Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early Nineteenth-Century English Popular Protest

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Introduction

Starting in the summer of 1830 in Kent with the destruction of threshing machines in the area between Canterbury and Dover and a spate of incendiary attacks on farmers' property in the environs of Sevenoaks, the so-called Swing Riots went on to engulf virtually the whole of southern, central and eastern England. As Swing spread westward beyond its initial Kentish epicentres, threshing machine-breaking and incendiarism were increasingly supplemented by calls for higher wages and more generous poor relief payments. According to Hobsbawm and Rudé, the authors of the only systematic national account of Swing, 1,475 episodes of protest occurred in some 38 different counties.[1] Recent revisionist work has suggested that Hobsbawm and Rudé tallies are seriously deficient though. For instance, in East Kent alone it has been stated that 124 incidents occurred compared to the 67 detailed in *Captain Swing*. Whilst Swing might have been far more intensive, such revisionist work further confirms Swing's status as the last widespread "rising" of the poor in rural England.[2]

Whilst the scope of Swing was exceptional, it utilised a series of protest forms that were long-practiced and well-understood by the rulers of rural England. Both drew upon community experience, something that was as much orally transmitted as it was directly experienced, and from events beyond the local area. As historians such as John Bohstedt and Adrian Randall have suggested, the experience of past successful protests were likely to encourage such communities to turn to riot to right future grievances.[3] As Andrew Charlesworth has suggested though, we should not underestimate the importance of diffusion, and thus immediate local precedence, in determining the recourse to riot.[4] Either way, a mass rising of the rural poor on the scale and form of Swing would have been impossible without some previous resort to direct action in the local area. And such protest precedents were many and varied.

Any reader of *Riotous Assemblies*, Professor Randall's recent magisterial survey of the recourse to riot in eighteenth-century England, will be left with the undeniable impression that rioting represented one of the most powerful modes of public expres-

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sion. Riots were not only occasioned by all attempts to impinge upon the "rights" of the people but also by intra-community disputes.[5] Studies of the popular crowd have thus advanced considerably since Gustave LeBon's pioneering attempts at the end of the nineteenth-century to theorise the Paris Commune of 1871:

> By the very fact that he forms part of an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultured individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian…a creature acting by instinct.[6]

Though even Randall's work owes a debt to LeBon, much subsequent analysis has adopted a more subtle contextual analysis. George Rudé's pioneering work identifying "faces in the crowd" concluded that many such individuals were relatively well-off and their actions well-disciplined.[7] E.P. Thompson's seminal examination of eighteenth-century food riots went further. "Rioters" actions were both given credence and informed by an underlying value system—which Thompson labelled the "moral economy"—that was well-understood by protestors and authorities alike. As such, the need to resort to violence occurred only when this mutual understanding broke down.[8]

Whilst in law, at least from 1715, a riot was defined as a gathering of twelve or more people who refused to disperse within an hour of the Riot Act being read, in practice such assemblies were frequently far from either violent or clamorous. Indeed, as Thompson asserted, eighteenth-century food rioters were frequently restrained in asserting their complaints, something made possible by the fact that many magistrates—those who were empowered to read the Riot Act—often both understood the rioters' demands and sympathised with their plight. "Riots" therefore played out in a mutually determined "field of force." The interplay between the different groups led to what Charlesworth has likened to a "stately gavotte."[9] The three groups—poor consumers; the farmers, dealers, millers and bakers; and the local authorities—broadly knew what to expect of each other and thus were able to avoid the recourse to bodily violence. Thus, most food riots were remarkable for, as Thompson suggested, their "restraint, rather than…disorder."[10] The field of force though was always latent with the possibility of violence. As Roger Wells has stated, "the moral economy was implemented in the context of threatened or actual violence."[11] And occasionally that which was threatened became reality. Order and negotiations could soon break down.

Charlesworth's use of a dancing metaphor is deliberately suggestive of more than controlled movement. The actants involved in food riots knew the "moves." Most food riots were, in a sense, tightly choreographed. They also knew that their "dance" needed to be vigorous. Riot was a performance, a staging of a demand, a playing out of a right, but above all it had to be assertive. As Wells has stated, riot was always the last resort, something potentially calamitous to the community.[12] Riot was not a pleasant request, though, as it will be shown, faux civility was often an important strategy in the illusory performance of order. Anthropologist James Scott has noted though, such un-

derstandings have developed from an understanding of the largely urban phenomena of price setting riots and thus do not necessarily apply to rural communities where different "moral economy" practices prevailed.[13] Thus whilst Swing combined some of the weapons of rural resistance, most notably incendiarism and the sending of threatening letters, with riot, the community memory of the necessary "moves" was not so much informed by past riots but instead through those customary rituals rooted in (clearly prescribed) conflict. Indeed, as Peter Jones has suggested, customary culture acted as a de facto guide for the rural poor as to the etiquette of negotiations with their social betters.[14] Thus, as with urban food riots, we would expect that rural riots would both be tightly choreographed and played out in a context of threatened violence.

We need to understand the ways in which bodily violence was avoided. If the moral economy—a value system that Wells has identified as underpinning not only food riots but many rural protests—was implemented in the context of threatened violence we know remarkably little about how this context was forged. In part, scholars of past protests have neglected to ask such questions for the reasons that conceptions of violence have remained somewhat narrow, studies remaining doggedly focused on changing levels of "violence" using long-run series of assault and murder indictments.[15] Even Charles Tilly's otherwise perceptive recent analysis of "collective violence" offers an unhelpfully constricted definition: that which is done to the person by multiple others using force. "[T]o spread the term 'violence' across all interpersonal relations and solitary actions," claims Tilly, "undermines the effort to explain violence....It blocks us from asking about effective casual relationships between exploitation or injustice...and physical damage."[16] This paper fundamentally disagrees. Psychologists and sociologists have long understood that violence can be more meaningfully understood as something that is not only effected through the act of one body striking another but also as something that can be affected through non-bodily engagement. Collective violence can thus only be meaningfully understood not as a practice but instead as something that is engendered, something that provokes a bodily response through the fear of terror. Blood is not a necessary product of violence nor necessarily a product of violence.

Even in the eyes of the statute a Swing gathering leading to an assault upon, say, a poor law official could be indicted in exactly the same way as a similar gathering which left a poor law official in fear of their life. Hobsbawm and Rudé's assertion that "to carry weapons, to bandy ferocious threats, and to destroy machinery was one thing, to shed blood was quite another" therefore holds little water.[17] Of the 1,976 cases heard at the 90 different Swing courts, only one of the 252 men sentenced to death, of whom 19 were actually hanged, was personally identified as the perpetrator of an act of bodily violence.[18] Even he, Henry Cook, a labourer from the Hampshire parish of Micheldever, whilst paying for his life for his "impetuosity" in striking local grandee William Bingham Baring at nearby Northington was actually charged with assaulting and stealing a gold sovereign from farmer William Paine.[19]

Such distinctions thus lay not so much in the statute or in case law but in the

attitude of those targeted by Swing groups and by the committing magistrates. That many of the temporary plebeian alignments that formed during the heat of the movement were never charged but were simply encouraged to disperse on the promise that their grievances would be examined, suggests that there was some considerable incentive in trying to force an objective whilst, ostensibly, remaining civil. But as E.P. Thompson noted, success—for that is the currency in which protestors always try to deal—was only possible if leverage could be brought to bear from the fear of disorder and violence.[20] How did the protesting crowd manage to negotiate between the need to capitalise on the fear of chaos and violence and the need to achieve their objectives? What were the tools and techniques that allowed the protesting crowd to successfully engage in "collective bargaining by riot" (the term is Hobsbawm's) without ending up swinging from a gibbet?

