Royal Holloway
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Jack Cade

The skin of a dead lamb and hatred of the written word

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Hayes Robinson Lecture Series 2006

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Introduction to new Hayes Robinson lecture series

by Penelope J. Corfield
Series editor

Each year in March, a distinguished international historian is invited to give a public lecture at Royal Holloway. Their chosen topics have ranged challengingly across time and across themes, from sexuality to long life, to visions of the afterlife. The event is organised by the History Department, under the terms of a benefaction from the estate of Margaret Hayes Robinson, who was a much-loved Head of Royal Holloway's History Department (1899-1911) in the days when higher education for women was still being pioneered.

The new lecture series, inaugurated in 1992, remains a popular occasion in the College's annual timetable. Regular guests include numerous former students, colleagues in the teaching profession, and large numbers from the local community in the Egham area. Each year, the Hayes Robinson lecturer also meets informally with Royal Holloway History students, for an Open Forum session of debate and discussion.

Publication of the Hayes Robinson lecture series was launched in 1997 by Natalie Zemon Davis, and has continued with notable contributions from Judith Bennett, Linda Colley, Saul Friedländer, Bob Fogel, Dame Olwen Hufton, Robert Darnton, Barbara Metcalf, and in 2005 by Benjamin Kedar on the theme of Jewish, Christian and Islamic religiosity in the era of the Crusades. From 2007 onwards, the Hayes Robinson lectures will be available on the web.

Details of the continuing lecture programme and past publications are available from the History Department Graduate & Research Office, Royal Holloway, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX. Please contact: 01784 443311 (phone); or email pg.history@rhul.ac.uk.

Roger Chartier is an internationalist scholar, holding prestigious academic posts in France and the USA. He is one of the leading pioneers of the new cultural history, which has been one of the major innovations in the study of history during the last thirty years. In the old days, chapters on 'culture' typically came at the end of textbooks, and tended to be rather dry and conscientious recitals of key developments in the arts.

Today, however, cultural history has come to the fore, and in a quite different way. The new style characteristically assesses case histories that relate to any form of 'high' or 'popular' culture – and/or everything in between – in order to confront general questions that are of significant historical interest in their own right. At its best, the new approach has opened new vistas, which have also thrown new light upon more traditional accounts.

In this Hayes Robinson lecture, Roger Chartier explores the intricate history of human communications, by looking at the early opposition to the written word, and especially to the new world of printing. His key example comes from Shakespeare's depiction, in Henry VI Part 2, of the rebel Jack Cade. He was a Kentish man who was hung as a 'horrible, odious, and errant false traitor and rebel' in 1450. For Shakespeare, Cade appears as the defender of a vanishing world when people communicated plainly by speech rather than by writing deceitful words on 'the skin of a dead lamb'. But why did some people oppose the written word? And what did Shakespeare intend to convey by his depiction of Cade? In answering these questions, Roger Chartier provides an elegant interpretation of the tensions generated by changes in technologies of communication.

Furthermore, his interpretation has an interesting topical resonance, When technologies of communication are changing once more, the Jack Cades of today warn of the dangers of information overload or worry that the art of conversation is disappearing or fear that, instead of electronic outreach, the outcome will be electronic snooping and surveillance. All this amply demonstrates that cultural history cannot be relegated to the 'boring' end of the textbooks but instead highlights key issues of universal importance.

Jack Cade, the skin of a dead lamb and hatred of the written word

'Burn all the records of the realm'.[1] All the commentators of *Part Two* of *Henry VI* have acknowledged that one of the main features attributed by Shakespeare to Cade's rebellion, as it is staged in the play, is the violent hatred for any form, any presence, any use of the written word.

The 'reformation' of the realm desired by the Kentish people and their captain – which is characterized by Holinshed's *Chronicle* as 'the punishing and reforming of the misdemeanors of [the King and Queen's] bad counselors, that neither fifteens [the new and unpopular property tax] shouldhereafter be demanded nor once any impositions or taxes be spoken of'[2] – is radically reinterpreted in the history play, which was printed in 1594, very likely performed in 1590 or 1591, and then reedited in the 1600 and 1619 *Quartos* before its publication in the *Folio*[3]. The return to the 'liberty' promised by Shakespeare's Cade supposes much more than the abolition of any new taxes. It requires: the abolition of private appropriation of the land; the disappearance of a monetary economy; and the suppression of the signs which exposed the inequalities of status:

> All the realm shall be in common [...] There shall be no money, all shall eat and drink on my scores, and I will apparel them all in one livery, that they may agree like brothers and worship me their lord.

