are socially and economically privileged as well, then conventional estimates of Cade's demagoguery and his followers' barbarity may themselves be in need of correction. Indeed, Shakespeare may be attributing to Cade and his rebels what is at once a critically acute and an ideologically predictable piece of social analysis, grounded in a consciousness of class differences and opposing class interests similar to that which appears to have characterized the attitude of the Elizabethan poor toward the rich.

In commenting on the nature of the connections between the educationally and socially privileged, Cressy would appear to confirm this possibility: "The social standing of priests and professionals depended on their training and function as well as on their connections and wealth. They were essentially skilled literate specialists, agents and associates of the ruling class. By virtue of their profession alone they were accorded a kind of honorary gentle status and were grouped with the gentry in most contemporary social classifications" (p. 122). Instead of engaging in a complicated bout of self-hatred in representing Cade's attack on literacy and the literate, Shakespeare instead provides Cade with an argument consistent with convictions that not only may have been shared by contemporary working men, but continue to characterize the struggle for control of the "means of communication" in societies similarly divided between literate haves and illiterate have-nots. In its effort to root out such "false caterpillars" as "scholars and lawyers," Cade's "ragged multitude" of illiterate "hinds and peasants" effectively identifies these "skilled literate specialists" as "agents and associates of the ruling class." Although the attendant scorn directed at literacy itself may constitute a displaced (and arguably self-defeating) symptom of political dispossession, the indictment of its beneficiaries could not be more apt.

Like other positions taken by Cade and his followers, the animus toward literacy is rooted in a collective valorization of prevailing differences, a nostalgia for a simpler time of undistinction, and a correspondingly defensive anxiety regarding change which has at least some basis in contemporary events. At the beginning of his encounter with Lord Say, for example, Cade identifies Say's educational philanthropy as one of the chief sins he has committed against the commonwealth: "Thou hast most traitourously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar-school; and whereas, before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caus'd printing to be us'd" (4.7.30-34).

The terms of Cade's indictment initially seem to subordinate willful ignorance to a conscious cultivation of comic effect, as Cade appears to relish his exaggeration of the threat posed to civil society by Say. But if we choose to take Cade at his word, his indictment may instead express the same nostalgia for a "bookless" existence presided over by satisfied forefathers, which Nicholas Breton describes in his representation of the semiliterate countryman's pastimes: "We can learn to plough and harrow, sow and reap, plant and prune, thresh and fame, winnow and grinde, brue and bake, and all without booke. These are our cheife businesse in the Country, except we be Jury-men to hang a theefe, or speake truth in a mans right, which conscience and experience will teach us with a little learning." Cade's claim that the heritage of this simpler state of affairs is jeopardized by the unsettling changes wrought by grammar schools may also be more broadly placed in the context of the "educational revolution" that took place in the first half of the Elizabethan period and that reached its peak in 1580. According to Cressy, "The reign of Elizabeth saw a solid improvement in literacy among tradesmen and craftsmen in all parts of England," with tailors and weavers in particular making considerable gains (p. 153). This "revolution" witnessed the dissemination of schoolmasters throughout the countryside and may have been directly responsible for making Shakespeare's own generation more literate than that of either his ancestors or his descendants. Of course, such a revolution may also have worked to create divisions between generations, to arouse anxiety among those incapable of benefiting from it, or to exacerbate already
prevailing tensions and differences between the latter and those who could employ their newly acquired literacy in the interests of social mobility.

Rather than speculate further in this vein, I would prefer to explore the connection between Cade's scorn for literacy and valorization of illiteracy with the positions he and his followers take toward property, power, and status relations. In the course of the play we get from them an inventory of claims, principles, and resolves that identifies the "fall" of the "merry world" that was England with the institution of a system of distinctions whose beneficiaries are gentlemen, magistrates, lawyers, and scholars, among others. England's redemption is premised on a series of utopian proposals that variously call for the termination of distinction ("All the realm shall be in common" [4.2.65]; the extermination of those privileged by distinction ("The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" [4.2.73]); and the absorption of those privileged by distinction into the great mass of the undistinguished ("Let the magistrates be laboring men" [4.2.16–17]). Having leveled distinction, Cade would apparel all "in one livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worship me their lord" [4.2.70–72]. Cade's determination to reserve this pivotal distinction for himself is expressed with a good deal more consistency than are his other positions. Calling for the burning of "all the records of the realm," Cade claims that "my mouth shall be the parliament of England" [4.2.12–14]. And in the same scene he asserts, "The proudest peer in the realm shall not wear a head on his shoulders, unless he pay me tribute" [4.2.114–15].