The above questions rest on inherently spatial turns. The very existence of a crowd, whether ceremonial or protesting, is not only something that briefly turns the social world upside down but also something that transforms the space it briefly inhabits. For instance, a vestry room—the space in the church which as well as fulfilling an ecclesiastical role also held meetings of the parish poor rate payers and was also where poor relief was often dispensed—when invaded by a group of irate labourers demanding more generous doles is immediately changed into an arena of conflict. As Tim Cresswell has suggested, it is the very act of spatial transgression that gives meaning to protests.[21] Overt protests can thus usefully be understood as "spatial inversions."

What follows is therefore not only an attempt to understand the ways in which violence is affected (and felt) without recourse to fists and weaponry, and thus to apply performative understandings to the historical geography of English protest, but also an attempt to uncover the fundamental spatial dynamics that underlay and gave meaning to riotous assemblies. There are three foci: gesture and choreography; the performing of pain; and language. Before this though it is necessary to briefly consider the ways it is possible to read such "performances" in the archive.

Swing's Archive

Reading riots in the archive is notoriously fraught with difficulty.[22] In constructing histories of popular protest we can only use whatever history has deigned to leave us, though, of course, we only glean meanings from archival fragments through our own interpretative "historical imaginations." We therefore need to understand that what survives in the archive is necessarily partial in three senses. Firstly, survival rates for the record of past protests are uneven. In part this is due to the fact that some of the records produced were of a transitory nature. Governmental and other quasi-judicial memos and personal diaries survive only through chance. That other accounts of protest were recorded and have thus been subsequently "lost" or destroyed is there-

fore inevitable. Sometimes even less transitory records are lost too. For instance the *Maidstone Journal*, the solitary newspaper for the county town of Kent in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, has no extant copies for the whole of 1800, a year of grinding dearth and widespread food rioting in south-east England.

Secondly, the impetus to record or not to record was, at least in part, determined by the witness, author or editor's positionality. As Wells has noted, many magistrates were reluctant to inform the Home Secretary that their localities were afflicted by riot. They could, after all, control their people through benign paternalism and the rule of law.[23] The impact of such political expediencies were further reinforced by the fact that whilst in some areas magistrates were in constant correspondence with the Home Office in other areas there were simply no resident justices to relay such news. Newspapers, by far the richest source for the study of past protests, could also be similarly self-censorious.[24] During the 1800-1801 grain crisis some papers deliberately failed to report accounts of riots for fear that reports were, as Wells has stated, "more likely to extend than suppress the mischief."[25]

Thirdly, even if a riot was recorded we need to be alert to the fact that the author's positionality combined with the practical purpose of the document would determine precisely what was actually recorded. For the exercise of mapping or tabulating riot this holds no problems, the record simply states a riot occurred. Indeed, many records note little more than the type of disturbance and its location. Even letters to the Home Office, potentially rich in qualitative information, do not always offer useful information. The following letter from a gentleman resident in the small Kentish town of Hawkhurst to Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel during the height of Swing is instructive:

> Eighteen months ago I foretold the very disturbances which afflict us....
> Today a body of men and three farmers from distant parishes' visited a clergyman at Hawkhurst and compelled him to give back some of the tithes.[26]

Other than for informing the Home Office of the incident, a riot, in law, the letter writer had no agenda other than to proclaim his own belief that Swing had been avoidable.

Other reports, though richer in detail, betray clear biases. The *Hampshire Telegraph* in reporting events in mid Hampshire noted that a "desperate mob" had been active in the vicinity of Micheldever, a parish well-known in Hampshire as a hot bed of plebeian radicalism. Their reports of other Swing disturbances in other areas used considerably more temperate language.[27] Letter writers too often had to axes to grind. According to Sir Henry Montresor, whose threshing machine was destroyed at the hands of the first machine-breaking gang in East Kent, Swing activists were "anarchists."[28]

Swing, as with all protest movements, was only ever as violent as it was perceived to be. Very few people could possibly observe a (physically) violent attack. In-

stead, news of the violent act would be spread through word of mouth and newspaper reports. Violent acts thereby instantly morphed from physical expressions into psychosomatic fears. Such a realisation not only has implications for our understandings of violence in the context of past movements but also for the ways in which we interpret evidence in the archive. If the violence of the past exists in the hybrid form of documents and our historical imaginations, then to confine our accounts of past violence to those attacks which were supposedly manifest physically is to misunderstand the very point of violence as a manifestation of discontent. Violence can therefore be more fruitfully understood as something that could have a psycho-physical manifestation as well as a straightforwardly physical manifestation. Violence did not have to involve flesh (or weapon) upon flesh to achieve its goals, rather through language, gesture and the performing of (disembodied) pain. Bodies could be made to feel something every bit as agonizing as a physical attack.

Reading Psychological and Bodily Manipulation

Gesture, choreography and the everyday

Whilst cultural historians and folklorists have long recognized the ritualistic importance of gesture in forms of communication and in the practices of everyday life,[29] scholars of popular protest have been somewhat slower to consider its importance notwithstanding a long held acknowledgement that past protests were often strongly rooted in custom and customary ritual. Charlesworth et al.'s analysis of the "Jack-A-Lent Riots," a set of anti-turnpike protests that occurred in and around Bristol in 1749, provides a notable exception. According to Charlesworth et al., the disparate communities across which the protests occurred were bound together by "a distinctive cultural fund of rituals and symbols."[30] Two of these forms, as identified by folklore historian Thomas Pettitt, relate to movement. The first, "processing," were acts central to many customary ceremonies, usually taking the form of either perambulating the parish or a procession to a place of local symbolic significance. The second took the form of the "visit" wherein a group would visit a predetermined household and give a performance, for instance mummers' plays or wassailing tides, and demanded largesse or refreshment ("quête customs").[31] In the context of the everyday life of the early nineteenth-century English parish, processing and systematic visiting played no part beyond seeking employment. However, when such acts were performed in their customary context the performative dimension of the ritual had to be understood by the community at large to be accepted as something other than open revolt. According to Bercé:

> The rites of folk custom...become...the elements of a concrete language, a range of gestures which, repeated, evolve into autonomous

signals, and which are capable of being coordinated into messages. They can perform the function of communicating emotions and of addressing appeals which are readily understood by all those who are members of this popular culture.[32]

Thus through a cognition of individual gestures, the overall performance was understood as the acting out of a ritual.

These same dynamics were also important in giving shape and meaning to popular protests. As Kevin Binfield and Katrina Navickas have both recently demonstrated in relation to the Luddite disturbances of the 1810s, the very fact that individuals in different places with different experiences and grievances could organize and unite under a shared banner was testimony to the importance of both symbols and a shared customary culture.[33] Deploying ritual forms was therefore not only important in investing the protest with cultural legitimacy through precedence but also to announce, through the perception of gestures, that, as with customary ceremonies, the everyday bonds between the poor and their social superiors were now unshackled.[34] Moreover, that the movement to clamp down upon traditional rituals gathered steam at the same time as the discernible upturn in quasi-insurrectionary popular movements is testimony to the fact such forms of behaviour, often dressed with mock violence and laced in bitter social critiques, were becoming less and less acceptable.[35] Indeed, that the "Special Commissions" which tried Swing protestors in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire pronounced the door-to-door demanding of monies (a classic "visiting" doling ritual) as felonious suggests that in the eyes of the law custom had no legitimizing function. There was, such an analysis goes, a world of difference between a ritual which was protected by the cloak of custom and broadly tolerated by the community and an act which explicitly sought to make a public protest. When between 8 and 9am on 25 October about 300 men assembled and marched about the Kentish parish of Lenham for 3 hours carrying a banner bearing the inscription "Starving at 1s. 6d. a week" it was obvious to the rest of the community that they were making a vehement protest and not simply enacting a customary ritual. No one was arrested but the incident generated considerable alarm.[36]

