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War, hunger, and gluttony in the first and second tetralogy: Sir John Oldcastle and Jack Cade

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"War, Hunger, and Gluttony in Shakespeare's English Histories: Sir John Oldcastle and Jack Cade" by Joan Fitzpatrick (Loughborough University, UK)

Abstract

Shakespeare may have returned to his first tetralogy when writing the second tetralogy to develop connections between English bravery and hunger as well as English cowardice and gluttony. Especially relevant are hitherto overlooked parallels between Sir John Oldcastle and Jack Cade in Shakespeare's treatment of dishonourable conduct and appetite.

In the plays featuring the reign of Henry the Sixth, in the first tetralogy, Shakespeare dramatizes England's medieval wars in France and insurrection closer to home: Jack Cade's uprising in England and his role in rebellion in Ireland. The second tetralogy, depicting what happens before this, culminates in a return to England's wars in France under the reign of King Henry the Fifth, following his adventures as a young man under the influence of his companion Sir John Oldcastle (Falstaff) and his negotiation of responsibilities as King in the context of this relationship. In all these plays, Shakespeare explores the catastrophic impact of war upon the most basic human need: having enough food to eat.

This article will explore the role of hunger and gluttony in Shakespeare's first tetralogy, the play's debt to the medieval penitential tradition, and the impact this might have had upon his subsequent English history plays. These are connections hitherto neglected by critics. Hunger was, and remains, a weapon of war, but for Shakespeare it also provided the precondition to

signal English heroism: the productive hunger of the brave soldier in the face of gluttony and cowardice. Shakespeare apparently re-read his first tetralogy when writing the second to further develop connections between English heroism, bravery, and hunger. He might also have been informed by the medieval view of hunger as morally beneficial. These connections to the past, in his own writing and earlier traditions, are especially relevant to hitherto overlooked parallels between the cowardly and gluttonous knight Sir John Oldcastle and the brave, though ignominious, English rebel Jack Cade.

At the beginning of Shakespeare's *Henry V* the Chorus refers to "the warlike Harry" who "at his heels, / Leashed in like hounds" has "famine, sword, and fire" (Prologue 5-8). In his threats before the gates of Harfleur Henry characterizes "impious war" as hell on earth-- "Arrayed in flames like to the prince of fiends"--warning that the consequences of continued defiance will be the rape and murder of the weak and innocent. Later in the play the Chorus alludes to the return of Elizabeth's Lord Deputy from Ireland:

Were now the General of our gracious Empress--
As in good time he may - from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit
To welcome him!
(5.0.30-4)¹

The allusion is probably to Essex, who had been sent to Ireland on 27 March 1599 and returned in disgrace on 28 September the same year, and so the play was presumably written before his disgrace, in the spring or early summer of 1599. The allusion might refer to the return of Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, following his victory in Kinsale in the winter of 1601, but critical consensus is for placing *Henry V* in 1599.² Early modern playgoers in

London, like their modern counterparts, might have experienced the kind of violence threatened against the people of Harfleur as combatants in, or refugees from, a foreign war but they would have had no experience of this sort of mass slaughter by an invading army at home. Yet London was not exactly a "peaceful city", having experienced riots by apprentices, primarily over the high cost of food, as recently as the summer of 1595. Henry's threats that the city of Harfleur will "in her ashes . . . lie buried", becoming a place of "waste and desolation" if it does not surrender (3.3.92, 101) allow an audience to imagine the horrors of siege warfare, including the consequences of exhausting stored food supplies, but it might also provoke recollection of more recent food-related violence in London. In *1 Henry VI* too the great English warrior Talbot, like Henry V in his threats against the people of Harfleur, might remind playgoers of the dangers of food instability when he tells the General of Bordeaux that his refusal to submit will "tempt the fury of my three attendants -- / Lean famine, quartering steel, and climbing fire" (4.2.10-11).

During the sixteenth century stories emerged from Ireland of the famine suffered as a result of war. In Holinshed's *Chronicles*, John Hooker describes the famine that followed the Desmond rebellion being so severe that people were "driuen to eat horsses, dogs and dead carions; but also did deuoure the carcasses of dead men, whereof there be sundrie examples . . .".³ Similarly, Fynes Moryson reports that, following the destruction of Irish corn by English forces, he witnessed "a most horrible spectacle of three children . . . all eating and knawing with their teeth the entrals of their dead mother".⁴ Reports of famine in Ireland emerged from other sources also. In Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*--not published until 1633 but written in 1595 and presumably circulating in manuscript--Irenius describes the consequences of the scorched earth policy implemented by English forces against the rebellions led by the Earl of Desmond in Munster:

Out of euerie Corner of the woode and glinnes they Came Crepinge forthe
 vppon theire handes, for theire Leggs Coulde not beare them, they loked like
 Anotomies of deathe, they spake like ghostes, Crying out of theire graues; they
 did eate the dead Carrions, happie wheare they Could finde them, Yea and one
 another sone after, in so muche as the verye carkasses they spared not to
 scrape out of theire graves. And if they founde a plotte of water Cresses or
 Shamarocks theare they flocked as to a feaste for the time, yeat not able longe
 to Continue thearewithall, that in shorte space theare weare non allmoste lefte
 and a moste populous and plentifull Countrie sodenlye lefte voide of man or
 beastr, yeat sure in all that warr theare perished not manie by the sworde but
 all by the extremitie of famyne which they themselves had wroughte.⁵

Spenser relates what happened in Munster, via the fictional Irenius, in order to persuade his reader that famine is a useful weapon of war, one that might also be used to suppress the ongoing rebellion in Ulster.

