

# Utopia Pre-Empted: Kett's Rebellion, Commoning, and the Hysterical Sublime

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## Abstract

In 1549, on Mousehold Heath, outside Norwich, the campmen of Kett's Rebellion created the greatest practical utopian project of Tudor England. Using a commoning rhetoric and practice, they tried to restore the moral economy of the county community, ally themselves with the reforming regime of Protector Somerset, and create a Protestant monarchical republic of small producers. In opposition, Tudor gentlemen and their chroniclers used 'the hysterical sublime', a rhetoric and practice of pre-emptive decisionist violence, to crush the Norwich commune, overthrow Somerset, and accelerate capitalist primitive accumulation. These two visions of culture and society continued to clash in Tudor England, but the gentlemen had gained the upper hand.

## Keywords

campmen, commoning, Kett's Rebellion, peasant rebellions, primitive accumulation, Tudor England, utopia

He who rises up to kill us, we will pre-empt it and kill him first.  
Ariel Sharon<sup>1</sup>

## Mid-Tudor Mark v. Tacitus<sup>2</sup>

In 'Fortunata', the second chapter of *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach contrasts two forms of narration in late antiquity: one from patrician Rome, the other from

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1. BBC News 2002. Sharon paraphrases the Babylonian Talmud on Exodus 22: 2–3 (Kopel 2004, p. 29).

2. Thanks to Joanna Tinker, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, Joe Hartney, Chris Kendrick, Ed White, and my students at SUNY Buffalo for comments; to Sharon Achinstein, David Norbrook, Joel Reed, and Modhumita Roy for opportunities to present; and to Andy Wood for sharing a typescript of *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (2007) – a superb work, particularly on the languages of popular resistance in Tudor England. I drafted this essay before reading it, and we disagree on the radicalism of the campmen's manifesto and on the dynamics of the rebellion itself, but I am indebted to Andy's work and his advice.

plebeian Judea. In his *Satyricon*, Petronius presents Trimalcho's aristocratic dinner guests buffeted about by a fate that 'strikes from without and affects only a limited area', not one that 'results from the inner processes of the real, historical world'. Similarly, in his *Annals*, Tacitus gives his aristocratic readers a superficial portrait from without of the impoverished soldiers in the Germanic legions. In a seditious oration, legionnaire Percennius sounds persuasive at first, as he pleads for his fellow-soldiers suffering from wounds, inclement weather, and lack of pay. But Tacitus remains indifferent to the development of deeper social forces and to plebeian speakers. He introduces Percennius with contempt as 'formerly a busy leader of theatrical factions, after that a common soldier, of a petulant tongue, and from his experience in theatrical party zeal, well qualified to stir up the bad passions of a crowd'. Tacitus lets him speak only in 'Tacitean', with a stylised indifference to the actual language of soldiers:

Tacitus not only lacks understanding, he actually has no interest whatever in the facts underlying the soldiers' demands. He does not argue against their demands in objective terms; he will not take the trouble to prove that they are not justified; a few purely ethical considerations... are quite enough to reject them in advance.<sup>3</sup>

Auerbach contrasts this form of narration with Mark's account of Peter denying Christ, which shows the highest feeling emerging from the lowest social stratum:

Why does it arouse in us the most serious and most significant sympathy? Because it portrays something which neither the poets nor the historians of antiquity ever set out to portray: the birth of a spiritual movement in the depths of the common people, from within the everyday occurrences of contemporary life, which thus assumes an importance it could never have assumed in antique literature. What we witness is the awakening of 'a new heart and a new spirit'. All this applies not only to Peter's denial but also to every other occurrence which is related in the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Mark's gospel reveals

a world which on the one hand is entirely real, average, identifiable as to place, time, and circumstances, but which on the other hand is shaken in its very foundations, is transforming and renewing itself before our very eyes.

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3. Auerbach 1953, pp. 28, 35, 37.

4. Auerbach 1953, p. 42.

We see ‘the beginning of a deep subsurface movement, the unfolding of historical forces’. Though New-Testament writers do not theorise this movement explicitly,

[y]et there is to be observed a spontaneous generation of categories which apply to epochs as well as to states of the inner life and which are much more pliable and dynamic than the categories of Greco-Roman historians. . . . [T]he essential point is this: the deep subsurface layers, which were static for the observers of classical antiquity, began to move.<sup>5</sup>

These two forms of narration reappeared in the summer of 1549 during the East-Anglian risings, as neo-Roman gentlemen, chronicled by their Tacitean historians, squared off against neo-Judean plebeians, with their gosselling petitioners.<sup>6</sup> Kett’s Rebellion, the best known rising, occurred in Norwich, the second city of the nation, and on nearby Mousehold Heath, as thousands of campmen – peasants, tradesmen, and artisans fired by Reformation theology and commonwealth ideology – conducted an orderly mass strike against local agrarian capitalists and the Norwich city fathers.<sup>7</sup> In these risings, the moral economy of anticapitalist English agriculture assembled in arms and allied itself – partly in fantasy, partly in truth – with the most powerful man in the nation: Lord Protector Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, who was the *de facto* leader of England during the first two and one-half years of Edward’s minority. The result was not so much a rebellion as the greatest practical utopian project of Tudor England and the greatest anticapitalist rising in English history.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Auerbach 1953, pp. 42–5. Thanks to Kent Cartwright for guiding me to Auerbach. His place in the history of Marxist literary criticism still tends to be overlooked, but see Barck 1992 on his personal and intellectual ties to Walter Benjamin, and Eagleton 2003 on his affinity for populist realism.

6. The ‘chroniclers’ include John Cheke, *The Hurt of Sedicion* (1549); Alexander Neville, *De Furoribus Norfolciensium* (1575), translated by Richard Woods as *Norfolkes Furies* (1615); Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed’s Chronicles*, in two editions (1577, and the 1586 edition, which I will quote from, Holinshed 1965); Sir John Hayward, *The Life, and Raigne of King Edward the Sixt* (1631); and Nicholas Sotherton’s undated manuscript, ‘The Commoysen in Norfolk, 1549’ (1976).

7. Russell 1859 includes substantial excerpts from primary sources. Virtual Norfolk 2001b, largely the work of Andy Wood and Andrew Hopper, collects the important primary materials with commentary. The ‘modern chroniclers’ include Beer 1982, Cornwall 1977, Land 1977, and Loades 1992.

8. The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 aimed at feudalism, not capitalism, while the English Revolution of 1642–60 was largely capitalist. Cromwell and his successors easily crushed its militant anticapitalist moments: the 1647 revolt of the Agitators (Holstun 2000, pp. 192–256), Corporal William Thompson’s radical army revolt in 1649, and Thomas Venner’s Fifth

In this essay, I will consider the social and symbolic dimensions of the resulting conflict. In the first two sections, which emphasise cultural and political analysis, I contrast the two sides. In ‘Fiestas of Justice’, I focus on the post-feudal but anticapitalist monarcho-populist bloc, which included Somerset, the campmen, and commonwealth writers like John Hales. Imagining a new utopia of smallholders secured by a benevolent, gospelling monarch, they tried to use the resources of a newly centralised Tudor state to preserve and extend the independence enjoyed by English small producers during the fifteenth century. I refer to the monarcho-populist structure of feeling simply as *commoning* to suggest both the agrarian institution and the mid-Tudor sense of ‘communicate (verbally), tell, declare, publish, report’.<sup>9</sup> Deeply conservative and profoundly radical, commoning tried to make the old smallholding community the basis for a populist transformation of economy, religion, and state. I focus on the few surviving texts in which the campmen speak directly, on Somerset’s responses to their petitions, and on the picture of the campmen rendered by their conquerors. In ‘Killing Conspecifics’, I consider the aristo-capitalist bloc of the ‘gentlemen’, as the campmen called their enemies – a group including most of nation’s nobility along with gentry and yeoman tenant farmers eager to expand and improve their holdings by converting social property (church lands, commons, wastes, and forests) into private property and free peasants into landless wage-labourers. Their structure of feeling, *the hysterical sublime*, combined vituperation, histrionic pardoning, and pre-emptive violence. I base my arguments here primarily on the chroniclers who celebrated the campmen’s destruction. The third and fourth sections emphasise narrative. In ‘Petitions, Pardons, and Slaughter’, I examine the conflict of these blocs in Norfolk, during which the gentlemen’s practice of pre-emptive assault enabled them to gain the upper hand. In ‘Serial Yearning for Fusion’, I consider the conflict’s social and literary aftermath.

### Fiestas of justice

Kett’s Rebellion grew out of long-term economic changes in agrarian relations, medium-term political precipitants, and a short-term cultural trigger. The long-

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Monarchist revolts in 1657 and 1661 (Manning 1999, pp. 81–124). More recent anticapitalist risings have lacked the campmen’s concentrated forces and their ally in a *de facto* head of state.

9. *OED*, ‘common’, v2. On this complex word, see also Rollison 2006. ‘Structure of feeling’ is Raymond Williams’s term for forms of practical consciousness that exert palpable and productive pressures without necessarily taking on the fixed identity of formal ideologies. As examples, Williams contrasts the structures of feeling among Restoration Dissenters and courtiers – the ideological grandchildren of the mid-Tudor monarcho-populist and aristo-capitalist blocs. See Williams 1977, p. 134.

term cause was capitalist primitive accumulation, specifically the ‘seigneurial offensive’ in Norfolk, as lords intruded on copyholds and on communal grazing rights, ending the fifteenth-century ‘golden age of the English labourer’.<sup>10</sup> The medium-term political precipitants included local conflicts born of Reformation property transfers and the breakdown of local ruling-class solidarity after the 1547 imprisonment of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and the execution of his son Henry, the Earl of Surrey.<sup>11</sup> Most important was the extraordinary division in the government itself between Protector Somerset, ‘an agrarian reformer by conviction’, and his fellow landlords, who ‘built up their fortunes out of the spoils of the monasteries, and whom no authority is strong enough to check’. These landlords included John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who would lead the second expedition against the campmen. They were particularly galled by Somerset’s 1548 and 1549 commissions under John Hales, which investigated oppressive enclosures.<sup>12</sup>

The short-term trigger was a festive celebration of local traditions against national authority, which occasioned a popular gathering that would eventually claim national authority against local class rule. The chapel in Wymondham Abbey, near Norwich, had been dedicated to Thomas à Beckett before Henry’s Erastian campaign against the Beckett cult confiscated its funds and turned it into a school.<sup>13</sup> But locals continued to use the school for a yearly festival and a play called ‘Windham Game’ commemorating the ‘translation’ of Beckett’s body to Canterbury. On 9 July, several playgoers left for nearby Morley, where they levelled some enclosures, then returned to Wymondham and levelled some more, including John Flowerdew’s. Flowerdew then paid them to level those of his neighbour, Robert Kett.<sup>14</sup> Kett (c. 1492–1549) was a substantial tradesman and landowner.<sup>15</sup> He and his brother William were members of the chapel guild and tenants of Loye Ferrers, last Abbott of Wymondham

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10. Wood 2007, p. 14. On the golden age, see Rogers 1949, p. 326 and Hilton 1985, p. 133. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx calls 1300–1450 ‘golden age of labour emancipating itself’ in England. See Marx 1986, p. 433. For lordly pressure on the Norfolk tradition of foldcourse foraging, see MacCulloch 1984, p. 54.

11. Jordan 1968, pp. 477–8.

12. Tawney 1912, p. 352. On Hales, see Hales 1929 and Jordan 1968, pp. 428–32. On the commissions, see Anon 1549 and Strype 1822, pp. 359–65. For the Edwardian social and cultural renaissance, see MacCulloch 2001.

13. Kett 1921, pp. 55–6. On the Beckett cult, see MacCulloch 1996, pp. 226–29.

14. Neville 1615, B2v–B3r; Holinshed 1965, pp. 963–64. Noting this and similar episodes, Mervyn James argues that Tudor England moved toward commercial drama with professional actors partly to control the civic tumult occasioned by the Corpus Christi cycle (James 1983, p. 29).

15. Kett 1921, pp. 53–9; Walter 2004.

Abbey. Robert named a son after Ferrers, and the Kett brothers struggled unsuccessfully to preserve the Abbey from Flowerdew's depredations. Robert held property of Warwick, and he was related by marriage to Flowerdew and to John and Philip Robsart, cousins to Amy Robsart, whom Warwick's son Robert would marry.<sup>16</sup> This network of relations might easily have bred a capitalist yeomen scrambling toward gentry status. It bred something else.

When the rioters arrived at Kett's enclosures, he greeted them 'as one burning with the same flames of furie'. He promised to help them 'subdue the power of Great men' and 'revenge the hurts done unto the Weale publike, and common Pasture by the importunate Lords thereof'. He promised to act as 'not only a companion, but a Captaine' in their assault on enclosures, beginning with his own. With authentic equestrian horror, Neville says they proceeded 'as unbridled horses lusting after liberty'. In Holinshed's words, 'Hereupon was Ket chosen to be their capteine and ringleader, who being resolved to set all on six and seven, willed them to be of good comfort, and to follow him in defense of their common libertie'. By levelling Kett's enclosures, then Flowerdew's, they also destroyed their own identities as day labourers purpose-hired for a yeomen's feud in which they had no class stake.<sup>17</sup>

Kett's motives are harder to figure. Combining psychohistory with economism, Beer suggests he acted out of class resentment because he hailed from just below the Norfolk gentry. But this ignores the suicidal strangeness of his action, nicely evoked by Louisa Marion Kett's family-proud history: 'he had a certain faculty for accumulating possessions. Like the young man in the Gospel he was suddenly asked to leave all, and for purely unselfish reasons he did so'. We can guess that Kett acted out of local rivalries aggravated by the Reformation, that he felt neighbourly shame at being linked to Flowerdew as an encloser, or that he had been inspired by commonwealth ideology, which we can hear even in Neville's reiterated linkage of 'common people', 'common fields', 'common pasture', 'common lands', 'common-welth', 'common ayre', 'common profit' and 'Weale publike'.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps he emulated the commonwealth asceticism of Somerset, who had violated all the habits of his class by converting his demesne lands to copyhold, dispossessing his own heirs and giving security of tenure to his new tenants.<sup>19</sup> But none of this diminishes Kett's act of sheer, revolutionary will, which established his solidarity-unto-death with his neighbours.<sup>20</sup> As the yeomanry split between

16. Russell 1859, pp. 130. n. 1; Kett 1921, pp. 26, 55.

17. Neville 1615, B3r–v; Holinshed 1965, p. 964.

18. Beer 1982, p. 83. Kett 1921, pp. 55–6. Neville 1615, B1v–B4r.

19. Jordan 1968, pp. 306, 415, 427–8.

20. The anticapitalist moralism of commonwealth rhetoric, frequently viewed with brisk,

wage-paying farmers and wage-earning labourers, Yeoman Kett stepped back into the undivided precapitalist county community and fought to preserve and transform it inside a new Edwardian settlement.

