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*Peterloo, Cato Street, and Caroline; Poetry
and Popular Protest, 1819-1821*

John Mark Gardner

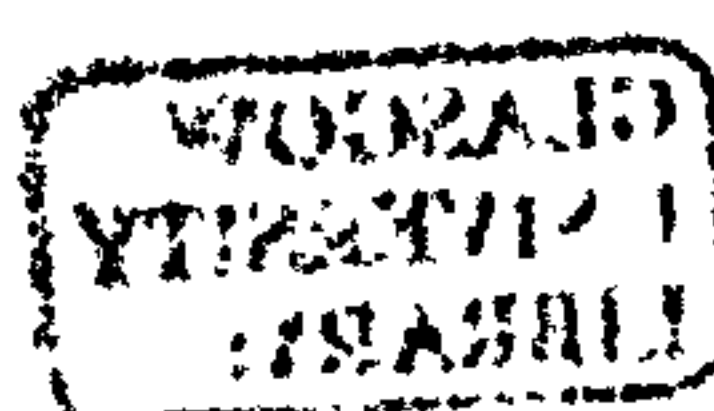
Degree Submitted: Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor Richard Cronin

University of Glasgow

Department of English Literature

November 2002



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Abstract

Literature produced in the five years after the fall of the Bastille, and at the time of the Irish rebellion in 1798, has long been seen to have infiltrated, and affected, the political sphere. And, partly due to the increase of printed material available, this period saw the creation of a new plebeian public sphere. However there are few critics who connect literature produced in the 'post-revolutionary' period, from the Peterloo massacre in 1819 until the end of the Queen Caroline affair in 1822, with the political history of those years. Instead writers working in this period are often represented as writing in isolation, possessed of an individual creativity that encloses them from the public world. Peacock portrays Shelley as Scythrop, the poet in his lonely tower in *Nightmare Abbey*; Byron produces the wandering Byronic hero, and Jane Austen is represented, even by her first reviewers, as a writer isolated from the world of public events. And many of those writers who cannot easily be thought of as practising an autonomous creativity have simply disappeared. Frank Kermode's view of the necessity of the poet's isolation is representative: 'To be cut off from life and action, in one way or another, is necessary as a preparation for the "vision". Some difference in the artist gives him access to this – an enormous privilege, involving *joy* [...] The "difference" of some of the English Romantic poets is too well known; they were outcast because they had to pay for their joy and their vision.'¹ However this view of the poet working in isolation from others, and events, creates exclusions from the Canon, as Anne Janowitz points out: "high" romanticism, with its obsessive focus on the self as voluntaristic and on the individual imagination as a source of self-representation, must perform the massive act of suppressing its own contestatory history in order to preserve its triumph.'² This thesis will address the problem of literary exclusions in the later Romantic period by shifting the focus of literary study away from the Self towards a sequence of key political events. This allows examination of a variety of canonical and non-canonical verse by focusing on writing that attempts to 'intervene in' the public world. More particularly I will focus on writing engaged in a struggle for control of the representation of three key public events: the Peterloo Massacre of August 1819, the Cato Street conspiracy of April 1820 and the Queen Caroline affair (1820-21). In each case I have considered the inter-relation between 'popular' responses, as revealed in broad-sheets, pamphlets, etc. and 'literary' responses, and have gauged how far the two types of response converge. I also look at the emergence of a kind of writing that dissolves the difference between the 'high' and the 'low', the kind of writing produced by figures such as William Hone, and Shelley in his *Mask of Anarchy*.

Each of these historical events is considered in a separate section. The first section deals with poetic responses to the Peterloo massacre. I begin by examining the poems of Samuel Bamford, the only known poet at the massacre, and his attempts to tone down the more inflammatory aspects of his first poems on Peterloo for his new Chartist audience of the 1840's. I then move on to William Hone and his battle to control the narratives of contemporary texts that have been produced by the

literary elite and the ruling class, and in doing so to create his own public sphere. I end the section by examining Shelley's Peterloo poems and his assimilation of current radical discourse and poetic style. The second section is concerned with the Cato Street conspiracy, a conspiracy that was in fact manufactured by the government's spy system. This event did not attract the radical poets, instead it elicited responses from liberals such as Charles Lamb and Byron. In this section I argue that both Lamb and Byron are more concerned with contemporary British politics than has previously been acknowledged. The third section of the thesis looks at the Queen Caroline affair, an event that put many radical republicans in the dubious position of supporting a Queen. By examining the work of Charles Lamb, George Cruikshank, William Hone, Shelley, and a number of anonymous radical poets, I attempt to determine just how the public's imagination had been shaped to engender such support, and what radicals expected to gain by championing the unfortunate Queen Caroline.

In conclusion this thesis is distinguished from other critical studies of the period by its refusal either to value literary texts for the light that they throw on the wider culture, or to value the wider culture for the light it throws on the literary texts. It starts from the assumption that literature and the culture out of which it is produced are interdependent.

¹ Frank Kermode, *The Romantic Image* (London: Fontana Press, 1971), pp. 18-19.

² Janowitz, Anne, "A voice from across the Sea" Communitarianism at the Limits of Romanticism', *At the Limits of Romanticism Essays in Cultural, Feminist and Materialist Criticism*, ed. by Mary A Favret & Nicola J. Watson (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.85.

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Illustration Acknowledgments

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List of Abbreviations

- Bruton: F. A. Bruton, *Three Accounts of Peterloo by Eyewitnesses Bishop Stanley, Lord Hylton, John Benjamin Smith, with Bishop Stanley's Evidence at the Trial* (Manchester: Longmans, Green & Co. 1921)
- Butler, *Romantics*: Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries; English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981)
- Byron, *Letters*: *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols. (London: John Murray, 1977)
- Cronin, *Politics*: Richard Cronin, *The Politics of Romantic Poetry; In Search of the Pure Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan, 2000)
- Dyer: Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789-1832*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- E. A. Smith: E. A. Smith, *A Queen on Trial The Affair of Queen Caroline*, (Avon: Alan Sutton, 1994)
- Hackwood: F. W. Hackwood, *William Hone: His Life and Times*. (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970)
- Hazlitt, *Works*: William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P.P. Howe after the edition of A.R. Waller and Arnold Glover, 21 vols. (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1930-34)
- HO: Home Office Papers
- Homely Rhymes*: Samuel Bamford, *Homely Rhymes, Poems, and Reminiscences* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1864)
- Howe, *Life*: P. P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt*, 2nd. Imp. (London: Martin Secker, 1922)
- Jones: Steven E. Jones, *Shelley's Satire; Violence, Exhortation, and Authority* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994)

- Lamb, *Works*: Charles and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen, 1903)
- The Making*: E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, 1979)
- Marlow: Joyce Marlow, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1970)
- Olivia Smith: *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)
- Passages*: Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- PRO: Public Records Office
- Prothero: Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century London, John Gast and his Times* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979)
- Reid: Robert Reid, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London: Heinemann, 1989)
- Rickword: Edgell Rickword, *Radical Squibs and Loyal Ripostes; Satirical Pamphlets of the Regency Period, 1819-1821 Illustrated by George Cruikshank and Others* (London: Adams & Dart, 1971)
- Royle: Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of revolution in Britain 1789 – 1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)
- Scrivener, *Radical*: Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley; The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982)
- Shelley, *Letters*: *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)
- Stanhope: John Stanhope, *The Cato Street Conspiracy*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962)
- TS: Treasury Solicitor's Papers
- Walmsley: Robert Walmsley, *Peterloo, the Case Reopened*,

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969)

Wood: Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1994)

Wu, *Hazlitt*. *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. by
Duncan Wu, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto,
1998)

Principal Players

Adams, John (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator. Turned King's evidence against his comrades.

Addington, Henry (B. 1757; D. 1844) Viscount Sidmouth. Lawyer, Prime Minister, 1801-3. Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1812-1822.

Arbuthnot, Harriet (B. 1793; D. 1834) Diarist. Wife of Charles Arbuthnot, M.P. Alleged lover of the Duke of Wellington.

Bamford, Samuel (B. 1788; D. 1872) Weaver, poet, political historian, special constable.

Benbow, William (B. 1784; D. 1841) Shoemaker, revolutionary, pornographer, publisher, editor (*Political Register*, *The Ramblers Magazine*), Chartist. Died in prison.

Bergami, Bartolomeo, (Fl. 1820) Also known as Pergami. Alleged lover of Queen Caroline. Named during her trial.

Birnie, Richard (B. 1760; D. 1832) Bow Street magistrate.

Brougham, Henry (B. Edinburgh, 1778; D. Cannes, 1868) Whig M.P. until the fall of Melbourne. Queen Caroline's lawyer during her trial.

Brown, Thomas (the younger). See Thomas Moore.

Brunt, John Thomas (B. 1790; D. Newgate, 1820) Shoemaker and Cato Street conspirator. Hanged then decapitated, outside debtors door, Newgate prison.

Burdett, Francis (B. 1770; D. 1844) Parliamentary reformer. M. P. for Westminster from 1806, shared the representation with John Cam Hobhouse from 1820 – 1832.

Byron, George Gordon (B. Cavendish-square, London, 1788; D. Missolonghi, 1824) Sixth Lord, poet and adventurer.

Canning, George (B. London, 1770; D. London, 1827) Lawyer, M.P. from 1793. In 1800 married Joanna Scott, gaining £100 000 as a result of the match. Appointed president of the Board of Control in 1816; Prime Minister in 1827. Alleged lover of Queen Caroline.

Carlile, Richard (B. Devon, 1790; D. London, 1843) Freethinker, radical publisher and editor. Advocate of birth control and the sexual emancipation of

women. Frequently imprisoned for publishing radical literature.

Caroline of Brunswick (B. Brunswick, 1768; D. London, 1821) Uncrowned Queen of England 1820-21. Estranged wife of George IV.

Cartwright, Major John (B. 1740; D. 1824) Parliamentary reformer.

Castle, John (Fl. 1816) Worked in Mother Thoms's brothel in King Street Soho, then arrested for forgery in 1812. Turned King's evidence against his co-accused Daniel Davis resulting in his execution. Thereafter became a paid spy government spy.

Cobbett, William (B. Farnham, 1762; D. Guildford, 1835) Essayist, farmer, politician, newspaper proprietor.

Cruikshank, George (B. London, 1792; D. London, 1878) Artist. Worked with William Hone, Charles Dickens and Pierce Egan.

Cruikshank, Isaac Robert (B. London, 1789; D. London, 1856) Artist. Brother of George Cruikshank.

Davidson, William (B. Jamaica, 1781; D. Newgate, 1820) The 'man of colour' in the Cato Street conspiracy. Studied law in Glasgow, mathematics in Aberdeen, became a cabinet maker in Birmingham. Worked for Lord Harrowby. Hanged then decapitated, outside debtors door, Newgate prison.

Edwards, George (B. Clerkenwell, 1788; D. South Africa, 1843) Government spy and Cato Street conspirator. Later known as George Parker.

Ethelston, Reverend Charles Wickstead (B. 1767; D. 1830) Manchester magistrate who read the Riot Act, and signed the warrant for the arrests, at Peterloo.

Gaunt, Eliza (Fl. 1819) Arrested with Bamford and Hunt at Peterloo while heavily pregnant.

George IV (B. St. James's Palace, 1768; D. London, 1830) Prince Regent 1811 – 1820. King of England 1820 – 1830. Married Maria Fitzherbert in 1785. Married Caroline of Brunswick in 1796. Divorced neither.

Hall, Abel (Fl. 1820) Tailor, Cato Street conspirator, later a government spy.

Hay, Reverend William Robert (B. 1761; D. 1839) Clerical magistrate involved in the Peterloo massacre. He was known as a stern magistrate, having sent Luddites to trial who were subsequently hanged. Rewarded with the Parish of Rochdale in 1823.

Hazlitt, William (B. Maidstone, Kent, 1778; D. Frith Street, London, 1830) Essayist, critic, novelist and artist.

Healey, Joseph (Fl. 1819) 'Doctor' Healey. Oldham radical leader, friend of Samuel Bamford.

Hiden, Thomas (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator. Turned King's evidence against his comrades.

Hobhouse, Henry (B. Clifton, 1776; D. Hadspen House, 1854) Archivist, Permanent under-secretary of state for Home Department, 1817-1827. Keeper of State Papers, 1826-1854. Controller of certain Home Office spies, notably George Edwards.

Hobhouse, John Cam, Baron Broughton (B. Redland 1786; D. Berkeley Square, London, 1869) Writer, statesman. First cousin of Henry Hobhouse. Served time in Newgate Jail 1819-20. MP for Westminster, 1820. Friend of Byron.

Hone, William, (B. Bath, 1779; D. Tottenham, 1842) Pamphleteer, editor, compiler of popular antiquities. Friend of John Cam Hobhouse, Hazlitt, George Cruikshank and Charles Lamb.

Hunt, Henry (B. 1773; D. 1835) 'Orator Hunt'. Organiser of the meeting at St. Peter's Field on August 16, 1819, later known as the scene of the 'Peterloo' massacre. Subsequently arrested and imprisoned for two years for organising the meeting. Became MP for Preston in 1830.

Hunt, Leigh (B. 1784; D. 1858) Poet, journalist and publisher (most famously *The Indicator* and *The Examiner*). Friend of Byron, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore Shelley, Dickens and Thackeray.

Ings, James, (B. Hampshire, 1785; D. Newgate, 1820) Cato Street conspirator, formerly a butcher. Hanged then decapitated, outside debtors door, Newgate prison.

Jenkinson, Robert (B. 1770; D. 1828) Lord Liverpool. Prime minister 1812-1827.

Johnson, Joseph (B. 1791; D. 1872) Brush manufacturer. Radical reformer and friend of Bamford.

Knight, John (B. 1763; D. 1838) Weaver, radical reformer, trade unionist.

Lamb, Charles (B. London, 1775; D. Edmonton, 1834) Essayist, humorist, poet, Clerk at India House. Loyal friend of Hazlitt, Hone and of almost everyone in the literary world.

Marks, J. L. (Fl. 1821) Artist, writer and pornographer.

Meagher, Edward (Fl. 1819) Trumpeter, with the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, who sounded the charge at Peterloo.

Mitchell, Joseph (Fl. 1817) Radical reformer. Friend of Bamford and Benbow.

Monument, John (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator. Turned King's evidence against his comrades.

Moore, Thomas (B. Dublin, 1779; D. 1852) Poet. Friend of Byron.

Moorhouse, John (Fl. 1819) Radical reformer. Arrested with Henry Hunt and Bamford at Peterloo.

O'Connor, Feargus (B. 1796; D. 1855) M.P. for Cork. Chartist leader. Committed to Dr. Tukes asylum for the insane in Chiswick between 1852 and 1854.

Oliver, William (Fl. 1817) Government spy, involved in Spa Fields case.

Paget, Henry (B. 1768; B. 1854) First marquis of Anglesey, Lord Uxbridge. Colonel with the 7th Light Dragoons. Involved in a spat between his men and Bamford's in January 1819, Manchester.

Palin, John (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator.

Ryder, Dudley (B. 1762; D. 1847) Lord Harrowby. Target of the Cato Street conspirators.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, (B. Field Place, Sussex, 1792; D. Viarregio, 1822) Poet.