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1 Quotation from *Henry VI Part Two*, according to William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part One, Two, and Three*, Edited by David Bevington, New York, The Bantam Shakespeare, 1988.

2 *Ibid.*, 'Shakespeare's Sources', *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (1587 edition). Compiled by Raphael Holinshed, pp. 441-2. A similar report of the rebels' claims is given by Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548): 'This Capitayn not onely suborned by techers, but also enforces by pryvye scholemasters, assembled together a great companye of talle personages, assuring them, that their attempt was both honorable to God and the king, and also profitable for the common wealth, promisyng them, if either by force or pollicie, they might once take the kyng, the Quene, & other their counsaillers, into their handes and governance, that they woule honorablie entreate the kyng, and so sharply handle his counsaillers, that neither fiftenes should hereafter to be demanded, nor once any imposicions, or tax should be spoken of', cited according to Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and *Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, London, Routledge & Kegan, and New York, Columbia University Press, 1960, Volume 3, p. 114.

3 For the contexts of the play, see Chris Fitter's articles, 'Emergent Shakespeare and the Politics of Protest: *2 Henry IV* in Historical Contexts', *ELH*, Volume 72, Number 1, 2005, pp. 129-58, and 'Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Visions of Popular Rebellion', *Shakespeare Studies*, Volume 32, Number 1, 2004, pp. 173-219.

'Let's kill all the lawyers' is another of the slogans of the rebels, uttered by Dick the butcher and taken up by Cade: 'Nay, that I mean to do'. Why such hatred against the lawyers? Because they handle the two instruments that impose an unjust oppression: parchment and wax.

In denouncing the tyrannical power of writing Cade distorts and gives a Christian resonance to an old juridical formula: 'Is not this 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?' – or in the slightly different text of the *Quarto*: 'Why is it not a miserable thing, that of the skin of an innocent Lambe parchment should be made, and then with a little blotting over with inke, a man should undo himselfe'.

Cade's mistrust of the authority assigned to the words inscribed on the skin of a dead animal does not have, as many of his other formulas or mottos do, its origins in the familiar tropes of popular protest. The image was in fact introduced in the mid-thirteenth century by Sinibaldo dei Fieschi, the future pope Innocent IV, in his *Apparatus* or commentary upon Gregory IX's *Decretales : 'contra jus gentium fuit inventum a jure civili, ut credatur pelli animali mortui'* – against the *'jus gentium'* – the civil law has decided that we must believe in the skin of a dead animal.

Such a gloss gave a striking formulation to an idea that had already been expressed one century earlier against the Roman civil law. According to this idea, the *'viva vox'* – or live voice – has to be considered as a form of evidence that is more decisive than any written text. In Justinian's *Novellae*, for example, such a preference was indeed mentioned, but it was limited to the situations in which the authenticity of a property transaction was at stake. In such a case, the oral testimonies of those who had attended and eye-witnessed the juridical act must always be preferred to the evidence given by the written document itself.[4] But from the twelfth century on, the privilege granted to *'viva vox'* was widely extended; and it became used to establish the superiority of the oral testimonies given by witnesses whose legal and social condition could guarantee their capacity to speak the truth.

4 Cf. Marta Madero, 'Façons de croire. Les témoins et le juge dans l'oeuvre juridique d'Alphonse X le sage, roi de Castille', *Annales. Histoire et Sciences Sociales*, 1999, pp. 197-218, and *Las Verdades de los hechos. Proceso, juez y testimonio en la Castilla del siglo XIII*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2004, pp. 52-7.