Extreme hunger was a reality of war in Ireland but, as is clear from the actions of London's apprentices, a lack of ready access to food was also an issue during peace-time. In *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses* (published in 1583) Phillip Stubbes, in the voice of Philoponus (and sounding rather like Spenser's Irenius), describes the fate of the poor English who cannot work and provide for themselves:

[They] die some in ditches, some in holes, some in caves and dens, some in
 fields . . . rather like dogs than Christian people. For notwithstanding that they
 be never so impotent, blind, lame, sick, old or aged, yet are they forced to
 walke the countries from place to place to seeke their releefe at every mans
 doore, except they wil sterve or famish at home Yea, in such troupes doe

they flocke, and in such swarmes doe they flowe, that you can lightlie go any way, and you shall see numbers of them at everie doore, in everie lane, and in everie poore cave . . .⁶

The sick, disabled, and old might have to beg for food but even the able-bodied poor were at risk of food shortages. Before the early sixteenth century food was relatively plentiful and wages comparatively high, mainly due to the disastrous effect of plague upon England's population, but around 1520 the population of England had begun to rise and a higher demand for food led to higher prices that many people could not afford because inflation had outstripped wages.⁷ This situation was exacerbated by three bad harvests in the 1560s and a particularly bad harvest in 1573. Food was also scarce in 1586, but because the early 1590s saw four good harvests, the government repealed the tillage act of 1563 (an anti-enclosure measure) and allowed the export of wheat. The year 1594 saw the first of four consecutive bad harvests leading to widespread starvation, the threat of popular rebellion in various parts of England, and the apprentice riots that erupted in London in 1595.⁸ Ian Archer observed that, although "the fundamental stability of the City" was not in question, these riots made for a distinctly nervous elite and the "sense of perceived crisis" was significant.⁹

As the agricultural historian Joan Thirsk pointed out, the reality of food shortages "set writers thinking on new lines. Their books actually discussed how to survive starvation, in novel ways that had not been discussed before". One of these was Hugh Platt's *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine*, printed in 1596. Here Platt

offered advice on making various plants palatable in emergency. Among those he named were beans, peas, beechmast, chestnuts, acorns and vetches, and his detailed instructions revealed his own many practical experiments, some of which were entirely sensible, like cooking out the bitterness of acorns before

mixing the pulp with flour, grinding more bran into meal than usual, or adding herbs to disguise a disagreeable taste.¹⁰

The threat of starvation meant that foods previously regarded as undesirable were "viewed in a fresh light as the life-saving foods that could insure against starvation". People also became more self-sufficient: they "grew roots on dunghills outside London, and public officials urged local authorities to promote their growing by the poor". The better-off too "heeded the importance of growing 'cabbages and roots' as an insurance against lean times and looked more appreciatively at those vegetables".¹¹

Might the reality of food shortages at home and in England's war against the Irish abroad also have had an impact upon Shakespeare's writing, specifically in his English History plays? Sir John Oldcastle and his exploits in the second tetralogy are often the focus of critical attention when it comes to the topic of food and eating in Shakespeare; Prince Hal must reject this figure of vice, a man given to gluttony and other failings, if he is to become an effective leader.¹² Yet there are important moments relating to hunger and gluttony in the Henry VI plays of the first tetralogy, pertaining to England's military engagements abroad as well as rebellion at home, that prefigure Shakespeare's gluttonous Sir John in the second tetralogy. Crucially, his English history plays also reveal Shakespeare's debt to medieval views regarding hunger and gluttony beyond the commonly-acknowledged allusion to Sir John as the Vice of old morality plays by specifically connecting Sir John's gluttony with his cowardice.

In Shakespeare's time, gluttony was widely considered bad for the soul as well as the body. In the Church of England's *Homily Against Gluttony and Drunkenness* (1563) the good Christian is told "howe destesttable and hatefull all excesse in eatyng and drinkyng is, before the face of almightie God".¹³ Gluttons are deemed "belly gods" and the Biblical *Gospel*

According to Saint Luke invoked as evidence that they will receive appropriate punishment from God: "Wo be to you that are full, for ye shall hunger".¹⁴ Yet the other extreme of fasting was acceptable only if it was not overly indulgent or ostentatious,¹⁵ since fasting invoked the old Catholic monastic tradition and Catholic fast days. Early modern dietary literature, a popular and influential genre indicating how to live a healthy life, also advised against gluttony. In William Bullein's *Government of Health*, the sober Humphrey offers advice to the riotous John who is keen to reform his ways: "those bellies that follow the lust of the eyes (in meats) in youth shall lack the health of all their bodies in age if they live so long".¹⁶ Here the focus is mainly on physical health rather than moral well-being. Similarly, Andrew Boorde's observance that "abstinence . . . is the most best and the perfect medicine that can be"¹⁷ is typical of the genre's concern with the body rather than the soul.

Yet, as I hope to demonstrate here, Shakespeare's conception of gluttony and hunger in his English history plays appears to have been informed not only by early modern descriptions of and proscriptions against excess and lack --from Ireland's wars, rising food prices and crop failures, early modern sermons and dietary literature--but also by what we might term the 'morally productive hunger' of an older tradition.