Simmons, William (Fl. 1819) Cato Street conspirator.

Southey, Robert (B. 1774; D. 1843) Poet, historian, playwright. Poet Laureate from 1813.

Spence, Thomas (B. Newcastle, 1750; D. London, 1814) Schoolmaster, pamphleteer (*Pigs Meat*) and influential radical.

Stafford, John (B. 1766; D. 1837). Bow Street clerk and recruiter of government spies.

Stafford, John (Fl. 1819) Weaver and poet.

Strange, John Shaw (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator. Deported to Australia in 1820. Later Chief Constable of the Bathurst district of New South

Wales.

Stoddart, John (B. Salisbury, 1773; D. London, 1856) Lawyer, leader-writer on *The Times*, 1812 – 1816. Ran *The New Times*, 1817 – 1826. Leading member of The Society for Suppression of Vice. His sister Sarah married William Hazlitt in 1808.

Thistlewood, Arthur (B. Tupholme, 1770; D. Newgate 1820) Soldier. Foremost Cato Street conspirator. Hanged then decapitated, outside debtors door, Newgate prison.

Tidd, Richard (B. Lincolnshire, 1775; D. Newgate, 1820) Shoemaker and Cato Street conspirator. Hanged then decapitated, outside debtors door, Newgate prison.

Watson, James (B. Scotland, 1776; D. New York, 1838) Known as 'Doctor' Watson. Helped found the Society of Spencean Philanthropists with Arthur Thistlewood in 1814. Leader in the Spa Fields riot of 1816.

Wilson, James (Fl. 1820) Cato Street conspirator. Deported to Australia in 1820.

Wilson, James (B. Avondale, 1760; D. Glasgow Green, 1820) Weaver. Hanged then Decapitated, for High Treason, following the 'Cathkin Insurrection' in 1820.

Wood, Matthew (B. 1767; D. 1843) M. P. Twice Lord Mayor of London: 1815 and 1816.

Wooler, Thomas Jonathan (B. 1786; D. 1853) Journalist, newspaper proprietor (*The Black Dwarf*) and radical reformer.

Introduction

Peterloo, Cato Street, and Caroline; Poetry and Popular Protest, 1819-1821 studies the interaction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ literature, during the ‘post-revolutionary’ Romantic period, by taking an event-centred approach to poetry produced in a time-frame that saw more verse being published than in any period before or since. In the following pages I connect the ideas, tropes and styles of writers as disparate as Samuel Bamford, William Benbow, Byron, George Canning, William Cobbett, George Cruikshank, John Cam Hobhouse, William Hone, Charles Lamb, J. L. Marks, Shelley and John Stoddart, by focusing on three of the events that shaped alike their work, and the beliefs and values of large sections of the reading public to which their work was addressed.

The ‘history’ of the two years from 1819 to 1821 came to be organised as a dramatic trilogy, consisting of three linked narratives: the Peterloo massacre of August 1819 when 80 000 people marched to St. Peter’s Fields in Manchester to demand universal suffrage and instead were attacked by the 15th Hussars and the Manchester yeomanry; the government contrived Cato Street conspiracy which resulted in the execution of five conspirators and the murder of a policeman; and the Queen Caroline affair, that was instigated when the new king, George

IV, took steps to prevent his estranged wife from becoming Queen. From the very first these narratives were at once, and inseparably, political, cultural and literary, yet literary scholars rarely link literature of this age to the events that surround its production. Instead, writers in this period are often represented as writing in isolation, possessed of an individual creativity that encloses them from the public world. Peacock portrays Shelley as Scythrop, the poet in his lonely tower in *Nightmare Abbey*; Byron produces the wandering Byronic hero, and Jane Austen is represented, even by her first reviewers, as a writer isolated from the world of public events. And, as Anne Janowitz observes, many of those writers who cannot easily be thought of as practising an autonomous creativity have simply disappeared:

As a result of the victory of individualism, a whole set of exclusions have proliferated, making large numbers of textual materials out of bounds for the customary literary-historical study of Romanticism. These include popular periodical poems, poetry written by working-class and agrarian poets, women's poetry, and, crucially, poems which attempt to *intervene in* rather than represent political and social movements. For "high" romanticism, with its obsessive focus on the self as voluntaristic and on the individual imagination as a source of self-representation, must perform the massive act of suppressing its own contestatory history in order to preserve its triumph.¹

Janowitz is undoubtedly correct in saying that there are 'a whole set of exclusions' from Romantic period studies: plebeian and women's verse, drama, political tracts, and poets who have not survived well, such as Thomas Moore and Charles Lamb. As Janowitz argues critical focus on the 'self' and the 'individual imagination' has helped create these 'exclusions'. Importantly, Janowitz also observes that poems 'which attempt to *intervene in* rather than represent political and social movements' have been neglected by literary critics.

But here Janowitz confuses intervention and representation. To represent an event is to intervene in the construction of its narrative. Representation, after all, was precisely the issue that had drawn those thousands of people to St Peter's Field that day, and, from the first newspaper reports of the subsequent events, to their investigation and re-investigation by twentieth-century historians, the question of how those events should properly be represented has been fiercely contested. An inability to gain access to political representation is the reason why the Cato street conspirators decided to use violence to intervene in the British political system, and a failed marriage led to Caroline of Brunswick's failed attempt to ensure that she was represented at the ceremony in Westminster Abbey where her husband was being crowned. In this thesis I will argue that these attempts at representation are mirrored in poetry of the period, therefore all the texts that I will examine in the following pages attempt to '*intervene in*' the political and social movements to which they refer but they do so by representing them for their own political ends.

The three events on which I focus are linked: each staged a demand by the disenfranchised – the thousands of artisans who gathered in Manchester, the tiny group of the dispossessed and impoverished inveigled into the Cato Street conspiracy, and a scorned princess -- to be allowed admission into the closed precincts occupied by those who exerted political power. Almost inevitably, in the literature that was produced by and that commemorates these events, similar

distinctions are threatened; between high and low literature, between oratory and demagoguery, between cultural production and the proliferation of trash. The distinctions between what can be regarded as 'high' literature and doggerel become blurred at this time to the point that verse can become impossible to stratify. Byron is a great Romantic poet, and William Hone wrote verse that appealed to the scarcely literate reader and yet, when Hone writes a parody of *Don Juan*, it becomes surprisingly hard to tell the two apart. In 1819 this was a new phenomenon, and it was catalysed, I shall argue, by the largest, and most politically and socially conscious display of class conflict that Britain had ever seen.

On the afternoon of August 16 1819, Samuel Bamford, Manchester radical leader, weaver, and self-educated minor poet (who had just published a collection of his poems under the title of *The Weaver Boy*) was desperately searching the area around St. Peter's Fields in Manchester for news of his wife Mima, fearing that she had been one of the dozen people killed, or hundreds injured, in what was to become known as the Peterloo massacre. Shelley, the republican from the other end of the social scale, was in Italy. He had just completed *The Cenci*, and 'Julian and Maddalo' and *Prometheus Unbound* was nearly finished. Two weeks later Shelley received Thomas Love Peacock's regular parcel of papers from England, which informed him of the massacre that Bamford had witnessed.

Both poets decided to address the event publicly. As Richard Holmes notes, ‘Shelley embarked on the most creative eight weeks of his whole life’,² during which he would produce ‘Men of England’, ‘England in 1819’, *Peter Bell the Third* and *The Mask of Anarchy*. Samuel Bamford (whose wife was safe) was arrested soon after Peterloo, tried for conspiracy and was subsequently imprisoned for one year in Lincoln Castle. Like Shelley, Bamford produced poems that directly addressed the events at Manchester, poems such as *The Song of Slaughter* and *Ode to a Plotting Parson*. These poets, who seem on the face of it so different from each other, arrive at very similar conclusions about Peterloo, use similar imagery; and recommend to the victims of the massacre a very similar course of action. In Shelley’s *Mask of Anarchy*, which is now the most widely read poem on the event, Hope gives birth to a ‘Shape’ which destroys Anarchy and the murderous Yeoman army that follows him. Hope then releases ‘an accent unwithstood’ which famously exhorts the people to ‘Rise, like lions after slumber, / In unvanquishable number’. Similarly, Bamford’s *Ode to a Plotting Parson* has ‘gloomy famine stalk thro’ the land’ giving rise to a ‘night wind’ which ‘will whisper a tale which thou can’st not endure’. Bamford’s ‘whisper’, like Shelley’s ‘accent’, can endure all repression, and it will continue to reverberate until the people collectively hear it and enact its demand for a revolution. How does it come about that two poets from very different backgrounds, who in their previous work seem to have had nothing but their political radicalism in

common, produced, though each was ignorant of the other's work, poems that utilise the same imagery, address the same audience, and arrive at identical conclusions? How did Shelley, a poet in the habit of addressing 'the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers', and Bamford, who chooses aggressively to identify himself in the title of his first volume of poems as 'a weaver boy', come to write in so similar a manner? It is a question that will inform this whole thesis.

Recent studies of the relationship between plebeian political activism and literature, whether by historians or literary critics, were all made possible by the publication of E. P. Thompson's seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963. This book differed from other books on economic and social history in that, like the work of Marx and Engels, it is a book that displays its literary and cultural credentials, but, unlike his masters, Thompson does not dwell on political theory. *The Making of the English Working Class* transformed our awareness of the period in part simply because it offered a description of the period which made all previous descriptions seem thin and weakly unrealised. The historian Iorwerth Prothero built on Thompson's work with his *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century London*; John Gast and his *Times*, which similarly examines the links between political, and at times literary spheres, and working-class culture. These books encouraged literary scholars to re-examine texts from the romantic period which had hitherto been ignored by a critical tradition that

focused on the work of the six major poets. Since then there have been bursts of research into non-canonical texts by both literary critics and cultural historians. Popular poems and prose, the minutes of political meetings, newspapers, advertising, medical literature, the writings of minor religious cults, reports of industrial and technological developments, and historical episodes that had been forgotten, ignored, or misinterpreted, have assumed a new relevance for scholars of the 'age of revolution'. But, even though they may focus on the same texts, literary critics and cultural historians still form two distinct parties, working in conformity with different methodologies. For literary critics historical events remain subordinate to the literature that those events produced, whereas for cultural historians, such as Iain McCalman, Iorwerth Prothero and E. P. Thompson, the value of literary study derives from the manner in which literary texts offer an index to wider cultural shifts. My approach is distinctive from previous studies of the period by refusing either to value literary texts for the light that they throw on the wider culture, or to value the wider culture for the light it throws on the literary texts. I start from the assumption that the poetry and the culture out of which it is produced are interdependent.

The period 1819-21 invites comparison with two other periods, both of them almost as brief: the early years of the English revolution in the 1640s and the five years that immediately followed the Fall of the Bastille, the years marked in

Britain by the pamphlet war. All three periods were marked by a sudden increase in the publication of printed material, and by a determination to widen the readership that such material addressed. Christopher Hill cites Clement Walker's

History of Independency:

They have cast all the mysteries and secrets of government...before the vulgar (like pearls before swine), and have taught both the soldiery and people to look so far into them as to ravel back all governments to the first principles of nature...They have made the people thereby so curious and so arrogant that they will never find humility enough to submit to a civil rule.³

The years from 1819 to 1821 similarly saw an attempt to 'cast all the mysteries and secrets of government...before the vulgar'. As I have noted, more volumes of verse were published in these two years than at any time between 1814 and 1835,⁴ and some of them -- the volumes on which I will concentrate -- offer representations, whether direct or indirect, of the three great narratives into which the history of these years was organised. In other words, I will focus on poems that not only represent these events, but are additionally linked by the fierce challenge they pose to established systems of representation.

The first section of this thesis looks at poetic responses to the Peterloo massacre. The Manchester demonstrators assembled to protest against the notion that their interests were adequately represented by a legislature elected by less than 5% of the population, and the massacre that followed instigated a contest as to how the event should be represented and who it should be represented by, in which all the writers who chose to offer their own

representations of the massacre necessarily engaged. I begin with Samuel Bamford, because he was the one poet who was actually present at the events that he later described. But Bamford's privileged status as eyewitness did not allow him to present the events at Manchester unmediated by myth. In fact, as I argue, Bamford not only mythologized the events of that day and his own role in them, but over the course of many years he developed, corrected, and redirected his myth. Bamford's first responses to the event (all of them expressed in verse) are angry and seditious, and daringly recommend an aggressive revolutionary reply to the violence that had been exercised upon peaceful demonstrators. In later years Bamford revised, or deleted his more inflammatory poems from his *Poems* (1843), and in his still widely read and trusted, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1844), he represented himself as committed from the outset to the principles of non-violent reform. The result of Bamford's historical revision is that both his poems and prose are freed from the violent content that characterises his poems written immediately after Peterloo. Bamford's poems, one might say, no longer offer a representation of the period in which they were written, but of the period in which they were re-published. In their revised form the poems become exhortations to the Chartists not to contaminate their political objectives by embarking on a campaign of violent protest.

In the next chapter I examine the works of William Hone that relate to Peterloo. Hone raises, with particular directness, a question that informs this study, the question of who can properly claim ownership of a particular narrative? Who owns a nursery rhyme such as *The House that Jack Built*, or an expensively published poem such as *Don Juan*, or a speech by the Regent, or a laureate poem such as Southey's *Vision of Judgement*, or the Peterloo massacre? Hone takes these disparate texts and claims each of them in the name of his own radical agenda. In doing so, he, along with the artist, George Cruikshank, created a new genre by marrying accessible Skeltonic doggerel with self-explanatory, 'readable' woodcuts. It was a genre so successful that it forced Hone's opponents to respond by attempting to co-opt it for their own purposes, and thus, unwittingly, to assent to the contention that seems to underlie all Hone's various activities, the contention that, in an age of print culture, representations are not owned, they are only used, and anyone with access to print has the power to use them in any way he will.

The final chapter in the Peterloo section looks at the poems produced by Shelley in response to the massacre, poems such as *The Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell the Third*, 'England 1819', and 'Men of England'. Although many critics have pointed out that in these poems Shelley has been influenced by the popular press, few offer precise instances of the links that Shelley forges with the work of broadside poets and pamphleteers. Shelley's poems were not produced, I

suggest, in isolation, the creation of the isolated Romantic subjectivity, but should be understood as a product of the literary culture in which Shelley participated. Indeed, the most powerful political statement offered by this group of poems may be embodied in Shelley's decision to abandon in them the role of Romantic 'author' and to speak rather in the anonymous voice of the broadside balladeer. In conclusion, this section argues that Bamford, Shelley and Hone offer their readers poems that represent the event that was Peterloo, and by doing so they intervene in, and become part of, an event that few witnessed, but many claimed as their own Waterloo or storming of the Bastille.