A French juridical saying likewise affirmed that *'témoins passent lettres'* – witnesses are superior to written records. It is such an 'auricular assurance' that Edmund uses for convincing Gloucester of Edgar's unfaithfulness: 'If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by auricular assurance have your satisfaction.' The proof of Edgar's betrayal will be more evident for Gloucester listening to the words of his son than reading the letter that Edgar has supposedly sent to Edmund.[5]

For medieval commentators, only the power of the Pope, the Emperor, or the King could endow the skin of a dead animal with a credibility that is *'contra jus'* and almost *'contra naturam'*. In this sense, the Jack Cade imagined by Shakespeare is not wrong when he links the authority of the 'scribbled parchment', able to 'undo a man', with the power of the officials who are or claim to be in charge of enforcing the royal orders. For Cade as for the lawyers, the seal is the instrument that operates the 'miracle' of transforming the lamb's skin into a form of evidence that must be believed.

According to the commentators on the Roman Law, the *'sigillum'*, or seal, is the material *'signum'* which authenticates the silent 'voice' of writing. It is then not surprising that Cade recognizes – but for the worse – this power of wax: '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.'

The historical Kentish rebels were also aware of the unjust authority imposed by the misuses of the royal seal. In the bill of petition they gave to the royal delegation they met on June 1450, when they were encamped under the walls of London, one of their demands was 'that all the extorcions may be leid down, that is to sey, the grete extorcion of grene wax that is falsly used to the perpetuall destruccion of the Kynges liege men and the Comons of Kent with out provision of our Souvraigne lorde and his trewe Counsell.'[6] This rebel bill of complaints, known by a fifteenth-century copy and printed in John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (published in 1580), which was a major

5 William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Edited by R.A. Foake, London, The Arden Shakespeare, 2000, pp. 183-4.

6 Quoted according to I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, Appendix A, p. 191.

source for Shakespeare's play, alluded to the abuse by the county officials of the writs sealed under the green wax of the Exchequer.[7]

In spite of the superiority granted to *'viva vox'* over the skin of a dead lamb, throughout Europe the legal, judicial and administrative procedures were using, more and more systematically, written documents as instruments of proof and authentication. In Shakespeare's England, as Phyllis Rackin argues: 'the collection and systematization of legal records supplied a crucial instrument for the Tudor effort to construct an absolute state.'[8] When he is indicting and condemning Lord Saye, Cade evokes the tyranny of writing exercised on the illiterates who are thus dispossessed of their own person: 'Thou hast appointed justices 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 hanged them, when indeed only for that they have been most worthy to live' – alluding to the privilege of 'benefit of clergie' which allowed men who could read to escape hanging.

The portrayal of Cade is fundamentally shaped in Shakespeare's play (if not in the historical event) by the double condemnation of the power of writing and of the power *over* writing, defined by Armando Petrucci as the attempt by authorities to monopolize writing as an essential instrument for the governance and control of territories and populations.[9] Cade radically embodies the 'the distrust of written modes of proof' and 'the rule that oral witness is preferable to documents', which Michael Clanchy identifies as a lasting resistance to the increasing importance of written records.[10] Cade embodies also the utopian reversal of the evolution that has identified the exercise of sovereignty with the construction of an administrative, judicial, and bureaucratic state apparatus: 'Burn all the records of the realm. My mouth shall be the Parliament of England'.

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7 Ibid., pp. 82-4. Cf. also Ellen C. Caldwell, 'Jack Cade and *Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part 2*', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 92, Number 1, Winter 1995, pp. 18-79.

8 Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History. Shakespeare's English Chronicles*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 209.

9 Armando Petrucci, 'Pouvoir de l'écriture, pouvoir sur l'écriture dans la Renaissance italienne", *Annales* E.S.C., 1988, pp. 823-47.

10 M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, Second Edition, pp. 299 and 272.

The agents involved in such an evolution are the main targets of the anti-writing rebellion as staged by Shakespeare. Its first victim is a clerk, Emmanuel from Chartham, who masters written culture ('he can write, read, and cast account'), who teaches children ('we took him setting of boy's copies', says Smith the weaver) and who knows the technicalities of legal documents: 'he can make obligations and write court hand', adds Dick the butcher.

Moreover, such a distrust and rejection of the professional hand was not limited to Cade – or to Shakespeare. After he has written a letter for Dulcinea on the *'librillo de memoria'* or 'writing tables' abandoned by Cardenio in the Sierra Morena, Don Quixote ordered Sancho (who will carry it) to have the letter copied. But Don Quixote firmly warned him in Thomas Shelton's translation: 'Beware in any sort that thou give it not to a Notary or Court-Clearke to be copied for they write such an intangling-confounding processe letter, as Satan himself would scarce bee able to read it.'[11] In both cases, the professional hand (the English court hand and the Castilian *'letra procesada'*, translated as 'processe letter' in the 1612 translation) is considered unreadable and, therefore, associated with secret and magic power. Emmanuel who writes court hand and carries in his pocket 'a book with red letters in't' (which can be either an almanac with the Saints' days in red or a primer with red capital letters) is necessarily a 'conjurer', 'a villain and a traitor', as Cade names him.