In *Piers Plowman*, William Langland's important and highly influential medieval, allegorical, dream-vision poem, gluttony is repeatedly invoked as a sign of moral corruption. Early in the poem, Holy Church warns Will the Dreamer that "Mesure [moderation] is medcyne" (1.35) for the soul as well as the body since "þe fende and þi flesh folowethe þe to-gidere" (in modern English "the fiend and the flesh follow thee together") (1.40). Gluttony is present at the wedding of Lady Meed (the enemy of Holy Church) and, with his pal 'Great Oaths', spends all day drinking and eating in taverns. It is this physical excess that prompts a drunken sleep and the sin of despair: "And þanne wanhope to awake him so with no will to

amend, / For he leueth be lost -- þis is here last ende" [And then Despair to awaken them so with no will to amend; / They believe themselves lost: this is their last end"] (2.98-100). Later Gluttony will visit another tavern, diverted from the Church to which he is heading to make confession, where he vomits and is helped home to bed by others.

Although Langland is concerned with the physical effects of gluttony (sleeping, vomiting, temporary physical incapacity), he does not mention the long-term physical consequences of disease upon the body, which dominates the early modern dietary genre, since his main objective is to highlight gluttony as a moral and social ill. Yet it is in his treatment of hunger and famine that Langland's allegory is furthest from early modern notions of gluttony. When the Christ-like Piers sees that some of his fellow pilgrims refuse to work the land alongside him, he asks Hunger to punish them, and he obliges: "He bette hem so bothe he barste nere here guttes" (in modern English "He so beat them both that he nearly burst their guts") (6.180). When, come harvest-time, the people have enough to eat, they again refuse to work, and we are told that Hunger will return: "and derthe be iustice" [and dearth be justice] (6.330). Clearly, the people have not truly repented their former idleness, and hunger is their punishment. Medieval monks were encouraged to follow the example of the early Christian saints who practiced fasting, as described in the widely-read hagiographies contained in Jacobus De Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, and to adhere to the Rule of Saint Benedict that forbade certain foods.¹⁸ Outside the walls of the monastery too, hunger was a means by which the good Christian might, of his or her own volition, reach or maintain spiritual integrity, but in Langland it is specifically a penalty that serves to remind the common people of their moral and social duty to God and each other.

In *1 Henry VI* too hunger is morally good since it makes for tenacious and valiant soldiers: Charles the Dauphin describes "the famished English, like pale ghosts [that] /

Faintly besiege us one hour in a month" (1.1.7-8). Although weak and exhausted, they will not give up. They are like lions wanting food" who "rush upon us as their hungry prey" (1.3.6-7), and "Lean raw-boned rascals" full of "courage and audacity" whereby "hunger will enforce them to be more eager" so that "rather with their teeth / The walls they'll tear down, than forsake the siege" (1.3.14-15, 18-19). Earlier in the play an English Messenger reports Talbot's bravery before his capture:

More than three hours the fight continued,
Where valiant Talbot above human thought
Enacted wonders with his sword and lance.
Hundreds he sent to hell, and none durst stand him;
Here, there, and everywhere, enraged he slew.
The French exclaimed the devil was in arms:
All the whole army stood agazed on him.
His soldiers, spying his undaunted spirit,
'A Talbot! A Talbot!' cried out amain,
And rushed into the bowels of the battle.
(1.1.120-9)

The actions of Fastolf undermine the bravery of Talbot and his men against the French:

Here had the conquest fully been sealed up,
If Sir John Fastolf had not played the coward.
He, being in the vanguard placed behind,
With purpose to relieve and follow them,
Cowardly fled, not having struck one stroke.
(1.1.130-4)

Here in the figure of Fastolf we seem to have an antecedent of the cowardly knight Sir John Oldcastle, later renamed Falstaff, who appears in the second tetralogy. Although Fastolf is not a major character in the first tetralogy--and he has neither Falstaff's girth nor what Edward Burns' referred to as his "calculated dishonesty"¹⁹--the cowardice of Fastolf makes for a clear thematic connection between the two figures.

In addition to the Messenger's report of Fastolf's cowardice, Talbot himself complains "But O, the treacherous Fastolf wounds my heart, / Whom with my bare fists I would execute / If I now had him brought into my power" (1.6.13-15). Fastolf appears again when for a second time he runs away from battle:

CAPTAIN Whither away, Sir John Fastolf, in such haste?

FASTOLF Whither away? To save myself by flight.

We are like to have the overthrow again.

CAPTAIN What, will you fly, and leave Lord Talbot?

FASTOLF Ay, all the Talbots in the world, to save my life. *Exit*

CAPTAIN Cowardly knight, ill fortune follow thee!

(3.5. 63-8)

Michael Hattaway suggested that the name 'Fastolf' "may have been punningly pronounced 'Fast-off';²⁰ George Walton Williams noticed the pun fifteen years earlier, but thought it either unintentional or nonexistent.²¹ If Hattaway is nearer the mark, then might Shakespeare have extended his pun to suggest gluttony (he is off his fast) as well as cowardice in the second tetralogy? Michael Taylor's observation that Fastolf has "nothing in common" with "the later and greater comic creation" seems overstated and rather odd since elsewhere Taylor acknowledges the "self-preservation" of both figures".²² If Fastolf's name might be considered a pun on moving quickly to save his own skin, it is plausible that Shakespeare

should subsequently think of the pun in the sense of both Sir John Falstaff's cowardice and his gluttony (his 'fast' is always 'off'), making him a doubly dubious figure.

Delivering a letter to Gloucester from the Duke of Burgundy, Fastolf is confronted by Talbot: "I vowed, base knight, when I did meet thee next, / To tear the Garter from thy craven's leg" and, explaining to those present how Fastolf fled from battle, Talbot denounces him as a "dastard" and a coward (4.1.14-15, 19). Gloucester refers to Fastolf's running away as "infamous" and especially heinous in a man of rank, with Talbot agreeing that he "Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight, / Profaning this most honourable order" (4.1.30, 4.1.40-1) before Fastolf is denounced by the king:

Stain to thy countrymen, thou hear'st thy doom.