Still, the very name 'Kett's Rebellion' underestimates the other East-Anglian rebellions and the orderly role of collective plebeian initiative, perennially overlooked by the modern chroniclers. The campmen, 'an angry but ill-directed local mob' required the charismatic leadership of Kett, suggests Barrett Beer, though even Neville says the influence was mutual. The panting campmen attacked Flowerdew's fences, 'possibly fortified with ale', while Kett craftily redirected them, using 'possibly more ale', ventures David Loades, possibly flustered with sherry.<sup>21</sup> Sodden or sober, the campmen began creating a highly-structured open-air commune. This group of labourers, husbandmen, butchers, coopers, thatchers, lime-burners, tailors, masons, millers, mercers, weavers, fishermen, surgeons, tanners, and shoemakers gathered on Mousehold Heath beneath a tree that came to be called the Oak of Reformation.<sup>22</sup> They governed themselves through a court and a body of representatives and practised military drill with the assistance of an expert gunner named Myles. They conducted services using Cranmer's new prayer book, taking instruction from the Mayor's appointed chaplain to the camp, Thomas Conyers; from Matthew Parker, later Archbishop of Canterbury; and from two 'prophets', Rugg and Wilse.<sup>23</sup> They petitioned King Edward and Somerset, hoping they would broaden and deepen their programme of reform. They supported themselves through writs of requisition from local gentlemen and through community contributions: the churchwardens of Carlton Colville collected a debt owed to the parish and took it off to aid the camp, while North Elmham provided relief for the wives of poor campmen and for Thomas Wakefield, wounded at 'the ffyrst skyrmyses', sending twelve representatives to the camp, along with fish, bread, mustard, beer, garlic, onions, arrows, and psalters. Norfolk women were actively involved, judging from Parliament's threat to hang wives or servants provisioning the camps.<sup>24</sup>

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modernising condescension, was not so much a substitute for structural analysis as an effort to totalise it and put it to work. On the importance of 'subjectivism' in revolutionary struggle, see Lukács 2000.

21. On the East-Anglian dimension, see MacCulloch 1984. Beer 1982, p. 83. Loades 1992, pp. 122–3.

22. For names and professions of some campmen, see Anon 1970a, pp. 328–31.

23. Russell 1859, pp. 36–7; Neville 1615, C2r. On the connections to evangelical religion, see MacCulloch 1996, pp. 432–8.

24. For one of the writs, see Neville 1615, C2r–v. On Carlton Colville, see MacCulloch 1986, p. 307. On North Elmham, see Russell 1859, pp. 181–4. On women and servants, see Luders and Raithby 1819, p. 105.

The campmen imprisoned and tried many of their gentlemen opponents. When Robert Raynbald, the Norwich chamberlain, cast lead shot for attacks on Mousehold Heath, a delegation of campmen carried him to the guildhall and confiscated the munitions. The next day, eighty campmen came to his house and carried him

away wyth them to Mushold to have hym to the tre for makynge of the forsayd gunshotte, and by the way he intreydyd them so that they caryed hym to Norwiche bothe wher he gaf them for remyssyon from goyng to the tree iii s iiiii d.<sup>25</sup>

Blomefield says they intended ‘To try him at the *oak of* REFORMATION, on which he was likely to swing’, while Land sees ‘petty theft and the acceptance of bribes’.<sup>26</sup> But the evidence suggests something less dastardly: a methodical inventory of Raynbald’s formidable household arsenal, a careful receipt, regular juridical proceedings, a modest bond in lieu of a court appearance. The campmen typically stopped short at rough humour, despite the chroniclers’ recurrent suggestion of murderous intent: after imprisoning Norwich Mayor Thomas Codd, one ‘varlet’ cried, ‘As many as would come to the Campe to morrow, should buy a Cods head for a penny’.<sup>27</sup> Codd survived the joke, but the varlet’s focus on prices was deadly serious. R.H. Tawney compares Kett’s Rebellion to an Irish fair rent campaign: ‘Nothing could have been more unlike the popular idea of a *jacquerie*’. MacCulloch says the East-Anglian risings were ‘fiestas of justice’ like the camp meetings of Primitive Methodists. The campmen thus resemble the ethically-charged eighteenth-century bread rioters analysed by E.P. Thompson, but here, two centuries earlier, we see them combining the moral economy of local restoration with a revolutionary vision of nationwide transformation.<sup>28</sup>

The campmen attacked the traditional rituals of hierarchy. On 11 July, Sir Roger Woodhouse drove to Mousehold Heath, taking three carts laden with beer, dry provisions, and fond memories of happy, paternalist church-ales. His clownish neighbours responded not with a hey-nonny-nonny, but by stripping him, beating him, taking him prisoner, and seizing the provisions. The campmen forced Norwich gentlemen to doff their finery and hide in the woods, stripped the mayor’s deputy, and mocked the attire of Warwick’s

25. Russell 1859, p. 83.

26. Blomefield, p. 237, n. 8, Land 1977, p. 83.

27. Neville 1615, F1v.

28. Tawney 1912, pp. 330–31. MacCulloch 1986, p. 303. Thompson 1991, pp. 185–258. Tawney’s magnificent and little-read *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1938) is one of the chief influences on the moral-economy analysis by the British Marxist historians.



herald as ‘but some peeces of Popish Coapes sewed together’ – a subtle sumptuary critique of the incomplete Edwardian Reformation. During the first royal assault, Neville says, the campmen captured an Italian mercenary named Cheavers, and seeing ‘all his garments and furniture which were upon him (very costly and cunningly wrought), they stripped him naked, and so hung him upon an Oke’. Sotherton wonders why they failed to seek ransom, ‘although there would have been given a c *li* for his life’. Holinshed says

they might have had no small portion of monie to have satisfied their greedie minds. But it seemed that their beastlie cruelty had bereft them the remembrance of all honest consideration and dutifull humanitie.<sup>29</sup>

They also captured Edmund Lord Sheffield, who tried to save his life ‘by all meanes possible, as by promising great rewards, by signifying his Nobilitie, and the account of his name’. Unmoved, a butcher named Fulkes ‘gave him his deadly wound with his Clubbe’.<sup>30</sup> The chroniclers never consider that the campmen might have squandered the potential ransom as a bit of levelling peasant potlatch, understanding that no captured campman could have expected any courtesy beyond ‘*Hangum tuum*’ and ‘*Hangum meum*’, in the sardonic Anglo-Latin of Hugh Latimer and Hob Carter.<sup>31</sup>

In mid-July, the campmen authored the Mousehold Articles, one of the most astonishing products of the early-modern political imagination. Because it proposes what academic historicism feels it could not have – a smallholders’ constitutional revolution that would have substantially democratised the mid-Tudor locality, parish, and state – the modern chroniclers have struggled to tame it.<sup>32</sup> Cornwall says its ‘stated desire to revert to the conditions of the happier times of the first year of Henry VII (which of course no one could remember) was unmistakably conservative’, while Land says it represents ‘the interests of men who already have a place in society and who would like a somewhat larger one’. McCulloch hears a reactionary yearning for ‘an

29. Neville 1615, C1v, D2r, G4v–H1r, I1v, F4r–v. Sotherton 1976, p. 89. Holinshed 1965, p. 972.

30. Neville 1615, G3v. See also Sotherton 1976, p. 91; Holinshed 1965, p. 974. In 1563, Barnabe Googe, Neville’s cousin, lauded Sheffield and damned Kett and Fulkes, that ‘bluddy Butcher byg and blunt’ (E1r–v). Neville contributed several poems to the volume.

31. Latimer 1968, p. 249; Longstaffe 2002, 3. 2. 649.

32. I follow Andy Wood (2007, p. 97) in this title for the manuscript. A seventeenth-century hand titled it *Keats Demaundes beinge in Rebellyon*. I will quote Russell’s version (1859, pp. 48–56). On Tudor petitions, see Hoyle 2002. ‘Democratise’ may sound troubling to rigorous lexical historicists, but we do not really need another word to characterise a proposal to limit capital accumulation and enfranchise the ‘pore commons’ in church and state.

imaginary past in which society had consisted of watertight compartments', one 'heavy with disapproval of social mobility in any direction'.<sup>33</sup> But 'social mobility' is a structural necessity only for the capitalist mode of production, not a universal human goal that the campmen cannily embraced or doltishly spurned. Only a one-track capitalist-modernisation narrative could see their systematic efforts to preserve small property as metaphysically doomed.

The Mousehold Articles, a classic early modern combination of submission and assertion, suggest considerable negotiation and agreement, for Mayor Codd and Alderman Thomas Aldritch signed as well as Kett. The manuscript lists representatives for twenty-two of the thirty-three Norfolk civil jurisdictions called 'hundreds', two for Norwich, and two more for Suffolk – an important indication of inter-camp organisation. The campmen mention enclosures only once, when they ask that ongoing reforms not threaten enclosures around 'saffren grounds'<sup>34</sup> – whatever they may be – thus emphasising John Hales' distinction between depopulating and genuinely improving enclosures.<sup>35</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch has plausibly suggested that the absence of attacks on enclosures as such derives from the peculiarities of East-Anglian land tenure: smallholders in the wood-pasture region indeed resisted landlordly enclosure of open-field lands, but in the sheep-corn lands, they were more likely to support the enclosure of their own lands as a holdfast against lords of manors invoking 'foldcourse' rights to graze livestock on their tenants' lands.<sup>36</sup> But the entire manifesto coheres around an effort to preserve small property and shape a new society on its basis. At its centre lies a proposal to roll back rents to 'suche price as they wer in the first yere of Kyng henry the viiith'.<sup>37</sup> Given the intervening years of inflation, this would have radically transformed property relations.<sup>38</sup> Modern chroniclers who overlook this staggering demand and Somerset's accommodating response to it lack the horrified insight of the landlords on Edward's Privy Council, who deposed Somerset from office as a class traitor in 1549 and executed him in 1552.<sup>39</sup> The campmen also attacked the feudal vestiges being incorporated in a regime of capitalism-from-above: lordly tenants passing on feudal duties to their subtenants,<sup>40</sup> lordly jurisdiction

33. Cornwall 1977, p. 145; Land 1977, p. 72; MacCulloch 1984, p. 50. See also Tawney 1912, p. 337.

34. §1; Russell 1859, p. 48.

35. Hales 1924, p. 41.

36. MacCulloch 1984, pp. 53–5. See also Hammond 1934, which summarizes Hammond's 1933 M.A. thesis.

37. §5; Russell 1859, p. 49. See also §§4, 6, 14; Russell 1859, pp. 48, 49, 51.

38. Fletcher and MacCulloch 1997, p. 76.

39. Holinshed 1965, pp. 1019–20; Jordan 1970, pp. 92–8.

40. §2, 9; Russell 1859, pp. 48, 50.

in court leets,<sup>41</sup> lordly interlocking directorships allowing feudal clients to become civic officials<sup>42</sup> and lords to become bailiffs to other lords,<sup>43</sup> lords purchasing freehold land and turning it into copyhold, with the accompanying feudal privileges,<sup>44</sup> lordly monopolies on the rivers and on certain sorts of fishing,<sup>45</sup> and lords electing the feodary.<sup>46</sup> Two articles attack capitalism-from-below by prohibiting yeomen from impinging on commoning rights with dovecots and coney warrens.<sup>47</sup> One protects persons earning less than ten pounds a year from being designated as shire officers and forced to pay the attendant expenses, while another boldly attempts to turn capitalist entrepreneurs into small producers by prohibiting persons earning more than forty pounds from raising more bullocks or sheep than their own households need.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the participants in the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536–7), the Western Rebellion (1549), and the Northern Rebellion (1569), and despite their aesthetically Catholic liking for plays honouring Becket, the campmen reveal no nostalgia for the old religion. But they do demand that church property be retained as a public trust, not plundered by a new Protestant gentry. They limit tithing,<sup>49</sup> detach parsons from lordly household service,<sup>50</sup> integrate the clergy in pastoral care at the level of the parish, and institute something like Congregationalism:

We pray that [prests] or vicars that be [not able] to preche and sett forth the woorde of god to hys parisheners may be thereby putt from hys benyfice, and the parisheners there to chose an other or else the pateron or lord of the towne.<sup>51</sup>

Parsons would foster literacy by teaching ‘pore mens chyl dren of ther paryshe the boke called the cathakysme and the prymer’<sup>52</sup> – part of the larger commonwealth push for public education.<sup>53</sup>

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41. §13; Russell 1859, p. 51.

42. §12; Russell 1859, p. 51.

43. §25; Russell 1859, p. 55.

44. §21; Russell 1859, p. 53.

45. §§17, 19; Russell 1859, p. 52.

46. §18; Russell 1859, p. 52.

47. §§10, 23; Russell 1859, pp. 50, 54.

48. §§18, 29; Russell 1859, pp. 52, 56.

49. §22; Russell 1859, pp. 53–4.

50. §15; Russell 1859, p. 51.

51. §8; Russell 1859, p. 49.

52. §20; Russell 1859, p. 53.

53. On proto-Congregationalism, see Fletcher and MacCulloch 1997, p. 78. On plebeian education, see Jordan 1968, pp. 162–3. John Hales proposed making the parish itself an institution to protect small producers by updating traditionalist rogation perambulations: each

After democratising the parish, the campmen turn to the state, for the Mousehold Articles are not so much a localist petition (the word ‘Norfolk’ is conspicuously absent from them) as a national one. The campmen take the Protector’s radical but strictly delimited instructions to Hales’s enclosure commissions of June 1548 and July 1549 as a model for a sweeping constitutional revolution:

We pray your grace to gyve lycens and auctorite by your gracious comyssion under your grett seall to suche comyssioners as your pore commons hath chosyn, or to as many of them as your majestie and your counsell shall apoynt and thynke mete, for to redresse and reforme all suche good lawes, statutes, proclamacions, and all other your procedyngs, whiche hath byn hydden by your Justices of your peace, Shreves, Escheatores, and other your officers, from your pore comons, synes the first yere of the reigne of your noble grandfather King henry the seventh.