The second section of this thesis develops the focus on the conflictual relationship between the 'high' and the 'low' that is so readily apparent both in the politics and in the literature of the period. However, unlike Peterloo, the Cato Street conspiracy did not produce a widespread popular response. The demonstration at Manchester had, after all, been a demonstration of the people organised by the people, or at least by their leaders. The Cato Street conspiracy, on the other hand, was organised not by those who met in the Cato Street loft, but by agents in the employ of the Home Office. Only two poets directly respond to the Cato Street conspiracy and both of them recognise the event as a challenge to their liberalism. I begin by examining two of Charles Lamb's poems, 'The Three Graves' and 'Sonnet to Matthew Wood'. This sonnet has previously been identified as referring to the Queen Caroline affair rather than

the Cato Street conspiracy. This is understandable as Wood was Caroline's most energetic supporter, but I trace Lamb's pretexts for this poem to a speech from the scaffold, and a parliamentary debate between George Canning and Matthew Wood on the government's use of spies to foment the conspiracy. Lamb's other Cato Street poem, 'The Three Graves', is more explicit. This emotive and angry poem concerns itself with the lowest currency in the government's war against the radical reformers – the paid spy working for Lord Sidmouth's spy system. It is a system that Lamb feels perverts the political life of his city by fostering fear and mistrust. In both of these poems Lamb writes as a Londoner, in defence of his mayor, but his stance leads him to a more sympathetic response to the desperate men arrested in Cato Street than was articulated by any of Lamb's more radical friends such as Hazlitt or Hone.

Byron's *Marino Faliero* has been said to have connections with the Cato Street conspiracy by both contemporary and modern critics, but the connections that have been pointed out have been very general, and indicate no precise correspondence between the two conspiracies. In this chapter I challenge conventional readings of the play by citing previously unknown papers recently found in the Public Records Office at Kew. These papers, from two separate government departments, crucially link Byron's most trusted friend, John Cam Hobhouse, with the conspirators, making possible a reading of the play which finds it wholly concerned with contemporary politics, and Byron's struggle to

come to grips with the new political realities in England. News of the Peterloo massacre prompted Shelley to abandon his guise as Romantic ‘author’ and assume the anonymous voice of the broadsheet balladeer. News of Cato Street prompted Byron to engage in a quixotic attempt to revive the ‘classical’ drama in England, a dramatic gesture in which he proclaims his solidarity with his own class, the class that had in common a classical education, even as he dramatised the downfall of an aristocrat who made himself a principled traitor to that class.

After years of neglect, the Queen Caroline affair has recently attracted the attention of a number of critics, as recent studies by Marcus Wood, Ann Hone and Olivia Smith demonstrate. I focus simply on the question of why such a disparate group of people, from the pornographer William Benbow to the lawyer Henry Brougham, united in support of George the Fourth’s estranged wife’s claim to the crown? I begin this section by examining popular representations of these monarchs that have been shaped by Gillray, Cruikshank, and in poetry most effectively by Charles Lamb. My next chapter, on William Cobbett, has no obvious place in a thesis examining poetic responses to political events. I have included it because the unlikely alliances that were formed at this period can be exposed most easily by tracing the activities of Cobbett. At no other time could a farmer, a bankrupt, and a radical who had spent time in prison for sedition, become the Queen’s address writer and adviser. Cobbett supported the Queen as a means to advance his own

radical agenda, and yet he also furthered the cause of his hitherto ignored reserve readership – women – by linking the Queen's cause to theirs. Finally I look at Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, a play based on the Caroline affair, which is saturated in the imagery and ideas being promulgated by the likes of Hone and Henry Hunt, and contains a revolutionary tendency which is usually only found in anonymous radical verse. I also try to answer the question of why a republican like Shelley seems to support a Queen's claim to the throne.

To conclude, this thesis demonstrates that in periods of conflict poets may shift their focus away from the Self towards society. As a result of this negation of the Self the poems produced tend to become authorless, and in fact many of the poems that I discuss were published anonymously. Alternatively, such conflict may generate an anxiety to which a poet responds in a defiant assertion of the Self. Byron suffered the staging and the failure of *Marino Faliero* as an elaborate spectacle in which Byron himself, as aristocrat and as author, suffered an ingenious and lingering public humiliation, a humiliation that he seems to link, however extravagant the analogy may seem, with the cruel execution to which several of the Cato Street conspirators were subjected.

The years from 1819 to 1820 represent a moment of crisis. It seemed so as much to a radical poet such as Shelley as to a high Tory such as the Laureate Southey:

It is no longer a question between Ins and Outs, nor between Whigs and Tories. It is between those who have something to lose, and those who have everything to gain by a dissolution of society.⁵

The crisis resulted in a victory as swift as it was complete for those who had something to lose. The power of a single small class, the land-owning aristocracy, was violently ratified; the Peterloo demonstrators were routed, Caroline was ejected from the Abbey, and the Cato Street conspirators were either executed or transported. For more than a century, through three carefully orchestrated parliamentary reforms at the end of which universal male suffrage had been all but secured, this class managed to maintain its hegemony. During that same period the character of literary history also became fixed. As English Studies established itself as a discipline in schools and universities a single approach came to dominate. To study English was to become familiar with the work of a succession of authors who had in common the possession of genius. Their work was autonomous, or, if related to anything outside itself, it was to the work of other literary geniuses, whose relationships with one another might be treated in studies of literary influence. Nothing marked the dominance of this kind of criticism more completely than the production of the literary period from 1780 to 1830 known as the Age of Romanticism, a period that was dominated in England by the work of six male poets. This thesis is devoted to the study of two brief years in which it seemed, at least to many of those

who lived through them; that both these histories might have been very different.

¹ Janowitz, Anne, ““A voice from across the Sea” Communitarianism at the Limits of Romanticism’, *At the Limits of Romanticism; Essays in Cultural, Feminist and Materialist Criticism*, ed. by Mary A Favret & Nicola J. Watson (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.85.

² Richard Holmes, *Shelley The Pursuit* (London: Flamingo, 1995), p.532.

³ Cited by Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down; Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Penguin, 1991), p. 72.

⁴ Dyer, p. 141.

⁵ *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, vol. 4, ed. by Rev. C. C. Southey (London, 1860), p. 360.

Part I: *PETERLOO*

Myth-making: Samuel Bamford and Peterloo

‘To the Reader’

The candid reader [...] will bear in mind, that he is not perusing the productions of one who has been blessed with a “Liberal Education”. That tis not an “Oxford Scholar” whom he is reading. That tis a “Weaver Boy of Lancashire,” one of old Burke’s Pigs, who has the audacity to lift his snout on high in the congregation of the Public, and thus “rebelliously” to grunt in the presence of his “betters”.

(Samuel Bamford, from *The Weaver Boy*)

Samuel Bamford’s account of the Peterloo Massacre, and the wider context surrounding it, given in *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, which E. P. Thompson calls ‘essential reading for any Englishman’,¹ is probably the most widely read text on those times. However Bamford claims that the event had a negative effect on his poetic output:

I FREQUENTLY called to see Sir Richard Philips, who always advised me to cultivate literature and poetry, as two friends who would be ready to console me at all times, and under all circumstances. He wished me to write something in the metrical way, about the Manchester affair, but I never did; it never presented itself as it were, to me in the form of poetry; it was too overpowering, too brimful of affliction, to be measured in verse; I made several attempts that way, but it would not do, and I never sought to describe it in any other form until this present publication.²

This is not quite true, Bamford did write verse about the Peterloo massacre, and the ‘several attempts’ that ‘would not do’ were published in pamphlets issued by Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt, and radical papers such as *The Black Dwarf* and *The Examiner*. Some of these poems would later appear in the 1843 collection of his poems, but in a revised form, free from any violent content, befitting a man who had become a sort of Jean Valjean figure, having served time in eight prisons and was now portraying himself as a model citizen. By the time he came to write *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, Bamford wanted to distance his kind of

radicalism from the violent side of reform that was identified with Feargus O'Connor, who was now leading the Chartists. So much so that he even became a special police constable in 1848, helping to control a Chartist meeting at Kennington Common. Bamford was now claiming: 'I considered it as the pride and glory of my life to have, in some degree, merited the name of a Reformer; but I never advocated its obtainment by violence.'³ However as Tim Hilton observes in his preface to *Passages* Bamford's claim does not quite ring true: 'In many ways his primary concern was to establish an idea of the sobriety and good sense of his own political character, and it is likely that he had been much more of a militant than he would have us believe, though contemporary evidence is thin.'⁴ Hilton complains that there is little evidence to prove his hunch that Bamford 'had been much more militant than he would have us believe',⁵ but such evidence is freely available to any reader of Bamford's early poems. It is not, as Hilton has it, that 'contemporary evidence is thin', but that Hilton is prepared to admit only one kind of document as constituting evidence. For the historian verse is not considered reliable. My purpose here is to compare Bamford's early more radical poems with their later revised versions that were written for a Victorian rather than a Regency readership. Of course Bamford was not alone in altering his poems for a new generation; Leigh Hunt famously toned down some of the more inflammatory aspects of Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy* to fit the new political realities of 1832 when it was first published after a twelve year delay. Nevertheless, it may seem that I am being ungenerous to Bamford by

pointing out deliberate straying from the truth in his work, but it should be remembered that immediately after Peterloo the mythmaking had already begun. Peterloo is one of those events that has, from the very first, always been used to fit the political realities of the present, whether during the Chartist period, the forty-hour strike in 1919, or 1972 and 'Bloody Sunday'.

On 16 March 1820, Bamford, Henry Hunt and nine others, appeared at the New Bailey to be tried for their lives on a charge of High Treason, for organising 80 000⁶ people to meet at St. Peter's Field in Manchester on August 16, 1819. One of the prisoners, Elizabeth Gaunt, who had only been on the hustings with Hunt for protection because she been cut and trampled at the meeting, was heavily pregnant and had been kept in solitary confinement for twelve days before appearing in court. At the same moment a general crackdown on radicals and the friends of reform was taking place: arrangements were being made to try the Cato Street Conspirators, the Queen Caroline affair was filling the newspapers, and in Scotland, Sidmouth's spy system was organising the entrapment of prominent radicals.

The aftermath of the Peterloo massacre led to a series of denunciations, the rounding-up of radical leaders, and constituted in short, an attempt to justify the actions of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, the Cheshire Yeomanry, and the 15th Hussars, who were responsible for killing up to 14 people⁷ and

wounding several hundred others at what was to become known as the ‘Peterloo massacre’. ‘Peter-loo’ was a word coined soon after the event firstly in *The Manchester Observer*, partly because the Hussars were wearing their Waterloo medals, and also because it was reported that a special constable had entered the house of Ann Jones, who was helping the wounded, and shouted ‘This is Waterloo for you – this is Waterloo!’ Hazlitt would have agreed with Victor Hugo’s assessment that ‘Waterloo was more a massacre than a battle [...] Waterloo, in terms of its ultimate significance, is the considered triumph of counter-revolution [...] Waterloo was the assertion of the Divine Right of Kings.’¹⁰ So did Byron, as can be seen in this stanza from *Don Juan*, addressed to Wellington:

You are “the best of cut-throats:”-- do not start;
The phrase is Shakespeare’s, and not misapplied: --
War’s a brain-spattering, windpipe splitting art,
Unless her cause by right be sanctified.
If you have acted *once* a generous part,
The world, not the world’s masters, will decide,
And I shall be delighted to learn who,
Save you and yours, have gain’d by Waterloo?
(9, iv)

Waterloo established the authority of the royalists, and as R. J. White asserts ‘Peterloo was the grim celebration of their success.’¹¹ The event that was Peterloo has been passed down to us over the last two hundred years rather in the way that Thomas Carlyle describes it:

Who shall compute the waste and loss, the obstruction of every sort, that was produced in the Manchester region by Peterloo alone! Some thirteen unarmed men and women

cut down, -- the number of the slain and maimed is very countable: but the treasury of rage, burning hidden or visible in all hearts ever since, is of unknown extent. “How ye came among us, in your cruel armed blindness, ye unspeakable County Yeomanry, sabres flourishing, hoofs prancing, and slashed us down at your brute pleasure; deaf, blind to all *our* claims and woes and wrongs; of quick sight and sense to your own claims only! There lie poor sallow work-worn weavers, and complain no more now; women themselves are slashed and sabred, howling terror fills the air; and ye ride prosperous, very victorious, -- ye unspeakable: give *us* sabres too, and then come-on a little!” Such are Peterloo’s.¹²

Samuel Bamford had been known as a radical leader for some time and is identified in a Home Office spy report (HO 42 – 158, ff 131), from January 1817, as Secretary of the Middleton Hampden club. He, along with several others, was arrested soon afterwards, under suspicion of High Treason. Bamford claims to have been interviewed by Lord Sidmouth and Viscount Castlereagh no less. He describes Castlereagh as ‘a good looking person in a plum-coloured coat, with a gold ring on the small finger of his left hand, on which he sometimes leaned his head as he eyed me over: This was Lord Castlereagh.’¹³ Both Joyce Marlow¹⁴ and Robert Reid¹⁵ give credence to this, however if we turn to an earlier account of Bamford’s arrest, Sidmouth is present, but not Castlereagh: ‘after suffering my eyes to glance over the group, one of them, who I found to be Lord Sidmouth, thus addressed himself to me’.¹⁶

In *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, Bamford describes how Sidmouth’s spy system had attempted, only a few weeks before his arrest, to involve him in a plot that would be implemented three years later—entrapping Arthur Thistlewood and his friends:

Some ten or a dozen of our best men were to provide themselves with arms, and march to London, where they would be joined by others, and, at a time agreed upon, the united body were to rush upon the ministers at a cabinet council, or a dinner, and assassinate the whole of them. All London would then rise; the population would subdue all before it; the country would be our own, and a new government would be formed.¹⁷

Bamford, writing over twenty years later, has summarised the Cato Street conspiracy. Bamford then claims that he declined the offer to take part, as he believed that ‘the government knew of it already’.¹⁸ This is one of the slips that Bamford, the man of peace vehemently opposed to violence, frequently makes in *Passages*, suggesting that he would have approved of the assassinations, if the plot had been genuine. Bamford also writes that he was later to find out that the man who proposed the plan was a close acquaintance of Oliver the spy, but believes that the unnamed man, who he recognised ‘as my most intimate acquaintance and co-delegate at London’ (which would suggest William Wilson or Mitchell), was also duped by Oliver. If we look back to Bamford’s pamphlet of 1817, detailing his arrest, the above meeting is recounted and dated 11 March. Bamford states that the man is a ‘stranger’, introduced by Dr. Healey; together they then went to the Trumpeter pub, where the man said he wanted to make a ‘Moscow of Manchester’¹⁹:

I was desired to bring the Middletonians into St. George’s Fields, when we should see the flames ascend at night in the air; that similar deputations had been sent to every Reform society [...] when the people were collected together, they were to be divided into different bodies; one of which was to engage the attention of the soldiers, whilst another was to attack the Barracks, and to secure the Arms and Magazine; another was to plunder and set on fire the houses of such individuals [...] persons that had rendered themselves particularly obnoxious, by their opposition to the cause of Reform [...] a fourth body was to storm the New Bailey and liberate the Prisoners.²⁰

In the earlier account of the meeting there is no mention of killing the Cabinet at dinner, or actual assassinations.