In the Land of Cockaigne promised by Cade and described as a return to the Golden Age of 'our forefathers', writing will be abolished. Everyone will have a 'mark', 'like an honest, plain-dealing man', which will make useless the capacity to sign and write. Everyone will use 'score and tally', which are sufficient for casting accounts without the writing of any number, but only by cutting notches on a stick split between debtor and creditor. The utopia designed by Cade is an absurd attempt for reversing time and history, similar to the frightening world imagined four centuries later by Borges in his 'Utopia of a Tired Man', *'Utopía de un hombre que está cansado'*, in which the nameless inhabitant of the future declares: 'Printing – which is now abolished since it tended to multiply unnecessary texts to the point of

11 Miguel de Cervantes, *The History of the Valourous and Witty Knight-Errant Don Quixote de la Mancha*, London, 1652, fol. 55 recto.

dizziness – was one of man's worst evils.'[12] The clerk of Chartham, whose name itself is a permanent reminder of oppressive written culture since Emmanuel means 'God with us', a formula frequently used as heading for legal documents, will be hanged, 'with his pen and inkhorn about his neck'.

'Noblesse oblige' – Lord Saye is not hanged but beheaded with his son-in-law, Sir James Cromer, and their two heads are put upon two poles and insulted in a kind of cruel pre-1789 parade. Saye, hated for having given up Maine and Normandy to the Dauphin of France, 'Monsieur Basimecu', or 'Bus mine cue' in the *Quarto* ['kiss my ass'], embodies all the targets of Cade's rebellion: learning, law, and privilege. Saye can speak French and for Cade, 'therefore, he is a traitor'. '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?' Saye quotes Latin sentences (*'bona terra, mala gens'*, a formula he applies to Kent) and Latin authors (Julius Caesar's *Commentaries* which contradict the proverb by describing the Kentish people as 'liberal, valiant, active, wealthy'). In the *Quarto* at least, Lord Saye owns a library, where other kinds of 'bookes with red letters' (possibly rubricated editions of juridical texts) are daily read by the readers he welcomes or 'kepst' in his house. Above all, Saye masters the rhetorical resources of language and uses them when pleading for his life.

Cade opposes to Saye's humanism the figure of the 'world turned upside down'. The grammar schools – erected by Saye for suppressing, as he said, 'ignorance [that] is the curse of God' – are condemned as corrupting the youth of the realm. The printing press, which Saye has supposedly introduced in England, has undermined the King's authority and dignity (even if, as Doctor Johnson annotated: 'Shakespeare is a little early with this accusation'). And the justices of peace appointed by Saye have enforced the worst injustice. The carnivalesque and comic dimensions of the scene are made still more explicit in the *Quarto*, where, after Cade's question ('What of Kent?') and Saye's answer ('Nothing, but *Bona terra*'), the rebels are puzzled by this unknown language:

12 Jorge Luis Borges, *Utopia of a Tired Man*, in Borges, *The Book of Sand*, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1978, pp. 89-104 (quotation p. 92).

Cade: *Bonum terum*, zounds what's that? –

Dicke: He speaks French –

Will: No 'tis Dutch –

Nicke: No 'tis Outalian, I know it well enough.

To help in constructing Cade's egalitarian and anti-writing discourse, Shakespeare read carefully the chronicles that narrated not only the 1450 rebellion but also the Peasant's Revolt under Jack Straw and Wat Tyler in 1381. If the bills of complaint of 1450 do not mention any hostility for written culture as such, the reports of the 1381 rebellion as given by Richard Grafton or Raphael Holinshed depicted the rebels' burning of all legal records and instruments and the destruction of the Savoy and the Inner Temple (which is anachronistically ordered by Cade to his company entering in London: 'Now go some and pull down the Savoy; others to th' Inns of Court. Down with them all').