And the offending officers will provide the ‘pore men’ assembled as commissioners a stipend of four pence a day.<sup>54</sup> It remains unclear whether or not these two articles would have replaced the gentlemen’s parliament, which this manifesto does not mention, but in any case, as Frederick Russell argued in 1859, they would have instituted a ‘people’s parliament’. The modern chroniclers have tended to overlook these articles’ importance. David Loades insists the campmen simply could not have been saying what they seem to be saying: Kett

could not have demanded the dismissal of the entire commission of the peace, even if his mind had been capable of grasping anything so radical, because there was no alternative to the local gentry as the agents of government.<sup>55</sup>

Loades’s frantic revisionist ‘there was no alternative’ conjures up Thatcher’s frantic, present tense and Tory ‘TINA!’ But the campmen were indeed grasping for a radical alternative: chosen by the people and confirmed by the Protector, these new commissioners would review *all* laws since 1485 – uncovering them, yes, but also redressing and reforming them, which is to say, writing new laws.

And in the most famous article, the campmen propose removing the vestiges of servile tenure: ‘We pray thatt all bonde men may be made ffre for god made

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year, with ‘two honest men’, the priest or curate would survey each pasture and note who had overstocked it with sheep, to the detriment of common sustenance (Hales 1929, p. lxxv).

54. §§27, 28; Russell 1859, pp. 55–6.

55. Russell 1859, p. 56, n. 2; Loades 1996, p. 126.

all ffre w<sup>t</sup> his precious blode sheddyng'.<sup>56</sup> In this striking prose poem, Bindoff hears an echo of the German peasant risings, with perhaps some hints of Lutheranism but none of levelling 'religious fervour'. MacCulloch hears a jab at the Duke of Norfolk, who had maintained hereditary bondage with unusual rigour on his estates, but given his disfavour and imprisonment, such an indirect attack is perplexing. Land hears a quibble directed against insignificant feudal survivals, not a radical assertion of Christian egalitarianism – an argument that would fail to account for the article's existence in the first place. Christobel Hoare's overlooked, ninety-year-old study of Norfolk bond families provides the most plausible explanation for the article's practical intent. She shows that Elizabeth farmed out to her courtiers the right to set the financial terms of compulsory manumission. A pious attack on vestigial feudal bondage thus served as a new form of expropriation, as it would again in 1861, when Russian serfs struggled to make their redemption payments. The article's tense is all: Christ has *already* made us free, pre-empting any benevolent extortion. Moreover, the article's suggestive, gnomic power is not simply a problem of reference to be solved. Russell notes the tonal shift, which

enables us to account for much that otherwise would be inexplicable. Taking this as the foundation on which they rested their hopes and claims, we are not surprised at finding indications of deeper seriousness and of a higher tone of feeling than usually accompany popular outbreaks.<sup>57</sup>

This clause suggests a movement out of specific grievances into the articulation of more fundamental principles, an ongoing process of reformation that will restore the egalitarian Christian commonwealth.

The Mousehold Articles have the temporally mixed quality of most political manifestos and revolutionary projects, including that of their enemies: just as radical sixteenth-century capitalists incorporated lordly feudal traditions in an acquisitive, market-oriented project aimed at enclosure, engrossment, improvement, and profit, radical sixteenth-century populists preserved feudal commoning traditions inside a subsistence-oriented project aimed at preserving small property as the basis for a new, relatively democratic church and state. When lords producing wool and other commodities for a market invoke traditional East-Anglian foldcourse rights to overstock the common with

56. §16; Russell 1859, p. 51.

57. Bindoff 1949, pp. 12–13. For *The Twelve Articles of the Upper Swabian Peasants*, see Baylor 1991, pp. 231–8; MacCulloch 1984, pp. 58–60; Land 1977, p. 71; Hoare 1917, p. 19. This article gave Rodney Hilton the title for his 1973 study of the English rising of 1381. See Russell 1859, pp. 51–2 n.

sheep and cattle, and the campmen propose new legislation that would preserve commoning rights for the community by denying them to the lords,<sup>58</sup> who is the traditionalist, who the innovator?<sup>59</sup> The campmen follow the commoning logic of the Narodniks and Karl Marx, who thought the Russian peasant commune might anchor an advanced democratic communism, or the Zapatistas, whose defence of their traditional, inalienable land holdings grounded an entire revolutionary programme.<sup>60</sup> They sought a smallholders' utopia securely based in post-feudal but precapitalist agriculture: a radically traditionalist and innovative return to an England that had never really existed.<sup>61</sup>

Like More's *Utopia*, the Mousehold Articles force us to expand our estimate of what Tudor England could imagine. Engels criticised utopian socialists for failing to ground their visions in actual social conditions and tendencies, but More did just that in *Utopia* by moving from diagnostic Book 1 to therapeutic Book 2. Similarly, the campmen drew out the egalitarian potential of Tudor absolutism, gospelling religion, enclosure riots, and even inflation, creating a utopian programme to protect small producers and reduce rents, limit capitalist accumulation, institute congregational religion, and call a people's parliament. More's King Utopus, with absolute power over newly-conquered barbarian Abraxa, turns it into Utopia by legislating himself and his dynasty out of existence. Imperious Protector Somerset and his enclosure commissions spark the dream of a smallholders' republic with no clear need for monarchs, bishops, or a parliament of gentlemen. More's Amaurot resembles but also reproaches Tudor London. Kett's Camp uncannily doubles Tudor Norwich, functioning as a full civil society created from below, reminding the gentlemen that they are 'a true leisure class – that they play no significant role in organising or directing production'.<sup>62</sup>

But unlike More's conquered Abraxans, the campmen are the subjects, not just the objects, of their utopian transformation – indeed, they are, for a moment, something like the identical subject-object of history.<sup>63</sup> Kett's Camp

58. §§3, 11; Russell 1859, pp. 48, 50.

59. The campmen may be responding to Somerset's sheep tax from March 1549. See Jordan 1968, pp. 434–5.

60. On Marx and the *mir*, see Shanin 1983. On the Zapatistas, see Marcos 1995.

61. On the 'peasant mode of production', see Whittle 2000, pp. 5–17.

62. Engels 1989, pp. 281–325. More 1992. On Ralph Robinson's 1551 translation of *Utopia* as part of commonwealth literature, see Baker 1999, pp. 106–30; Kendrick 2004, p. 193.

63. Lukács 1971, p. xxiii. Only 'something like' because the campmen still relied on a legislating force outside themselves. In this regard, they remained a serial collective. Because early-modern utopia had not yet fully conceptualised mass agency, it frequently retained the necessary transitional figure of a legislating and abdicating utopian *rex absconditus* (Holstun 1987, pp. 91–101).

was not a nostalgic *used-to-be* but a Blochean *not-yet*: no doubt, the campmen longed to break camp and return to their families, fields, and shops, but only after transforming all England into a permanent, monarcho-populist camp. By combining the reform of coney warrens and bushel measures with a proposal for radical social transformation, and grounding everything on Christ's manumission from the Cross, the gospelling campmen revealed the 'movement of deep, subsurface layers' beneath the passage of daily life, opening up the hierarchical moral economy of the past to the social revolution of the future.<sup>64</sup>

### Killing conspecifics

Neil Davidson has recently reasserted the progressive force of bourgeois revolutions in developing the forces of production and creating an international proletariat, criticising suggestions, including my own, that early-modern small production might have provided a stable and long-lasting alternative to capitalism.<sup>65</sup> Davidson's charge is telling, and an elegiac attention to the campmen and a greater appreciation for their importance in the history of anticapitalist struggle should not lead us to overlook the fact that their enemies were able to crush them. But I would emphasise relations over forces of production in the East-Anglian transition to capitalism, or rather, relations-as-forces: the campmen failed not because they refused to accept some inevitable capitalist transformation, but because the gentlemen excelled them in organising *force* itself, that 'midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one', which 'is itself an economic power'. In August 1549, the determining force of production was Warwick's cavalry.<sup>66</sup>

Like the campmen, most Tudor gentlemen were radical, not nostalgic, but they imagined quite a different sort of revolution. For them, the turbulence of the present must not be traced to any historical cause. It must be rendered monstrous, then crushed, while accumulation proceeds apace. In the process,

64. Auerbach 1953, p. 45.

65. Davidson 2005, pp. 47–8. Davidson is surer than I am that capitalism alone could have led to genuine economic development.

66. Marx 1996 p. 739. In seeing military force as a force of production, Marx suggests an intersection between 'forces-first' orthodox Marxism and 'relations-first' political Marxism. Cavalry troops – usually a monopoly of the ruling class – deserve a larger place in the history of capitalism, and so does John Dudley. In October, Dudley used his mercenary cavalry to strengthen his coup against Somerset (MacCulloch 1996, p. 444), and in December, his Privy Council created a standing cavalry, partly to restrain the tumultuous crowds angered by Somerset's imprisonment (Hoak 1976, p. 199–201).

they sound one of the defining notes of early-modern ruling-class culture: an alloy of comic raillery, loathing, and pre-emptive violence that rings out whenever landlords and their clerks catch sight of small producers organised in large groups for something other than work, play, or prayer. I will begin with four examples: from Martin Luther, an anonymous Tudor playwright, Edmund Spenser, and Sir John Cheke.

In *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants* (1525), Luther says,

Anyone who can be proved to be a seditious person is an outlaw before God and the emperor; and whoever is the first to put him to death does right and well. For if a man is in open rebellion, everyone is both his judge and his executioner. . . . I will not oppose a ruler who, even though he does not tolerate the gospel, will smite and punish these peasants without first offering to submit the case to judgment.<sup>67</sup>

Luther begins with jurisprudence but moves quickly to plain old prudence. Collapsing judge and executioner, he exchanges juridical proof for rapidity of execution as a standard of what is right and well. In a pinch, he even prefers a Catholic prince to a Protestant peasant in arms – there is nothing like the sight of a rustic army to help a magisterial reformer consider a temporary truce with Antichrist. In *An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants* (1525), Luther redefines rebels:

A rebel is a man who runs at his head and lord with a naked sword. No one should wait, then, until his lord commands him to defend him, but the first person who can, ought to take the initiative and run in and stab the rascal, and not worry about committing murder; for he is warding off an arch-murderer, who wants to murder the whole land.<sup>68</sup>

Luther is not wasting time telling us that someone running at his lord with a naked sword is a rebel. Everyone knows that. Rather, he tells us that any ‘rebel’ – say, someone assembling in a group with unclear intentions in a time of turmoil – is bearing a metaphorical sword and may be summarily executed by a real one. His innovative rationale for pre-emptive attack muddles ‘stabbed because a rebel’ and ‘a rebel because stabbed’. With breathtaking speed, a recalcitrant peasant becomes a rebel, a regicide, a Cain-like arch-murderer, and a monster who would murder the whole land. The lack of logical rigour is precisely the point: Luther sublimely strains the imagination, training it to commit innovative enormities.<sup>69</sup>

67. Luther 1967, pp. 50, 52.

68. Luther 1967, p. 81.

69. In ‘Murdering Peasants’, Greenblatt analyses brilliantly the training in class violence provided by Luther, Spenser, and others, and the iconography of comically-backstabbed peasants (Greenblatt 1990, pp. 99–130).



*The Life and Death of Iacke Strawe*, an anonymous play of the 1590s about the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, dramatises Luther's argument from a critical perspective. When the assembled peasant rebels parley with young King Richard, their leader Jack Straw demands the king's sword. William Walworth, Mayor of London, is appalled at this symbolic affront. He reflects silently on the opportunities for career advancement, then modulates into vocal denunciation, a low blow, and obsequious self-promotion:

MAIOR Old Rome I can remember I have read,  
 When thou didst flourish for vertue, and for armes,  
 What magnanimitie did abide in thee:  
 Then *Walworth* as it may become thee well,  
 Deserve some honour at thy Princes hand,  
 And beutifie this dignitie of thine,  
 With some or other Act of consequence:  
 Villaine I say whence comes this rage of thine,  
 How darest thou a dungell bastard borne,  
 To brave thy Soveraigne and his Nobles thus.  
 Villaine I doe arrest thee in my Princes name,  
 Proud Rebel as thou art take that withall;      *Here he stabs him*  
 Learne thou and all posteritie after thee,  
 What tis a servile slave, to brave a King.  
 Pardon my Gracious Lord for this my fact,  
 Is service done to God, and to your selfe.

KING. Lord Maior for thy valiant Act in this,  
 And Noble courage in the Kings behalfe,  
 Thou shalt perceave us not to be ungratefull.<sup>70</sup>

Collapsing arrest, trial, and execution in two lines, Walworth addresses a living rebel as if already dead on the dunghill, then a dead rebel and his interrupted posterity as if still living and learning. Next to Straw's no-longer-pardonable body, his 'Pardon my Gracious Lord' is a decorous courtly joke that helps him burrow into the patronage system. The playwright underlines Walworth's self-serving violence, for his Jack Straw, unlike the armed and charging peasant in Holinshed, is stationary and unarmed.<sup>71</sup>

Spenser begins Book 5, Canto 2 of *The Faerie Queene* with a populist assault by Sir Artegall and his squire Talus on the bridge-guarding baron, Pollente, who has 'great Lordships got and goodly farmes'. Artegall beheads him,

70. Longstaffe 2002, pp. 734–52.

71. Holinshed 1965, 2, pp. 740–1. Tom Paine called Walworth a 'cowardly assassin' (Dobson 1983, p. 396). I am grateful for discussions of the play with Jennifer M. Roth, whose M.A. thesis establishes its complex connections to the mid-Tudor crisis. She notes (2003, p. 1) that Thomas Wilson's *Art of Rhetorique* had compared Straw and Kett (1553, 68r–v).

punningly sticks his head on a pole as a ‘mirroure to all mighty men’, and the ‘wicked customes of that bridge reformed’. By ‘customes’, Spenser means both Pollente’s extortionate tolls and the Catholic arch-enemy of Reformation iconoclasts. But Artegall rapidly morphs into a version of Pollente when he encounters a populist giant promising a multitude that he will reform custom by weighing the world with the scales he holds, restoring it to egalitarian first principles. Artegall tries to reason him into submission with a series of self-contradictory arguments. Weighing the world is a sort of sinful presumption, though he himself has done this with Pollente, as has Spenser, in his proem to Book 5. Weighing the world is imprudent, for it might destabilise the universe; the world has already been weighed and found absolutely steady. We can never know the original state of things so we cannot use it as a norm to criticise present-day hierarchy; the original state of things is the present hierarchy. Right and truth cannot be weighed against wrong and falsehood; right is the temperate mean between two wrongs, and truth the temperate mean between two falsehoods. When the giant is unmoved, or perhaps just confused, Talus, like Walworth, takes the decisionist, sub-chivalric initiative and shoulders him over a cliff into the sea.<sup>72</sup> Just as the giant turns out not to have been much of a giant, so the debate, with its foreordained conclusion, turns out not to have been much of a debate. Like the Tudor ruling class, Artegall and Talus strike one blow toward their popish right, another toward their populist left, and proceed down an imperial, proto-Anglican, and capitalist *via media*.