Critical to the power of processing was the fact that all individuals became subsumed, literally, into a collective body. Indeed, newspapers and letter writers frequently referred to Swing groups as "bodies of men." Occasionally though even this was subverted. At the Hampshire village of Owlesbury a small group of Swing protesters who traversed the parish levying "doles" were accompanied by a woman on horseback.[37] Here roles were provocatively reversed. In many parishes women were not allowed to make claims at the vestry for the relief of their families, instead their husbands had to make such applications. Now the woman was positioned, literally, over the group of men. The march round the parish was therefore not simply a playing out of labouring strength but rather a symbolic statement that all power was inverted, that

conventional social relations—at least for that moment—did not hold. This was the ultimate performance of liminality. Intriguingly, when, in early December, wages and poor relief entitlements were eventually increased the Owlesbury vestry proclaimed, as if to assert that "normal" power relations were again in force, that "[h]aving removed all causes of discontent the vestry will not yield to intimidation or threats on the part of the *men* [my emphasis]."[38]

Processing was often made more menacing by invoking military discipline. The first episode of threshing machine-breaking outside of East Kent was undertaken by a group of 50 men who had equipped themselves with guns and pistols and blackened their faces before marching from Newington to nearby Hartlip. Whilst such actions could be read as being motivated by a need to remain anonymous, something reinforced by the fact that the episode occurred under the cover of darkness, it is also important to note that after this initial episode the group's activities occurred in broad daylight. Their guns, supplemented by hatchets, hammers and saws, were reportedly discharged in the "midst of the cheering following their work of destruction."[39] Whilst never resorting to physical violence this Swing group, as did others, took on a militaristic appearance baring a striking similarity to earlier Luddite gangs who affected an "atmosphere of militarism" by drilling at night and arranging funds to purchase arms.[40] It is important to state though that there is no evidence to suggest that, unlike some Luddite gangs, Swing gangs and groups drilled by night.

The united body was also a form of choreography used in other situations. The depositions and notes taken by the chairman of the East Kent Quarter Sessions in relation to the first machine-breaking gang offer unusually rich detail in this regard. Initially the gang used choreography to hide individuals' identities. During their second outing on having arrived at a predetermined farm, four men stood in the road "a rod and a half" away from the farmyard gate to keep watch. The rest of the party entered the yard, 30 of whom then formed a line in front of the house "to prevent anyone coming to know any of the Company."

> About 20 of the company went to the Barn…and some brought out a Threshing Machine. The Party then broke it to pieces….There was a great noise and shouting all the while they were breaking the machine—they were engaged about 20 minutes or half an hour in breaking the machine. The company then assembled at the yard Gate and gave 3 cheers.[41]

Depositions relating to their fourth outing reveal a growing confidence. Some of the gang on their way to their target of Hardres Court stopped off at a local public house. After a few pints, the gang again set off, making a great deal of noise as they proceeded. One of the labourers at Hardres Court even heard them whistling, singing and hallowing. One of the ringleaders was also reported to occasionally shout "Hark forward," presumably an attempt to maintain discipline and the keep the men together. On

arriving a "long string" of men, about 6 rods long (30 metres), went into the yard, with four or five others waiting in the road near the gate to watch for soldiers, who, the gang had been told by a hop drier working in the farmyard, were on their way. The barn doors were forced open and the machines dragged out into the yard where they were destroyed in full view of farmer Dodd. The destruction complete, the men reassembled by the corner of the farm yard and gave three cheers. They then made the necessary arrangements for their next machine-breaking episode and dispersed into the night.[42]

Whilst it would appear that the Elham gang deliberately attempted to shield individuals' identities, they positively attempted to draw attention to their collective activities. The practice of disciplined marching did not simply serve the practical purpose of getting efficiently to the offending farmer's yard but also acted to tell the communities through which they traversed that they were coming. As one farmer whose threshing machine was destroyed by the gang described: "[I saw] a great Number of Persons pass….I heard several of them cry out, like Hunters, Yo Ho!…I believe they were hunting after my machine."[43] Hallowing thereby served as a warning and threat. That bodies of men marched about the countryside, some armed with pistols which on occasion were fired into the night sky, some whooping and hallowing, generated a terror that was arguably greater than the potential loss of threshing machines. The fear engendered was psychosomatic, a fear manifested in the body of bodies unseen. Indeed, to many individuals Swing gangs and groups only existed vicariously as spectral presences through newspaper reports and word of mouth rumours. The motif of shadowy persons effortlessly drifting in and out of the countryside, usually either on horseback or in carriages, assumed a central place in the popular image of Swing. For instance an hour before a midnight incendiary set fire to the premises of the Borden (Kent) overseer, an old woman living in a nearby cottage heard the sound of carriage wheels and hushed "incriminating conversation."[44] Not too surprisingly, Knatchbull, in correspondence with Home Secretary Peel, proclaimed that he was "surrounded by people who are under a great sense of agitation."[45]

Evidence from elsewhere suggests that bodily formations were also used to ratchet up the possibility of violence in the mind of Swing's targets. Mid afternoon on Monday 22 November William Lutley Scalter of Tangier Park in Wootton St. Lawerence (Hampshire) heard "the mob" "coming" from the direction of Manydown. After "a little salutation" they said they must have "a little satisfaction." At this point the rules of the doling ritual collapsed. Scalter refused their request, prompting one of the men, evidently a ringleader, to shout out "Then we must go to work." The "mob" then burst through his gates and "rushed" to the front door raising their sledgehammers aloft. Scalter, evidently alarmed, warned the men that they should "take care" as the soldiers were coming, prompting them to reply: "We don't care for the Soldiers. We can die but once and the Soldiers won't fire upon us." They then seized two of Scalter's employees and again demanded "satisfaction," which, upon Scalter's enquiry, was stated to take the form of two sovereigns. Again, he refused, prompting the assembled crowd to cry

out "Ring a Ring" upon which they duly raised their clubs into the air and surrounded Scalter. This time he promised that, if they would let him, he would get some money from the house. True to his word, he returned and told the men that if they wanted the money they must take it from his pocket, thus, in law, making it a clear case of robbery. This they refused to do and cried out that they would take them "By force, by force." Scalter then placed two sovereigns in his hand, but on being "jostled" the coins fell to the floor and were promptly taken by the men. They then gave a cheer and departed.[46]

Other than the sight of large groups of men traversing the countryside there were further ways in which violence could be affected which focused upon inverting the icons of respectability. For instance in east Dorset some of the yeomanry forces deployed to suppress a mobile Swing group noted that the protestors they encountered were "fine-looking young men, and particularly well-dressed, as if they had on their best clothes for the occasion."[47] Thus the idealized image of the deferential worker covering their often emaciated, dirty bodies to enter the realm of the respectable—the parish church—was now reinscribed. The smart dress was partly an attempt to state the legitimacy and respectability of their claims and actions but also in part an ironic (re)inscription of conventional modes of social control. Nowhere was this better expressed than at Ashampstead, Berkshire. Swing activist George Merritt proclaimed in a parley with Thomas Butler, a carpenter who refused to join Merritt, "Damn all Sunday mornings—there is no Sunday mornings in the case."[48] Respectability and normative codes of behaviour did not hold in the maelstrom of rural revolt.