Be packing, therefore, thou that wast a knight.

Henceforth we banish thee on pain of death.

(4.1.45-7)

Talbot's denunciation of Fastolf as a coward stems from the historical Fastolf's behaviour during the Battle of Patay in June 1429 when, having made too far an advance, Fastolf was forced to retreat and Talbot was captured. In the chronicles of Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed, Fastolf is praised for his bravery in the wars against the French before this incident, with Hall listing him amongst "diverse other valiaunt knightes and esquiers", and he retained the respect and trust of John, Duke of Bedford, whose inquiry cleared him of cowardice.²³

It is only in the second tetralogy that Shakespeare fully develops a link between cowardice and gluttony, although there is a link between Fastolf and food since the historical Fastolf commanded the convoy that brought supplies to English soldiers during the siege of Orléans.

The French attempted to prevent the delivery of provisions to English soldiers but were defeated in what became known as The Battle of the Herrings in which Fastolf used barrels of fish as a stockade.²⁴ Salted herring was a food with which any glutton who has "addict[ed] themselves to sack" like Sir John (*2 Henry IV* 4.2.120-1) would be familiar since it was often sold in taverns as was the "pickled herring" consumed by Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* (1.5.116-17). There is also a link between the historical Fastolf and hunger since in 1435 he advocated a scorched-earth policy (what he termed "sharpe and cruelle war") along the borders of Normandy in place of the siege warfare hitherto adopted by the English in France.²⁵ If Shakespeare was aware of this it might well have triggered the connection he makes in the second tetralogy between Sir John and food.

Critics have claimed that Shakespeare's lampooning of the proto-Protestant martyr Oldcastle--which got him into so much trouble with Oldcastle's relatives and compelled him to change the name to Falstaff--may indicate Shakespeare's Catholic sympathies or his criticism of non-conforming Protestants.²⁶ Geoffrey Bullough pointed out that in a book praising Oldcastle, John Bale reported the knight's repentance before the Archbishop of Canterbury "that in my frail youth I offended the Lord, most grievously in pride, wrath and gluttony, in covetousness and in lechery" and so Shakespeare might have fixed upon this reference to gluttony, making it a dominant character trait.²⁷ But it is also possible that Shakespeare returned to the earlier play *1 Henry VI* to re-use the name Fastolf and, upon doing so, decided that just as connections in the earlier play had been drawn between English bravery and hunger, so he might also make connections between English cowardice and gluttony, something perhaps suggested to him by the historical Fastolf's role in The Battle of the Herrings. *1 Henry VI* was probably written by Thomas Nashe, Christopher Marlowe, and another (as yet unknown) playwright around 1592 and later adapted by Shakespeare, sometime between 1592 and 1599, with the year 1595 being most likely.²⁸ In the early 1590s

food was not especially scarce (as noted above, these years saw four good harvests) but when composing *1 Henry IV*, and the figure of Oldcastle as a cowardly and gluttonous knight, in the late 1590s (the period that also saw Shakespeare change the name Oldcastle to Falstaff), the bad harvests of 1594 to 1597 inclusive, and the hunger and rebellion that accompanied them, would be fresh in many people's memories. It is around the time when England suffered significantly from hunger that a specifically gluttonous coward appears; no mention of cowardice is made by the historical Oldcastle in his confession so it is likely the figure of Fastolf who suggested this aspect of the characterization to Shakespeare.

In *1 Henry VI* Talbot attacks the French when their guard is down, after they have "all day caroused and banqueted" (2.1.12), and Charles and Joan are characterized as cowardly when Burgundy asserts that he has "scared the Dauphin and his trull" (2.2.28). Although brave men in the play are not averse to food, as when Talbot asks the Countess of Auvergne for wine and cates "For soldiers' stomachs always serve them well" (2.3.80), they eat moderately and only when the timing is right (the French having just fled). Returning to the first tetralogy appears to have focused Shakespeare's mind on the moral merits of a healthy hunger and its corollary: an unhealthy gluttony. Whether Shakespeare originally wrote parts of *1 Henry VI* or was responsible for adapting an earlier play,²⁹ is irrelevant to my argument that the first tetralogy and its treatment of appetite influenced Shakespeare in his portrayal of Sir John in the second tetralogy who, though an attractive figure at times, especially in the first half of *1 Henry IV*, is ultimately a pathetic man made ill and morally corrupt by over-indulgence.

The historical Fastolf's role in The Battle of the Herrings makes for a curious connection between Shakespeare's delineation of Sir John in the second tetralogy and his earlier portrayal of Jack Cade. In *2 Henry VI* Dick the Butcher suggests Cade is so named for "stealing a cade of herrings" (4.2.34-5), a 'cade' being a barrel containing 720, later 500, herring. In *Lenten*

Stuffe (published in 1599) Thomas Nashe observes "The rebel Jacke Cade was the first, that devised to put redde herrings in cades, and from hym they have their name", but Nashe's work is ironic and the OED records use of the word to mean 'a barrel of herrings' prior to Cade's rebellion.³⁰ The herring-Cade-Nashe connection is of special interest because Nashe is widely accepted as one of the authors of 1 *Henry VI*, although he is thought to have written most of act one, not act four where the reference to herring comes up.³¹ Nashe is more usually noted for his praise of the play's presentation of "brave Talbot (the terror of the French)" in *Pierce Penniless*,³² which of course was self-praise. More relevant to Shakespeare's characterization of Sir John in the second tetralogy might be the links that emerge between Cade, dishonourable conduct, and gluttony.