In August 1549, tainted by association with the treacherous, impulsive, and recently-executed Thomas Seymour, Sir John Cheke was temporarily alienated from Somerset. In Cambridge, between the first and second assaults on the campmen, he wrote *The Hurt of Sedicion*, which became a touchstone of Tudor-Stuart order rhetoric. First, Cheke chastises his Pollente, the Catholic Western Rebels, who say ‘the newe is differente from the olde, and therefore ye wyl have the olde. . . . Ye seke no religion, ye be deceyved, ye seek traditions’. Then he turns to his populist giant, the Protestant campmen of Norfolk, who rebel out of sheer yearning ‘to have no Gentylnen, bycause ye be none youre selves’. Cheke feigns a direct address to the campmen that temporarily registers their grievances, but like Tacitus, he moves quickly into excremental calumny, alliterative denunciation, and abusive rhetorical questions: ‘What death can be devised cruel inough for those rebelles, who wyth trouble seketh death?’ His actual audience is Warwick, also in Cambridge, preparing the final assault on the campmen. Cheke’s frontispiece, which depicts a mounted knightly Joab lancing rebellious Absalom in the back, would not have reassured Kett.

72. Spenser 2001, 5. 2. 5, pp. 19, 28, 49. On Spenser’s giant, see Holstun 2007.

King David had ordered his forces to ‘Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom’, but when Joab found him caught fast in an oak tree, hanging ‘between the heaven and the earth’, he stabbed him in the heart.<sup>73</sup> As we will see, Warwick followed Joab’s example, despite Somerset’s instructions to deal gently with the campmen.

The hyperventilated incitement of Luther and Cheke, the abrupt lunges of Walworth and Talus – these logical and temporal hiccups blot out the moment of dialogue and law with a murderous thrust delivered like a punch line, opening up an authoritarian, post-populist future. They reveal a functional psychopathology that I will call the *hysterical sublime*: these gentlemen approach a complex social knowledge (the causes and cures of peasant rebellion) that would sublimely tax their cognitive capacity, then hysterically spurn this knowledge and redound into laughter and decisionist violence. Through pre-emptive attacks, they retroactively turn their enemies’ willingness to negotiate into a horrifying existential threat. They embody Carl Schmitt’s famous aphorism, ‘Sovereign is he who decides on the exception’: Warwick’s aristo-capitalist assault on Somerset and the campmen is to monarcho-populist commoning as Schmitt’s yearned-for dictatorship is to parliamentary democracy. Given Somerset’s own highhanded impatience with conciliar rule, the analogy is imperfect, but it does illuminate Warwick’s aching hatred of those like Somerset who blur the vital line between class ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’, his abhorrence of commonwealth loquacity (gossiping prophets, enclosure commissions, petitions and responses), and his impulse to create an authoritarian future through neo-feudal deeds and declarations, not dialogue.<sup>74</sup> If we acknowledge the enemy’s full humanity and explain to him that we plan to kill him tonight because we fear he will kill us tomorrow, then we should anticipate his impeccably logical retort: ‘Then I should kill you this morning – so let’s talk instead’. Through vituperative attacks on the subhuman enemy, we can pre-empt any such universalist dialogue by firmly grounding a particularist perspective in the existential anxieties of friends: ‘Against this kind of enemy... it makes sense to get our retaliation in first’.<sup>75</sup>

73. Cheke 1549, A4v–A5r, A8r, B5v; 2 Samuel 18: 5, 5. Holinshed reprinted all of Cheke directly after his account of Kett’s Rebellion (1577, pp. 1677–96; 1965, 3, pp. 987–1011).

74. Schmitt 2005, p. 5. On the political metaphysics of friends and enemies, see Schmitt 1996.

75. Ignatieff 2004. For a 350-year-old critique of Ignatieff’s pre-emptive solecism, see *The Gorgon’s Head, or The Monster of Munster Choaked with a Lamb’s Skinn*, a Baptist pamphlet written against the Presbyterian frenzies that hastened the Restoration: our Presbyterian ministers ‘have declared it openly in their Sermons, that the Monster was come into England: and that the *Anabaptists* of England would have cut All our English Throats... And many of us have been put into grievous frights by it: so that we felt on our Throats to find whether it were not done already: but we found them yet very sound and whole, which is a certain and infallible demonstration

The hysterical sublime combines anxious displacement, fearful memory, and the traumatic recoil from class violence. First, displacement: for Sartre, the hysteria of unproductive surplus-appropriating groups derives from ‘interiorised scarcity’. These groups,

perpetually in danger of liquidation because they are the absolute Other (living off the labour of Others), interiorise this ambivalent alterity and behave toward individuals either as if they were Other than man (positively, as gods), or as if they alone were men in the midst of a different, sub-human species.<sup>76</sup>

In peacetime, they displace their anxiety about their own superfluity into humorous raillery against the rank and mutable many, with their chuckle-headed gluttony and laziness. This collection of shop-worn proverbs, sexual and excremental abuse, and bestial imagery has strong formal affinities with the misogynous humour of Joseph Swetnam and many others, for both derive from an imperfectly repressed fear of dependence on those who reproduce real, material existence. But in times of crisis, when the sub-human group begins trying to abolish its own ambivalent alterity, the gentle joke grows frantic: Cheke reminds the campmen, somewhat vaguely, of the ‘daily benefites from the gentlemen to you’, and that ‘living in a comune wealth to gether, one kind hath need of an other and yet a great sort of you more nede of one gentleman, then one gentleman of a greate sort of you’. It is difficult to find similar sentiments from commoners paying fees, fines, tithes, payments-in-kind, rents, and labour services, while being crowded off the commons. In 1536, John Walker of Griston proposed to cull gentlemen and their children in the cradle, ‘for yt were a good thinge yf ther were so many jentylnen in Norff. as ther be whyt bulles’.<sup>77</sup>

Second, the hysterical sublime incorporates a fearful memory of the English Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, the German Peasants’ War of 1525–7, the Münster Anabaptist commune of 1534–5, and the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536–7. All

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that our Monster [Minister?] is a Prophet, and foretells things before they come to pass, or likely to come to pass. For we are all living, and mean to Cut theirs: Ah, Rogues Cut our Throats? We’ll be revenged on them’ (Anon 1660, p.2).

76. Sartre 1991, pp. 149–50, reworking his Preface to Henri Alleg’s *The Question*: most Europeans in Algeria believe ‘they have the divine right, and... the natives are sub-human. This is a mythical interpretation of a reality, since the riches of the one are built on the poverty of the other. In this way exploitation puts the exploiter at the mercy of his victim, and the dependence itself begets racialism’ (Alleg 1958, p. xli).

77. On the many-headed monster and the early modern commonalty, see Hill 1975 (pp. 181–204) and Rollison 2006. Cheke 1549, F7r. Walker quoted in Russell 1859, p. 8; MacCulloch redates his speech to 1536 (1986, p. 299, n. 29).

had important social-revolutionary dimensions in addition to religious ones, and they would send shivers down gentle spines for centuries. The Matter of Britain inspired Tudor and Stuart ideologists to fabricate nationalist myths of England's Celtic and Trojan roots, but alongside it sat the terrifying Matter of Münster, Mousehold Heath, and Blackheath, where Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, the Cornish rebels of 1497, and the New Model Army all camped. These risings prompted a chronic aristocratic Great Fear, with virulent outbreaks during the Mid-Tudor Crisis, the turbulent 1590s, the beginning of the English Revolution in the early 1640s, the sectarian scare that preceded the Restoration, and the French Revolution, when the Abbé Grégoire and the National Guard reminded Edmund Burke of 'The Abbé John Ball' and of 'Cade, Ket, and Straw, at the head of their national guards, and fomented by certain traitors of high rank'.<sup>78</sup>

Third, this hysteria derives from internalised class violence. In any exploiting mode of production, the systematic extraction of surplus ultimately depends on potential or actual violence, with the limit case of killing, whether of a thief, a foreign soldier, or a rebel (slave, serf, free peasant, or proletarian). This killing has consequences for the killers as well as the killed, and ruling-class consciousness incorporates, to one degree or another, a normalised post-traumatic stress disorder. Faris Kirkland analyses the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) of US soldiers, who have violated what Marx called their 'species being', or what Kirkland – no young Hegelian, but a retired US Army lieutenant colonel – calls 'the aversion most mammals have to killing "conspecifics"'. To kill more efficiently, they may learn to practice 'pseudospeciation' by classifying their enemies as other than human, as Sartre suggests. But some 'psychological afterburn' remains.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Tudor gentlemen pseudospeciate rebellious peasants as the beast with many heads, or distance themselves from conspecific corpses with hired hangmen and a vast repertoire of hemp-and-gallows humour, or employ foreign mercenaries already psychically damaged by removal from their own homes and more inclined to hew Norfolk peasants than would be, say, a group of Suffolk peasants. But some aversive afterburn remains, particularly when the extraordinary killing that creates a new mode of production joins the ordinary killing that maintains customary forms of surplus extraction.

At such moments, normal ruling-class PTSD becomes a pre-emptive *Pre*-TSD, which turns a plan for slaughter into its own justification by attributing it to the intended victims, creating 'the outcome of a phantasmic event, an

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78. On the Pilgrimage of Grace, see Hoyle 2001. Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, quoted in Dobson 1983, p. 393. Compare the hysteria of white Southern planters contemplating slave rebellions (Aptheker 1999).

79. Kirkland 1995, p. 299. See also Olson 2007.

imaginary episode set in the future'.<sup>80</sup> Every suspicion becomes an existential threat, prompting a lynching, a white terror, the crushing of a peasant encampment, or a pre-emptive war. And a sleepless ruling class perpetually at war can view its unprovoked attacks as pre-emptive: Tudor civil servant Richard Morison asks, 'In time of peace, be not all men almost at war with them that be rich?'<sup>81</sup> The Tudor gentleman in the era of primitive accumulation and the Protestant Reformation fashions himself by his humanist schooling, his dynastic and erotic obsessions, his clashing bonds of blood and affection, and the religious practices that torment, catechise, and absolve him. He is tautly disciplined, exquisitely self-conscious about courtly codes of conduct, and trained to hold taut the bridle of the self while stepping boldly forth with calculating *sprezzatura*. But he is also hysterically formed and deformed by learning how to kill, by planning to kill, and by killing.<sup>82</sup>

Three episodes of gentle hysteria from the tumultuous summer of 1549. First, on 7 July, the day Kett's Rebellion broke out, Sir William Paget chastised his friend Somerset for his lenient response to peasant unrest: 'The foot taketh upon the part of the head, and *commyns* is become a king'. He recalls the tumults in Germany, where 'some spiced consciences' pitied the poor and shunned the moderate bloodshed that could have prevented full-scale conflict. Impatient with mid-Tudor wets whining about enclosures and dearth (like Tacitus, he voices plebeian grievances, then ignores them), he proposes to send an army consisting of several chief justices, an English cavalry troop, and four thousand German mercenaries from shire to turbulent shire. In each, they would summon 'twenty or thirty, of the rankest knaves', and 'If they come peaceably to justice, let six be hanged of the ripest of them without redemption, in sundry places of the shire; the rest remain in prison'.<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Smith, Somerset's secretary of state, was temporarily out of favour and rusticated to Berkshire, which had seen some peasant risings. He too fretted about the Protector's tepid response. On 18 July, after several nights in a panicky, sleepless sweat, he wrote William Cecil with a vision of pre-emptive attacks by a nationwide force of night-riders. Each shire should set up a cavalry troop led by gentlemen with 'grave yeomen' attending,

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80. Atzmon 2006. The two greatest nuclear panics in recent years occurred in major nuclear powers, directed against non-nuclear powers: the US against Iraq in 2002–3 and Israel and the United States against Iran in 2006–8.

81. Morison quoted in Zeeveld 1948, p. 216.

82. Philip Sidney offers a classic example: anyone teaching the magnificently overwrought prose of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* should briefly entertain students' frequent first impression that Sidney was crazier than a shithouse rat.

83. Strype 1822, pp. 431, 435, 436; condensed in Knighton 1992, pp. 121–2. For similar sentiments and an oblique threat against Somerset, see Cheke 1549, D8v, F2v.

And where they hear tell of any evil rule, or beginning of stir to be, there suddenly in the night to come with a sixty or a hundred horse, and take and lead away the *stirrers* before any company be come unto them. . . . [A]nd if a great number of the boisterous were despatched, the realm had no loss.<sup>84</sup>

With their rigorous hempen posses, Paget and Smith violently parody Somerset's circuit-riding enclosure commissions. Michael Perelman has shown that even doctrinaire eighteenth-century advocates of laissez-faire capitalism admitted the need for systematic, extra-market compulsion. Thomas Smith, whose fantasies of lynched peasants complement his eminently rational *Discourse of the Commonweal*, the founding work of capitalist political economy, backdates this combination to mid-Tudor England.<sup>85</sup>

As we will see, Warwick acted out these fantasies on 27 August, when he crushed the campmen. But, two days earlier, during a low point in the battle, when some frightened Norwich citizens asked him to leave town, Neville says he employed an atavistic ritual to reunify his forces:

I will first suffer fire, sword; finally, all extremity, before I will bring such a stayne of infamy and shame, either upon my selfe, or you. With these words hee drew his sword; so did the rest of the Nobles (for they were all there gathered together) and hee commanded after a warlike manner (and as is usually done in greatest danger) that they should kisse one anothers sword, making the signe of the holy Crosse, and by an Oath, and solemne promise by word of mouth, every man to binde himselfe to other, not to depart from the City, before they had utterly banished the Enemy, or else fighting manfully, had bestowed their lives cheerfully for the Kings Majestic.