Subsequent to Bamford's arrest Lord Sidmouth felt that, through his spy system, he had checked the growth of radicalism in the North of England. In 1818 he wrote:

The combination at Manchester is now nearly dissolved [...] the arrest of Johnston, Bagguley and Drummond, the failure of the pecuniary supplies, and the admirable arrangements of Sir John Byng, in conjunction with the civil authorities, have effected this fortunate change.²¹

But, as E. P. Thompson relates:

One by one they were forced to release the reformers – Thomas Evans, Gravenor Hensen, Knight, Bamford, Johnson, Bagguley, Mitchell and many others [...] The released men refused to lie down: they addressed meetings, attended dinners in their honour, and attempted to sue the Government for illegal arrest.²²

By 1819 radical leaders had become more organised and were encouraged by high profile acquittals such as William Hone's in 1817, and of the accused at the Spa Field's riots when the evidence of Castle and Oliver was exposed. The conditions of the working classes had deteriorated since the end of the war and wages were half of what they had been only ten years before. Even the Tory Mrs. Arbuthnot, friend of Castlereagh and Wellington, concedes in her Journal that in 1819 '10 000 able and willing workmen were starving in one town (Glasgow) for want of work, & every other manufacturing town suffering in a like degree'.²³ E. P. Thompson identifies Britain as a country on the brink of a class war:

1819 was a rehearsal for 1832. In both years a revolution was possible [...] because the Government was isolated and there were sharp differences within the ruling class. And in 1819 the reformers appeared more powerful than they had ever been before, *because* they came forward in the role of constitutionalists. They laid claim to rights, some of which it was difficult to deny at law, which had never been intended for extension to the 'lower orders'. But if these rights were gained, it meant, sooner or later, the end of the

old regime: as scores of magistrates wrote in to the Home Office, in very similar terms, if meetings or unions or seditious pamphlets were allowed, *at what point would this stop?*²⁴

If the radicals were releasing ‘seditious pamphlets’ then the ruling and middle classes were making their own counter broadsides. They often take the form of panic-stricken admissions of fear of the mob, but within them we can see a realisation that the conflict is between classes. In a contemporary pamphlet tellingly titled *A Warning Letter to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, Intended Principally as a Call Upon the Middle Ranks, At this Important Crisis*, the Rev. Lionel Thomas Berguer writes:

The people are entirely changed: loyalty and religion are not only exploded, but *laughed at*, and the most undisguised *hatred* of the government, and *expectation* of its downfall are nightly expressed in almost every ale-house in the metropolis. Even the very beggars in the streets are growing insolent at the prospect. [...] Dustmen and porters read and discuss politics.²⁵

But if Sidmouth felt confident about the abilities of his spy system, the Government as a whole were clearly worried about the state of the country, as Home office papers reveal:

It appears, that the confidence of the Disaffected is such, that they represent the numbers enrolled as amounting to several hundred thousand, and that their Societies are daily increasing; and in their lists they distinguish by particular marks those among their subscribers who are able-bodied men, and ready to act when required; and that they also keep a list of those who refuse to join them in what they call a “Black Book,” and threaten vengeance against those persons when the general insurrection shall take place. In some parts of one populous county, whose nearly every village has already its Hampden Club, the members make it no secret that they consider themselves as of no other use than as being ready to act whenever they are called upon; on their admission they are said to be listed, and receive a secret card with the words “Be Ready, Be Steady.”²⁶

A reform meeting to be addressed by Henry Hunt had been planned for 9 August 1819, but having been banned by the authorities another was arranged for 16 August. Hunt anticipated confrontation with the Manchester authorities,

but wished to avoid it, releasing *An Address to the Reformers of Manchester and its Neighbourhood*, warning the people against riling the authorities on 16 August:

The eyes of all England, nay, of all Europe, are fixed upon you and every friend of real Reform and Rational Liberty, is tremblingly alive to the result of your Meeting on Monday next. Our Enemies will seek every opportunity, by means of their sanguinary agents, to excite a Riot, that they may have a pretence for SPILLING OUR BLOOD [...] Come, then, my friends, to the Meeting on Monday, armed with NO OTHER WEAPON but that of a self-approving conscience; determined not to suffer yourselves to be irritated or excited, by any means whatsoever, to commit any breach of the public peace.²⁷

Similarly, Sidmouth was anticipating unrest and in a letter to the Attorney

General written on 3 August 1820, he asks what circumstances would precipitate the use of force against demonstrators at the forthcoming meeting:

With reference to your opinion that the meeting advertised to be held at Manchester on the 9th instant may, although not illegal in its inception, become so from what may take place thereat, I have to request that you and the Solicitor General will consider and report to me whether in the event of such meeting becoming illegal by the parties assembled proceeding to the selection of a representative in Parliament, or by the debating of any other illegal question, it will be competent for the Magistrates to use force in the dispersion of such Meeting.²⁸

The Attorney General's reply is not available, but by the 4th of August Henry

Hobhouse was writing in the strongest terms to James Norris, Manchester

stipendiary magistrate:

'Lord Sidmouth [...] desires me to say that reflection convinces him the more strongly of the inexpediency of attempting forcibly to prevent the Meeting on Monday [...] even if they utter sedition or proceed to the election of a Representative Lord Sidmouth is of opinion, that it will be the wisest course to abstain from any endeavour to disperse the Mob unless they should proceed to acts of felony or Riot.'²⁹

Hobhouse tries to dissuade the authorities in Manchester from using force, but

he also takes care to indicate the grounds that would justify its use.

From the beginning the Manchester magistrates planned a show of strength, ignoring Sidmouth's urge for restraint, and using the arrest of Hunt as an excuse to disperse the crowd. The people who marched to St. Peter's Field on August 16 had heeded Hunt's warning, carrying no weapons, only caps of liberty and banners bearing inscriptions such as 'Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage', 'No Corn Laws', 'Major Cartwright's Bill', 'Let Us Die Like Men, and Not Be Sold Like Slaves' (on the banner of the Royton female reformers), 'Taxation Without Representation is Unjust and Tyrannical', 'The Poor the Source of all Government', and 'Labour is the Source of all Wealth'.³⁰

The Manchester Magistrates met at 10 am in the Star Inn, before moving on to a Mr. Buxton's house which overlooked St Peter's Field. The authorities then waited until 1.35 pm. when the crowd had grown to perhaps 80 000 people, before the Reverend Charles Ethelston reputedly read the Riot Act from the window of Mr. Buxton's house, although Bishop Stanley, who was present in the house would later claim, 'I neither heard it read nor saw it read'.³¹ Ethelston was not known for his sympathy with the reform movement and is quoted as having previously said, 'Some of the reformers ought to be hanged – the rope is already around your necks'.³² The authorities then sent in the Yeomanry to arrest Henry Hunt, John Knight, Joseph Johnson and John Moorhouse at the hustings where Hunt had begun to address the crowd. The Manchester and Salford Yeomanry had only been formed two years before in response to the Blanket

March of 1817, and were relatively inexperienced, consisting mainly of the sons of local manufacturers and merchants: they were not well liked. As R. J. White puts it: "The Manchester and Salford Yeomanry consisted almost exclusively of cheesemongers, ironmongers and newly enriched manufacturers, and the people of Manchester and district thought them a joke, and not a very good joke."³³

The Yeomanry were not very impressive; many of them having had no military training whatsoever, but the government felt that they were essential for internal national security. There were doubts that regular professional soldiers could be trusted to police their own people, but the natural enemies of the radical working classes, their bosses and the owners and family of the factories they worked in, could be. As the Rev. Berguer hysterically observed:

Things have reached their climax: but a RÉVOLUTION will be either prevented, or induced, according as the MIDDLE ranks bestir themselves during the REBELLION. If your dependence is placed upon your ARMY alone, for the suppression of a general insurrection, your expectations will be disappointed. It is idle to suppose that the army will draw a single sword against the collective sense of the nation.³⁴

Even if Sidmouth had wanted to rely on the army to control an uprising in Britain, he knew that they did not have the strength. There were only 16,000 regular soldiers in England, compared with 32,000 in occupied France and 32,000 in India.³⁵ The Yeomanry cavalry regiments were also considerably less expensive to keep, consisting as they did of wealthy men playing soldiers. Volunteers had to supply their own horse, saddlery and uniforms (apparently it was the case that the worse the regiment, the gaudier the uniform). The

government only paid for arms, ammunition, and an annual grant of £1. 3/. to each volunteer.

The inexperienced Yeomanry soon got into trouble as they tried to hack their way through the compacting crowd. A trumpeter, Edward Meagher, who would be the subject of one of Bamford's poems, was said to have gone berserk, attacking anyone at hand including the elderly and women. Bamford's account of the first minutes of the Yeomanry's charge is perhaps the most famous:

'Stand fast,' I said, 'they are riding upon us, stand fast.' And there was a general cry in our quarter of 'Stand fast.' The cavalry were in confusion: they evidently could not, with all the weight of man and horse, penetrate that compact mass of human beings; and their sabres were plied to hew a way through naked held-up hands, and defenceless heads; and then chopped limbs, and wound-gaping skulls were seen, and groans and cries were mingled with the din of that horrid confusion. 'Ah! Ah!' 'for shame! for shame!' was shouted. Then, 'Break! Break! They are killing them in front, and they cannot get away'; and there was a general cry of 'break! break.' For a moment the crowd held back as in a pause; then was a rush, heavy and resistless as a headlong sea; and a sound like low thunder, with screams, prayers, and imprecations from the crowd-moiled, and sabre-doomed, who could not escape.³⁶

The 15th. Hussars, many of whom were wearing their Waterloo medals, then moved in to aid the Yeomanry, and only twenty-five minutes after the Riot Act was reported to have been read, the field had been cleared by Major Dyneley's six-pound guns—except for the casualties. If Wellington alone had thought his troops 'detestable' in 1815, then much of Britain agreed with him now.

In the aftermath of the killing the magistrates obviously claimed that they had met Hobhouse's criteria for using force. However in the Reverend Edward Stanley's account there is no evidence of 'felony or riot':

I saw no symptoms of riot or disturbances before the meeting; the impression on my mind was that the people were sullenly peaceful [...] I have heard from the most respectable authority that the cavalry were assailed by stones during the short time they halted previous to their charge [...] My evidence on that point can only be negative.³⁷

Lord Eldon had said of the massacre, 'Without all doubt, the Manchester

Magistrates must be supported; but they are very generally blamed here.'³⁸ As the actions of the Magistrates had to be justified, the trial of Hunt and Bamford was inevitable. The original charge of High Treason was dropped for the lesser charge of conspiracy, contained within which was a charge of unlawful assembly with the purpose of disturbing the peace. Hunt was sentenced to two and a half years in Ilchester jail; Bamford, Healey, Johnson and Knight to one year in Lincoln Castle. Bamford claims in *Passages* that the judge had directed the jury towards acquittal, but in reality the jurors had no choice but to convict, after the judge directed them that assembling 'for the purpose of raising and exciting discontent and disaffection in the minds of the subjects of the King—and for moving the subjects of the King to hatred and contempt of the Government and constitution of the Realm' should result in a guilty verdict.³⁹

Opposition to the actions of the Manchester Magistrates was instant. Francis

Place had written to John Cam Hobhouse saying:

These Manchester Yeomen and magistrates are a greater set of brutes than you form a conception of. They have always treated the working people in a most abominable manner. [...] They cut down and trampled down the people; [...] The law will, from the want of proper interference, afford no redress. Should the people seek it by shooting their enemies one by one and burning their factories, I should not be at all surprised, nor much outraged.⁴⁰

From the first accounts of the Peterloo massacre class-conflict is identified; the ‘work-worn’ versus the ‘prosperous’ manufacturing class. The following extract from *The Times* from 21 August 1819 is a good example of growing consciousness about the balance of power in the large industrial towns:

There is yet another light in which the proceedings at Manchester ought fairly to be viewed, and to which, though we hinted at it yesterday, we wrote in too much haste to give its just importance [...] The Magistrates are, we have been informed, with scarcely one exception, of the class of master manufacturers. They have the power completely in their own hands.

The Times had good reason to support the radical version of the events of August 16. John Tyas, a reporter for *The Times*, who had been sent to cover the meeting, had been arrested alongside Hunt at the hustings where he was preparing to take notes of Hunt’s speech. Tyas’s reports of how ‘the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry lost all command of temper’⁴¹ would shape the paper’s standpoint on the event thereafter. The more radical papers such as *Sherwin’s Weekly Political Register* went further: ‘The Government has long been MILITARY DESPOTISM in a *theoretical* point of view; it is now become so in *practice* and the murders at Manchester are but the first fruits of its principles.’⁴²

The paper then uses the language of war, reminiscent of anti-French propaganda used by right wing papers such as *John Bull* and *The Morning Chronicle*: ‘Women appear to have been the particular objects of the fury of the Cavalry Assassins. One woman [...] was sabred over the head [...] some were sabred in the breast; so inhuman, indiscriminate, and fiend-like, was the conduct of the

Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry.’⁴³ In many of the numerous pamphlets released relating to the massacre is a realisation that a class war is taking place:

The bloated tax-eaters accuse us of conspiring. Now, the rich keep their arms in their houses – they are now training their tenants and servants in their Halls and parks – their obsequious dependants are members of Yeomanry Corps – they possess unbounded property [...] Yet after all, who are the real conspirators? Is it not the rich that are conspiring against the unprotected poor?⁴⁴

There is a proto-Marxist realisation that the manufacturing classes are totally dependent on the working class, therefore the pamphlet advocates abstaining from taxed items such as tea, tobacco and ‘spirituous liquors’: ‘Thus we will weaken a merciless and guilty ministry’.⁴⁵ It was something that Wellington also realised in political terms: ‘It would rob the upper classes of the political influence which they derive from their property and possibly eventually of the property itself.’⁴⁶ But of course there was another view to be taken of the events at Manchester, which was expounded in both verse and prose. Publishers like John Stoddart, the editor of *The New Times*, were eager to counter the radical papers with which *The Times* was now largely agreeing, as a letter from Stoddart to Sidmouth shows: ‘I am happy to learn [...] that the Coroners inquests impute no blame to the Ycomanry. I shall instantly publish a Second Edition to counteract the mischievous effect of the malignity shown in the old Times.’⁴⁷

The following extract is taken from a police office report from 7 December 1819, which was reprinted in *The Times* on 13 December 1819: ‘And we now state, that should any interruption to the public tranquillity cause bloodshed, those who fell will be the unpitied victims of their own wickedness.’ We must

assume that this excludes the couple of causalities sustained by the Yeomanry.

Similarly there is a reply to John Stafford's poem 'Peterloo', which ends:

You must all unite together to gain your liberty,
And not forget those tyrants, but with justice them pursue,
And all such cruel murderers that went to Peterloo.⁴⁸

'The answer to Peterloo' begins as follows:

On the sixteenth day of August, eighteen hundred and nineteen,
All in the town of Manchester the REBELLY CREW were seen,
They call themselves reformers, and by Hunt the traitor true,
To attend a treason meeting on the plains of Peter-Loo.

Those hearers at their patron's call came flocking into town,
Both Male and Female radical, and many a gapeing clown,
Some came without their breakfast, which made their bellies rue;
But got a warm bagging on the plains of Peter-Loo. [...]

Now to conclude and make an end, here's a health to GEORGE our KING,
And to all those Gallant Yeomanry whose praises I loudly sing;
May Magistrates and Constables with zeal their duty do;
And may they prove victorious upon every Peter-Loo.⁴⁹

As we can see the battle was being fought out in the newspapers and journals as well as in the field, and often in a similarly gut-wrenching way; Peterloo was an event of such magnitude in the minds of people that it produced polar responses.