Richard Grafton had also indicated in his *Chronicle at Large* (1569): 'And in their passage, they spoyled the houses of all men of lawe that stood in their way, whether they were Spirituall or Temporall [...] And then came unto the Temple and other Innes of Court, and spoyled the Bookes of law, and the records of the Counter'. Raphael Holinshed added in *The Third Volume of Chronicles*: (1587): 'They purposed to burne and destroie all records, evidences, court-rolles, and other minuments that the remembrance of ancient matters being remooved out of mind, their landlords might not have whereby to chalenge anie right at their hands [...] They went to the Temple, and burnt the men of lawes lodgings, with their bookes, writings, and all that they might lay hand upon'.[13]

The conflation of the two historical episodes[14] gives to Cade's rebellion the status of an *'exemplum'* but with a profound distortion of the meaning of the rebels' destruction of documents in 1381. As underlined by Steven Justice, 'the rebels

13 Cf. Richard Grafton's *A Cronicle at Large*: (1569) and Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles*: (1587), cited according to Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. 3, pp 130, 131-2.

14 For other examples of attribution to Cade of Holinshed's description of anti-writing claims of the 1381 rebellion, see Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays. From Chronicle to Stage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 100-01.

aimed not to destroy the documentary culture of feudal tenure and royal government, but to recreate it; they recognized the written document as something powerful but also malleable, something that once written, could be rewritten'.[15]

The targets of such an 'insurgent literacy' were poll tax receipts, the landholding records of the lords, and the archives of local and royal justice, but not the books, the libraries, or the intellectual or ecclesiastical culture. Shakespeare transformed into a radical hatred for learning, writing and books the older narratives offered by the chronicles of the sixteenth century, which oscillated between describing the precise targeting of legal instruments by the rebels of 1381 and sometimes a broader anti-intellectual interpretation of their uprising. It is clear, however, that the main aim of the peasants led by John Ball and Wat Tyler was to use the power of writing against the power over writing exercised by juridical, fiscal and feudal authorities.

There remains one further question that has polarized the multiple interpretations of Shakespeare's representations of Cade's rebellion: if it is exemplary, what is the meaning of its exemplarity? Is it exemplary because its grotesque character crudely exposes, as Richard Wilson wrote, Shakespeare's 'scorn for popular culture and identification with an urban elite in whose eyes authority would henceforth belong exclusively to writers'?[16] Or, does the *'exemplum'* reveal the ambivalence of Shakespeare's staging of the revolt, by attributing to Cade and his followers formulas belonging to an egalitarian tradition and language?

Such usages include, for example, Cade's reference to the formula 'And Adam was a gardener', when Stafford accused him of being a 'shearman' and not Mortimer's son – in phrasing that recalled the question raised by John Ball in 1381: 'When Adam delved, and Eve span / Who was then a gentleman?' Or the sentence uttered by Holland (the actor transformed into a character of the play by Shakespeare's slip or the use of a prompt-book as a copy-text): 'It was never merry world in England

15 Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1999, pp. 13-60.

16 Richard Wilson, *Will Power. Essays on Shakespearean Authority*, New York and London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, p. 29.

since gentlemen came up'. Or Jack Cade's order to not spare any gentleman but only 'such as go in clouted shoon' – a self-identification which was used in different peasant's rebellions in the sixteenth century – for example in Norfolk in 1537 and again in 1549.[17]

What meaning can be constructed from such a recapitulation of the tropes of leveling and popular protest that Shakespeare knew perfectly well, when they are reused for depicting Cade's rebellion? If *2 Henry VI* is endowed by 'the capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences',[18] what is the meaning, or, better said, the meanings of the social energy that the play radiated to its audiences or readership?

Such a question is particularly important in the case of Shakespeare's 'Histories', which were reprinted several times (for example three times before the *Folio for the Quarto* version of *2 Henry VI*, published under the title of *The Whole Contention betweene the two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* in 1594, 1600 and 1619) and which framed the relation with the past of England for all those who did not read the chroniclers and who learned their history by attending performances or reading play-texts.