In 2 *Henry VI*, Jack Cade ("that coistrel", 3.1. 381) promises excess, urging his followers "Be brave, then, for your captain is brave and vows reformation" (4.2.66-7). His vision of revolution consists of a land of plenty: "There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny, the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer"(4.2.67-9). He promises, moreover that "there shall be no money / All shall eat and drink on my score" (4.2.74-5) and that "the Pissing Conduit will run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign" (4.6.3-4). As Ellen C. Caldwell observed, Cade's promise that the Pissing Conduit--a place from where the lower classes drew water--will run with wine strikes most critics as ludicrous.³³ For example Eklund, whilst acknowledging that Cade's proposal to have the conduit run with wine should be read in the context of the hungry poor, inviting "contemplation of a system where food and drink are, like water, a kind of public commons", nevertheless described it as a "laughable programme".³⁴

Yet, as Caldwell noted, "it was customary for the city of London to celebrate the coronations and victories of kings and queens by staging pageants at the conduits and having

those conduits run wine".³⁵ She added that "the demand for wine itself is unusual only in the length of time and for whom it should flow, an exaggeration that underscores rather than undercuts the seriousness of the proposal" so that, by proclaiming himself king, "Cade arrogates to himself the traditional ceremonies of accession".³⁶ Chris Fitter thought that Caldwell underplayed the comic potential of Cade's exaggeration,³⁷ but her point nevertheless makes his promise of wine instead of water less ludicrous than it might at first appear, although the early audience would have understood it as gluttonous, with a possible nod towards Catholic transubstantiation (water into wine), which would be in keeping with Cade's medieval origins.

The Cade scenes are darkly comic--and there are moments when his proclamations are contradictory, such as "all the realm shall be in common . . . when I am king" (4.2.70-1)--but he is not merely a fool. For Roger Warren the laughter in these scenes is not necessarily carnivalesque and we should not assume that the comments made by his fellow rebels are mocking asides heard only by the audience. Rather, the comments made following Cade's claim to be a Mortimer might well be "overt, mocking statements, heard and relished by all".³⁸

Before the audience encounter Cade, York characterizes him as a brave fighter:

In Ireland have I seen this stubborn Cade
Oppose himself against a troop of kerns,
And fought so long till that his thighs with darts
Were almost like a sharp-quilled porcupine;
(3.1.360-3)

Cade is a shape-shifter, not only fighting the Irish enemy but passing himself off "a shag-haired crafty kern" (3.1.367) (a 'kern' was an Irish footsoldier) in order to move amongst them and act as an informant for York. Cade's impersonation of the dead Sir John Mortimer, whom he resembles (3.1.358-9), similarly enables York to "perceive the commons' mind, / How they affect the house and claim of York" (3.1.374-5). Although York describes Cade as brave and loyal--"I know no pain they can inflict upon him / Will make him say I moved him to those arms" (3.1.377-8)--we witness mainly rabble-rousing and bullying. In Hall's *Chronicles*, as Geoffrey Bullough pointed out, during his rebellion Cade was in control of his men, at least at first, and engaged reasonably with representatives sent from the king. Hall notes "These lordes found him sober in comunicacion, [and] wyse in disputyng", although "arrogant in hart and styfe [stiff] in his opinion" and Cade prohibited "to all men, Murder, Rape, or Robbery".³⁹ As with Sir John Oldcastle, the dramatic character exhibits characteristics not evident in the historical figure upon whom he is based. In *2 Henry VI* the characterization of Cade as bravely loyal and also a rebel might be explained by the presence of more than one hand in the play.⁴⁰ Yet the apparently contradictory characterization of Cade across the rebellion scenes might well be deliberate. Although it is beneficial to York and the English forces in Ireland that Cade can retrieve information from the enemy, his bravery is undercut rather by the ease with which he can so easily impersonate an Irish rebel and, later, a man of rank (Mortimer), suggesting that duplicity comes easily to him.

The excess promised by Cade to his followers is prefigured in an earlier scene, when the apprentice armourer Peter Thump fights with his master Horner, whom Thump has accused of treason. Horner is already drunk and continues to accept a range of strong drinks from his neighbours: the wines charneco and sack, and "a pot of good double beer" (2.3.64-5). Double beer was especially strong, unlike weak small beer, and in Holinshed's *Chronicles* the selling of strong beer in England's weekly markets is condemned as especially harmful:

there is such headie ale & béere in most of them, as for the mightinesse thereof among such as séeke it out, is commonlie called huffecap, the mad dog, father whoresonne, angels food, dragons milke, go by the wall, stride wide, and list leg, &c. And this is more to be noted, that when one of late fell by Gods providence into a troubled co[n]science, after he had considered well of his reachlesse [reckless] life, and dangerous estate: another thinking belike to change his colour and not his mind, caried him straightwaie to the strongest ale, as to the next physician. ⁴¹

In the anonymous play *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*, identified by Bullough as an analogue to *2 Henry VI*,⁴² one of the rebels, Tom Miller, claims that Parson Ball, the radical priest and fellow-rebel, is given to drunkenness: "Find him in a pulpit but twice in the yeare, / And Ile find him fortie times in the ale-house tasting stronge beare". Later in the play Miller announces himself a regular consumer of strong ale.⁴³ In *2 Henry VI*, Thump refuses all offers of drink, and wins the fight with his master, Horner, even though Horner is skilled at fencing. Having been defeated, Horner admits his treason; the drunkard who drinks to excess is thus shown to be ignoble. It is possible that just as he returned to the cowardly Fastolf to develop the figure of Sir John in the second tetralogy, Shakespeare also returned to this scene (whether or not he actually wrote it), to develop the concept of the dishonourable man of high rank who drinks sack to excess and is exposed as an immoral fraud. Ronald Knowles characterized the Thump-Miller scene as "a burlesquing of the chivalric code",⁴⁴ something Shakespeare will develop more fully, via the figure of Sir John, in the second tetralogy.