It is commonplace for commentators on the play to emphasize the many contradictions in Cade's positions, the most notable one involving Cade's demagogic claim to absolute power in a society in which all things are to be held "in common." But it is Cade's impulse to change radically the system by which goods and offices are distributed that might better occupy our attention. We learn from the examples to the play gives us that what motivates Cade and his confederates most insistently is the wholesale destruction of a system of privileges which renders them visibly and permanently powerless. Gentlemen, magistrates, lawyers, and scholars are portrayed as accomplices in a ruling-class conspiracy to cheat working men out of their "ancient rights." This conspiracy has been institutionalized in a rule of law, permanently housed in "the records of the realm," and handed down in incomprehensible Latin tags by magistrates who will excise only those who are as literate as they are. Enclosures, price-fixing, coining, the control of surplus, and the delegation of easily distinguished vocational liversies, are all represented as activities that advance the interests of the ruling order at the expense of those who suffer them. Cade's communistic al-

ternative is an oppositional dream of simplification and uniformity—of undistinction—of an equity born out of an intolerance with inequity, though, given its genocidal and demagogic components, hardly identifiable with what we today would call social justice. The root of the dream, in an apparent but fully explicable reversion to mystification, is Adam in the Garden, the common father of common men, who, as in the passage from Breton, can do "all without book."

III

As others have noted, one may trace the communistic dream in 2 Henry VI to a common ideological source which helped define a succession of other popular uprisings and revolts, succinctly summarized in John Ball's catchphrase, "When Adam delv'd and Eve span / Who was then the gentleman?" Shakespeare's familiarity with Grafton's and Holinshed's representations of John Ball and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 has long been recognized and acknowledged. It is especially obvious in his anachronistic decision to have Cade and his followers destroy the Savoy and attack the Inns of Court, and in Cade's response to Stafford's attempt to belittle him:

Staf. Villain! thy father was a plasterer; And thou thyself a shearmen, art thou not?

Cade. And Adam was a gardener.

Bro. What of that?

(4.2.126–28)

But the question asked by Stafford's brother, to which Cade gives a characteristically arch and contradictory reply, is one that John Ball answered more incisively in the sermons reproduced by Grafton and Holinshed.

Richard Grafton offers a reconstruction of the commonplace address Ball would give his parishioners after Sunday services:

Ah good people, matters go not wel to passe in England in these dayes, nor shall not do untill every thing be common, and that there be no Villeyner nor gentlemens but that we be all as one, and that the Lordes be no greater then we be. What have we deserved, or why should we be thus kept in servitude and bondage? We be all come from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve. Wherefore can they saye or shewe that they are greater Lordes then we be? savvying in that which we get and labour for, that doe they spend.
Tracing the human family back to its presumptive source in Adam and Eve, Ball effectively declares that the oppressive divisions of the contemporary social order constitute an unauthorized deviation from a divinely ordained equality. He further identifies the distinctions that currently obtain between lords and commons in terms that would be familiar to any latter-day cultural materialist. According to Ball, social dominance is now delegated to those who consume but do not produce, while those who produce but do not consume are “kept in servitude and bondage.” Given this state of affairs, the return he envisions to an originary condition in which “there be no Villeynes nor gentlemen but that we be all as one” would appear to require either the dissolution of differences among men or the elimination of one of the contending social classes.

In his famous speech to the rebels at Blackheath, Ball offered his auditors a solution to this dilemma based, like Cade’s, on an inverted valorization of workers. Ball addressed his audience as “good husbands” who must set about to transform the decaying garden of England in a thoroughly class-conscious manner, and not merely restore it to an Edenic state that has its human counterpart in an all-inclusive equality.

According to Holinshed:

He counselled them... that after the manner of a good husband that tilleth his ground, and riddeth out thereof such evil weeds as choke and destroye the good corn, they might destroye first the great lords of the realm, and after the judges and lawyers, questroners, and all other whom they undertooke to be against the commons, for so might they produce peace and suerte to themselves in time to come, if dispatching out of the waie the great men, there should be an equalitie in libertie, no difference in degrees of nobilitie, but a like dignitie and equalitie in all things brought in among them.