Binding together his lordly fascies, Warwick embodies Paget and Smith's fantasy of reactionary but innovative group formation. Following Sartre's dialectic of practical ensembles, his group emerges out of the perceived threat of a counter-group, but dissimulates its own novelty with conspicuous anachronism: as Klansmen brandished Jacobite regalia and burning crosses to forge the postbellum capitalist plantocracy, and as French revolutionaries 'performed the task of their time in Roman costume and with Roman phrases', so Neville's new Tudor aristocracy pursued primitive accumulation, and later a coup d'état, while dressed up as crusading feudal barons intoning neo-Latin periods.<sup>86</sup>

84. Tytler 1839, 1. 185–9.

85. On Smith, see Wood 1994, pp. 191–235; and Kendrick 2004, pp. 169–97. Perelman 2000. Davies suggests Smith was behind a 1547 proposal for English judicial slavery that prefigured the chattel slavery of the New World plantations (1966).

86. Neville 1615, 14r–v. Marx 1979, p. 104.

All the Tudor chroniclers of Kett's Rebellion sing the praises of lordly assaults, excoriate the campmen, and snub Somerset, who is conspicuous by his absence from Neville, Cheke, Sotherton, and the sections of Holinshed on Kett's Rebellion. Alexander Neville's *De Furoribus Norfolciensis*, a sumptuous Latin quarto published by Henry Bynneman in 1575, is the most important and culturally influential account of Kett's Rebellion, both in itself and through Holinshed's 1577 abridged and revised translation, also printed by Bynneman, and his 1586 second edition. Neville, who lived an unremarkable life as Tudor-Stuart middle management, dedicated *De Furoribus* to his employer and Bynneman's patron, Archbishop Matthew Parker, who had witnessed and participated in many of the events Neville narrates.<sup>87</sup> In 1582, Bynneman appended Neville's work to Christopher Ocland's *Anglorum praelia*, a Latin verse history of England from 1327 to 1558. The Privy Council had the Commissioners for Causes Ecclesiastical make this work an official text for grammar schools, replacing Ovid's *Art of Love* and other works by 'such lascivious poets'.<sup>88</sup> Many copies of the 1582 editions survive, most with Neville's tract appended, so a generation of English students may have read it. In 1615, Richard Woods translated Neville's work as *Norfolkes Furies*; in 1623, a second edition appeared as *Norfolke furies, and Their Foyle*.

Because the enclosure commissions were not sent out to Norfolk, Neville says, 'the common people began to murmur, and be grieved' and entered into 'secret counsels'. He proceeds to display these secret counsels through an initially sympathetic speech of more than seven hundred words by an unnamed spokesman for the peasant collective:

The pride of great men is now intollerable, but their condition miserable. These abound in delights, and compassed with the fulnesse of all things, and consumed with vaine pleasures, thirst only after gaine, and are inflamed with the burning delights of their desires: but themselves almost killed with labour and watching, doe nothing all their life long but sweate, mourne, hunger and thirst.

The people hold land miserably 'at the pleasure of great men: not freely, but by prescription, and as it were at the will, and pleasure of the Lord'. Rioting in 'effeminate delights', these 'gorgious Gentlemen' take away the 'common Pastures left by our predecessors for the reliefe of us, and our children'. Viewing the nobility's attempts to hedge in the common fields, the pastures, and nature

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87. Leedham-Green 2004. Neville's title may owe something to *De furoribus Gallicis*, François Hotman's account of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, published by Bynneman in 1573.

88. Anon. 1896, pp. 389–90.



herself, the speakers resolve that ‘we will rather take Armes, and mixe Heaven and Earth together, then indure so great crueltie’.<sup>89</sup>

Annabel Patterson says Neville has ‘willy nilly, given almost more than we could ask for in terms of attributing rational motives and emotive force to radical agents’, but rationality is not on Neville’s agenda. He introduces this oration resembling that of Percennius with a Tacitean denunciation of the ‘base and vile’ rebels as ‘light, and seditious persons of the common people’, who ‘powre foorth their ungodly desires against the Commonwealth’ and ‘bitterly inveighed against the authoritie of Gentlemen, and of the Nobilitie’. He concludes it by calling them ‘desperate persons, and banckeroute varlets’, adding a stream of excremental abuse: ‘All the rest of that filthy company flowed againe to the Campe at Moushold, as into a sinke’. Similarly, Cheke says, the camp is a sewer, and the campmen are beasts, inferior body parts, a disease.<sup>90</sup> Neville and Cheke are far from anything like a Tudor public sphere: their overt fictionalising comes together strangely with sympathetically rendered peasant complaints which need not be repressed or misrepresented, for true or false, they remain a seditious affront.<sup>91</sup>

Neville frequently records quite legibly an episode of canny peasant improvisation, then denounces it as bestial fury. During the first assault on the camp by Sir William Parr, Marquess of Northampton, Neville says, a number of ‘beardless boys . . . provoked our men with all reproachful speeches’, and

a great company of Country Clownes, did hazard a thing not only marvelous to see, but incredible to heare. For the unarmed multitude, and others, part with Clubbes and Swords, others with Spears, Staves and Javelins, (as chance could arme every man on the sudden) cast themselves headlong into the River that compasseth the Cite, at the Bridge, called Bishops Gates Bridge. Who, without feare, swimming over, and flying to the Gates with out-cries, and most tumultuous noise, strooke such a terror in the minds of all men, as there was none almost, which thought not that day, the day of doome, both to their Citie, and to themselves. Therefore all for the most part (being afraid and discomfited) fled.

Neville turns tactics into tumult: as far back as Froissart’s *Chroniques*, Walsingham’s *Chronicon*, and Gower’s *Vox Clamantis*, peasant rebellions appear as apocalyptic assaults on the lordly ear.<sup>92</sup> The hysterical sublime sometimes

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89. Neville 1615, B1v, B2r–v. The passage owes a debt to John Ball’s Blackheath sermon. See Dobson 1983, p. 371. Whittle argues that both the 1381 and 1549 rebellions were class struggles between lords and peasants, but the former focused on labour, the latter on land (2007, pp. 234, 244).

90. Patterson 1989, p. 43. Neville 1615, B2v, I3r. Cheke 1549, B4v, B6r, C3r.

91. On sedition, see Manning 1980.

92. Neville 1615, D4r, F1v. Froissart says a group of peasant rebels who saw the king’s barge

verges on inadvertent humour: describing the campmen's settlement of Mousehold Heath, Neville writes 'Heere they placed the Chambers (and as it were) tents of their furies, and lurking those thicke woods, as dogs in their kennels, they violated all Lawes of God and man', but he instances only the campmen's entering the imposing home of the recently executed Earl of Surrey, and leaving 'the markes of their villanies' (graffiti?). He adds that 'such monsters of mischiefe were conceived; and such unlawfull lusts in all kinde of daliance, that my tongue abhorreth, and is ashamed to tell', but instead of a bumpkin satyricon, he shows only the campmen's monstrously gentle 'desire of ease' and of roasted livestock.<sup>93</sup>

Matthew Parker, Master of Corpus Christi College and future archbishop, was visiting nearby and came to the camp to deliver a homily against wilful disobedience and rebellion. The campmen bristle like reprobate Jews reviling Christ in a passion play, and Parker escapes being 'thrust thorow of the raging multitude' only through an Anglican miracle: when a colleague soothes the savage breast by singing to the campmen the *Tē Deum* in English, 'by the sweetness of which Song, they being ravished', Parker makes his getaway.<sup>94</sup> Like Pyrrhus entering Troy, the campmen enter Norwich like 'wilde beasts under the shape of men', and commit sublime monstrosities – 'many other fearefull things (which that I may not make lesse in speaking), I willingly let passe'. Unnamed Norwich matrons offer their virtue to save their unnamed husbands, to no avail.<sup>95</sup> Cheke charges, 'no doubt thereof ye would have fallen to slaughter of men, ravishing of wives, deflouering of maides, chopping of children, firing of houses, beting doune of stretes, overthrowing of al together'.<sup>96</sup> In this aristocratic Norfolk Romance, events emerge not from within, through the development of social processes, but from without, through horrific imagined transgressions, heroic responses, and miraculous happenstance. This willed incomprehension helps justify the pre-emptive assaults on the sublime Monster of Mousehold Heath.

At two key moments, Neville moves out of misty enormities into sharp-focus accounts of briskly punished plebeian effrontery. During the York Herald's visit, Kett's forces offer a temporary truce, which the Norwich city fathers rebuff. After the campmen assault the city, one of the

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'made such a cry, as though all the devils of hell had been among them' (Dobson 1983, p. 144). For Walsingham and Gower, see Justice's fine analysis of the politics implicit in turning plebeian voices into noise (1994, pp. 206–12).

93. Neville 1615, E4v, C1v, D3r.

94. Neville 1615, C4r–D1r. Thanks to Christa Pijacki for the passion play analogy.

95. Neville 1615, G4v, H1v. For further improbable accounts of nameless slain gentlemen, see D3v, D4r, F1v, F3r, I2v.

96. Cheke 1549, C8r.

cursed boyes, putting downe his hose, and in derision, turning his bare buttocks to our men, with an horrible noise and out-crye, filling the aire (all men beholding him) did that, which a chaste tongue shameth to speake, much more a sober man to write: but being shot thorow the buttocks, one gave him, as was meete, the punishment he deserved.

During Warwick's assault, the Norroy Herald delivers a long oration denouncing the campmen, prompting a similar retort:

It happened before he had made an end of his speech, that an ungracious boy, putting downe his breeches, shewed his bare buttockes, and did a filthy act: adding therunto more filthy words. At the indignity whereof, a certaine man being moved (for some of our men were on the river, which came to behold) with a bullet from a Pistoll, gave the boy such a blow upon the loines, that sodainely strooke him dead.

Cornwall comforts the gunman: 'For all we know this soldier had intended to do no more than scare him, and by chance had scored a hit at extreme range'. But this shows only the extent to which liberal humanitarianism has inflected modern conservatism. Neville is moved only by the indignity, not the dead boys, while Woods glosses, 'a boyly trick justly punished'.<sup>97</sup> And for both Warwick and Neville, the campmen's continuing effort to negotiate through petitions was just another boyly trick.

### Petitions, pardons, and slaughter

In July 1549, Somerset and his Council wrote nine letters to camps in Norfolk, Suffolk, Oxfordshire, St Albans, Hampshire, and Essex. In the first full study of these letters, Ethan Shagan adapts the older liberal interpretation of 'Good Duke Somerset' associated with A.F. Pollard and W.K. Jordan.<sup>98</sup> Though Somerset was not driven by free-floating benevolence, concrete circumstances did launch him on a quest for *popularity*: 'a conscious effort to appeal downward for support from those outside the political establishment, creating a power-base independent of either the court or local affinities'. These letters reveal one side of a monarcho-populist dialogue between Protector and commons, employing a gospelling 'feedback system' in which

97. Neville 1615, E4r, I1v. Cornwall 1977, p. 215. Sotherton mentions both episodes (1976, pp. 87, 94).

98. Shagan suggests Somerset authored or approved all nine letters (1999, pp. 37–8).

the language of evangelical Protestantism became the political *lingua franca* between government and people.... [T]he Protector's strategy involved an elaborate courting of public opinion and a stunning willingness to commit the regime to fundamental changes in policy at the initiation of the commons.<sup>99</sup>

John Hayward discussed one of these letters as early as 1631, and later historians have also drawn on them, but it remained to Shagan to show their full significance. Like a post-revisionist C. Auguste Dupin, Shagan reveals the importance of the purloined letters that were there all along.

Michael Bush and George Bernard have responded with strenuous incomprehension. Bush reasserts his earlier revisionist attempt to 'demolish' the liberal interpretation of Somerset. Bernard questions the significance of Shagan's discovery and the soundness of his interpretation, adding that

It is necessary in addition to look at *all* the surviving evidence, including proclamations, conciliar letters, military commanders' letters, as well as narratives of the rebellions, and to consider events – military, political – over a longer time-scale.<sup>100</sup>

Bernard's advice sounds more like a stopgap effort to defer inquiry than a genuine attempt to continue it, but we should take it seriously. When we do, the result is not a revisionist muddle of contingencies but a determinate conflict between monarcho-populist and aristo-capitalist politics, with the former struggling to ally Somerset and the campmen through peaceful negotiations, the latter scheming to destroy this alliance and replace negotiation with armed conflict.

In mid-July, the Privy Council heard messengers from a Norfolk camp who asked for an emissary to receive written grievances. Somerset's 17 July response is superficially an exercise in traditional Tudor order rhetoric, but it creates a genuine dialogue. He reminds the campmen that enclosure commissioners are already at work 'for reformation of thinges', saying it is 'your lack and blames to assemble as you doe and not to content your selves to receave things by order from the kinges Majestie'. The campmen have been misled by agitators, including 'naughtie papists priests that seeke to bringe in the olde abuses and bloody lawes' who 'seeke nothings but spoile and ravine of yow your wives daughters and servaunts'. Somerset warns that the rebellion will bring England into foreign disrepute by this rebellion and preaches the summertime parable of the provident ant who lays up for the winter. But he also promises to respond to any articles of complaint.<sup>101</sup>

99. Shagan 1999, pp. 37 note 1, 42, 47.

100. Bush 2000; Bush 1975, p. vii. Bernard 2000, p. 119.

101. Shagan 1999, pp. 55–7.

The next day, in an astonishing second letter to Norfolk, Somerset tried to anticipate the campmen's petition, 'thinckinge your griefs to be of the same sorte and nature that your neighbors be'. He promises nothing less than a Velvet Revolution on commonwealth lines, conceding the primary agrarian reform by promising to restore the rents of forty years earlier. Bush admits that this reform 'could easily be taken as radically favouring the peasant at the landlord's expense', but insists 'there is no evidence to prove that this was its intent'. Short of a séance, it is not clear what Bush would count as evidence of Somerset's intent, which seemed plain enough to the gentlemen who would work to disrupt his proposal and behead him. Somerset limits priests to one benefice, cuts the price of wool by one third, and restricts vertical monopolies by prohibiting landlords from engrossing other occupations. He offers to consider 'anye other your articles as yow shall have good cause both to content your selves and to praye for us' and encourages the campmen to appoint four or six representatives to present grievances to a new parliament, which he promises to call in October, one month early, 'for the more spedye reformation of the premisses'.<sup>102</sup> Somerset had high hopes for his negotiations: on 22 July, the day after his herald arrived in Norwich, he wrote Lord Russell, contrasting the Western rebels, whom Russell was crushing, to the East-Anglian rebels, whose emissaries seem to have been present in London, where they say

in counsaill things of common ordre, as to have one man to have but one ferme lands at theyr owne parrych, and suche lyke; they stand for present reformation and yet must they tary a parlayment tyme.<sup>103</sup>

What ensued remains somewhat mysterious. The Clerk of the Norwich Mayor's Court says two heralds arrived in Norwich on 21 July, the second with a pardon, and that the campmen rebuffed both.<sup>104</sup> The chroniclers collapse the two heralds into one. Neville's York Herald arrives in Norwich, proceeds to the Oak of Reformation, mentions nothing of Somerset's offers, denounces the campmen, and offers them gracious pardon if they disarm and disperse or 'condign punishment' if they do not. Most of Neville's campmen reject the pardon after Kett argues

Kings are wont to pardon wicked persons, not innocent and just men; they, for their part, had deserved nothing, and were guiltie to themselves of no crime; and therefore despised such speeches as idle, and unprofitable to their business.<sup>105</sup>

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102. Bush 2000, p. 107. Shagan 1999, pp. 53–5.