The power in acts of subverting gestures derives from the sense that the everyday is being reinscribed, that which appears on the surface to be familiar is actually being invested with radically different meanings. Such acts not only offer subtle critiques of everyday life—for the everyday for most Swing activists was bound up with hunger, uncertainty and dismal living conditions—but also unbalances the social equipoise. If practices and gestures which conventionally signified "business as usual," that the labouring poor were labouring to support their employers, were subverted then order and control were thrown into open contention. In a way somewhat similar to Edward Muir's suggestion that "ritual can open up a labyrinth of dissonance, rather than a neatly unified vision of society," so such protests too announced that the bonds between the poor and their social superiors were now unshackled.[49]

These practices were akin to what the anthropologist Victor Turner has recognised as rituals of liminality, whereby groups in communities which feel threatened engage in disruptive behaviour thereby demonstrating their collective strength. Whilst it is highly questionable as to whether, as Turner identified, farmers and other rulers of rural England "positively enjoined" the poor to temporarily exercise ritual "authority" over them, it is useful to think of Swing as a deliberately disruptive exercise conducted on terms that resonated with the whole community.[50] In this sense Swing was an attempt to restore the social balance to that of some unspecified past time, to break the bonds before refashioning them on a more equitable footing. Or, to paraphrase Turner,

Swing attempted to realign (local) social structures as a "communitas," an undifferentiated society in which all individuals interact on an equal footing.[51]

Such subtlety might seem counterproductive. Surely the point of protest was to make a point and force change; something reinforced in the popular imaginary by iconic scenes of tumultuous crowds and heated confrontation. To Swing protestors the point of subtlety and the deliberate inversion of the everyday was to *suggest* at the possibility of physical violence without having to resort to fisticuffs. That if it appeared that society had been turned topsy-turvy then the protestors could soon also move beyond restraint to open defiance and destruction. The first Swing episodes in Berkshire are instructive.

During the early hours of Monday 15 November a small group of labourers traversed the parish of Thatcham calling on all labourers to join them. "A sufficient number of them gathered together"; they "marched off" to visit all the farms in the parish led by one of their number blowing a horn. Having compelled the labourers then at work to join them, their numbers swelled to between 200 and 300. They then "marched" to the church where the select vestry was holding its weekly meeting.[52] Here the labourers "verbally requested" that all those out of work be provided with employment and that their wages be increased. The former was assented to but the latter request declined. Throughout "the whole of these proceedings," it was reported, the "men were quite peaceable."[53] Thus far the protest had been directly modelled on forms of customary culture akin to Turner's liminal rituals. What followed was quite different. On Wednesday the same group reassembled and destroyed threshing machines in the vicinity of Bucklebury. By the end of Friday it was reported they had destroyed a total of 43 machines, making this arguably the most intensive wave of rural luddism in English history. They also demanded money and victuals from those whose machines they had destroyed, an allusion to the fact they had been at "work" for the community and thus deserved payment.[54]

The next attempt to secure higher wages from the parochial authorities was also suggestive of the fact that the approach taken at Thatcham had failed. On Saturday morning (20 November) a group of labourers began collecting at the parish of Speen, four miles distant from Thatcham. Again, the instigators marched from farm to farm imploring all those at work to join them with the purpose of attending a meeting of the Speen select vestry scheduled later that day. Unlike at Thatcham though, it was "previously known" that the labourers would make an application to the select vestry to increase their wages. The result was also very different to that achieved at Thatcham. The select vestry, who had a month earlier adopted a so-called Labour Rate to regulate the number of labourers employed by each farmer, resolved to advance all labourers' wages by a shilling a week and, in addition, to allow those with more than two children the price of a gallon loaf per additional child per week. Reverend Majendie was delegated to inform the labourers of the decision. He was also joined by the farmers and magistrates from Newbury who had heard "exaggerated reports" about the events at

Speen. The labourers formed a ring—a symbolic performance of unity, deliberately ex-cluding any non-parishioners—and agreed to the select vestry's pronouncement "dis-avow[ing] every intention of provoking riot or disorder."[55]

Not long after the meeting had broken up, 150 labourers gathered at Speenhill where they were swiftly met by the Hungerford Troop of Yeoman Cavalry and several of the magistrates previously at the Speen meeting. The men were forced against some iron paling and the Yeomanry surrounded them. Reverend Fowle, who had been at the earlier meeting, called on all the Speen men to come forward and state their reasons for rioting. Universally they replied they wanted their wages increased. The select vestry de-cision was relayed and the men, apparently, dispersed.[56] The effect of iterating the Speen decision to a group of labourers only part of whom came from Speen was to inspire those from other parishes to force an increase in wages. Thus on Monday the rural workers in the area surrounding Speen rose in unison destroying threshing machines and demanding higher wages.[57]

The faux deference of the labourers at Thatcham, an example of what K.D.M. Snell has labelled "deferential bitterness,"[58] was backed up by the suggestion of force performed not only by marching, an invocation of military discipline, but also through the tactic of filling the churchyard—the ultimate "respectable" space in the parish—with the bodies of dirty labouring men. If they had ostensibly remained "respectable," this had only been achieved through their careful use of language. To affect violence was one thing, to resort to physical violence quite another. Even the gathering at Speen—made more powerful and thus more threatening by virtue of the mass destruction of threshing machines in the locality—also adopted a faux deferential tone. The per-formance of parochial unity by the men and the apparent acceptance of a classic pater-nalist *quid pro quo*, higher wages for quiescence, were, as at Thatcham, a necessary foil to the deliberate attempt by the men to instill a sense of fear into the rulers of the parish.

Wherever Swing was first manifested this dynamic was played out. At Sher-ston in north Wiltshire a large group of labourers who had assembled to the sound of a horn were reported to be "peaceable" having "no thought of committing violence" but proclaimed they were "determined" to affect a rise in wages. That the farmers "gen-erally assented to the proposals" is instructive. This rising occurred on 29 November, over a week after the start of sustained Swing activity in the county. The farmers there-fore had plenty of time to preemptively increase their labourers' wages. That they did not is understandable for the simple reason that many were not making any money due to the entrenched agrarian depression. We can therefore only understand their eventual concession as something made because of the latent possibility of violence and de-struction inferred through the choreography of the crowd and individual gestures.[59]

Performing pain

Moving beyond collectively suggesting the possibility of violence to, somewhat more graphically, acting individually to affect an immediate and visceral terror was evidently a potentially risky strategy. One way in which violence could be affected upon a chosen target but the risk of incarceration—or even execution—avoided was through the performance of pain. Or, in other words, attempting to affect a psychosomatic response through inflicting "pain" upon embodied proxies.

Such a strategy had a long history in English popular protest. Animal maiming was a proxy affecting of violence *par excellence*. According to John Archer, the only historian to have systematically analysed animal maiming, it was "a more personal act of violence by the maimer on the victim than any other protest crime." He continued, "one can view it almost as a form of symbolic murder." In conclusion, it was "[an] extreme form of psychological terror which could leave the victim appalled and fearful for his own safety."[60] In a major archival re-analysis of south-eastern Swing only one (definite) case of animal maiming has been identified: several pigs belonging to the proprietor of the Brighton coach were poisoned in late November.[61] This incident occurred well after the main wave of Swing activity in mid Sussex though. Indeed, in many senses Swing is remarkable for its almost complete avoidance of a protest form that was regularly practiced in its heartlands.