Recently Bamford has been described as one who 'grew up to be a bad poet and a good prose writer'.⁵⁰ Thomas Carlyle seems to have agreed, and went as far as attempting to warn Bamford off verse in a private letter: 'I own I had

much rather see a sensible man, like you, put down your real thoughts and convictions in Prose, than occupy yourself with fancies and imaginations such as are usually dealt with in verse.’⁵¹ John Keats is another who was not an admirer of Bamford’s verse. ‘Solitude how calm art thou’ and ‘To Death’, both included in *The Weaver Boy*, had been printed, without Bamford’s name, in *The Examiner* on 15 August 1819. The publication of these poems must have reminded Keats of Lockhart’s quip that the ‘just celebrity of Robert Burns and Miss Baillie has had the melancholy effect of turning the heads of we know not how many farm-servants and unmarried ladies; our very footmen compose tragedies.’⁵² Keats was prompted to write to his brother George: ‘My name with the literary fashionables is vulgar – I am a weaver boy to them’.⁵³ In *Passages* Bamford bemoans the lack of popularity of his verse with the elite and asks us to compare him with Burns:

I had read how ‘an Ayrshire ploughman,’ had once been deemed good company for a Scottish duchess, but I found that the barriers of English rank were not to be moved by ‘a Lancashire weaver,’ though he could say, ‘I also am a poet,’ and, quite as much as the Scottish bard, a patriot also.⁵⁴

But it seems that Bamford’s verse was ‘vulgar’ to the ‘literary fashionables’.

Only two contemporary reviews are listed in William S. Ward’s *Literary Reviews in British Periodicals*,⁵⁵ and both are fairly good; *The Monthly Magazine* enthuses that Bamford’s *Miscellaneous Poetry*:

[...] exhibits so much energy of thought and diction [...] There is a bold and manly love of liberty in the mind of this humble bard [...] His style and matter are all his own, and display as singular an instance as we can recollect of a naturally strong and poetical mind struggling against the disadvantages of station and education.⁵⁶

But a later review of *Miscellaneous Poetry* finds some fault in Bamford’s verse:

The author is a professed radical reformer, and during the suspension of the *habeas corpus* act, was imprisoned in different gaols; a circumstance which gives his poetical allusions a bitterness bordering sometimes on coarseness.⁵⁷

This literary ‘coarseness’ that the reviewer identifies is perhaps a reaction to

poems such as *Touch Him!*, written in January 1819, omitted from *The Weaver*

Boy, included in his *Miscellaneous Poems* from 1821, and subsequently cut from his

1843 collected edition. *Touch Him!* tends to negate Bamford’s later projected

image as an advocate of passive resistance who would write ‘Turn from those

who are hallooing you on to havock’⁵⁸:

TOUCH him, ay! touch him, if you dare;

Pluck from his head one single hair--

Ye sneaking, coward crew:

Touch him--and blasted be the hand

That graspeth not a vengeful brand,

To rid our long oppressed land

Of reptiles such as you.

Strangely Jerome McGann misinterprets this poem in *The New Oxford Book of*

Romantic Period Verse, where he writes of *Touch Him!*:

The poem was written shortly after the Peterloo Massacre in August 1819 and was publicly recited and circulated at the time, though it was not printed until 1821. Bamford strangely misdates the event in the subheading he gave to his poem: ‘Verses occasioned by the Outrage committed upon Mr. Hunt, and His Friends, at the Theatre, Manchester, on the evening of Friday, January 22nd, by Lord Uxbridge, Captain Fraser, George Torr, and twenty or thirty other “Gemmen” of the same stamp’. Bamford’s poem refers to the radical orator Henry Hunt as well as various leaders of the cavalry which attacked the crowd at Peterloo.⁵⁹

It is difficult to work out why McGann would think that the poem was written

after Peterloo. One possibility is that he assumes that the poem was produced

after Peterloo due to its exclusion from *The Weaver Boy*, but there is no evidence

of this. In fact the whole poem is a warning against anyone harming Hunt in the

future. There are no references to Peterloo, and there is no evidence that Uxbridge, Fraser or Torr were at Peterloo – they were with the 7th Hussars not the Fifteenth who assisted the Yeomanry on August 16th. Bamford wrote *Touch Him!* in response to an incident which occurred on January 22nd 1819, when Henry Hunt visited the Theatre Royal in Manchester. The authorities knew of Hunt's intended visit and placed Lord Uxbridge and five officers of the 7th Hussars in a box opposite to Hunt's. There was an altercation, and the red-coated officers manhandled Hunt out of the theatre. In response to this, Bamford and seventeen other men formed a bodyguard to protect Hunt when he revisited the theatre the following Monday.⁶⁰ The incident is described in *Passages*, although Bamford fails to mention his inflammatory poem *Touch Him!*. These threatening lines are at odds with Bamford's claim that as a reformer 'I never advocated its obtainment by violence', and the threats have a personal aspect:

You whisker'd whelp, of borough-breed,
Shall surely rue his dastard deed,
And so shall Sawney, too:
Their chicken hearts, in that dread day,
Shall melt before their enemy;

The 'whisker'd whelp' is Lord Uxbridge, and 'Sawney' is Captain Fraser, both veterans from Waterloo. Bamford asserts that when a revolution occurs, 'The mighty flood shall break away:/ Our purse-proud tyrants vanity,' and then presciently claims, 'A tougher game they'll have to play/Than that of *Waterloo*'.

There is also some comedy in the piece as Bamford goes on to describe what would have happened had things become violent on the occasion of Hunt's visit:

False teeth and noses would have flown,
Which the scabb'd rascals call their own,
Before the clog of country clown,
Or cudgel's bruise so dire.

These lines are at odds with the impression that Bamford was trying to make in subsequent collections of his verse, from which this poem was omitted. In the 1864 collection Bamford would write:

Away, then, with the dagger and the pike, ere you become brigands and outlaws! Turn from those who are hallooing you on to havock! Let your dream of rapine be dispelled! And the proud ones of the land shall know that you are more nobly proud than themselves. [...] Stand aloof then, ye well disposed of my countrymen, that if peace be outraged until justice retaliates, it may smite those only who have provoked the blow.⁶¹

In the 'Fray of Stockport', a lockout in Stockport from July 1818 is described, when the Riot Act was read and the Yeomanry were called upon:

Then, proudly let our banner wave,
Wi' freedom's emblem o'er it,
And toasted be the Stockport lads,
The lads who bravely bore it.
An' let the "war worn" Yeomanry
Go and curse their sad disasters,
An' count, in rueful agony
Their bruises an' their plasters.

On this occasion the Yeomanry were pelted with stones by the radicals, and in this poem are challenged by Bamford, and teasingly called "war worn" to hint at their general lack of military prowess. In 'The Prediction', again from *The Weaver Boy*, the feats of the army at Waterloo are mourned:

The shamed sun be veiled 'till
The work of butchery was o'er
Hell, in her darkness, triumph'd they,
For freedom fell by Englishmen!

At this point Bamford echoes Hazlitt's view of the defeat of 'the child Roland of the revolution',⁶² demonising the triumphant English: 'Then let the vanquish'd wear the chain, / And bow unto a BEAST'. As in *The Mask of Anarchy*, the state, personified by the crown bears the mark of the devil. The poem reappears in the 1843 collection of Bamford's verse. But the eleven-stanza poem has now been cut to four, and mentions nothing of Waterloo or the poet's view of it; instead it is an attack on a safely dead, and in posterity as in life, much maligned character, Lord Castlereagh. The poem asks for Castlereagh's death by 'Pistol, dirk' or prophetically, a 'whetted knife', and the poem contains a footnote in which Bamford pays tribute to his own prescience: 'This prediction was written and published several years before the death of Lord Castlereagh.'⁶³ Another pre-Peterloo poem in which Bamford seems to advocate violence is 'Ode to Death', where he asks to die 'on some great day' fighting for freedom's cause:

May I fall on some great day,
With freedom's banner streaming o'er me,
Live to shout for the victory,
And see the rout roll on before me:
Tyrants from their greatness torn.

Note that the tyrants do not fall, but instead are 'torn' from greatness, by those fighting under freedom's banner.

Robert Walmsley, who James Chandler calls ‘a modern apologist for the actions of the Manchester Magistracy’⁶⁴ writes of Bamford’s ‘Ode to a Plotting Parson’: ‘It was one of the bitterest, most vituperative pieces of writing in all the Peterloo canon, because it was aimed at an individual.’⁶⁵ Written in January 1820, Bamford’s poem attacks the Rev. Robert Hay, a Manchester magistrate:

Come over the hills out of York Parson H___
Thy living is goodly, thy mansion is gay,
Thy flock will be scattered if longer thou stay,
Our Shepherd, our Vicar, the good Parson H___.

O fear not, for thou shalt have plenty indeed,
Far more than a Shepherd so humble will need;
Thy wage shall be ample, two thousand or more,
Which tithes and exactions will bring to thy store.

And if thou *should’st* wish for a little increase,
The lambs thou may’st sell, and the flock thou may’st fleece;
The market is good and the prices are high,
And the butchers are ready with money to buy.

Hay was one of the Magistrates at Mr. Buxton’s house who had decided the fate of the demonstrators on St. Peter’s Field, and allegedly held the coat tails of Ethelston as he read the riot act from Buxton’s window. He was known as a stern magistrate, having sent Luddites to trial who were subsequently hanged. Hay was subsequently rewarded for his services to the government by being given the parish of Rochdale, one of the richest parishes in England with an annual income of £1730.⁶⁶ Even as late as 1833 *The Examiner* had not forgotten Hay:

A Reverend Magistrate, who was promoted for his services on this occasion to one of the best livings in the country, was an eye-witness of the scene, and doubtless took the aristocratic view of it, in which there was no pity for the unwashed; and having in his evidence deposed that he saw a wounded woman sitting by the road-side, he was asked what her condition was, or whether he could recognize her? His reply was that he 'did not take any particular notice, for (laughing as he spoke) *she was not very attractive*'⁷⁷.

Bamford then widens his scope of attack, describing Peterloo and the conduct of the infamous trumpeter Meagher:

And here is a barrack with soldiers enow,
The deed which thou willest all ready to do;
They will rush on the people in martial array,
If thou but thy blood-d[r]ipping cassock display,

And Meagher shall ever be close by thy side,
With a brave troop of Yeomanry ready to ride;
For the steed shall be saddled, the sword shall be bare,
And there shall be none the defenceless to spare.

Then the joys that thou felt upon St. Peter's-field
Each week, or each month, some new outrage shall yield:
And thine eye which is failing, shall brighten again,
And pitiless gaze on the wounded and slain.

Thy Prince shall thank thee, and add to thy wealth,
Thou shalt preach down sedition, and pray for his health;
And Sidmouth, and Canning, and sweet Castlereagh,
Shall write pleasant letters to dear cousin H--!

Again the attitudes of the government are highlighted, and in particular the

Prince's congratulations to the Yeomanry. Bamford seems to be well informed about Hay's activities and especially his reliance on spies⁷⁸:

For thy spics they shall lurk by the window at night,
Like bloodhounds to smell out the prey of thy spite;
And the laugh shall be hush'd, and when townsmen do meet,

None even his neighbour shall venture to greet!⁶⁹

Shelley's bloodhounds, who would follow Castlereagh in *The Mask of Anarchy*, are here led by Sidmouth. Bamford realises that large meetings are no longer feasible for the radicals, or for the government to control, therefore there will be a greater reliance placed on Sidmouth's spy system. It will be used to cultivate distrust amongst the radicals and split them: 'None even his neighbour shall venture to greet!' 'Ode to a Plotting Parson' was to re-surface in Bamford's collected poems of 1864 (it was omitted from the 1843 edition), but it was cut from fifteen stanzas to five. As Walmsley points out, 'Bamford's five verses in their 1864 version are toned down in their asperities, and the poem truncated as it is from the original version seems to have little point.'⁷⁰ The first five stanzas of the original poem remain with little alteration, and the remaining ten stanzas which contain references to Peterloo, are cut.

While in Ilchester gaol Bamford wrote his *A Song of Slaughter*, which was issued by Henry Hunt in his *Letter to Radical Reformers*. The poem was published with the note, 'N.B. This song is the exclusive property of Samuel Bamford, for whose benefit it is published separately, price One Penny'. The first stanza is reminiscent of Shelley's *Mask*:

Parent of the Wide Creation,
We would counsel ask of thee!
Look upon a mighty nation,
Rousing from its slavery

The common influence is *Paradise Lost* and the *Areopagitica*: 'Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks'.⁷¹ This image seems to have been an inspiring one for the radicals. William Hone too draws upon it in his *Don Juan*

Canto the Third:

And broad and bright the People's majesty
Upriseth as the sun from Ocean's deep,
To gild the level flood of Liberty;
Or like a giant from his hour of sleep,
Prepared the Race to run, and the Reward to keep.

(LXII)

Bamford claimed that Milton was the biggest influence on his verse, and would later enthuse, 'Oh! John Milton! John Milton! Of all the poetry ever read, or ever heard recited by me, none has so fully spoken out the whole feelings of my heart – the whole scope of my imaginings – as have certain passages of thy divine minstrelsy.'⁷² Bamford goes on to use the imagery of Milton that Shelley had recently drawn upon:

Thou hast made us to inherit
Strength of body, daring mind;
Shall we rise, and, in thy spirit,
Tear away the chains that bind?

Chains, but forged to degrade us,
O, the base indignity!
In the name of God, who made us,
Let us perish, or be free!