103. Pocock 1884, p. 32; abbreviations expanded.

104. The second herald may have arrived on the twenty-fourth. See Virtual Norfolk 2001g.

105. Neville 1615, E1v–E2r; see also Sotherton 1976, 85; Holinshed 1965, 3.970.

Kett's campmen had reason to be wary: in 1536–7, some of them may have been serving with the Duke of Norfolk when he persuaded Henry to issue a disingenuous pardon to gain time on the way to crushing the Pilgrimage of Grace.<sup>106</sup> In any case, Neville's York Herald charged Kett, 'this beastly man (and infamous in so many points of villanie)', with

treason against the Kings Majestie, and pronounceth him a Traitor, & guiltie of high Treason. Moreover, commandeth *Ioh. Petibone*, the Mayors Sword-bearer, to arrest this cursed Caitife of an action of treason, against the King; but then they began a stur on every side, this way, & that way, striving with no lesse stout, then dangerous contention.

He offers not a Protectoral but a Henrician pardon: a sovereign act of exception and histrionic restraint that threatens to turn violent if not immediately accepted. Neville says the herald, Mayor Codd, and Thomas Aldrich returned to Norwich, Kett and some campmen to Mousehold Heath, and other campmen, who accepted the pardon, to their homes.<sup>107</sup>

Back in Norwich, Mayor Codd shut the gates, freed those gentlemen imprisoned by Kett in the castle, and admitted them to the war counsel, which garrisoned the city and commenced starving the remaining campmen into submission. The Chamberlain's accounts suggest a frenzy of preparation: the gentlemen appointed a watch, positioned cannon, cast shot, distributed match and powder, and built up ramparts.<sup>108</sup> When they heard that some campmen had entered the city and then left, Neville says, they panicked, 'perceiving the Conspirators to plot on every side the death and destruction of men and goods'. They moved their cannon from the Castle ditch because they 'did not much annoy the enemy. . . . [A]nd all the night following (for the most part) was spent in fearefull shot on both sides'.<sup>109</sup> In other words, the gentlemen began the shooting – a provocative act that the modern chroniclers ignore or attribute, with no evidence, to the campmen.<sup>110</sup>

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106. Manning 1977, p. 30, n. 52. On Henry's disingenuous pardon at Doncaster see Fletcher and MacCulloch 1997, pp. 34, 46–7; and Shagan 2003, pp. 112–17. Kett's caution is still relevant: Cornwall declares that some Suffolk rebels 'were pardoned, proof positive of participation in some unlawful activity' (1984, pp. 64–5).

107. Neville 1615, E2r.

108. Neville 1615, E2r–v. Russell 1859, pp. 75–7.

109. Neville 1615, E2v–E3r. See also Sotherton 1976, p. 86; Holinshed 1965, 3.970. Hayward's Edward sent the campmen a response based on Letter 1 along with a general pardon, whereupon they inexplicably 'discharged the first shot against the citty' (1631, pp. 68–70).

110. Cornwall 1977, p. 156. Land 1977, p. 80. Beer 1982, p. 119. Fletcher and MacCulloch 1997, p. 68.

It is unlikely that either herald would have neglected his charge by delivering a mere denunciation amid Somerset's informants and thousands of armed campmen. But if both delivered Somerset's generous offers, why did these campmen not accept them and go home, as did others in East Anglia and beyond? They had everything to lose by rejecting Somerset's offers, and everything to gain by accepting them: a radical rollback in rents in two months, continuing negotiations, a commonwealth Parliament in October, and safe return to their neglected families, fields, and shops. Perhaps they *did not* reject the offers, but merely retired to debate them. However attractive, they were complex enough to require careful and confidential consideration by the Council of Hundreds. Those campmen who headed home may simply have anticipated a full, negotiated resolution of the crisis that would reconcile Somerset's second letter and the Mousehold Articles. And the campmen did accept at least one of Somerset's offers in his second letter, for they sent six representatives to court: on 27 July, Somerset wrote that Sir William Parr, Marquess of Northampton had left for Norwich, but

we trust ther shalbe no great matyer, for presentlye are come hither half a dozen chosen of theyr compayny who seke the kyngs Majesties mercie and redresse of things, and be returned to receyve pardon by dyrecons of the mrques siche as will seke yt at his handes.<sup>111</sup>

They may even have travelled to court with the York Herald. If so, then either the chroniclers exaggerated the hostilities, or the campmen were magnanimous enough to overlook an artillery barrage.

In any case, the chroniclers who recorded the first negotiations in Norwich found the initial phases of the monarcho-populist dialogue too obscene to narrate: with the exception of Hayward, they mention nothing of Somerset's offers. Rather than assuming the historical accuracy of this furious set-piece, we should probably look to its formal function in Neville's narrative: it feels like another imagined scene, perhaps a back-formation from the later pardons and battles, motivated by loathing of Somerset's accommodating offer and by the need to fill in the narrative space left after excising it. But whether these excited accounts of conflict on 21–2 July were fact or fiction, they reveal the gentlemen's underlying fear that class war would *fail* to break out, that the negotiations would succeed, that rents and the price of wool would be rolled back, and that a commonwealth Parliament would convene in October to ratify these actions and consider further ones. Given that the other

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111. Pocock 1884, p. 28; Pocock misdates the letter 17 July.

camps had dispersed with the promise of fundamental social reform, Mousehold Camp held forth the last chance for a slaughter and a coup.

When news of the encounter reached the Privy Council, Somerset foolishly assembled the first expeditionary force under Northampton, who combined the general animus of the peers against commonwealth ideology with a personal grudge against Somerset, who had frustrated his efforts to divorce and remarry.<sup>112</sup> A larger aristocratic conspiracy against Somerset had begun taking shape as early as June, fuelled by resentment of Somerset's executing his own treasonous brother, Thomas, in March; his enclosure commissions, personally aggravating to Warwick; his gentle treatment of earlier risings; and his arrogance toward other councillors. Hales (probably) and another contemporary chronicler both say Warwick began scheming against Somerset from the beginning of his Protectorate by setting him against his brother. Van der Delft, the imperial ambassador, reported to Charles V that Mary had told him that

there was much rivalry and division in the Council, for the Earls of Warwick, Southampton and Arundel, and the Great Master [Sir William Paulet] were working against the Protector and his new Council and sending to sound her to see if she would lend her favour to an attack on the Protector, whom they wished to impeach for lese-majestie.<sup>113</sup>

And the gentlemen may have short-circuited efforts at peace by disrupting communications between Somerset and Mousehold Heath.<sup>114</sup>

Northampton's army reached Norwich on 31 July and entered the city. The next day, the campmen attacked, slew Sheffield, and drove Northampton out. Somerset complained Northampton had 'evill governed' his charge, for where he

was specially instructed to voyde the fight, and being a number of horse should by speciall order have kept the feld and so have penned them from vitail, and otherwyse so awaked them as to have made them sought theyr pardon; And thereby to have preserved the kyngs subjects bothe of the marques parte and of thother corrupt members who might have been brought to the acknowledge of theyr dewties, yf it had bene well handeled, he and suche advyse of counsiall as he had there lefte quite their Instruccion and went to pynne them selves within the towne of Norwich, which afterwards they were fayne to habandon.<sup>115</sup>

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112. Jordan 1968, p. 367.

113. See Adams et al. 2003. On Warwick's resentment of the enclosure commission, see Knighton 1992, pp. 111–12. For Van der Delft, see Berkman 1980, p. 248.

114. Virtual Norfolk 2001c.

115. Pocock 1884, pp. 58–9.



Most historians have seen Northampton as a bumbling sonneteer, but there was a method to his cavalier bravado, which helped subvert the peaceful programme Somerset had promised the campmen.<sup>116</sup> True, any people striving to leave behind a culture of deference needs to learn that earls can be killed, but Sheffield's death played right into the *berserker* cunning of the gentlemen, who saw to it that the rising ended not with monarcho-populist legislation but with spurts of patrician, then torrents of plebeian blood.

Indeed, even Somerset seems at first to have decided on a 'terrible example' in retribution. But by 24 August, he had calmed down, saying there was 'no great losse saving the losse of the lord Sheffild', with fewer than five hundred killed on both sides, none of them gentlemen.<sup>117</sup> Though he originally intended to head the second expedition himself, Somerset foolishly delegated the job to Warwick, who marched to Norwich with his sons Ambrose and Robert and a force of 6,000 foot. Ominously, Warwick asked that Northampton join him in returning to the scene of his humiliation.<sup>118</sup> They arrived on the twenty-third and were joined by 1500 horse, mostly Swiss mercenaries. The chroniclers say Warwick began with a pardon, in the form of a long secular sermon by Gilbert Dethick, the Norroy Herald. Neville looks into the hearts of the campmen and finds them trembling 'for the guilt of Conscience', but nevertheless offended and ready to accuse Dethick of serving the gentlemen, not the king. They reject the pardon, which 'in appearance seemed good and liberall, but in truth would prove in the ende lamentable and deadly, as that which would be nothing else; but Barrells filled with Ropes and Halters'. Neville follows with some formulaic denunciations of their pestilent madness, but negotiations proceed until Warwick's gentle gunman shoots the second Rabelaisian camping boy, leading the campmen to fear a general bloodbath:

*O my companions, we are betrayed. Do you not see our fellow Souldiers cruelly slaine before our eyes, and shot thorow? what shall wee hope for, being dispersed, and unarmed, when yet being in armes, violence is offered? For surely this herald intendeth nothing else, but we being inclosed, all of us on every side with traynes, and weakned, may most cruelly be slaine of the Gentlemen.*<sup>119</sup>

Tacitean Neville feels no obligation to address the logic – quite valid, as it turned out – of the argument he records or creates.

116. See Jordan 1968, p. 487; Cornwall 1977, p. 168; Land 1977, pp. 84–8; MacCulloch 1996, pp. 433–4.

117. Lodge 1838, 1.161–2. Pocock 1884, p. 59.

118. Jordan 1968, p. 488.

119. Neville 1615, H4r–I1v.

But the gentlemen underestimated the campmen's patience, for Kett 'joyned himself with the Herald, and minded to have spoken with Warwicke, face to face'. Sotherton emphasises Kett's self-sacrifice: the pardon had excluded him from mercy. As they moved toward Warwick's camp, Neville says a 'mighty rout of Rebels' followed them, declaring that 'they were willing to undergoe with him what fortune soever (though never so sharpe) and if he would needs goe any further, he should have them his companions and partners, both in life and death'. At Dethick's request, Kett demonstrated his good faith by returning and quieting the campmen. Had he been allowed to return to Warwick's camp, perhaps atoning for Sheffield's blood with his own, England might have remained on track for the October commonwealth Parliament.<sup>120</sup>

But Warwick headed off this peace offensive:

[W]hen hee perceived that they were all carried headlong (with a certaine frenzy, and as it were, a blinde rage of the minde) to destruction: and that neither by intreaty or faire promises; not yet by the feare of punishment, they could bee wonne to cease from their filthy enterprise: It seemed best unto him, to leave off for ever the hope of peace: a thing aswell by himselfe, as by others often proved in vaine, and now at the length to deale by open warre.

As usual, in the absence of any concrete provocation, Neville piles up pejoratives, but without denying Kett's efforts to avert a battle. The modern chroniclers repeat or improve on his account. Cornwall accepts Neville's account of Warwick's internal state: '[I]t was now clear to Warwick that the attempt at pacification had failed'. Loades ignores the restored orderliness of the campmen: 'Kett's men were in an ugly mood, and he had lost his control over them. Not being a soldier, he did not know how to handle such a situation'. Land embroiders: the words of the rebels who rode up to Kett 'can also be seen as an assertion that Kett would not be allowed to go before Warwick as the sole representative of the rebel cause'. Beer wantonly transfers Warwick's reported decision to Kett: 'sensing that his own authority was diminishing, Robert Kett decided that a meeting with Warwick would be fruitless'.<sup>121</sup>

Warwick ordered his pioneers to break open a gate where 'they first entred the City, and killing many, they easily remove the enemy from that place'. Entering the marketplace, they found almost sixty rebels begging for pardon, whom they proceeded to punish in a 'warlike manner. . . . For without hearing

120. Neville 1615, I2r; Sotherton 1976, pp. 94–5.

121. Neville 1615, I2r. Cornwall 1977, p. 215. Loades 1992, pp. 125–6. Land 1977, p. 116. Beer 1982, p. 131.

the cause, all of them were presently (as the manner of warres is) manifestly convict of their wickedness, and received their last punishment'.<sup>122</sup> The Chamberlain's accounts for that boisterous day list an outlay of 8p for erecting a gallows, 3p 'for mending of a leddyr that was broken at the Crosse with hangyng of men', and 3s 9p 'for the Charges of beryeng of xlix men that war hangyd at the Crosse in the market, for makyng pytts and carryeng to them'. The battle proceeded with full force, particularly in the city, where three or four gentlemen were killed. With one volley, a Captain Drury slew 130 campmen (Neville's tally) or 330 (Woods's). Myles, the campmen's gunner, slew Warwick's master gunner with a shot.<sup>123</sup>

On 26 August, Warwick cut the supply lines between Norwich and Mousehold Heath, and the campmen decided to make a stand at nearby Dussindale, where there may have been better hope of provision. The usual explanation – that they were acting on a deluding prophecy – is implausible. Neville gives the 'unsavory and sottish verses' in English, and Woods renders them thus:

The Country gnooffes Hob, Dick, and Hick,  
With clubbes, and clouted shoone,  
Shall fill up Dussyn Dale:  
With slaughtered bodies soone.<sup>124</sup>

Mousehold Heath and its environs had been associated with plebeian uprisings as far back as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and the campmen may well have authorised their struggle with populist prophecies, but it is difficult to imagine them engaging in such witless self-mockery.<sup>125</sup> However, the chroniclers, old and new, fancy the Delphic irony of 'slaughtered bodies' (intended aristocrats, actual campmen), for it retroactively vindicates the gentlemen: if they meant to slaughter us, who can blame us for slaughtering them?<sup>126</sup> In any case, on 27 August, after a pitched battle, most of the campmen broke ranks and fled, and

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122. Neville 1615, I2r–v. In his first edition, Holinshed thriftily illustrated these and other hangings with two favourite woodcuts, used as far back at his account of Vortigen hanging recalcitrant Scots and Picts (1577, pp. 1670, 1674, 110). Albion's fatal tree becomes a visual leitmotif for its history.