Instead, Swing, when manifest covertly, relied almost completely upon incendiarism and the sending of threatening letters. Whilst the final section will analyse in detail the use of language as a way in which violence was affected, it is important to also realize that in some instances Swing activists also deployed unwritten—and unspoken—threats in tandem with threatening letters. The first threatening letters signed "Swing" to be sent outside of East Kent included one, sent to a gentleman in the vicinity of the Kent county town of Maidstone, sealed in blood.[62] Elsewhere it was not the letters that were covered in blood but rather objects that were sent, or rather directly delivered, with threatening letters. In early November a spate of threatening letters were sent to farmers in East Grinstead and Gardener Street in north Sussex. One of the letters was accompanied by a rag soaked in blood. Such was the fear generated that two London police officers were sent to help investigate.[63] Elsewhere in Sussex in conjunction with a wave of "terrible letters" sent to farmers and gentlemen in the vicinity of Battle and Hastings, at least two people received loaves of bread soaked in blood into which bloodied knives were thrust.[64] Whilst such gruesome tactics appear to have been innovative in the context of south-eastern popular protest, they rested upon a longer history of invoking the blood of the poor's oppressors in times of dearth. From at least the 1800 grain crisis onwards, popular protests juxtaposed bread—that which was necessary to sustain plebeian bodies—with blood, usually, it was inferred, from the bodies of those who manipulated grain markets.[65] Such a strategy was as close as one could get

to actually spilling the blood of a popularly detested tyrant. The tactic therefore also avoided the likelihood of instant arrest and also reduced the probability of execution, for very few writers of threatening letters were ever successfully punished.[66]

Other than suggesting bodily violence through maiming animals or sending blood soaked letters, loaves and rags, Swing also deployed other arguably more immediate proxies in the form of effigies. The creation of effigies was central to many forms of customary ceremony, most notably "Riding the Stang" and "Gunpowder Plot" rituals.[67] A review of popular protests in south-east England reveals effigies had long been used as a form of embodied proxy. In 1770 at Lewes a Methodist preacher was hanged and burnt in effigy. In 1795 the Bishop of Rochester was burnt in effigy by a crowd of a thousand people after proclaiming that "the great mass of the people have nothing to do with the laws, but to obey them." Millers were whipped and burnt in effigy during the grain crisis of 1795 at Petworth; paraded around the streets of Margate in 1800 before being burnt; and hanged; and, drowned and burnt in effigy at Boreham (Sussex) in 1801. Even a witness in a smuggling trial was "riotously" paraded in effigy around the streets of Canterbury in 1822.[68] The effigy was clearly a practice with deep roots in English popular protest. The use of effigies in political and trades disputes in the 1810s and 1820s suggest that as a popular tactic it was not only alive and well by the time of Swing but also was being appropriated in protests that transcended personal and, what John Bohstedt has called, "community politics."[69]

It would therefore seem likely that Swing would deploy effigies in its armoury of protest tools. Only at Banbury in Oxfordshire though was a human effigy paraded. Even this solitary case was somewhat unusual in the context of Swing in that the effigy was of an unpopular local man rather than a particularly obnoxious farmer or a penny-pinching overseer of the poor.[70] Swing targeted individuals as representatives of the parochial body politic—or transgressors of the expected norms of the body politic—rather than as solitary atavistic actants. Swing's targets were many and could not be easily represented in effigy. Intriguingly though, Swing's archive does relate one case in which a non-human effigy was central to the protest discourse. During a wave of assistant overseer expulsions in East Sussex, the Ninfield assistant overseer Skinner was so treated. According to Skinner, a procession of some 600 people bundled him out of the parish alongside a mocked up pair of giant scissors, a reference to Skinner's popularly-loathed policy of shaving the heads of pauper women and men. If Skinner was more frightened by the physical act of removal than by the effigy, the satirical scissors would no doubt have left an indelible impression upon the minds of local vestrymen that the poor would not be subjected to such bodily degradation.[71]

The detailed archive of the Elham gang also suggests that threshing machine-breaking acted as an embodied proxy for physical violence, not, however, as proxies for their owners but instead women. Machine threshing displaced the exclusively male role of threshing by flail with a combination of horse, child, woman and (to a greatly reduced extent) man-power and as such represented an affront to labouring masculin-

ity.[72] George Youens, one of the Elham gang, on being questioned recalled that during their second machine-breaking outing, "The people made a great noise all the time—they called out—'Kill Her—More Oil! More Grease!'" Needing more oil and grease is probably an allusion to sexual intercourse and therefore a further way in which male labourers made connections between machines and female bodies.[73] Threshing machines, to the Elham gang at least, became proxies for female bodies—or rather the machinic female body—something they, as men, should control, dominate and discipline.

Language

Defining the "violent" content of the spoken and written word is fraught with difficulty. The following example taken from the East Sussex parish of Mayfield highlights the differing perceptions between Swing protestors and the forces of law and order. On 10 November a mobile Swing group "carried around the 3 adjacent parishes" a paper stating their demands. The paper, seized by local grandee Sir Godfrey Webster, read:

> Now gentlemen this is wat wee intend to have for a married man to have 2s and 3d per day and all over two children 1/6 per head a week and if a man has got any boys or girls over age for to have enough that they may live by there labour and likewise all single men to have 1/9 a day per head and we intend to have the rents lowered likewise and this is what we intend to have before we leave the place and if ther is no alteration we shall proceed further about it. For we are all as one and we will keep to each other.

The paper betrayed many classic Swing traits. Its use of language was both firm, but not forceful. It also used deferential forms ("Now gentlemen..."). The strength of community feeling was made known and their unity highlighted by the final sentence. To Webster though this was a "violent paper."[74] Clearly the gap between language which was supposed to affect a violent bodily response and that which was merely firm was often non-existent. Or rather the differences in motivation were lost in a haze of perception. In addition, any attempt to read the ways in which violence was affected through language needs also to be alert to the importance of metaphor and simile and graphic allusions.

The most obvious way in which violence could be linguistically affected was through invoking blood. Whilst, as we have seen, many Swing groups were careful to avoid directly implicating themselves in violent plots, some individuals showed little reticence in making bloody threats. Sometimes these threats were issued by gangs who were careful to avoid the use of such language in front of farmers but did not hold back in threatening labourers who refused to take part. For instance, the Elham gang were measured in their use of language around their targets but regularly warned other

labourers who stayed loyal to their employers not to interfere with their activities otherwise they would "blow out their bloody brains."[75] Other groups in East Kent were a little more direct. At Littlebourne, just beyond the fringes of the area in which the Elham gang operated, one farmer was warned by a crowd gathered below his window in the middle of the night:

> 'You damned blubber head. If you come out we will serve you as we will the dog and put the rope round his neck. Where is the £10 you robbed the widow of?'

He was then called

> 'a great many other names' and subjected to 'abusive language'. [76]

In the context of other Swing incidents, violent threats tended to be made by individuals who did not live in the vicinity. Local labourers ran the risk of future discrimination by employers and poor law officials if they uttered threats. One such fellow was John Adams, one of several Maidstone shoemakers with radical political views who assumed leadership of highly mobile Swing groups in West Kent. Whilst frequently drawn into making provocative and highly political comments in parleys with farmers, poor law officials and local elites, Adams reserved his most vicious denunciation of the state of the poor for Reverend Gambier of Langley. After Adams's initial demands were turned down, he launched into a tirade against the ruling elites and their, as he saw it, corrupt and contemptible political system. His group would, he claimed, "bedew the Country with Blood and pull down the House[s of Parliament] which had thoroughly got the dry rot." Gambier quickly changed his mind and gave Adams a sovereign.[77]

Swing groups comprised exclusively of local men were rarely so forceful. At Wrotham (Kent) on 24 November a very large gathering of labourers cried out "Bread or Blood" during their hour-long parley with the Vicar.[78] The spectre of spilt blood was raised at Herstmonceaux (Sussex) where a "mob" threatened to attack the house of the feeble 75-year-old Rector during the night and have "blood for supper" if he did not promise to lower his tithes.[79] Similarly at St. Mary Bourne in Hampshire a Swing group armed with large sticks, pick axes and "other weapons" called upon the Vicarage. The vicar being out, they "took command of every room" and demanded "money or blood" from the vicar's wife. She was so alarmed that she fainted at the foot of the stairs prompting her daughter, in fear, to give the men half a sovereign. They then departed, but not before they had threatened to return later to demolish the house.[80] That in all three instances clergymen were targeted might suggest not only that labourers held the established church and its tithe-rich clergy in contempt but also that they thought inflated tithes were often behind farmers' inability to afford to pay living wages.