The question is asked as in *The Mask of Anarchy* whether to rise or not, and is answered with the line ‘Let us perish or be free’, which is unmistakably a call to arms. The reference is to Milton’s Satan bound in ‘Adamantine chains’, and it is an image that also found its way into artistic representations of John Bull, such as in George Cruikshank’s ‘The Free-born Englishman’:

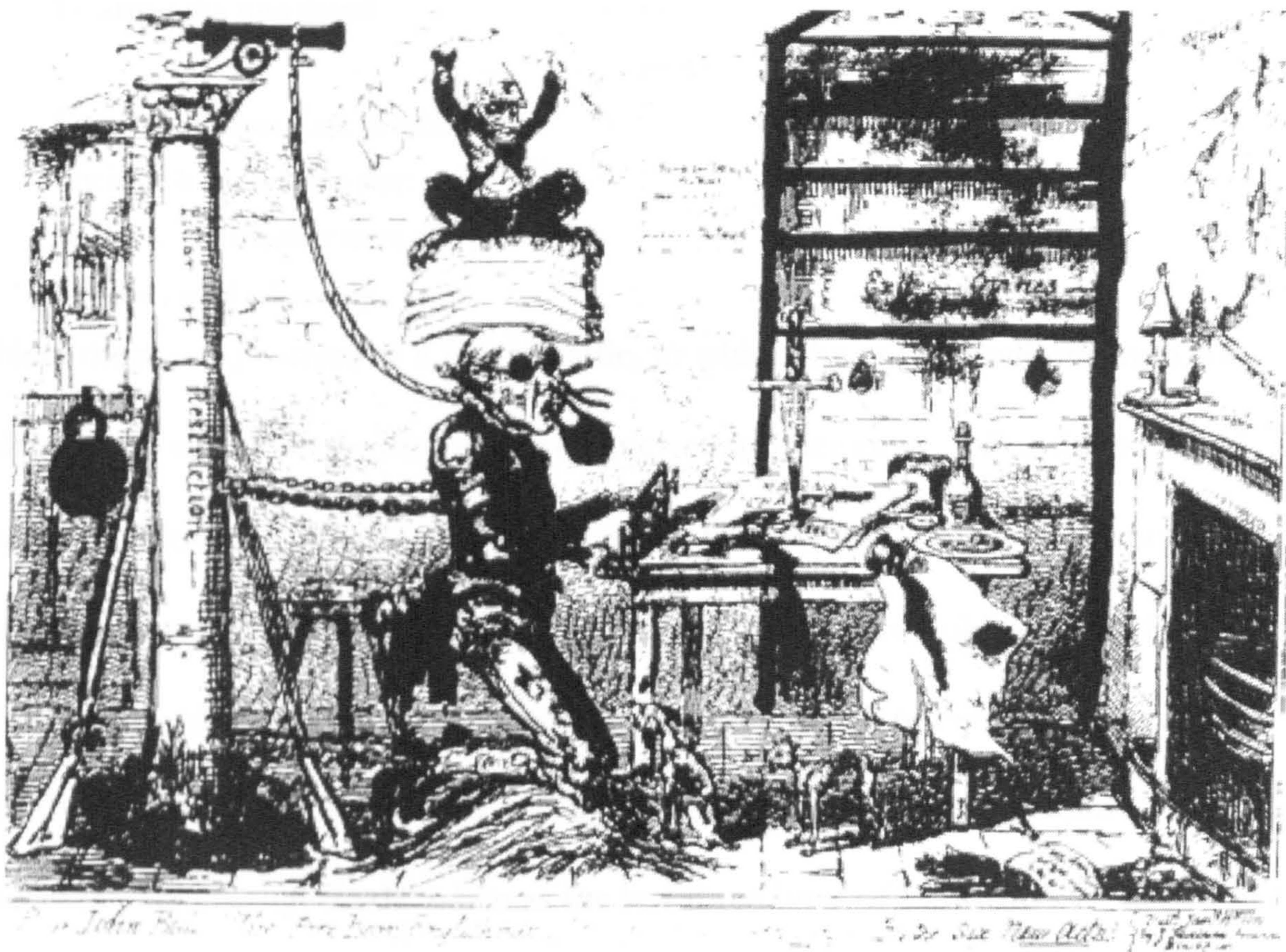


Figure 1: George Cruikshank, ‘Gag-‘Em-All, Geoffry, The Free-Born Englishman Deprived of His Seven Senses by the Operation of the Six New Acts of the Boroughmongers’ (London: J. Fairburn, 1819)

Milton’s influence on the radicals is something that was noted by loyalists, for instance in *The Loyal Man in the Moon*: ‘Call every frightful picture to thy view, / That Dante or great Milton ever drew;’⁷³ The final three stanzas of *A Song of Slaughter* move on to Peterloo, and its legacy:

Ah, behold their sabres gleaming,
Never, never known to spare,
See the floods of slaughter streaming!
Hark the cries that rend the air!

Youth and valour nought availed!
Nought availed beauty's prayer!
E'en the lisping infant failed
To arrest the ruin there!

Give the ruffians time to glory!
Theirs is but a waning day;
We have yet another story,
For the pages of history.

Here there is a promise of a future battle, in which the radicals will triumph, as the victors will write the history, 'We have yet another story, / For the pages of history.' However, Bamford took the 'exclusive property' clause on his poem to its fullest extent, and by the time his collected poems were published in 1843, the poem had been cut to only four stanzas removing all references to Peterloo. In the revised version Bamford only asks, 'Shall we rise, and in thy spirit/ Tear away the chains that bind?' whereas the last three lines of Bamford's earlier version of the poem seems to promise a future physical battle in response to Peterloo.

As a poet Bamford seems to have influenced no-one, and most of his verse is long out of print, except for one poem which is printed in full by Elizabeth Gaskell¹⁴ in *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*, 'God save the Poor'. And by

virtue of its inclusion in this novel, it played its part in the struggle for reform. *Mary Barton*, which helped the course of reform after its publication in 1842, with its portrayal of industrial working class life, shocked the middle class reading public, and brought the plight of the poor and Bamford's poem to a greater audience than any of his collections of verse had ever achieved.

Bamford's poem 'God Help the Poor' ends:

God help the poor, who in lone vallies dwell,
Or by far hills, where whin and heather grow!
Theirs is a story sad indeed to tell;
Yet little cares the world, nor seeks to know
The toil and want poor weavers undergo.
The irksome loom must have them up at morn;
They work till worn-out nature will have sleep;
They taste, but are not fed. Cold snow drifts deep
Around the fireless cot, and blocks the door;
The night-storm howls a dirge o'er moss and moor.
And shall they perish thus, oppress'd and lo'n?
Shall toil and famine hopeless, still be borne?
No! GOD will yet arise and HELP THE POOR!

But in the only one of Bamford's poems that met with a wide audience there are no calls on man to rise and change his situation, only God.

¹ *The Making* p.944.

² *Passages*, p.231.

³ *Passages*, p.94.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁵ See Bamford chapter, p.22

⁶ The numbers who attended the meeting at St. Peter's Field range from estimates of 30 000 (Thomas Tatton a magistrate at the trial of Henry Hunt), to 153 000 people (James Wroe, the *Manchester Observer*). Bamford estimated 80, 000 people (*Passages*, p. 151).

⁷ Figures for deaths caused at Peterloo are variable, as some died several weeks after the event. See Bruton, pp. 81-85.

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- ⁸ *The Manchester Observer*, 21 August 1820.
- ⁹ J. Taylor, *The Peterloo Massacre, Containing a Faithful Narrative of the Events which Preceded, Accompanied and Followed the Fatal Sixteenth of August, 1819, on the Area Near St. Peter's Church, Manchester, Including the Proceedings which Took Place at the Inquest at Oldham on the body of John Lees* (Manchester: 1819), p.178.
- ¹⁰ Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (Penguin, 1982), pp.316-7.
- ¹¹ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (London: Mercury Books, 1963), p. 181.
- ¹² Thomas Carlyle, *The Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle*, 16 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864), 9, p.83.
- ¹³ *Passages*, p. 83.
- ¹⁴ Marlow, p.63.
- ¹⁵ Reid, pp.71-72.
- ¹⁶ Samuel Bamford, *An Account of the Arrest and Imprisonment of Samuel Bamford, Middleton, on Suspicion of High Treason. Written by Himself* (Manchester: 1817), p.38.
- ¹⁷ *Passages*, p. 62.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.64.
- ¹⁹ It appears that someone associated with Sidmouth's spy system really did meet Bamford, as the phrase also appears in HO 42/168, April 3rd. 1817.
- ²⁰ *An Account of the Arrest and Imprisonment of Samuel Bamford*, pp. 17-18.
- ²¹ Cited by Marlow, p.80.
- ²² *The Making*, p.736.
- ²³ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, ed. by Francis Bamford and the Duke of Wellington, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1950), I, p.139.
- ²⁴ *The Making*, p.737.
- ²⁵ Rev. Lionel Thomas Berguer, *A Warning Letter to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, Intended Principally as a Call Upon the Middle Ranks, At this Important Crisis* (London: T. and J. Allman, 1819), p.28.
- ²⁶ Public Records Office, Treasury Solicitor's Papers, TS 11/875. *Report From the Committee of Secrecy, on PAPERS, Which Were Presented (Sealed up) to The House, by Lord Viscount Castlereagh, on the 4th Day of February, by Command of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent*, p.7.
- ²⁷ Marlow, p.113.
- ²⁸ Public Records Office, Home Office, HO 41/4, f 432 (Disturbance book vol. 4, 3 Jan 1818 to 1 Sep 1819).
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ See *An Examination of the Late Dreadful Occurrences at the Meeting at Manchester, on August 16, 1819; Being a Clear Statement and Review of its Object, Circumstances, and Results* (Newcastle on Tyne: William Andrew Mitchell, n. d.).
- ³¹ Bruton, p.42.
- ³² Marlow, p.50.
- ³³ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo*, p. 185.
- ³⁴ Berguer, p.36.
- ³⁵ Reid, p.84.
- ³⁶ *Passages*, p. 152.
- ³⁷ Bruton pp. 21-22.
- ³⁸ Cited by C. J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (Manchester: Macmillan, 1966), p.187.
- ³⁹ PRO, TS 36/6, 'The King versus Henry Hunt and others, taken from Mr. Gurney's short hand.'
- ⁴⁰ Letter from Place to Hobhouse, cited by Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place, 1771-1854* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), pp.141-2.
- ⁴¹ Cited by Reid, p.174.
- ⁴² *Sherwin's Weekly Political Register*, 21 August 1819.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *Address of the Reformers of Fandon, to Their Brothers the Pitmen, Keelmen, and Other Labourers, on the Tyne and Wear* [sic] (Newcastle Upon Tyne: John Marshall, 1819), p.7.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 8.
- ⁴⁶ Cited by Clive Bigham, *The Prime Ministers of Britain 1721-1921* (London: John Murray, 1924), p.199.
- ⁴⁷ HO 42/192, f.269.
- ⁴⁸ See Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poems and Prose* ed. by Tim Webb and George E. Donaldson (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), pp. 470-72.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp 472-73.
- ⁵⁰ Marlow, p.25.

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- ⁵¹ Letter from Carlyle to Bamford 21 April 1849. Cited by Morris Grant, *Samuel Bamford Portrait of a Radical* (Littleborough: George Kelsall, 1992), p.41.
- ⁵² *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), p.519.
- ⁵³ Letter to the George Keats's 17 September 1819. *The Letters of John Keats 1814 – 1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), II, p.186.
- ⁵⁴ *Passages*, p. 219.
- ⁵⁵ Ward, William S., *Literary Reviews in British Periodicals 1821-1826 a Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977)
- ⁵⁶ *The Monthly Magazine or British Register*, 52 (1821), p.450.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, Jan 1, 1822, p.502.
- ⁵⁸ Samuel Bamford, *Homely Rhymes, Poems, and Reminiscences* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1864), p.244.
- ⁵⁹ *The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse*, ed by Jerome McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.803.
- ⁶⁰ For more on this see Reid, pp. 108-9.
- ⁶¹ Bamford, *Homely Rhymes*, p.244.
- ⁶² William Hazlitt, *The Life of Napoleon*. See Hazlitt, *Works*, IV, p.240.
- ⁶³ Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquis of Londonderry (1769 – 1822). Castlereagh killed himself by cutting his carotid artery with a penknife (his razors had been taken away) while in his wife's bed. He is thought to have been being blackmailed for picking up a transvestite. See John Stanhope, *The Cato Street Conspiracy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), pp. 94 –95. It seems as though Castlereagh's fondness for picking up prostitutes was well known, William Hone hints at this in his *Official Account of the Noble Lord's Bite! And his Dangerous Condition, with Who Went to See him, and What Was Said, Sung, and Done, on the Melancholy Occasion* (London: William Hone, 1817), p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ James Chandler, *England in 1819; The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.18.
- ⁶⁵ Walmsley, p.132.
- ⁶⁶ Reid, p.221.
- ⁶⁷ *The Examiner*, 10 March, 1833.
- ⁶⁸ See Reid, p.25.
- ⁶⁹ This poem was printed in the *The Black Dwarf*, 7 (1821), pp. 670-72.
- ⁷⁰ Walmsley, p.132.
- ⁷¹ John Milton, *Areopagitica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), p.49.
- ⁷² Cited by Garratt, *Samuel Bamford Portrait of a Radical*, p.36.
- ⁷³ *The Loyal Man in the Moon* (London: J. Johnston, 1820).
- ⁷⁴ Gaskell had befriended Bamford shortly before she wrote her novel, and later wrote to Tennyson on Bamford's behalf to obtain a signed volume of his verse.

William Hone and Peterloo



Figure 2: George Cruikshank, The final cut from William Hone's *The Right Divine of Kings to Govern Wrong!* (London: William Hone, 1821)

Whitbread, and ye whose names I hardly know,
Of maiden Ciceros a beardless row,
Prentic'd at Waithman's, Moore's, or Creevey's shop,
Poor little embryo pop-guns, ready-ramm'd,
With Hone or Thelwall's paper pellets "cramm'd",
A lack-a-day! No one shall hear you pop!¹

Marcus Wood writes of William Hone's work:

To 'read' the works of Hone and Cruikshank demands the breaking-down of genre distinctions and notions of high and low art. Their texts are some of the most open in English. The temptation for the academic is to tie them down, or wrap them up neatly for storage in a prepared theoretical space. [...] Hone conjoins, reinvents, but never drowns his sources. As a result his work emerges as virtually impossible to categorise in

terms of style or genre. It is scrupulously classless and because of its unvarying basis in parody strangely authorless as well.²

I largely agree with Wood's analysis of Hone's work, although his warning against locating Hone's work in a 'prepared theoretical space' seems redundant. The scope of Hone's relationships in literary and political spheres, and the blend of 'high' and 'low' literature that characterises his work, makes this impossible. Hone he is friendly with the literary elite: William Hazlitt, Leigh and John Hunt, John Cam Hobhouse and Charles Lamb, and yet he maintains ties with the sometime pornographer William Benbow, reformers such as, William Cobbett, Major Cartwright and Henry Hunt, and revolutionaries such as 'Doctor' Watson and Arthur Thistlewood. He was also a prolific publisher, producing 175 publications between 1815 and 1821,³ the main focus of which is injustice and hypocrisy. Hone attacks the treatment of inmates in lunatic asylums, a judicial system that hangs people for the possession of forged paper money, the conditions of the urban working class, the Regent and the government of mediocrities he identifies as being responsible for the plight of the poor, champions Queen Caroline, publishes Keats's poems, John Clare's, Hazlitt's *Political Essays* at a loss, forges canto three of Byron's *Don Juan*, and eventually pursues his antiquarian interests in books such as *Ancient Mysteries Described* and the *Every-day Book*. Strangely though, Hone does not write about the most significant political incident of 1820, the Cato Street Conspiracy;⁴ but there may have been good reason for this—his closeness to the event. Home Office files show that Hone had attended meetings which also included radical figures such

as Samuel Bamford and Henry Hunt, as well as Spenceans such as ‘Doctor’ Watson, Thomas Preston and Arthur Thistlewood. Hone had actually been invited to a meeting that would include the Cato Street conspirators on the evening of 23 February (the date of the conspiracy) by William Cobbett. The meeting place was at the ‘Hole in the Wall’ in Barbican – which happened to be where Arthur Thistlewood and his men were meeting just prior to going to the loft in Cato Street where they would be discovered. But Hone excused himself from Cobbett’s invitation saying that he was going to visit John Cam Hobhouse at Newgate.⁵ He never forgave Cobbett for trying to involve him in the conspiracy as his daughter relates:

My mother’s belief that Cobbett was ‘a dangerous bad man’ was fortified by the fact of his having endeavoured to persuade my father to associate himself with such a gang as had been gathered together in Barbican. My father and Cobbett never met again.⁶

This suggests that Cobbett was also aware of the plans of the conspirators, and that on this occasion was perhaps working for the government -- who would have liked an excuse to arrest Hone after their failure to convict him during his three trials for blasphemous libel in 1817. Hone’s daughter Mrs. Burns claims that Hone as much as said that Cobbett knew of the conspiracy:

In the course of his last illness, while conversing with his family, the name of Cobbett turned up. He remarked, ‘Cobbett was a bad man; he once endeavoured to persuade me to adopt a course which I knew would be wrong, urging the necessity of a man studying the interests of himself and his family before that of the public, and he said he should not mind seeing London knee-deep in blood, if it served his family’.⁷

In this chapter I will be following on from Marcus Wood’s and Kyle Grimes’s⁸ excellent studies of Hone, by examining specifically his responses to the Peterloo massacre, for which he produced three main publications: *The Political*

House that Jack Built, *The Man in the Moon* and *A Slap at Slop* (which had combined sales of 250 000 copies)⁹ and an important, but less well-known, and critically neglected text, *Don Juan Canto the Third*.