In the Shakesperean depiction of Cade's rebellion, the contradiction or ambivalence between irony and sympathy, between contempt for the vanquished and distance vis-à-vis the victors is not easy to solve.[19] A first step might be to emphasize the importance of theatrical conventions that link base characters and comic style. This is why Phyllis Rackin considers that 'plebeian characters constitute a significant presence in *2 Henry VI*, but their characterization, their roles, and their interests are finally determined by the requirements of the historical plot and the conventions of dramatic representation.'[20] According to David Bevington, 'In *Henry VI* Shakespeare

17 Charles Hobday, 'Clouted Shoon and Leather Aprons: Shakespeare and the Egalitarian Tradition', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 23, 1979, pp. 63-78.

18 Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 6.

19 Stephen Greenblatt, 'Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion', *Representations*, 1, February 1983, pp. 1-29 and esp. pp. 23-5.20 Rackin, *Stages*, pp. 218-19.

20 Rackin, *Stages*, pp. 218-19.

portrays the irresponsibilities of Jack Cade's rebellion with an exaggerated satirical animus that appeals to a deep mistrust of the mob,"[21] a judgment echoed by Thomas Pendleton's reference to "the immense and destructive energy and chaotic fun [Cade] brings with him.'[22]

Another interpretation could be based on the analysis of how the history play altered its own sources. For Paola Pugliatti, who has meticulously recorded Shakespeare's distortion of the chronicles, the effects produced by such a manipulation are, on the one hand, to portray Cade's rebellion as entirely manipulated by York's political strategy, and, on the other hand, to affirm that, if 'Cade and his followers are grotesque and almost subhuman, the power that produced them and whose instrument they are is by no means the comparatively dignified power of the chronicles; it is the debased, degraded, and sickly power that the play depicts.'[23]

This universal degradation is reinforced by the derisory and bawdy asides by which Cade's followers themselves mock his genealogical and familial claims:

Cade: My wife descended of the Lacys

Dick [aside]: She was, indeed, a peddler's daughter, and sold many laces

Smith [aside]: But now of late, not able to travel with her furred pack, she washes bucks here at home.

In the same manner they ridicule the monarchical authority he claims:

Cade: My mouth shall be the Parliament of England

Smith [aside]: It will be stinking law, for his breath stinks with eating toasted cheese.

Holland [aside]: Then we are like to have biting statutes, unless his teeth be pulled out.

Seduced and manipulated by York, mocked by his own companions, Jack Cade does not embody the popular voice. As Annabel Patterson asserts: 'Cade is an impostor, a traitor of his class, hawking his false claims to the name of Mortimer by way of a

21 David Bevington, *Shakespeare*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, p. 239.

22 Thomas A. Pendleton, 'Introduction', in *Henry VI. Critical Essays*, Edited by Thomas Pendleton, New York and London, Routledge, 2001, p. 23.

23 Paola Pugliatti, '"More than History can Pattern": The Jack Cade Rebellion in *Shakespeare's Henry VI, 2'*, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 22, Fall 1992, pp. 451-78 (quotation p. 477).

romantic fiction, the tale of a noble child stolen from its cradle by a beggarwoman, and now returned to claim its inheritance.'[24]

The depiction of Cade's rebellion could perhaps help to define two different dimensions of the relations between Shakespeare and the cultural practices of his time. On the one hand, Shakespeare wrote his 'Histories' by interpreting and distorting the historical archives that he knew through the mediation of the printed chronicles. As shown by David Grummitt, the narrative and political interpretation of Cade's rebellion developed by Hall, Grafton, or Holinshed, was not a neutral one but was the one fixed by the chroniclers of the late 1450s at the expense of other narratives, such as the rebels' petitions, the proclamations of the crown, or the legal records.[25]

On the other hand, Shakespeare brought onto the stage and into his text the objects and practices of the written culture of his own age.[26] Cade's radical hatred for writing is thus based on a wide array of references (negative, of course) to the instruments, forms, techniques, uses, and agents of such a culture. As did some of his fellow playwrights, Shakespeare transformed the material realities of writing into a dramatic resource, which he used to achieve narrative, poetic, or political effects. In the case of the depiction of Cade's rebellion, the lesson was not without ambiguity, since it echoed and debased at the same time the traditional denunciation of the oppressive force of writing.