Ball’s emphasis on the destruction of judges and lawyers provides another basis for understanding Shakespeare’s delegation to Cade of an emphasis on the same and on the destruction of the “records of the realm.” It may be traced to the same rationale that motivated “the common uplandish people” during the Peasants’ Revolt “to burne and destroie all records, evidences, court-roles, and other minimmens,” the rationale being “that the remembrance of ancient matters being remooved out of mind, their landlords might not have whereby to chalenge anie right at their hands.” What Ball, Cade, and the “uplandish people” want, in the end, is less the return to a garden state that antedates the history of their disenfranchisement than the recovery of an “ancient freedom” that will supersede the memory of their servitude and dispossession. That Cade ultimately meets his end at the hands of a powerfully endowed “lord of the soil” while hunting up a salad in that man’s garden graphically demonstrates the nostalgic basis of this shared dream of undistinction at the same time as it validates its construction of prevailing class differences.

NOTES

1. 2 Henry VI 5.1.64–82. All quotations from 2 Henry VI are from the Arden edition, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross (London: Methuen, 1969); subsequent citations appear in the text.

2. In his own commentary on this scene, William Carroll calls Iden “an Horatian figure” and offers an illuminating comparison to the language delegated to him in the Folio version—from which my quotations are drawn—and in The First Part of the Contention. Although I agree with Carroll that the evidence for viewing the Contention’s Iden as a “potential encloser” becomes thinner in the Folio, I find other reasons to question his alleged standing as “an emblematic version of the happy rural man,” as I suggest later in this chapter.


6. 6. As Michael Hattaway writes in “Rebellion, Class Consciousness, and Shakespeare’s 2 Henry VI,” Cahiers Elisabethains 33 (1988), 19–22: “What Cade proclaims constitutes a cause... a cause that emerges from class oppression” (p. 19). Hattaway also claims that the nobility in the Henry VI plays “constitute a class—or if we prefer, an elite—defined by the conflict between individual aspirations of its members and everything that constitutes the culture or cultures of the plebeians” (p. 16).

7. Susan Amussen, “Gender, Family, and the Social Order, 1560–1725,” in Order and Disorder in Early Modern England, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 206, n. 33. Michael Hattaway offers this commentary on the similar conclusion reached by the editors of the volume in which Amussen’s essay appears: “Working from an analysis of cultural models, patterns of behaviour and local community, Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson conclude that ‘a class society had not in our period yet arrived’ [ibid., p. 4]. I cannot dispute their conclusion if I work from the same material and the same premises. But it seems that yet again literary critics have something to offer the cultural historians” (“Rebellion, Class Consciousness,” p. 16). On this subject, see note 12.

8. Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost (New York: Scribner’s, 1965), p. 23. A possible exception is David Underdown, who notes that “a heightened polarization of society... makes this period [1540–1640] an important stage in the long process of class formation. England was still very far from being a class society, but the lines were beginning to sharpen, the horizontal ties linking the ‘respectable’ and dividing them from the poor to cut across the vertical


10. Ibid., p. 99.


12. In her editor's note to _Shakespeare Quarterly_ 42, 2 (1991), Gail Kern Paster calls attention to the lack of reciprocity of social historians to the work of literary scholars, who have been greatly influenced by their findings and methodologies. Paster notes that not even avowedly revisionist historians "seem as prepared as most literary practitioners to investigate the ideological or material consequences of dramatic representation, either on lived practices or on the social formation of consciousness" (p. vii). Although I do not claim that "literary evidence, the evidence of imaginative texts," should "be allowed a referential function, a power to give material and concrete evidence about the past" (p. iii)—a possibility that Paster poses without actually endorsing—I do think social historians should attend more closely to the representational claims of what is imagined in such eminently social texts as 2 Henry VI.


15. In _Shakespeare and the Popular Voice_, Annabel Patterson notes that in appropriating "the chronicle accounts of the Peasants' Revolt to thicken his description of Jack Cade's rebellion," Shakespeare "was clearly participating in an Elizabethan cultural practice, that of collating the popular protests of the past, both with each other and with the issues of the day" (pp. 38–39).


17. Ibid.


21. In her discussion of Kett's rebellion, Annabel Patterson remarks the "self-conscious acceptance, by the rebels themselves, of a 'peasant' ideology of the primitive," and concludes that "it is no accident that Shakespeare's Cade makes [the 'clouted shoon'] his distinguishing mark of class" (Shakespeare and the Popular Voice, p. 40).

22. Edward Hall, _The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke_ (London, 1548), f. 160a.

23. Wilson, "A Mingled Yarn," p. 168. As Wilson writes: "Son of a provincial gosgr whose only testimony is the mark he left beside his name in borough records, Shakespeare used his professional debut to signal scorn of popular culture and identification with an establishment in whose eyes authority would henceforth belong exclusively to writers" (ibid., p. 169).