Two days before the Peterloo massacre Hone published William Hazlitt's *Political Essays*, the publishers Taylor and Hessey having previously rejected Hazlitt's proposal for the book.¹⁰ Edgell Rickword says of the arrangement:

I do not think any one of Hazlitt's biographers has been generous enough in recognising the courage of Hone's action, for the book runs to over four hundred pages, and he paid the author a hundred pounds into the bargain. It does not seem to have done the publisher much good, for we find the sheets bound up with a cancel-title under the imprint of Simpkin Marshall in only three years time.¹¹

Duncan Wu notes that the first edition was still on sale at a reduced price as late as 1840.¹² But as Tom Paulin points out: 'Angry, rough, vigorous, wild, Hazlitt's *Political Essays* draws sustenance from its identification with Hone. Though Hone was viewed as an opportunist, ruffian journalist, Hazlitt obviously welcomed the association with him, and enjoyed his and Cruikshank's company'.¹³ In fact there seems to have been a very close relationship between Hone and Hazlitt, as Patmore recounts: 'If I were required to name the person among all Hazlitt's intimates in whose society he seemed to take the most unmingled pleasure – or should I say with whom he felt himself most at ease and 'comfortable' – I should say it was the late William Hone, author of the celebrated "Parodies.'" ¹⁴ In a review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*, the reviewer for *The*

Quarterly Review also associates Hazlitt and Hone, calling them (along with Leigh Hunt), ‘asses’:

Apollo [...] finds us occupied (as Perseus found the Hyperboreans of old) in his favourite amusement, the sacrifice of asses – Hone, Hunt, Hazlitt, and other χνωεαλα. — Were they not more vicious than stupid we should almost feel inclined to pity the unconscious levity of the ‘beasts’ at their fate!!¹⁵

The reviewer affects a high style to distance himself from the accessible and therefore vulgar styles of Hazlitt, Hone and Hunt. He then labels them with Washington Irving’s recently coined term ‘slang-whanger’¹⁶ and then defines it as ‘*One who makes use of political or other gabble, vulgarly called slang, that serves to amuse the rabble.*’ And in order to ‘amuse the rabble’, ‘the disciplines of the Radical school lose no opportunity of insinuating their poison into all sorts of subjects; a drama, a novel, a poem, an essay, or a school-book, is in their hands an equally convenient vehicle.’¹⁷ A review of Hazlitt’s *Political Essays* in the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* similarly insists that Hazlitt’s style in the essays is downwardly mobile:

Because Cobbett was plain, Hazlitt must be vulgar, nay, so foul-mouthed, that we should tremble to see the eye of a modest female directed to his polluted pages. Because Cobbett, scarcely knowing, frequently violated the rules of rhetoric, Hazlitt chooses to neglect the most obvious dictates of decency. Cobbett generally addressed himself to the illiterate; it was therefore necessary that he should talk in a manner level to their acquirements. Hazlitt, on the contrary, bespeaks the notice of the high-born and the learned, but forgets that homely figures and disgusting allusions are not the most likely means of securing their attention, far less their approbation.¹⁸

But if Hazlitt and Hone were identified together politically and stylistically, outwardly their focus of attack was different. Hone always writes about specific political events and the characters pertaining to them, whereas Hazlitt writes on a more general philosophical level about politics. After Waterloo it is said that

Hazlitt went on a drinking bender so severe that afterwards he never drank again, but the event that was Peterloo seems to have produced nothing; Hazlitt unlike Hone neglects to say anything about the Manchester authorities' show of power. P. P. Howe excuses this, writing: 'In 1819, the culminating year of the post-Waterloo home policy, as has been recognised, Hazlitt's political pen was silent; but he was justified in thinking it had done enough.'¹⁹ And in a way it had; Hazlitt's words were utilised by the Hunt brothers in the post-Peterloo backlash against the state, and specifically against the Regent's remarks on the event, which were revealed to the public in *The Examiner* of 29 August 1819, where Leigh Hunt printed a letter from Lord Sidmouth to the Earl of Derby forwarding the Regent's congratulations to the magistrates who had instructed the Manchester Yeomanry:

I have been commanded by His Royal Highness to request that your Lordship will express to the Magistrates of the county palatine of Lancaster, who attended on that day, the great satisfaction derived by His Royal Highness from their prompt, decisive, and efficient measures for the preservation of the public tranquillity.²⁰

In the same issue were Hazlitt's observations 'On the Regal Character', taken from his *Political Essays*, which had been published by Hone only two weeks before. In Hazlitt's essay the status of a King is deflated to a person only interested in the 'merest trifles', whose opinion is not important: 'The common regal character is then the reverse of what it ought to be. It is the purely *personal*, occupied with its own petty feelings, prejudices, and pursuits.'²¹ Hazlitt then goes on to make remarks that could have been written for Peterloo:

They regard men crawling on the face of the earth, as we do insects that cross our path, and survey the common drama of human life, as a fantoccini exhibition got up for their amusement. [...] Without the common feelings of humanity in their own breasts, they have no regard for them in their aggregate amount and accumulating force. Reigning in contempt of the people, they would crush and trample upon all power but their own. They consider the claims of justice and compassion as so many impertinent interferences with the royal prerogative. They despise the millions of slaves whom they see linked to the foot of the throne; and they soon hate what they despise. [...] Their blind fatuity and insensibility to all beyond themselves, that, transmitted through successive generations and confirmed by regal intermarriages, in time makes them idiots.²²

Hazlitt's essay written in May 1818 was an ideal counter for the Hunt brothers

to use against the words of a madman's son. However this may not have been

Hazlitt's only contribution to the post-Peterloo fight against the state being

waged by the radical press. Hazlitt's grandson, W. C. Hazlitt, claims that his

grandfather may have been more productive than Howe assumes, and may

actually have helped Hone in the production of some of his squibs:

It was at the 'Southampton' that Mr. Hazlitt, Mr. Cruikshank, and Mr. Hone used to meet and discuss the subjects for Hone's next squib. I believe that my grandfather is answerable for some of the outlines of these, and for suggesting to Cruikshank what he thought was the salient point for illustration. The story goes that he was once trying to make himself understood to Cruikshank, when the latter got up, and dipping his finger in his ale-glass, traced something in beer on the table. "Is that what you mean, sir?" he asked, and my grandfather assented.²³

The suggestion that Hazlitt, Hone and Cruikshank met 'in the dingy wainscoted

coffee-room of the Southampton Arms, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery

Lane'²⁴ to work on the outlines of Hone's forthcoming squibs is one that

deserves more attention than this thesis is capable of, but further research in this

area would be useful for Hazlitt studies and as an example of collaboration

between writers, who, at times, epitomize 'high' and 'low' literature.

Don Juan Canto the Third, unlike the more successful *Political House*, or *The Man in the Moon*, was written for the consumption of the literary elite (perhaps the reason that there was only one edition of the poem, unlike *The Political House* which went through over fifty). The poem actually predates canto three of Byron's *Don Juan* by several months, and is a full length Byronic counterfeit running to 114 stanzas. Hone cleverly has the poem printed by a T. Davis (Murray had sub-contracted the printing of the poem out to Thomas Davison, without including his own name on the title page), making it look, to the casual observer, as if the poem is a genuine continuation by the same author as cantos one and two.²⁵ To many readers it would have seemed as though Hone's *Don Juan* was more credible than many of the forgeries of Byron's poem that were circulating in London.²⁶ It was after all entirely possible that Hone would be the publisher of canto three. Hone had already printed Southey's *Wat Tyler* in 1817, much to the poet laureate's embarrassment and anger. Sherwood, Neely and Jones had printed the poem (which Southey claimed was stolen) in February 1817, a few months before Hone, but anonymously. It was Hone who put the name of the poet, who had written *Wat Tyler* in 1794 (before he became an apostate²⁷) on the title page. Hone had been angered by Southey's reaffirmation of opposition to reform recently published in the *Quarterly Review*, where he had written, 'If the opinions of profligate and mistaken men may be thought to reflect disgrace upon the nation, of which they constitute a part, it might verily be said, that England was never so much disgraced as at this time.'²⁸ Southey

eventually decided to publish *Wat Tyler* himself in 1837, and in his preface he takes on the charge of being a turncoat that was levied at him in 1817:

Twenty years ago, upon the surreptitious publication of this notable drama, and the use which was made of it, I said what it then became me to say in a letter to one of those gentlemen who thought proper to revile me, not for having entertained democratical opinions, but for having outgrown them, and learnt to appreciate and to defend the institutions of my country. [...] Wherefore then, it may be asked, have I included *Wat Tyler* in this authentic collection of my poetical works? For these reasons – that it may not be supposed that I think it any reproach to have written it, or that I am more ashamed of having been a republican, than of having been a boy.²⁹

Hone's timing for the release of *Wat Tyler* was impeccable; the tale of peasant revolt was put before the public just after the Spa Fields riots, with Southey's Tyler having a touch of the industrial modern being a blacksmith, rather than a tiler.³⁰ Hone's continuation of Byron's *Don Juan* was no less timely, being released immediately after Peterloo, and at a time when radical publishers such as Richard Carlile were feeling the full force of the law. The first stanza of *Don Juan Canto the Third* claims that the poet (Byron), is sending his new canto to Hone for publication, rather than John Murray, as Murray will not reveal that he is the publisher of the poet's most controversial work³¹:I

Miss Haidee and Don Juan pleaded well;
At least my publisher *of late* so tells me,
Although the world he does not chuse to tell,
Yet, every body knows 'tis he who sells me:
To sing what furthermore the *pair* befell,
(As he declines my book and thus compels me,
Because my "*guinea trash*" he will not own,)
I send this Canto into Mr. Hone.

Hone had already criticised Byron and Murray, for printing cantos one and two of *Don Juan* anonymously, in his *Don Juan Unmasked*!:

You do not ask with Mr. Hazlitt, ‘Has Mr. Murray turned Quaker, that he styles himself John Murray in the title-page?’ You do not select Mr. Hazlitt’s quotation and say, ‘Mark you his absolute John?’ No *Don Juan* appears without Mr. Murray’s honest name to it. He publishes, but makes no sign [...] *Don Juan* is a poem by Lord Byron.³²

In this obscure publication, which attempts to enlighten the reading public as to who the author and publisher of *Don Juan* are, Hone criticises Murray and Byron for their cowardice in not revealing their names—but it goes deeper than this.

In 1817 Hone had been tried three times for what was pretty much the same charge; twice for blasphemous and seditious libel, and once for blasphemous libel, for printing *The Late John Wilkes’s Catechism*, *The Political Litany* and *The Sinecurist’s Creed*. The following parody of the Ten Commandments is from *The Late John Wilkes’s Catechism* (these are the last six):

- V. Honour the Regent and the helmets of the Life Guards, that thy stay may be long in the Place, which thy Lord the Minister giveth thee.
- VI. Thou shalt not call starving to death murder.
- VII. Thou shalt not call Royal gallivanting adultery.
- VIII. Thou shalt not say, that to rob the Public is to steal.
- IX. Thou shalt bear false witness against the People.
- X. Thou shalt not covet the People’s applause, thou shalt not covet the People’s praise, nor their good name, nor their esteem, nor their reverence, nor any reward that is theirs.³³

Symbolically Hone links himself with Wilkes’s early radicalism. In his publications released after 1816 Hone frequently states that his shop is at ‘45 Ludgate Hill’. As Robert Southey noted in a footnote to his ‘A Vision of Judgement’, ‘45’ was a significant number for the radicals. Looking back to the unrest of the 1760’s, Southey quotes Dr. Franklin: ‘The mob (spirited up by numbers of different ballads, sung or roared in every street) requiring gentlemen and ladies of all ranks, as they passed in their carriages, to shout for Wilkes and

liberty, marking the same words on all their coaches with chalk, and No. 45 on every door, which extends a vast long way along the roads in the country.’³⁴

Wilkes edited the counter to the Ultra-Tory *The Briton* -- *The North Briton*, and, in number 45 of this paper (23 April 1763) he insinuated that the King had lied in a speech from the throne. As a result his *North Briton* premises were the subject of an arson attempt by Sheriff Harley, his men, and ‘the common hangman’.³⁵

Hone had allied himself with the radicalism of the second half of the eighteenth century that had ferociously attacked Bute’s government and the King, and this was the mainstay of Hone’s defence against the charge of blasphemous and seditious libel when he defended himself in court, without the aid of a lawyer, using the unusual defence that his parody was attacking the state, and not the word of God. His acquittal was a great victory for the radical press and is said to have led to the early death of Lord Ellenborough. Hone’s success prompted Leigh Hunt to praise his victory in *The Examiner* on 21 December 1817, and Keats to write to his brothers:

Hone the publisher’s trial you must find very amusing; and as Englishmen very encouraging – his *Not Guilty* is a thing, which not to have been, would have dulled still more Liberty’s emblazoning – Lord Ellenborough has been paid in his own coin – Wooler and Hone have done us an essential service.³⁶

Keats was enthusiastic enough about Hone’s victory to make him the subject of his sonnet ‘Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream’, where he casts him as Daniel opposing the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar (the government):

Before he went to feed with owls and bats
 Nebuchadnezzar had an ugly dream,
 Worse than an Hus'if's when she thinks her cream
 Made a Naumachia for mice and rats.
 So scared, he sent for that 'Good King of Cats'
 Young Daniel, who soon did pluck away the beam
 From out his eye, and said 'I do not deem
 Your sceptre worth a straw—your Cushions old door-mats.'
 A horrid nightmare similar somewhat
 Of late has haunted a most valiant Crew
 Of loggerheads and Chapmen—we are told
 That any Daniel though he be a sot
 Can make their lips turn pale of hue
 By drawing out 'ye are that head of Gold.'

Hone is in opposition to the tyranny of the government and in his trial highlighted the hypocrisy of the state; their crimes being so great that they have no right to persecute him. Their institutions are 'not worth a straw' and even the lowest of the radical press, 'any Daniel though he be a sot / Can make their lying lips turn pale of hue' by exposing their lies, and can thus bring down 'that head of Gold'.³⁷ Thomas Moore is another who celebrated Hone's success, with a poem:

Nor do I owe to these alone
 My great success; but much to HONE
 The parodist, who was acquitted,
 And who the *Judge himself* out-witted.³⁸

However Hone's victory in court did not please everyone: Dorothy Wordsworth wrote, 'The acquittal of Hone is enough to make one out of love with English Juries.'³⁹ But as Olivia Smith points out the trials did have an effect on Hone's

work: ‘After his three trials for blasphemous libel, Hone placed advertisements in every London paper, promising not to publish any more scriptural parodies and suggesting that others do likewise.’⁴⁰ Hone’s problem with Byron and Murray is that in stanzas 205 and 206 of canto one of *Don Juan*, Byron also parodies the Ten Commandments, and ‘they have been published by Mr. Murray, in direct opposition to his friends of the *Courier* and *Quarterly*, in open contempt of Bills of Indictment’.⁴¹

CCV

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell’s Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
Commit – flirtation with the muse of Moore.