Instead, Swing protestors frequently resorted to the less risky strategy of issu-

ing indirect threats through the medium of threatening letters and, on occasion, graffiti. Threatening letters, by definition, either suggest dreadful consequences if the letter writer's desires were not fulfilled or use obviously faux deferential language. Graffiti had little choice but to rest on the former rather than the latter. Not too surprisingly for what is necessarily a transitory form of expression, especially when written in chalk, few cases of graffiti were recorded during Swing. Moreover, all recorded cases occurred in Kent in areas dominated by machine-breaking. Arguably the most dramatic case occurred at Borden immediately after overseer Knight's premises were discovered to be on fire. "Painted" onto a wall were the chilling words "Down with machines. Death to informers," not so much a direct threat to the bodies of farmers but instead a warning to the community to unite against the use of threshing machines.[81] The most sustained use of violently suggestive graffiti came from the area between Canterbury and Dover, roughly proximate to the area in which the Elham gang operated. On the night of 6 October the word "Swing" was first used: threatening letters sent to two farmers in Dover were signed "Swing," whilst the "dead" walls on the road between Canterbury and Dover were chalked with the same word. Whilst there is much conjecture as to what "Swing" meant it would appear that from the wording of one of the threatening letters—"You are to notice that if you doant put'away your thrashing machine against Monday next you shall have a 'SWING'"—it was an allusion to "swinging" on the gallows. Such an interpretation is given further credence by the fact that the first use of the word "Swing" coincided with the arrest of the ringleaders of the Elham gang.[82]

Later that week another farmer in the vicinity of Dover also received a threatening letter (the archive does not record whether it was signed Swing or not) requesting her to remove her threshing machine from her farmyard and place it in an adjacent field. The farmer did as requested and the same evening the machine was broken and then set on fire, presumably by men affiliated to the Elham gang. These events then prompted two other Dover farmers through fear to preemptively place their machines in the "open fields" preparatory to their destruction. A reporter from the London-based *Morning Herald* claimed that many farmers were "so terrified that they have almost invited the men around to demolish their machines."[83] One large farmer at Eastry (East Kent) even went as far to remove his threshing machine from his premises and set it on fire so as to protect his farm from incendiaries.[84]

"Swing" was unambiguously a violent, disembodied, threat. The intention was to invest those who deployed machines with a psychosomatic fear of the limitless possibilities of the Swing activists' terror. And it worked. Beyond the initial East Kent epicentre, "Swing" was utilised as a way of spreading both the nascent movement and the fear of attack. The sending of "Swing" letters marked the start of Swing activity in the vicinity of Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Wrotham and even the Kent-London fringe, as well as East Sussex, south Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and south Berkshire.[85]

Conclusions

According to Amartya Sen, the development of market capitalism is tied up with the provision of "entitlements," a variety of "rights" focused primarily upon the commodities necessary to sustain life.[86] In many ways Swing can be understood as a response to a crisis in the nature of entitlement. Whilst some Swing activists had broader popular political goals, most Swing incidents were rooted in an attempt to restore living wages, the "right" to work and sustaining poor relief. An intensification of agrarian capitalism—stimulated initially by high cereal prices during the Napoleonic Wars and forced to become more efficient by declining cereal prices post 1815—combined with a British state increasingly enthralled (and in service) to the doctrines of political economy meant that the role of customary entitlements was undergoing rapid change. What was once well understood by all members of rural society was also now open to challenge from the law which ever more tightly proscribed the condition of private ownership.

There was, therefore, a disparity between, on the one hand, labourers who sought to restore past entitlements, and, on the other hand, the very farmers and magistrates who were directly responsible for the very reduction—and in many cases elimination—of entitlements. As Charles Gore, in a critique of Sen's concept, has suggested, the precise nature of entitlements can change over time and be open to ambiguity.[87] This ambiguity shaped Swing's reliance on the affecting of violence. If labourers still clung, often tenaciously, to their customary forms of culture rooted in the dying paternalist ethic, many farmers and magistrates also remained convinced of their paternalistic duty to uphold the entitlements of the poor but were controlled, respectively, by the "logic" of market capitalism and the laws that sought to uphold its supremacy. The experience of the 1820s had shown labourers that farmers would not voluntarily increase wages, nor vestries voluntarily increase poor relief payments. For labourers to re-stoke the dying embers of agrarian paternalism they needed not to physically harass those who could improve their situation but instead to appeal to their conscience whilst at the same time offering a stern warning of the consequences of a failure to take action. The affecting of violence was therefore critical—and central—to Swing's *modus operandi*.

Swing protests were deliberately choreographed to perform both (plebeian) community cohesion and to generate fear. Indeed, one could argue that the very "existence" of a mythical leader of the movement, Captain Swing, was not only an attempt to raise a militaristic spectre—an allusion to discipline—but was also an attempt to reduce the need for individuals to act. Nevertheless for Swing groups to actually function as something more than spectral presences or mute but menacing marching bands, at least one individual had to fulfil at least a notional leadership role. Moreover, such a position necessarily required the individual to be seen to be authoritative. There was,

therefore, a very fine line between affecting violence and effecting acts of physical violence. When tempers and frustrations flared and when requests were met by indifference or even aggression the line was occasionally broached.

As cultural geographer Derek McCormack has suggested, "power is always as much a matter of being affected as it is a matter of affecting."[88] If the act of physical violence can be understood as embodying a set of tacit and turgid bodily responses, not so much as a carefully calculated performance as a letting go, then the power of affecting violence rested entirely upon either the controlled performance or the careful use of language. There are, of course, limits to how far such performative ideas can be applied to understanding Swing, or indeed any other protest movement or individual act for which we have only an archival record. Not only were many such acts unwritten but also the very act of inscribing that which representation renders partly opaque could appear to act in direct opposition to the philosophical foundations that underpin the non-representational understandings this paper is based upon.

These limits also apply to the ways in which we can understand the "success," or lack of "success," of affecting violence. Whilst the act of destroying a threshing machine had a clear, unambiguous outcome, it is much harder to read the successes of affecting violence. Moreover, whilst a burnt hay rick would be forever lost and a broken threshing machine with great expense repaired, the successes of affected violence were increased wages and more generous poor relief entitlements. From this perspective it would appear that in the short term Swing was extraordinarily successful in pushing wages and relief entitlements higher. However, in the spring and summer of 1831 wages again fell to pre-Swing levels, poor relief became increasingly parsimonious—something further enforced through the workhouse-based New Poor Law enacted in 1834, and farmers again turned to labour-saving machinery. The short-term successes were in part a function of Swing's ability to stoke the dimming embers of rural paternalism through engendering fear. If Swing activists' concessions were not met then the countryside would either be pitched into open battle or would be set ablaze by the torches of a thousand incendiarists. The retrenchments were thus only made possible because of the fact that ultimately Swing's power—the fear it generated—dissipated almost as quickly as the movement itself had developed.

Notes

1. Eric Hobsbawn and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London: Lawerence and Wishart, 1969): 304-5.
2. Carl Griffin, "There was no law to punish that offence' Re-assessing Captain Swing: Rural Luddism and Rebellion in East Kent, 1830-31," *Southern History* 22 (2000): 140. Whilst later rural protest movements did occur, they were not as spatially extensive as Swing—the last pitched battle on English soil, occurring in 1838, only drew protestors from a narrow range of parishes between Canterbury and Faversham—and were much more narrowly focused, for

instance the anti New Poor Law protests of 1835-6 and the widespread adoption of agricultural labourers' trades unions in the so-called Revolt of the Field of the 1870s.