Although at the height of his power Jack Cade, accompanied by Dick the Butcher amongst others, promises abundant food and drink, he is ultimately driven to forage for food in the garden of Alexander Iden, whose name may pun on the Biblical Eden (and is spelt as Eden in

Holinshed). That the historical Cade was found lurking in the garden of Eden allows the drama to develop in the spirit of the medieval, allegorical tradition of Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Before encountering Cade, Iden asks "who would live turmoiled in the court / And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?" (4.9.16-17), only to have his beloved idyll destroyed by Cade's sinister presence. Earlier in the play York praised Cade as a "devil" (3.1.371), something picked up in a rather subtle way later when Cade claims his followers will "worship me their lord" (4.2.77). Remarking upon the irrelevance of his modest ancestry, he observes "And Adam was a gardener" (4.2.133), alluding to the proverbial question 'When Adam delved and Eve span who was then a gentleman?', used also by the rebel priest John Ball and recorded in Holinshed's *Chronicles* and in *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*.⁴⁵ As William Montgomery observed, when Cade proclaims "our enemies shall fall before us" (4.2.36), he "may be punning implicitly on his name and the Latin verb *cadō, cadere*, meaning *fall*".⁴⁶ Like Satan, the first rebel, who encouraged Eve to eat the forbidden fruit that brought about the Fall of humankind, Cade promises his followers transformation by consumption but his promises prove to be empty.

In his fight with Alexander Iden, Cade threatens to "cut . . . out the burly-boned clown in chines of beef" (4.9.57). It is fitting that the famished Kentish man should, in the county long-termed the garden of England, imagine a specifically English foodstuff; the dietary author Andrew Boorde considered beef "good meat for an Englishman", observing that young, salted beef from the male animal "doth make an Englishman strong".⁴⁷ Yet the focus here is not physical strength but moral degeneracy. Where in *I Henry VI* Talbot and his men are described as "Lean raw-boned rascals" full of "courage and audacity" (1.3.14-15), their 'productive hunger' making them good soldiers, Cade's gesture towards cannibalism (Iden's flesh is imagined as a 'chine' or joint of meat) is part of a wider confluence between savagery and unnatural consumption in the first tetralogy.⁴⁸ There is a clear sense that war drives men

to savagery and, in some cases, acts of cannibalism such as those reported from the wars in Ireland, perhaps gesturing to Cade's role in the Irish wars, when he is said to have both fought the kerns and disguised himself as a kern (2 *Henry VI*, 3.1.360-1, 367-8). In *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine* Hugh Platt suggests "Certaine strange and extraordinarie waies for the relieuing of a prisoner, or other poore distressed creatures, when al hope of usual victual is taken from him", one of which is that "a man may liue 10. or 12. daies by sucking of his owne bloud".⁴⁹ During such desperate times, consuming the blood or flesh of another might well be a logical next step. It is perhaps unsurprising that the famished Cade should hint at cannibalism, a nod towards the Catholic transubstantiation suggested in his earlier promise to transform water into wine.

In Iden's garden Cade puns on the word 'sallet' as a foodstuff (our modern 'salad') and a soldier's helmet: "many a time, but for a sallet, my brain-pan had been cleft with a brown bill; and many a time, when I have been dry, and bravely marching, it hath served me instead of a quart pot to drink in" (4.9.10-14). Cade thus reminds the audience that he is a former solider (a "brave" one at that), which Fitter thought "would bond Cade to many in his commons audience", specifically those veterans who remained unpaid by the Queen for their services, allowing for what Eklund characterized as a broadening of "the commensality of hunger beyond his own criminally-induced starvation".⁵⁰ As Fitter noted, there is nothing in the chronicle sources to suggest Cade was famished at the time of his death. He argued that Cade's hunger and the "heavy-handed proprietorial aggression" of Iden works to encourage audience sympathy: "a small, starved, undaunted man, he is done to death by a huge, unpyting, well-fed one".⁵¹ It is a convincing point, yet the heavily allegorical nature of the scene in Iden's garden arguably also encourages the audience to regard Cade as a symbol of vice that must be banished, just like the gluttonous Sir John in the closing scenes of 2 *Henry IV*. As in 1 *Henry VI* where Talbot and his men stand for productive hunger, Shakespeare is

here too apparently invoking the concept of hunger as a means of moral correction. It is an aspect of spiritual instruction rooted in England's medieval past, and evident in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, rather than an early modern culture that sought to distance itself from monastic self-denial.