Never annotated in modern editions of the play and often ignored in scholarly analyses of the rebellion, Cade's implicit citation of Innocent IV's *'sententia'* – condemning the authority and credibility wrongly accorded to the skin of a dead animal, transformed by Cade into an 'innocent lamb' maliciously used for oppressing innocent men – is good example for understanding how Shakespeare mobilized different languages (legal, millenarian, carnivalesque, folkloric, and so forth) for

24 Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 49.

25 David Grummitt, 'Deconstructing Cade's Rebellion: Discourse and Politics in the Mid- Fifteenth Century', in *The Fifteenth Century VI: Identity and Insurgency in the Late Middle Ages*, Edited by Linda Clark, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2006 (forthcoming).

26 For an example of such exchanges, cf. Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery and Heather Wolfe, 'Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Writing in Renaissance England', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 55, Number 4, 2004, pp. 379-419.

portraying the frightening and absurd restoration of a Golden Age without books, without records, without writing. So Cade is the cruel, grotesque and manipulated prophet of an impossible future. By the 1590s, the Tudor monarchy had already firmly established its power over writing and the artisans, who in the play (but also in the actual rebellion),[27] have followed Cade were eager to gain for themselves something of the power of writing – and to use it for 'publishing' ballads, libels, and petitions which they composed against persons of good credit and powerful authority.[28]

Cade's impossible restoration of a vanished time, liberated from the oppressive power of writing, is perhaps also a manner for indicating the lasting nostalgia for orality, and the anxieties created by the growing power of the written word in early modern European societies.

Moreover, Cade was not the only one to affirm the superiority of oral pleading over depositions set down in writing in the law courts. Written procedures were considered as open to error, inaccuracy, and betrayal of the witnesses' spoken words, whereas oral pleading gave immediately an indication as to whether the witness was speaking truly or falsely. As wrote Francis Bacon in 1616: 'there are more doubts that rise upon our statutes, which are a text law, than upon the common law, which is no text law'.[29]

But – unlike Cade's radical opposition between mouth and skin, voice and parchment – speech, image and writing were very often held as complementary modes of knowledge, memory, and persuasion. These three modalities of communication – the living word, the painted or engraved image, and the manuscript or printed text – were considered as equivalent forms of knowledge, and were accorded an equal capacity for signifying 'the thing and the concept itself'.

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27 Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 101-11.

28 Adam Fox. 'Ballads, Libels, and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', *Past and Present*, 145, 1994, pp. 47-83, noting esp. pp. 63-4: 'The combination of oral and literate dissemination was employed in almost all instances of public ridicule by lyric and song; everywhere the two modes were side by side, interchangeable and mutually reinforcing. [...] Libelers proclaimed almost unanimously that the world of purely oral tradition was long gone'.

29 Quoted by D.F. McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', in *New Directions in Textual Studies*, Edited by D. Oliphant and R. Bradford, Austin, 1990. Reprinted in D.F. McKenzie, *Making Meaning. 'Printers of the Mid' and Other Essays*, Edited by Peter D. McDonald and Michael Suarez, Amhesrt, Mass., University of Massachusetts Press, 2002, pp. 237-58 (quotation p. 243).

So indeed the Portuguese Henrique de Villegas specified in 1692, in his book with the exemplary title *Leer sin libros: Reading without books.*[30]

Such a three-way equivalence between speech, image and written word had many consequences. First of all, it allowed for a choice between one or another of the available languages, based not on the nature of the message to be conveyed, but on the composition of the audience and the circumstances of communication. Moreover, this equivalence established the use of the three mediums of expression in every social milieu, from the most humble to the most aristocratic.

Orality in its different forms was as strongly present in the court society as in popular culture.[31] Images could be addressed to all kinds of beholders, from the most learned to the most naïve. Writing was not simply the privilege of the powerful, but, in the cities at least, the written word was familiar even among the illiterate – thanks not only to the public display of inscriptions on the monuments or placards and posters against the walls[32] but also to the practice of reading aloud, which assured the sharing of texts beyond the minority of those able to read them.

To stress the equivalence between orality, the image, and the written word is not, however, to argue that individuals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ignored the specificity of each mode of communication. Thus there were acknowledged differences between the performative force of the spoken word – able to curse, to conjure, or convince – and/or the capacity of visual representation to give presence to the absent being or thing, and/or the possibility of the reproduction and preservation of texts, which only writing, and more particularly printing, makes possible. Indeed, it was this awareness of difference that justified the simultaneous

30 Fernando Bouza, *Comunicación, Conocimiento y Memoria en la España de los Siglos XVI y XVII*, Salamanca, SEMYR, 1999, English translation: *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory in Early Modern Spain*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, pp. 10-11.