3. John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (London: Harvard University Press, 1983); Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2006).

4. Andrew Charlesworth, *Social Protest in a Rural Society: The Spatial Diffusion of the Captain Swing Disturbances of 1830-1831* (Norwich: GeoBooks, 1979).

5. Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, *passim*.

6. Gustave LeBon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: Ernest Benn, 1896): 13.

7. George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (London: Lawerence and Wishart, 1964).

8. Edward P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 76-136.

9. Andrew Charlesworth, "From the Moral Economy of Devon to the Political Economy of Manchester, 1790-1812," *Social History* 18 (1993): 205-17.

10. Thompson, "Moral economy," 112. Bohstedt, in a critique of Thompson's concept, has suggested that outside of small market towns the "rules" of engagement central to Thompson's formation of the moral economy were less well-developed. Thus if both rioters, the magistrates and the objects of the rioters' opprobrium, in, to use Bohstedt's example, Manchester, did not "know" how to act they had to constantly invent and reinvent rules of engagement: *Riots and Community Politics*, 202-223.

11. Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1988): 178.

12. *Ibid.*, 161, 178.

13. James Scott, "The Moral Economy as an Argument and a Fight," in Randall and Charlesworth, *Moral Economy and Popular Protest*, 194-202.

14. Peter Jones, "Swing, Speenhamland and Rural Social Relations: The 'Moral Economy' of the English Crowd in the Nineteenth Century," *Social History* 32 (2007): 285-6.

15. For two excellent exemplars of this "tradition" see: James Cockburn, "Patterns of Violence in English Society: Homicide in Kent 1560—1985," *Past and Present* 130 (1991), especially 71-6; Peter King, "Punishing Assault: The Transformation of Attitudes in the English Courts," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27 (1996): 43-74.

16. Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 4.

17. Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 212.

18. *Ibid.*, 308-9.

19. It is important to state though that it is beyond doubt that Cook was judicially executed, unlike his fellow activists, because of his resort to bodily violence. *Hampshire Chronicle*, 22 November; *Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Herald*, 28 November; W. Baines, Winchester to Peel, 23 November, N[ational]A[rchives] H[ome]O[ffice] 52/7, ff. 73-4; Times, 22 December 1830; David Kent, *Popular Radicalism and the Swing Riots in Central Hampshire* (Winchester: Hampshire County Council, 1997): 11.

20. Thompson. "Moral Economy," 108.

21. Tim Cresswell, *In Place, Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

22. Roger Wells, "Counting Riots in Eighteenth Century England," *Bulletin of the Society for the*

Study of Labour History 37 (1978): 68-72; Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*, 6-19.

23. *Ibid*., 69.

24. Carl Griffin, "Knowable Geographies? The Reporting of Incendiarism in the Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century English Provincial Press," *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 48-51.

25. Roger Wells, "Social Protest, Class, Conflict and Consciousness in the English Countryside 1700-1880," in Mick Reed and Roger Wells, eds., *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1880* (London: Frank Cass, 1990): 159.

26. William Hussey, Hawkhurst to Sir Robert Peel, Home Office, 11 November 1830, NA HO 52/8, ff.324-5.

27. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 29 November 1830.

28. Sir Henry Montresor, Barham, 27 October 1830, Centre for Kentish Studies [herein CKS] U951 C14/4.

29. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1978); Jan Bremmer and Hennan Roodenberg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1992)

30. Andrew Charlesworth, Richard Sheldon, Adrian Randall and David Walsh, "The Jack-A-Lent Riots and Opposition to Turnpikes in the Bristol Region in 1740," in Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth, eds., *Markers, Market Culture and Popular Protest in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996): 55.

31. Thomas Pettitt, "'Here Comes I, Jack Straw': English Folk Drama and Social Revolt," *Folklore* 95 (1984): 11-12.

32. Yves-Marie Bercé, *Fête et Revolte. Des Mentalité Populaires du Xv au XviI Siècle* (Paris, 1976): 72, cited (and translated) in Pettitt, "Here Comes I, Jack Straw," 4.

33. Kevin Binfield, *The Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore, 2004), esp. 44-7; Katrina Navickas, "The Search for 'General Ludd': The Mythology of Luddism," *Social History* 30 (2005), passim.

34. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 4.

35. Bob Bushaway, *By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (London: Junction), ch. 7.

36. *Kentish Gazette*, 29 October 1830.

37. *Hampshire Advertiser*, 27 November 1830.

38. Owlesbury Vestry minute, 9 December 1830, Hampshire County Record Office, 11M67 PV1.

39. *Rochester Gazette*, 2 November 1830.

40. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 611; Navickas, "The Search for 'General Ludd,'" 289.

41. Depositions of Ingram Swaine, labourer, Isaac Croucher, labourer, Thomas Larrett, labourer, both 19 October, and John Collick, yeoman, 8 October, CKS Q/SBe 120/34, 35 and 14b.

42. Depositions of Richard Castle, thresher; John Fairman, labourer; Francis Castle, yeoman,;William Dodd, yeoman; George Castle and Thomas Castle, sons of Francis Castle; all 19 September, CKS Q/SBe, 120/2 f, b, c, a, d and e; Deposition of John Whitnall, labourer, 5 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/8b.

43. Deposition of John Hambrook, carpenter, 25 September and 18 October 1830, CKS Q/SBe 120/ 4 and 19a.

44. Reverend Poore, Murston to Peel, 23 October, NA HO 52/8, ff.300-301; *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October 1830.

45. Sir Edward Knatchbull, Lyminge to Peel, 6 October 1830, NA HO 52/8, ff.281-2.

46. Information of William Lutley Sclater Esq, Tangier Park, Saint Lawrence Wootton, 24 November, HCRO 10M57/03/33. Intriguingly a Swing group at nearby Micheldever similarly managed to force a farmer, through fear for his own safety, to give them a sovereign. After it was handed to them one of their number proclaimed that, as if to pacify the situation, "It will not end in blood." Examination of William Pain, senior, farmer, Mitcheldever, taken 1 December 1830, HCRO 92M95/F2/9/13.

47. Parry Okeden, "The Agricultural Riots in Dorset in 1830," *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 52 (1930): 90-1.

48. Evidence of Thomas Butler, carpenter, Ashampstead, 13 December 1830, NA T[reasury]S[olicitor] 11/849-2900A/E.

49. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 4.

50. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1960): 167.

51. *Ibid.*, 177.

52. Mass lobbying of vestries was a tactic commonly deployed by labourers in post Napoleonic rural England, though viewed as an act of protest by most vestrymen and magistrates.

53. *Reading Mercury*, 22 November and 13 December 1830.

54. A witness of a case of machine-breaking at Hawkhurst (Kent) noted that "I never saw any body do a thing more deliberately (as if at his daily labour)": Prosecution briefs prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of the King vs. George Barrow, John Ballard, John Tuckner, William Chrisford and John Beale, Kent Winter Assizes 1830, NA TS 11/943.

55. Frederick Page, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, Speen to Sir Robert Peel, 21 November 1830, NA HO 52/6, ff.10-13.

56. Captain Liddendale with co-signees, Hungerford, 22 November, to Sir Charles Dundas, Barton Court near Newbury, subsequently forwarded to Melbourne, 24 November 1830, NA HO 52/6, ff.47-8.