Discussing the absence of any scenes featuring the lower orders in *1 Henry VI*, Michael Taylor observed how in *2 Henry VI* "Cade's comic cruelty anticipates the superbly balanced tavern scenes in the two parts of *Henry IV* where the comedy only thinly camouflages a sinister nihilism".⁵² The Cade rebellion scenes might also have prompted Shakespeare to draw a connection between dishonourable conduct in war and gluttony when developing the character of Sir John in the second tetralogy. This is especially pertinent given the historical Fastolf's connections with food and hunger: commanding the convoy that brought supplies to English soldiers during The Battle of the Herrings and urging a scorched earth policy in the French wars, the same policy that would be made use of in Ireland where Cade has served York. In *1 Henry 6* valiant English soldiers are hungry where the duplicitous French, advantaged by the witchcraft of Joan La Pucelle, are given to excess and in *2 Henry VI* a sober Horner defeats his gluttonous, dishonest, master. Before his death Cade proclaims "Tell Kent from me she hath lost her best man, and exhort all the world to be cowards. For I, that never feared any, am vanquished by famine, not by valour" (4.9.72-5). The same cynicism towards honour will be expressed by Sir John in his "catechism" in *1 Henry IV*: "Can honour set-to a leg? No. . . . Honour is a mere scutcheon" (5.1.131-2, 140) and his exhortation that others (his imagined "thousand sons", humanity as a whole) should "addict themselves to sack" (4.2.118-120). Neither Cade nor Sir John repent their wicked ways, and in this they resemble the idle commons in Langland's poem who suffer punishment as a consequence of their sinful recidivism. As in the earlier poem, the wider social, political, and national good is

at stake since vice--in the shape of rebellion against or corruption of a leader--cannot be tolerated.

Unlike Sir John, Cade is not a glutton, although by promising his followers an unlimited supply of bread and strong drink he appeals to their impulse towards gluttony. Instead, he suffers hunger, recalling Langland's use of Hunger in *Piers Plowman* as a means to punish wrong-doing. Shakespeare's comic actor Will Kempe would likely have performed the role of Falstaff in the second tetralogy and if Kempe also played the part of Cade, drawing upon his skills as a Morris dancer (as suggested by Richard Helgerson), as well as his talent for comedy,⁵³ then a connection between Sir John Falstaff and Jack Cade emerges, part of a larger connection between the first and second tetralogy, one that is predicated on war, hunger, and gluttony and clearly indebted to the medieval penitential tradition.

Notes

¹All quotations of Shakespeare's plays are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works: Compact Edition*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery (Oxford, 1988).

²Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, eds., *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion* (Oxford, 2017), p. 527. Performance and publication dates for plays are also indebted to the electronic resource 'Database of Early English Playbooks', or 'DEEP', created by Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser and hosted by the University of Pennsylvania.

³Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles, Newlie Augmented and Continued By J. Hooker Alias Vowell Gent. and Others*, STC 13569, 3 vols. (London, 1587), vol. 2: The Description of Ireland, sig. R1v-R2r.

⁴Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary Written By Fynes Moryson Gent. (Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell Through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, . . . France, England, Scotland, and Ireland)*, STC 18205 (London, 1617), sig. Bbb2r.

⁵Edmund Spenser, *Prose Works*, ed. Rudolf Gottfried, *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, 10 (Baltimore, 1949), p. 158.

⁶Phillip Stubbes, *The Second Part of the Anatomie of Abuses* (London, 1583), G1r.

⁷Y. S. Brenner, 'The Inflation of Prices in Early Sixteenth Century England', *The Economic History Review*, 14 (1961), 225-39, pp. 235-6; Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35 (2005), 457-79, pp. 459-60.

⁸W. G. Hoskins, 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1480-1619', in *Essays in Agrarian History*, ed. W. E. Minchinton (Newton Abbot, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 93-115, pp. 106-8; Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Oxford, 1988), p. 220; Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 1-9.

⁹Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, p. 9.

¹⁰Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007), p. 34; Hugh Platt, *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine*, STC 19996 (London, 1596), D1v-D3v.

¹¹Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760*, pp. 34-5.

¹²Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 11-36; Elena Levy-Navarro, *The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity: Body Image in Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and Skelton* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 67-109; Joshua B. Fisher, 'Digesting Falstaff: Food and Nation in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Plays', *Early English Studies*, 2 (2009), 1-23; Christine Hoffmann, 'Biting More Than 'We' Can Chew: The Royal Appetite in *Richard II* and *I* and *2 Henry IV*', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 45 (2009), 358-85.

¹³Church of England, *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes of Such Matters as Were Promised and Intituled in the Former Part of Homelyes, Set Out By the Auctoritie of the Quenes Maiestie: and to be Read in Every Paryshe Church Agreablye*, STC 13664 (London, 1563), Oo2r.

¹⁴Church of England, *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes of Such Matters as Were Promised and Intituled in the Former Part of Homelyes, Set Out By the Auctoritie of the Quenes Maiestie: and to be Read in Every Paryshe Church Agreablye*, Oo2v; Luke 6:25.

¹⁵Church of England, *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes of Such Matters as Were Promised and Intituled in the Former Part of Homelyes, Set Out By the Auctoritie of the Quenes Maiestie: and to be Read in Every Paryshe Church Agreablye*, Nn1v.

¹⁶Joan Fitzpatrick, *Three Sixteenth-century Dietaries: A Critical Edition*, The Revels Companion Library (Manchester, 2017), p. 222.

¹⁷Fitzpatrick, *Three Sixteenth-century Dietaries: A Critical Edition*, p. 173.

¹⁸For example, *The Golden Legend* relates that Saint Giles only occasionally drank milk from a female deer and the Rule of Saint Benedict did not allow the consumption of animal flesh and wine except for the sick and weak (Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton, 2012), chp. 130; Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict: In Latin and English*, trans. and Ed. Justin McCann, Orchard Books (London, 1952), chp. 39, 40).