123. Russell 1859, p. 132. Neville 1575, p. 131; Neville 1615, I2v, I3r.

124. Russell 1859, p. 214. Neville 1575, p. 141; Neville 1615, K1v. Quoting Neville, the *OED* defines 'gnoff' as a 'churl, boor, lout'.

125. Palgrave 1847, pp. 209–23.

126. Putterham discusses this prophecy as an 'amphibology' (1589, p. 218); so does Blomefield (1806, p. 252, n. 3). Cotta compares it to the prophecy Aeneas receives at Delphi (1616, pp. 64–5). Beer claims the campmen 'foolishly based their strategy on the obscure prophecy' (Sotherton 1976, p. 75). Thomas hears an actual prophecy, perhaps improved after the fact (1973, p. 478). Patterson hears genuine peasant ideology (1989, p. 40).

the Swiss cut them down. Somerset counted a thousand dead, Neville 3,500, and Robert Parkyn, 7,000 on both sides, with many other counts in between.<sup>127</sup> These estimates vary because of the chroniclers' contradictory impulses to magnify both the victors' mercy and their rigour, their class indifference to the dead campmen, and the summertime necessity for getting tons of rotting flesh underground quickly. After capturing, trying, and convicting the Kett brothers, the state hanged them in chains, Robert from Norwich Castle, William from Wymondham Abbey.<sup>128</sup>

In the midst of battle, says Neville, one group of rebels drew together and 'resolved they had rather die manfully in fight, then flying, to be slaine like sheepe'. When promised pardon, they demurred:

But, they have had already experience, of their cruelty upon their companions in all places. . . . And in truth, whatsoever they pretend, they know well, and perceive; this pardon to be nothing else but vessels of Ropes and Halters, and therefore have decreed to die.

Warwick promised to abide by the pardon, and 'thus many men . . . were saved by the Wisdom and Compassion of Warwicke'. Somerset told Sir Philip Hoby that Warwick had pardoned all,

The chief heades, ringleaders, and postes excepted, Kett and iii of his britherne with sundry other chief captaines, all vile persons, were also taken, who now remaine in honde to receive that which they have deserved.<sup>129</sup>

But Warwick stretched the truth. 'Judgement in the Castle' began the day after the battle, 'and an inquiry was made of those that had conspired, and many were hanged, and suffered grievous death. Afterward nine which were the Ringleaders, and principalls', joined by 'many companions with them in these villainies' died in the traditional festive fashion: half-hanged on the Oak of Reformation, cut down, castrated, slit open, their living bowels cast into a fire, then decapitated and quartered, with the pieces displayed about town.<sup>130</sup> The nine included Myles the cannoneer and the prophets Rugg and Wilse, but the 'many' who also suffered presumably included some of those promised pardon, since Neville has mentioned only the 3,500 slain in flight and the large group taken into custody.<sup>131</sup>

127. Somerset in Russell 1859, p. 213. Neville 1615, K2v. Parkyn in Dickens 1947, p. 71.

128. Neville 1615, K4r–v.

129. Neville 1615, K3r. Somerset quoted in Russell 1859, p. 214.

130. Neville 1615, K3v.

131. Holinshed 1965, p. 983. Twenty years later, a Suffolk rebel recalled the treachery (MacCulloch 1984, p. 47).

Neville's attention deficit lets him move in two paragraphs from praise for Warwick's gentle magnanimity to awe at the solemn spectacle of his gibbets. There is no cross-class public sphere, no requirement for ideological consistency – what matters are the affront and its punishment. As beastly plebeian 'sedition' need imply no mendacity, so godly gentle pardon need imply no mercy: the sovereign power to make exceptions shines forth equally from the pre-emptive attack, the pardon, and the pardon's abrogation. Drawing on the Norwich Roll, now lost, Blomefield estimates 300 hanged during and after Warwick's assault, with at least a week of executions.<sup>132</sup> Anticipating the eighteenth-century's parliamentary enclosures, this gentle riot offered the victors a windfall opportunity for state-aided primitive accumulation. On 3 September, six days after the battle, Sir Thomas Woodhouse wrote his brother William that

You shall understande that my lord of Warwike dothe execucion of menny men at Norwiche. And the gentlemen crave at his hande the gyft of the rycheess of them, and doe dayly bring in men by accusacyon.<sup>133</sup>

The modern chroniclers identify spontaneously with the hangmen. With brisk domestic whimsy, Cornwall says 'Warwick spent two weeks at Norwich mopping up'. Beer says 'Warwick's strategy for pacification called for exemplary sentences for the leaders and pardons for the smaller fry'. Land, with stiff-lipped historicism, says 'Recent writers have condemned the punishment as excessive, but to do so is unhistorical'. Loades is judicious but rigorous:

Warwick administered the inevitable punishments in Norfolk with moderation, and in strict conformity to the law. That did not mean that the toll was light; some 600 died on the gallows.

However unreliable as a historian, Neville is a more astute sociologist than his successors. After a landlordly epiphany, his Warwick redeems the captive campmen:

There must be measure kept, and above all things in punishment men must not exceed. He knew their wickednes to be such, as deserved to be grievously punished, and with the severest judgment that might bee. But how farre would they goe? would they ever shew themselves discontented, and never pleased? Would they leave no place for humble petition; none for pardon and mercy? Would they be

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132. Blomefield, p. 255.

133. Russell 1859, p. 151. Some who profited from land grants and other gifts after Kett's Rebellion include Audley (Anon. 1970a, pp. 190–1), Thomas and Elizabeth Horseman (Anon. 1970b, p. 55), Warwick (Anon. 1970b, p. 115), Northampton (Anon. 1970b, pp. 146–50), the Woodhouses (Anon. 1970b, pp. 29–30).

Plowmen themselves, and harrow their owne lands?’ These speeches appeased greatly the desire of revenge, and brought to passe, that many which before burned wholly with cruelty, afterward notwithstanding were farre more courteous towards the miserable Common people.<sup>134</sup>

The hysterical sublime dissolves into pardon, mercy, and courtesy, but only when scared silly by the harrowing spectre of a gentleman ploughman.

### Serial yearning for fusion

As the greatest anticapitalist rising in British history, Kett’s Rebellion has attracted populist historians and novelists.<sup>135</sup> But perhaps because its particular form of anticapitalism resisted assimilation to the long-dominant ‘bourgeois-revolution’ model of social change, it has drawn surprisingly little attention from the British Marxist historians. Marx never mentioned it. Tawney considered it throughout *The Agrarian Problem*, but overemphasised its traditionalism. Hill never took it up. Even Robert Brenner, critic of the bourgeois-revolution model, mentions it only briefly and does not feel compelled to account for the campmen’s appearance in an England he views as already thoroughly capitalist.<sup>136</sup> The neglect may also be due to the fact that the East-Anglian rebellions marked not just a beginning, but an ending: they offered the first large-scale anticapitalist struggle aiming at national social transformation, but the slaughter at Dussindale ended any hope that the county community might be the basis for another such struggle. The fatal change came as independent yeomen like Kett formed the second leg of the classic agrarian-capitalist triad of rent-earning landlords, rent- and wage-paying tenant farmers, and wage-earning labourers.<sup>137</sup> Commoning traditions certainly continued for centuries, perhaps everywhere we find resistance to the enclosure of land, knowledge, and resources, as Massimo De Angelis argues. But later Tudor risings were either sectarian or baronial revolts (Dudley’s attempted coup against Mary, Wyatt’s Rebellion, the Northern Rebellion, Essex’s Rebellion), or minor local disturbances (the Oxfordshire Rebellion, Hackett’s Rising).<sup>138</sup> We

134. Cornwall 1977, p. 224; Beer 1982, p. 184; Land 1977, p. 125; Loades 1992, p. 126; Neville 1615, K4r. Jane Whittle suggests only the Ketts and four more were hanged or outlawed after the rebellion but does not give her source (2007, p. 240, n. 51).

135. Lawrence Stone says that 1549 ‘witnessed the most threatening and the most widespread series of popular revolts in the nation’s history’, with ‘clear class-war overtones’ (1974, p. 20). For popular histories, see Clayton 1912 and Groves 1946. For an insightful historical novel, see Lindsay 1949.

136. Tawney 1912; Brenner 1985, p. 48. A.L. Morton devotes two insightful pages to it (1948, pp. 143–4).

137. Marx 1998, pp. 608–33, 768–800; Whittle 2000, pp. 312–13.

138. De Angelis 2004; Fletcher and MacCulloch 1997, pp. 115–28.

can measure the utopian promise of the camps and the extent of the loss suffered by English small producers in 1549 by comparing Robert Kett and the campmen to Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers, exactly one hundred years later. Winstanley, the greatest social theorist of seventeenth-century England and a brilliant prose stylist, left behind a body of writing far larger than everything we possess from the camps. But the Diggers lacked the campmen's extensive local power base, their impressive (though finally inadequate) military organisation, and their access to the ear of a great political leader. Without these, the Diggers remained isolated, impotent, and politically inconsequential.<sup>139</sup>

What kind of revolution did the campmen envision? Not capitalist, of course, as we can see in their struggle against primitive accumulation. Not neo-feudal, as we can see in their hatred of vassalage, their Protestantism, and their vision of a people's parliament. And certainly not socialist, as we can see in their commitment to small property. I have called 'monarcho-populist' their effort to graft a progressive small production onto a benevolent despotism that would help check capitalist forces. Could this tenuous hyphenated alliance have 'clipped the wings of rural capitalism', as S.T. Bindoff suggests?<sup>140</sup> Denying a hypothetical is as dubious a task as asserting one, but it is hard to see how even an upright dynasty of populist, anticapitalist monarchs could have held off forever the established dynamic of English capitalist accumulation, or how a non-monarchical republic might have spread outward from East Anglia and Somerset House to unify the nation. I think those clipped capitalist wings would have grown back, stronger and meaner.

Monarcho-populist solidarity did linger, but only in a weakened form. When Warwick launched his coup in October 1549, Somerset had Edward issue a remarkable downward petition to 'all his loving subjects' to come to Hampton Court to defend them against 'a most dangerous conspiracy'. One 'Henry A' seconded Somerset, damned the *arriviste* Council as 'but late *from the dunghill*', noted that their coup interrupted the commonwealth parliament promised for October, and prophesied against London, 'called Troy untrue, Merlin sayeth that twenty-three of aldermen of hers will lose their heads in one day'. Perhaps 4,000 untrained commoners heeded the call, to no avail, and Warwick's forces captured and imprisoned Somerset.<sup>141</sup> On 22 January 1552, the Privy Council ordered the people to stay indoors during Somerset's execution. Many disobeyed, creating a commotion around the scaffold, until

139. On the Diggers, see Manning 1992, pp. 79–134; and Holstun 2000, pp. 367–433. The Revolution's clubmen, while armed, disciplined, and genuinely political, aimed to preserve local communities, not transform the nation (Manning 1996, pp. 78–85).

140. Bindoff 1949, p. 9.

141. Jordan 1968, pp. 506–9. Tytler 1839, pp. 205, 209–10.

Somerset quieted them and decorously laid his head down.<sup>142</sup> After Edward's death in 1553, John Dudley, now Duke of Northumberland, briefly enthroned his son Guildford and daughter-in-law Lady Jane Grey. Remembering the slaughter at Dussindale, the gospelling populace of East Anglia turned on him, helping Mary win the day. Later, when advocating continued agrarian reform, they reminded Mary of her debt to them, to little effect.<sup>143</sup> Concretely, the monarcho-populist alliance survived in the Tudor-Stuart poor law and anti-enclosure legislation: their indigent English beneficiaries owed to the campmen what Western welfare recipients owe to the Bolsheviks.<sup>144</sup> But these were no more than faint echoes and aftershocks.

Though it has attracted very little attention from historians or literary critics, the cultural afterlife of the struggle was considerable: seen from Mousehold Heath, the high English Renaissance reveals not just a court culture and an emergent imperial nation, but conflicting triumphalist and elegiac views of the mid-Tudor crisis.<sup>145</sup> In the midst of the rebellions, Cranmer coordinated the preaching against the camps by both native English and continental refugee clerics. Chastising enclosers but damning rebels, their sermons helped fabricate the classic Anglican 'middle way'. Cranmer's own sermon on rebellion was quite bold toward Somerset: the rebellions were God's scourge of lax governance, and 'David, because in time he did not correct his three sons Amon, Absolon, and Adonias, he lost them all three, and was in great danger to be destroyed by them himself'. In a preface of 1551, John Véron sympathised with the poor, but called for the pitiless exemplary punishment of rebel leaders, comparing them to Absalom.<sup>146</sup> In 1549, Bernardino Ochino wrote an Italian dialogue translated into English as *A Dialogue betwene the kinge and his people*, in which the King counsels the rebellious People to submit to order, even to 'dye for hunger' if no remedy appears for their suffering. In a 1549 letter about the Western and East-Anglian Rebellions, translated by Somerset himself, John Calvin advised him 'to hold the brydle shorte', for 'insomuche as menne pardoneth suche enormities, it must folowe that GOD must take vengeance'.<sup>147</sup> Like Calvin, Cranmer, and Cheke, Thomas Smith was close to Somerset but

142. Jordan 1970, pp. 100–2.

143. MacCulloch 2001, pp. 123–4.

144. On monarchist resistance to enclosure, see Tawney 1912, p. 317. On the poor law, see Patriquin 2007.

145. For two partial exceptions, see Patterson 1989, pp. 32–51; and Norbrook 2002, pp. 28–52.

146. MacCulloch 1996, pp. 434–40. Cranmer 1846, p. 191. On Absalom, see also pp. 191 (again) and 199. Véron 1551, B6r–B7r.