57. J. Westall, Hungerford, to Sir Francis Freeling, Post Master General, John Pearse, Childon Lodge, near Hungerford, and Fred Page, Speen, to Peel, all 22 November 1830, NA HO 52/7, ff.16-7, 25-6 and 27-30.

58. Keith D.M. Snell, "Deferential Bitterness: the Social Outlook of the Rural Proletariat in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in Michael L. Bush, ed., *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London, 1992): 158-84.

59. *Keene's Bath Journal*, 6 December 1830. Adrian Randall and Edwina Newman have suggested that in Wiltshire paternalism was an important factor in helping limit the potential destructive impact of Swing: "Protest, Proletarians and Paternalists: Social Conflict in Rural Wiltshire 1830-1850," *Rural History* 2 (1995): 205-227.

60. John Archer, "A Fiendish Outrage? A Study of Animal Maiming in East Anglia: 1830-1870," *Agricultural History Review* 33 (1985): 147-8.

61. Carl Griffin, "'As Lated Tongues Bespoke': Popular Protest in South-East England, 1790-1840" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bristol, 2002); *Rochester Gazette*, 6 December. A further case of cow and pig poisoning at Shere (west Surrey) in September predated the movement and was, in all probability, tied into very specific local resentments. Indeed, the

Hampshire Telegraph (20 September 1830) reported that the area was "infested with some unknown villains."

62. *Maidstone Journal*, 26 October 1830.

63. *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830.

64. Lord Balmanno, Fitzroy Square, London to Peel, 12 November, NA HO 52/8, ff.158-160. One of the letters threatened to demolish the "new town" of St. Leonards, a genteel place of leisure for the moneyed classes. Such spaces were clearly an affront to some, presumably radical, individuals: *Southampton Mercury*, 13 November 1830.

65. Arguably the most famous juxtaposition of bread with blood occurred during the series of food riots that spread throughout East Anglia in 1816. These riots started in the Suffolk village of Brandon where, so history suggests, protestors paraded the streets shouting out in unison "Bread or Blood." Their cry, as if to remove any doubts as to whose blood would be spilt, was actually "Bread or Blood in Brandon." See Alfred Peacock, *Bread or Blood: A Study of the Agrarian Riots in East Anglia in 1816* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965): 78-9.

66. Edward P. Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John Rule, Edward P. Thompson and Cal Winslow, eds., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975): 255-344. Intriguingly, I have found no record of Swing threatening letters directly mentioning the spilling of blood, an allusion common in pre-Swing letters. Indeed, in a protest reminiscent of later Swing protests the Mayfield (Sussex) overseer received a letter early in 1825 threatening that "Wee do Intend Washing Our Hands inn your Blood": *Sussex Advertiser*, 10 January 1825.

67. For the role of effigies in customary ceremony see Bushaway, *By Rite*, 65-74; Edward P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991): 469-524.

68. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 29 January 1770; 25 April 1796 and 9 February 1801; *Kentish Gazette*, 20 and 24 November 1795, 26 September 1800 and 24 May 1822; *Kentish Chronicle*, 26 September 1800.

69. Effigies were also used in anti-Corn Law protests in Canterbury in 1815, in protests during 1820 against the trial of Queen Caroline in several locales in East Kent, and in a dispute between a master tradesman and his workforce at Lewes in 1821: *Kentish Gazette*, 10 March 1815, 24 November 1820 and 3 April 1821; *Times*, 13 March 1815; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 22 October 1821. For an account of the ways in which the burning of effigies was also deployed by "loyalists" as a means to stir up popular political antipathy to the works of Thomas Paine see: Frank O'Gorman, "The Paine Burnings of 1792-1793," *Past and Present* 193 (2006): 111-155.

70. Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, 143.

71. *Brighton Gazette*, 11 November 1830 and 4 August 1831. The practice of shaving the heads of parish paupers was not, however, uncommon in the rural south.

72. For the ways in which early threshing machines were used see: E. Collins, "The Diffusion of the Threshing Machine in Britain," *Tools and Tillage* 1 (1972), esp. 16-19,22-27; S. Macdonald, "The Progress of the Early Threshing Machine," *Agricultural History Review* 23 (1975): 63-77; N. Fox, "The Spread of the Early Threshing Machine in Central Southern England," *Agricultural History Review* 26 (178): 26-32. For the substitution of male labour see: Griffin, "There was no law to punish that offence," 136-7.

73. The deposition of fellow machine breaker John Jeffereys also gendered the machine as female. Depositions of George Youens, labourer, 7 October, and John Jefferies, labourer, 8 October

1830, CKS. Q/SBe, 120/13 and 15.

74. For the 10th and 11th see: J. Major, Tunbridge Wells, to Camden, 11 November, forwarded to the Home Office, Battle Bench, to Peel, 12 November, NA HO 52/8 ff.235-6 and 52/10 ff.394-6; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22 November. According to Sir Charles Blunt the men who entered Mayfield town on the night of 10 November intended to also remove the assistant overseer: Sir Charles Blunt, Heathfield, to Peel, 11 November 1830, NA HO 52/10, ff.526-7.

75. Deposition of William Forded, 24 September; Information of Edward Hughes and Richard Hills, 23 September; and, Information of Benjamin Andrews, 27 September 1830, CKS U951 C177/11, 10 and 19.

76. That the crowd had gathered in the night was surely no coincidence, the darkness helping to obscure their individual identities: Information of John Lancefield, Wingham Petty Sessions Minute, 12 October 1830, CKS PS/W4.

77. Prosecution Brief prepared by the Treasury Solicitor in the case of The King vs. John Adams, NA TS 11/1071, 5035.

78. *Times*, 29 November 1830.

79. General Dalbiac, Battle to Lord Fitzroy-Somerset, 15 November 1830, forwarded to the Home Office, George Mathews, Curate, Herstmonceaux to Melbourne, 3 February 1831, NA HO 52/8, ff. 190-4.

80. *Hampshire Chronicle*, 13 December 1830.

81. *Maidstone Gazette*, 9 November 1830.

82. *Kentish Gazette*, 8 October; *Times*, 10 October; *Brighton Herald*, 16 October 1830.

83. *Kentish Gazette*, 15 October; *Brighton Herald* (copying a report from the *Morning Herald*), 16 October 1830. It is instructive that the following spring when labourers' wages were lowered, the first protests took the form of writing "Swing" on "most" walls and buildings around Dover: *Maidstone Journal*, 31 May 1831.

84. *Times*, 16 November 1830.

85. *Maidstone Gazette*, 19 October; *Kentish Gazette*, 19 and 22 October; *Kent Herald*, 21 October and 11 November; *Times*, 21 October; Sir Francis Freeling, General Post Office to Phillips, Home Office, 4 November (enclosing a letter from Ticknoll, Battle to Freeling, 3 November), NA 52/10, ff.354-6; *Rochester Gazette*, 9 November; *Reading Mercury*, 15 November; *Devizies and Wiltshire Gazette*, 18 November; *Southampton Mercury*, 20 November 1830. Other violent symbols were also utilised in threatening letters. Whilst, as already noted, only the spectre of blood was raised rather being directly mentioned in Swing letters the threat of death by gunshot was directly mentioned. One such letter offered a Horsham magistrate advice on how to "escape the impending danger in this world." Chillingly, it was signed "a Friend to all Mr Swing about—beware of the fatel Dagger and the are [air] gun": Thomas Sanctuary, Horsham to Peel, 17 November 1830, NA HO 52/10, ff. 532-3.

86. See Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1981).

87. Charles Gore, "Entitlement Relations and 'Unruly' Social Practices: A Comment on the Work of Amartya Sen," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 29 (1993): 433.

88. Derek McCormack, "Diagramming Practice and Performance," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23 (2005): 121.