¹⁹William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part I*, ed. Edward Burns, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 2000), 112n31.

²⁰William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, ed. Michael Hattaway, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1990), 132n104.

²¹George Walton Williams, 'Fastolf or Falstaff', *English Literary Renaissance*, 5 (1975), 308-12, 311n9.

²²William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part One*, ed. Michael Taylor, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, 2003), 93, 180n106.

²³Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [And] Yorke Beeyng Long in Continual Discension for the Croune of This Noble Realme . . . Beginnyng at the Tyme of Kyng Henry the Fowerth, the First Aucthor of This Deuision, and so Successiueely Proceadyng to the Reigne of the High and Prudent Prince Kyng Henry the Eight . . .*, STC 12721 (London, 1547), A6r; Williams, 'Fastolf or Falstaff', p. 308; G. L. Harriss, 'Fastolf, Sir John (1380-1459)', in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison and Lawrence Goldman, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9199 (Oxford, 2004-13), pp. n. pag.

²⁴Harriss, 'Fastolf, Sir John (1380-1459)'.

²⁵Harriss, 'Fastolf, Sir John (1380-1459)'.

²⁶Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays*, p. 20.

²⁷Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London, 1973), vol. 7: Major Tragedies: *Hamlet*; *Othello*; *King Lear*; *Macbeth*, pp. 169-70;
Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays*, p. 20.

²⁸Gary Taylor and Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works', in *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford, 2017), pp. 417-602, pp. 513-7.

²⁹Taylor & Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works', pp. 516-7.

³⁰Thomas Nashe, *The Works*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1904), vol. 3, p. 221;
Joan Fitzpatrick, *Shakespeare and the Language of Food: A Dictionary*, Continuum
Shakespeare Dictionaries (London, 2010), 'herring'. OED cade *n.l.* 2.

³¹Taylor & Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works', pp. 513-4.

³²Thomas Nashe, *The Works*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1904), vol. 1, p. 212.

³³Ellen C. Caldwell, 'Jack Cade and Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*', *Studies in Philology*, 92 (1995), 18-79, p. 52.

³⁴Hillary Eklund, 'Revolting Diets: Jack Cade's 'Sallet' and the Politics of Hunger in *2 Henry VI*', *Shakespeare Studies*, 42 (2014), 51-62, pp. 58, 57.

³⁵Caldwell, 'Jack Cade and Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*', p. 53.

³⁶Caldwell, 'Jack Cade and Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*', p. 54.

³⁷Chris Fitter, 'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation': Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion in *2 Henry VI*, *Shakespeare Studies*, 32 (2004), 173-219, p. 176.

³⁸William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part Two*, ed. Roger Warren, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, 2003), p. 52.

³⁹Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [And] Yorke Beeyng Long in Continual Discension for the Croune of This Noble Realme . . . Beginnynge at the Tyme of Kyng Henry the Fowerth, the First Aucthor of This Deuision, and so Successiue Proceadyng to the Reigne of the High and Prudent Prince Kyng Henry the Eight . . .*, m5v; Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London, 1960), vol. 3: Earlier English History Plays: *Henry VI* [Parts 1-3]; *Richard III*; *Richard II*, pp. 96, 115.

⁴⁰Taylor & Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works', pp. 493-6.

⁴¹Raphael Holinshed, [*Holinshed's Chronicles*] *The First and Second Volume of Chronicles . . . Newlie Augmented and Continued By J. Hooker Alias Vowell Gent. and Others*, STC 13569, 3 vols. (London, 1587), vol. 1: The Description of Britaine; The Description of England; The Historie of England, S4v.

⁴²Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 3: Earlier English History Plays: *Henry VI* [Parts 1-3]; *Richard III*; *Richard II*, pp. 138-50.

⁴³Anon, [*Jack Straw*] *The Life and Death of Jacke Straw, a Notable Rebell in England: Who Was Kild in Smithfield By the Lord Major of London*, STC 23356 (London, 1593), A4r, D4r.

The Life and Death of Jack Straw was first published in 1593, a year before *2 Henry 6*, and both plays were probably first performed in 1591.

⁴⁴William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 2*, ed. Ronald Knowles, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1999), p. 88.

⁴⁵Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 3: Earlier English History Plays: *Henry VI* [Parts 1-3]; *Richard III*; *Richard II*, p. 133; Anon, [*Jack Straw*] *The Life and Death of Jacke Straw, a Notable Rebell in England: Who Was Kild in Smithfield By the Lord Major of London*, A4r.

⁴⁶Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford, 1987), p. 188.

⁴⁷Fitzpatrick, *Three Sixteenth-century Dietaries: A Critical Edition*, p. 185.

⁴⁸For example the references to drinking blood in the Temple Garden scene (*1 Henry 6* 2.4.108, 134), the characterization of Suffolk as a cannibal who has "overgorged" on the heart of his mother, England (*2 Henry 6*, 4.1.85), and Margaret's description of her son's murderers as "Butchers and villains! Bloody cannibals!" (*3 Henry 6* 5.5. 60).

⁴⁹Platt, *Sundrie New and Artificiall Remedies against Famine*, B1r.

⁵⁰Fitter, 'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation': Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion in *2 Henry VI*, p. 207; Eklund, 'Revolting Diets: Jack Cade's 'Sallet' and the Politics of Hunger in *2 Henry VI*, p. 59.

⁵¹Fitter, 'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation': Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion in *2 Henry VI*, pp. 208, 210, 211.

⁵²Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part One*, p. 62.

⁵³Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 2*, pp. 65-6; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992), p. 216.