31 Fernando Bouza, *Palabra e imagen en la Corte. Cultura oral y visual de la nobleza en el Siglo de oro*, Madrid, Abada Editores, 2003.

32 Cf. Armando Petrucci, *La Scrittura. Ideologia e rappresentazione*, Torino, Einaudi, 1986 [English Translation: *Public Lettering. Script, Power, and Culture*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993]; Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001; and Antonio Castillo Gómez, '"Amanecieron en todas las partes públicas...": Un viaje al país de las denuncias', in *Escribir y leer en el siglo de Cervantes*, Edited by Antonio Castillo Gómez, Barcelona, Gedisa, 1999, pp. 143-91.

use of the three modes of communication – for example in the genre of devising emblems or in the practice of preaching – and that made possible the trajectory of the 'same' discourse from one mode into another, from orality into pictures, or from images into written and printed texts.

The ambivalent perception that recognized, at once, the semantic equivalence of the different forms of communication and their specific capacities legitimized not only the complementarity of their uses but also the attempts made by each form to capture something of the effects held as proper to the others.

That was apparent, for example, when writing or print sought to seize or to imitate the formulas of speech. As D.F. McKenzie has stressed, writers and printers used several devices for giving voice to the texts and for suggesting the affinities between writing and speaking.[33] The more spectacular of these devices were the dialogic form of catechisms, pamphlets, or even treatises on natural philosophy; the addresses to the reader as if he or she was an interlocutor; the marginal notes that established a conversation between several authors; or, in the case of transcriptions of speeches, sermons, and theatrical plays, the different resources (punctuation, stage directions, frontispieces) that tried to restore onto the printed page something of the spoken word and living speech.[34]

Contrary to the idea that has been inherited from the nineteenth century, positing a radical separation between the written word and other forms of communication – and contrary to Cade's dream or nightmare – it is important to appreciate the strong and durable presence of the power of the image and the voice within writing itself. As Fernando Bouza has noted, with reference to the era of Cervantes and Shakespeare: 'Images and speech remained present also in that specific realization of writing which is reading. Writing continued to maintain a lively and intense relationship with those two other forms of communication, knowledge, and memory, perhaps because in writing, too, resided something of that essential creativity which

33 McKenzie, 'Speech-Manuscript-Print', pp. 250-8.

34 Roger Chartier, *Publishing Drama in Early Modern Europe*, Panizzi Lectures 1998, London, The British Library, 1999.

was manifested in a voice that upbraids or blesses and in the powerful images whose contemplation was propitiatory.'[35]

This observation encourages resistance to the temptation of the anachronism that would 'protect' writing from any contamination by the forms of communication it is supposed to have marginalized. Furthermore, Bouza's commentary also opens the way for analyzing the different categories of writings, which have a performative force identical to certain oral utterances, or for considering the exchanges between images constructed as discourse, and writings invested with the visual power of ekphrasis, when images are summoned up by words.

Following the advice of Louis Marin, it is thus important to understand the complexity of the relationships between text and images, in an era when they were thought of as two languages using the same grammar, if not the same lexicon, and when, at the same time, text and images were simultaneously granted specific powers that justified their juxtaposition, interweaving, or exchanges.[36]

Paradoxically, Cade's anti-writing rebellion, as imagined by Shakespeare, encourages a rejection of the simplifications, received ideas, and myths which have generated a lasting historical narrative according to which 'rationality' and 'modernity' are exclusively identified with written culture.

Of course, it is true that, against Cade's will, archives were multiplied, lawyers and notaries were more and more numerous, books were printed, and writing became the fundamental instrument for the governance of territories and population. Such changes do not supply a reason, however, to relegate to the past, or to the popular, the language of images and the practices of orality – which were shared by an entire society, from the court to the country, by the learned and the illiterate, the rulers and the rebels.

35 Bouza, *Communication, Knowledge, and Memory*, p. 38.

36 Louis Marin, *Des pouvoirs de l'image. Gloses*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1993, pp. 72-101.