147. [Ochino] n.d., 327–8; thanks to Tim Raylor for help with transcription. Calvin 1550, D7r.



critical of the ‘hotlings’ surrounding him, who ‘devise commonwealths as they list’.<sup>148</sup> During the Rebellion, he wrote *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, a fictional dialogue ostensibly occasioned by Somerset’s enclosure commissions. But where Somerset aimed to restrain agrarian capitalism by bringing together in each parish ‘Twoo Freholders, twoo Fermers, twoo Copie holders, or tenauntes at wil’ to investigate enclosures, Smith brings together a Doctor (a civil lawyer), a Knight, a Merchant, a Capper, and a Husbandman (actually, a wage-paying farmer) in what Kendrick calls an ‘anti-camp’: a restricted capitalist utopia managed by the Doctor, who proposes a strictly monetarist solution for the problems of ‘dearth’, or inflation.<sup>149</sup>

A Dudleian current of nervous gentlemanly culture began in 1549, when Norwich burghers mounted the Dudley family’s heraldic ‘ragged staff’ on the city gates. The city instituted a yearly sermon to commemorate the Rebellion’s defeat.<sup>150</sup> As Northumberland took power, he attacked both verbal and agrarian commoning by prohibiting extraordinary assemblies and rolling back the anti-enclosure legislation of the previous 65 years.<sup>151</sup> In December 1561, Elizabeth removed the taint of treason that Northumberland had passed to his sons Ambrose and Robert Dudley. The next month, the Inns of Court honoured Robert at their Twelfth Night revels with an avant-garde blank-verse history play, *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex*, by Richard Sackville and Thomas Norton, who had been secretary to Somerset and tutor to his children in 1549. Most critics have focused on the play’s role in the succession controversy and its possible nomination of Robert Dudley as consort to Elizabeth.<sup>152</sup> But it ranges further: Gorboduc tyrannically combines arrogance in ignoring his counsellors with weakness in dispersing his sovereignty – for the gentlemen in attendance, qualities most apparent in the worrisome brief reign of Somerset. The fatal rivalry of Gorboduc’s sons recalls Somerset’s with his brother Thomas Seymour. A gentle perspective on the Somerset years also appears in the play’s primary additions to its chronicle sources: its emphasis on counsel and its peasant revolt against Gorboduc (the chronicles describe only a civil war). Indeed, the two come together, for the counsellor-physician Eubulus cures the state’s civil sickness by proposing to send ‘the power of horsemen’ against the

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148. Bush 1975, p. 67.

149. Smith 1964; remarkably, this dialogue was long attributed to John Hales. Anon 1549. Kendrick 2004, p. 191.

150. Rye 1905, p. 20; Neville 1615, K4r. The 1642 sermon seems to have had little effect on its hired preacher, one Laurence Clarkson/Claxston, probably the future Ranter (Virtual Norfolk 2001d).

151. Jordan 1970, pp. 37–8, 40.

152. Axton 1977, pp. 38–60.

peasants, and by hanging the survivors with ‘the strangling cord’.<sup>153</sup> One of the play’s chief sources, *Coopers Chronicle*, also gives the first substantial published account of Kett’s Rebellion, showing the pardoned rebels handing over ‘their chief capitaines to punishment’; similarly, some of the rebels in *Gorboduc* hand over their leaders as a ‘wholesome terror to posterity’.<sup>154</sup>

This Dudleian tradition includes Neville’s history itself. After Matthew Parker died in 1575, Neville quickly rededicated his history to Archbishop Grindal, favourite of Robert Dudley, now Earl of Leicester, who later enlisted Neville in his dealings with Archbishop Whitgift. Philip and Robert Sidney, Leicester’s nephews and Warwick’s grandsons, knew Neville well.<sup>155</sup> A narrative of lapsed sovereignty like *Gorboduc*’s drives Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, with tyrannically self-deposed Duke Basilius, dangerously elevated peasant Dametas, and hysterically slaughtered peasant rebels. Drawing on Neville in 1577, Holinshed had shown that ‘butcherly knave’ Fulkes slaying Sheffield with a club; revising this account in the peasant rebellion of Book 2, Sidney shows Prince Pyrocles beheading a ‘butcherly chuff’ who menaces him with a club. In Book 4, the gibbeted rebel remnant inspires a defence of lynch law: they suffer ‘that without law which by law they had deserved’. In 1587, Neville dedicated to Leicester a compilation of funerary verse for Sidney. The entire *Faerie Queene* of Edmund Spenser, also a Dudley client, shows would-be gentlemen how to fashion themselves by killing conspecifics. Kett’s Rebellion echoes loudest in Book 2, when autochthonous ‘Captaine Malegar’ and his peasant rebels menace the Castle of Temperance, a decorous aristocratic body politic, until Arthur raises him up to kill him in the open air, as Hercules killed Antaeus; Joab, Absalom; and Warwick, Captain Kett.<sup>156</sup>

But there was also a cross-sectarian monarcho-populist tradition. Robert Crowley’s great works of the commonwealth years combine admonitory sympathy for the campmen with apocalyptic attacks on enclosers. His masterpiece, *Philargyrie* (1551), connects the money-grubbing Roman-Catholic counsellor Hypocrisie with his corrupt gospelling successor, Philaute, who evokes not just Henrician plunderers but Northumberland’s engorged Privy Council. A reawakened Prince and his godly advisors send Philaute

153. Sackville and Norton 1970, 5.2.50, 52.

154. Cooper 1560, 43r, 47v, 345r. Sackville and Norton 1970, 5.1.92, 5.2.26–33. In a timeserving 1552 letter to Calvin, Norton blamed Somerset for his own death, saying ‘he plotted the destruction of certain others of the royal council’ (Robinson 1846, pp. 339–42). Norton later translated Calvin’s *Institutes*, with its denunciation of Anabaptist rebels.

155. Leedham-Green 2004. Philip Sidney commended Neville to Robert Sidney (Sidney 1963, pp. 130, 133).

156. Holinshed 1577, 1665; 1965, p. 974; Sidney 1977, pp. 380, 763; Spenser 2001, 2.9, 11.

packing, along with Philargyrie himself.<sup>157</sup> Miles Hogarde, the plebeian Catholic hosier, poet, and polemicist, ferociously opposed both the Reformation and agrarian capitalism. In 1557, he dedicated to Mary a manuscript poem entitled *A Mirroure of myserie*, which attacks rack-renting and other oppressions of the poor. John Heywood's insect allegory, *The Spider and the Flie* (1556), the stillborn epic of monarcho-populism, stages a series of debates about agrarian class struggle and a pitched battle between spiders and flies that clearly alludes to Kett's Rebellion. It concludes hopefully with a vision of fundamental agrarian reform through a utopian alliance of Queen Mary and commoners against Northumberland and the gentlemen who survived him.<sup>158</sup>

Perhaps recalling the origin of Kett's Rebellion with a play in Wymondham, a royal proclamation of August 1549, in the midst of the Rebellion, prohibited the performance of any 'interlude, play, dialogue, or other matter set forth in form of play' until All Saints Day, on the grounds that they 'contain matter tending to sedition, and contemning of sundry good orders and laws'.<sup>159</sup> But the stage provided the primary aesthetic medium for remembering the camps. Nicholas Udall's interlude *Respublica* (1553) centres on the monarcho-populist solidarity of the Marian title character with 'People', an honest rustic, against a disreputable quartet of advisors representing both the recently-executed Northumberland and the ex-Protestant plunderers remaining on Mary's Privy Council, who may have attended the performance. William Wager's *Enough Is as Good as a Feast* dramatises the conflict of Enough and Tenant and Prophet and Heavenly Man with rack-renting Covetousness and Worldly Man.<sup>160</sup> A concern for the agrarian moral economy, all but invisible in Sidney and Spenser, pervades English Renaissance drama, including fear of enclosure and vagrancy (*Arden of Faversham*) and wistful homage to Somerset-like paternalists in *Thomas of Woodstock* (the title character) and *Iacke Strawe* (King Richard). Shakespeare conducted the most extended and sympathetic meditation on monarcho-populism by dramatising traditions of popular debate and petitioning (2 *Henry VI* and *Coriolanus*), treacherous aristocratic slaughter (*The Henriad*), and sympathetic versions of Protector Somerset (More in *Sir Thomas More*; Queen Katherine, Buckingham, and Cranmer in *Henry VIII*).<sup>161</sup> In 2 *Henry VI*, the Duke of Suffolk combines two mid-Tudor enemies of the campmen. At first he resembles Northumberland, for he is an

157. Crowley 1975, and 1980. See also Graham 2005.

158. Martin 1981; Holstun 2004.

159. Hughes and Larkin 1964, p. 478.

160. [Udall] 1952; Wager 1967.

161. Mathur 2006; Holstun 2003.

encloser, a ripper-up of petitions, and the murderer of Good Duke Humphrey, Lord Protector Gloucester, who suggests Good Duke Edward, Lord Protector Somerset. But when righteous pirates loyal to Gloucester capture Suffolk, he looks more like the haughty Sheffield, for he tries to save himself by revealing his aristocratic attire and offering ransom. Unmoved, they ridicule and behead him.<sup>162</sup>

The campmen and their survivors left the most poignant reflections on Kett's Rebellion: festering hatred for gentlemen, elegiac affection for Kett, and wistful yearning for the shattered camp.<sup>163</sup> In the midst of the Rebellion, Sir John Chaundler, parson of Alswyththorp in Norfolk, said 'I wold the towne of Lynne & all the Gentylnen there were on fyre'. Shortly after the Rebellion, Robert Burnham, parish clerk of St Gregory's, Norwich, said 'There are too many gentlemen in England by fyve hundred'.<sup>164</sup> A baker named Mordewe said that, if the King would only make him hangman, he 'could find it in his heart' to hang 'a great many gentlemen'. A Norwich man stared at Kett's hanging body, blessed his soul, and prayed he would be decently buried, not hung up for 'winter store'. In June 1550, a Norwich fisherman named John Oldman fondly recalled the fellowship of Mousehold Heath, where the campmen feasted on the voracious allies of the gentlemen: 'it was a merry world when we were yonder eating of mutton'. Ralph Claxton insisted that he 'did well in keeping in Kett's camp', 'thought nothing but well of Kett', and 'trusted to see a new day for such men as I was'. William Mutton, an ailing campman, refused to repent for breaking down Norwich penthouses during the rising. Asked if this might anger potential employers, he responded with an eloquent, moral-economy elegy for himself: 'he would never work more, for the Lord had enough for us all'.<sup>165</sup>

The compilers of the Virtual Norfolk website suggest that 'the overriding memory of the camping time for many local women must have been the onset of their widowhood'; in 1551, Johanne Ryches testified 'That she was maryed to Robert Riches dwelling in Stokesby, and that he was slayn in the comoytion tyme'.<sup>166</sup> In early 1549, Thomas Toly, a butcher of Norwich, paid seven shillings 'for the fyrst 1/2 yere ferme of the 4th. and 5th. stalls bothe in oon', but nothing for the second half of the year 'forasmoche as he was hangyd as a traytor'. John Kyng stopped paying rents for his stall because he was 'a rebell

162. Shakespeare 1999, 4.1.

163. On the complexities of seditious speech in early-modern England, see Shagan 2001, Wood 2001, and Wood 2007, pp. 91–143.

164. Virtual Norfolk 2001c. Burnham qtd. in Russell 1859, p. 162.

165. Rye 1905, pp. 27–8, 20, 22, 19.

166. Virtual Norfolk 2001a; Virtual Norfolk 2001e.

in Mushold kenell and was nevyr hard of syns'. The slaughter and the mass graves, with no proper mourning, bred traumatised fantasies of revenge. In February 1550, Margaret Adams of Earlham revived the missing campmen, adding messianic foreign potentates to supply the lost principle of English unity: 'There are 500 of Musshold men that are gone down to the great Turk and to the Daupin, and will be here again by Midsummer'.<sup>167</sup>

A recurrent idiom of the campmen and their allies evokes, in the language of Sartre's practical ensembles, a serial yearning for fusion. Before the Rebellion, William Poynt of Ipswich said 'Gents and Richemen have all catell and wolles and suche like things in ther hands nowe a dayes and the pore peple are now Famysshed but C of us wyll rise one daye agenst them and I wylbe one'. After the rebellion, Thomas Wood, a Norwich joiner, said that, 'if there were forty of good fellows that were of my set', they would make Alderman Aldriche pay back his ill-gotten gains, while he and one other would 'make a supplication to the King that would make the Alderman to sweat'. In February 1550, John Redheddes said he was one of a group of forty or more who would have the Dudleian ragged staff 'plucked down' from their gates, and he accurately prophesied Warwick's ambitions: 'it was not meet to have any more King's Arms than one'. On 4 February 1551, William Baker of St Augustine's, Norfolk, speaking of 'a sort of Churls that have the church goods in their hands that the poor can have none', said 'I will be one of them that shall pluck it from them ere Witsun Sunday'. On 9 May 1553, John Somerd said of the aldermen's new enclosures on the Norwich town close that 'he would be one of the eight who would put it down, dykes and all, himself', and one of those 'hundred or two' who would cast down any new closes. The murmurers even hinted at intriguing new strategies for setting this fused group into motion: on 16 January 1550, John Oldman and James Cowell vowed 'They would have no more lieng camp but a running camp'.<sup>168</sup>

Clearly, the memory of Mousehold Heath still pulses with visions of a world 'entirely real, average, identifiable as to place, time, and circumstances', though 'shaken in its very foundations . . . and transforming and renewing itself before our very eyes'.<sup>169</sup> But the medium is important: these desperate vaunts are preserved for us as court records of one terrified commoner testifying against another. For the moment, seriality reigned.

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167. Russell 1859, pp. 184–5; Rye 1905, p. 58.

168. Virtual Norfolk 2001f; Rye 1905, pp. 38, 20, 25, 52–3, 19. The idiom reappeared during the Oxfordshire Rising of 1596, along with memories of Mousehold Camp (Walter 1985, pp. 92, 100, 101B, 106M, 119M).

169. Auerbach 1953, pp. 42–3.

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