CCVI

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby’s Muse,
His Pegasus, nor anything that’s his;
Thou shalt not bear false witness like “the Blue’s”—
(There’s one, at least, is very fond of this);
Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose;
This is true criticism, and you may kiss—
Exactly as you please, or not, --the rod;
But if you don’t, I’ll lay it on, by G—d!

(*Don Juan*, canto 1)

It is interesting that some of Byron’s targets were anticipated by Hone in *The Sinecurist’s Creed*, from 1817:

And COLERIDGE shall have a Jew's Harp, and a Rabbinical Talmud, and a Roman Missal: and WORDSWORTH shall have a Psalter, and a Primer, and a Reading Easy: And unto SOUTHEY's Sack-but shall be duly added: and with Harp, Sack-but, and Psalter, they shall make merry, and discover themselves before Derry Down Triangle, and HUM his most gracious master, whose Kingdom shall have no end.⁴²

For Hone, Murray is a hypocrite and coward for not revealing that he is the publisher of Byron's poem which openly defies the blasphemy law that Murray and his friends pretend to uphold. Hone believes that Murray is doing Byron a disservice by not admitting that he is the publisher of *Don Juan*, as this would enable Byron to reveal that he is the author, and would therefore aid the freedom of the press, and the language that it could safely employ. But in a letter to John Murray regarding the publication of a collected edition of his verse, Byron insists on keeping his *Don Juan* anonymous:

Now if you publish them in the same volume with "Don Juan" - they identify Don Juan as mine - which I don't think worth a Chancery Suit about my daughter's guardianship; - as in your present code a facetious poem - is sufficient to take away a man's rights over his family.⁴³

There appears to be some jealousy behind Hone's assertion that Murray owes Byron his loyalty, as he has benefited financially by their working relationship:

III

John owes me much and need'nt have been ashamed
To put his name upon the title page, [...]

IV

You're witness here I don't get passionate,
I never yet was cooler in my life;
But all men know, Drab John was rendered fashionable
When my son Harold took the Muse to wife:

(*Don Juan Canto the Third*)

Even in 1821 Hone continued to think of himself and Byron as pursuing a common cause, as we can see in an unpublished letter from Hone to John Cam

Hobhouse: ‘The Printing Press ‘works well’, -- ‘Sardanapalus’ – ‘God save the King’ – ‘Cain’, a mystery published by John Murray! Lord Byron must come in for his share of the Quarterly cat.’⁴⁴ (Hone was to come in for a scathing eight page attack from the *Quarterly Review* in 1824 where he is throughout disparagingly referred to as ‘the Pamphleteer’).⁴⁵ But Hone’s *Don Juan Canto the Third* is not only about Murray and Byron; it is a complex piece full of contemporary allusions, and various points of attack: the cowardice and hypocrisy of John Murray; Coleridge and the reading public; the press, the Regent; the issue of reform; Peterloo; radical public meetings, and the spy system.

The poem begins with Juan’s arrival in London, after travelling through France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Holland. Juan is now married to Haidee, and they have twelve children. Juan then becomes a ‘News Retailer’, first of all dealing in the established papers:

XVI

There lay the Chronicle, and there the Sun,
The Globe, and once a week th’ Examiner;
The Advertiser, the Republican,
The Herald and the Statesman and the Star;
The Courier too, enough to startle one,
The greatest Liar of the whole by far; [...]

Tiring of this Juan then sets himself up as a publisher of ‘Rubbish on Reform’, printing a paper called ‘The Devilled Biscuit’:

XXV

And Juan called it so, because concocted
Of every hot or savoury Ingredient;
Upholding principles the same as Locke did,
Who built a paper limit for the obedient:

Thereafter Peterloo occurs, and Juan goes to the meeting held at Palace Yard, Westminster, on 2nd September to condemn the massacre, addressed by Burdett, ‘*classic* Hobhouse’ (LIV), and Major Cartwright—where he is arrested as a traitor. The poem ends with Juan’s apprehension and the suggestion that there may be a Canto four ‘if Juan shouldn’t die in jail’ (CXIII).

Don Juan Canto the Third is the first of Hone’s publications to refer to the Peterloo massacre. It can be dated before *The Political House* because it does not mention the Six Acts, which were announced at the end of November 1819, and undoubtedly Hone was incensed by these measures as can be seen in *The Political House that Jack Built* and *The Man in the Moon*. In *Don Juan Canto the Third* the poet is not present at St. Peter’s Field on August 16, he is in London:

XXXIV

I saw no swords, or Yeoman sworn to draw them,
But I confess at window frame compact,
High over-head I saw a noble nob—
They said the owner’s name was Irish Bob.

Rather than exclusively blame the Manchester Yeomanry for the killings in Manchester, Hone sees their controllers, from a ‘window frame compact’, as the true murderers. In particular Hone identifies ‘Irish Bob’, Robert Stewart (Lord

Castlereagh), and the government, as those whose ruling ideas have contaminated the Yeomanry against the people.

XXXV

I often wish this Bob, like Bobadil,
(who struts our stage the very prince of stormers)
Upon *his* plan would just contrive to kill
Some fifty thousand of these vile Reformers;
Or Sabre them into a Surgeon's bill,
Your sabre is the best of all deformers:
Men's *felt* is soft, and so are women's *Dunstables*.
Besides, he'd save the king some cash and constables.

Castlereagh reminds Hone of Bobadil in Ben Jonson's *Everyman in his Humour*, the cowardly braggart captain who contrives to kill 40 000 men:

I would select nineteene, more, to my selfe, throughout the land; gentlemen they should bee, of good spirit and able constitution, I would choose them by an instinct, [...] This done, say the enemie were fortie thousand strong, we twentie would come into the field, [...] wee would kill them; twentie more, kill them too; and thus, would kill every man, his twentie a day, that's twentie score; twenty score, that's two hundreth; two hundreth a day, five dayes a thousand; fortie thousand. [...] And this, will I venture my poore gentleman-like carcasse to performe (provided, there be no treason practis'd upon us) by faire, and discreet manhood, that is, civilly by the sword.⁴⁶

Hone's point is that the government will have to kill off all of the reformers if they want to end demands for political change; therefore if the government continues to oppose reform the result will be revolution. Castlereagh's colleague, Henry Addington (Lord Sidmouth),⁴⁷ is portrayed as a shadowy evil figure in the next stanza:

XXXVI

And here I would particularly urge on
The circle grave to whom I sing aloud,
That I observed a solemn looking surgeon,
Studying a book unjostled by the crowd;

“Tis well thought I – I donned my best habergeon,
When Doctors come, of their profession proud,
And study ‘*Cross’s Surgery*’* on the spot!
There’s many a Radical will soon be shot.

Hone introduces Sidmouth in a subtle and subversive way, as befits the head of the country’s spy system. (In *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Street Gang*, he is described as ‘the daemon of traps, and beaks, and gad-flies, and eaves-droppers.’)⁴⁸ ‘The circle grave’ is a reference to Sidmouth’s ‘circular letter’ issued on 27 March 1817 and sent to magistrates around the country. In this Sidmouth encourages the arrest of vendors of pamphlets and newspapers which could be considered seditious and blasphemous—leading to Hone’s label for Sidmouth, ‘the Doctor, of *Circular* fame, / A Driv’ller, a Bigot, a Knave without shame’.⁴⁹ Sidmouth had been given the name of ‘Doctor’ by Canning ‘Who dubb’d *him* ‘the Doctor’, whom he now calls ‘brother’,⁵⁰ in the first stanza of ‘The Grand Consultation’:

If the health and the strength, and the pure vital breath
Of old England must be doctor’d to death,
Oh! Why must we die of one doctor alone?
And why must that doctor be just such a one
As Doctor Henry Addington?

Canning, always conscious of the paucity of his own claims to social superiority, enjoyed reminding his colleagues, and foes, of their ‘lowly’ origins, especially Addington who had briefly reached the office of Prime Minister in 1801, an office that Canning aspired to. Sidmouth’s father had been the physician to the Earl of Chatham, and through him Addington met his son, William Pitt the younger, who helped to begin his political career.

When Hone introduces the Peterloo massacre in his poem, he does not utilise the emotive statistics of so many dead, or hundreds wounded, that most texts dealing with the event use. Instead he personalises the experience of the day by focusing on one person, Elizabeth Gaunt:

XLII

I'm but a man, but if I were a woman
I should not be so much afraid of Guards,
But like Eliza Gaunt I dread a Yeoman,

The Guards, or the regular soldiers, would not be a threat to a woman, as they are professional and have a sense of honour, but the Yeomanry have none of these virtues. Hone asks if the middle-class Yeomanry were aware of who they were attacking. They may feel it is fine to attack the working classes, but some of the crowd may be nobler than they are; Elizabeth Gaunt may be descended from the aristocracy:

XLIII

Now, that I'm musing on this Betty Gaunt,
I wonder if she's lineally descended
By Father, Mother, Brother, Uncle, Aunt,
From him who Lusitanian Tower defended;

John of Gaunt⁵¹ had headed a corrupt government during the reign of Richard II, but this is of no concern to Hone. Gaunt, for Hone, is an early champion of freedom of speech because he had supported the Lollards who had translated the Bible into English, thereby threatening the authority of the church by giving ordinary people access to the word of God. The fact that Elizabeth Gaunt is

pregnant perhaps makes him think of her ancestry, and ‘Betty’s’ good name is placed in opposition to that of the Yeomanry:

XLIV

You used some *Centuries past* to have a phrase
For neat expression of some trifle petty,
I’ve often heard it in my younger days,
If I remember right,-- “My Eye and Betty!”
Aye, “Betty Martin” – but Wordsworthian Rays
Of Genius now afford us one as pretty,
Foy for our Martin – “Pshaw, ‘tis all my aunt,
‘Tis all my uncle’s wife and Betty Gaunt!”

Hone is reminded of another Betty—Wordsworth’s Betty Foy, and if Elizabeth Gaunt concentrates the plight of many then the Yeomanry are identified with Wordsworth’s ‘The Idiot Boy’:

Perhaps, with heads and heels on fire,
And like the very soul of evil,
He’s galloping away, away,
And so will gallop on for aye,
The bane of all that dread the Devill

The words used by loyalists to describe the massacre, such as ‘Occurrence’ used by the *Courier* to describe ‘the Manchester Event in the *best* terms’,⁵² are of interest to Hone, as is the strange political alliance that the massacre has produced between the ‘blackguard’ and the ‘gentleman’⁵³:

XLV

O Betty! fare thee well, and if for ever,
I must an Exile part from Hunt and thee.
Let not the Manchester *Occurrence* sever
The tender bond of our Triumvirry:
You’ll find that Hunt as shrewd a cove, and clever,--

I must be off to Palace Yard, and see
If they intend to poke the Brighton lances
Thro' Cartwright, Hobhouse, Walker or Sir Francis.

Juan then goes to Palace Yard to hear Burdett condemn the actions of the Manchester authorities, but he realises that to associate with radicals and reformers is to risk being set up by one of Sidmouth's many spies who have infiltrated radical groups, and who find easy pickings at events such as the Palace Yard meeting:

LVIII

I'm cautious now of what Cockade I wear,
I just observed an Oliver who went hence
To build *Reforming Castles* in the air;
And, tho' for ever in a dungeon pent hence,
He'd swear he saw me in St. James's Square
With jumping McGregor, or Simon Bolivar,
And pike-armed Radicals – Oh Judas Oliver!

Sir Francis Burdett's 'speech' to an estimated crowd of 30 000 people, describing what happened at Peterloo, is then retold in verse:

LXVII

"Even thus met Englishmen in peaceful guise
Upon the firm earth of that saintly field;
Their council hall o'er-domed by rolling skies,
That spread, they rashly deemed, an ample shield,
For those that in the open day-light wield
Petition's olive branch, -- the freeman's tongue,--
But ne'er to *Speech* did the oppressor yield,--
Already to their steeds the Yeomen sprung,
And note of maddening charge their hollow bugle rung.

No Riot Act has been read, 'ne'er to *Speech* did the oppressor yield', before
Meagher the trumpeter, decides to sound the charge:

LXIX.

“Fast fell defenceless manhood in that hour,
And womanhood and childhood lost their charm,
Humanity her sceptre, -- thought her power;
And justice was a bruised and broken arm,
Upon the rampant field of that *alarm*.
On every side was heard a fiendish cry,
Where slaughter's sickle reaped her crimson farm,
Wreathing the dead ears round her temples high,
As the REFORMER fell, -- and saddening sunk to die.

Peterloo has produced an unwelcome result, “Sleep on – the stainless banner of
Reform/Shall never more to thy applauses wave”, implying that there is no
longer any scope for peaceful demonstrations; all that is left now is violence, and
probably a revolution.

The most successful of Hone's publications was his famous *The Political House
that Jack Built*. This squib, written in response to the Peterloo massacre, was
first published in December 1819, and by March had run through fifty-two
editions. Unsurprisingly the squib elicited a worried response from loyalists,
such as Southey who commented, ‘I have seen that previous production of
Hone's. It is exactly one of those things which ought to be brought before a
jury’.⁵⁴ But of course it wouldn't be: the establishment feared another acquittal
after Hone's three previous successes. Much has been written on the models for

Hone's *Political House* (Marcus Wood's *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822*, provides the most thoroughly researched study of the squib's antecedents) and of Hone's reliance on the nursery rhyme. It was a link that Hone made himself, when he describes the conception of his most successful work:

After my trials, the newspapers were continually at me, calling me an acquitted felon. The worm will turn when trodden on. One day, when I had been exasperated beyond bearing, one of my children, a little girl of four years old, was sitting on my knee, very busy, looking at the pictures of a child's book; 'What have you got there?' said I – "The House that Jack Built" – an idea flashed across my mind; I saw at once the use that might be made of it; I took it from her [...] I sat up all night and wrote "The House that Jack Built. [...] In the morning I sent for Cruikshank, read it to him, and put myself into the attitudes of the figures I wanted drawn. Some of the characters Cruikshank had never seen, but I gave him the likeness as well as the attitude.⁵⁵

The pedagogical aspect of Hone's squib is further insisted upon in 'The Author's Dedication to his Political Godchild. To Doctor Slop, In Acknowledgment of Many Public Testimonials of His Filial Gratitude; and to The Nursery of Children Six Feet High, His Readers, For the Delight and Instruction of their Uninformed Minds'. Stoddart is Hone's 'Political Godchild', as he has been forced to respond to Hone's squibs, through the loyalist association, by producing texts which tend to co-opt Hone's 'kind' of writing. Stoddart was behind many of the crude loyalist association pamphlets being published by the likes of William Wright (whom Hone calls a "Pedibus-Annexis' Publisher"). These publications attempt to challenge Hone at his own game by producing similar pamphlets (frequently blatant copies with an inverted message) that also synthesise woodcuts and doggerel. Hone has in a sense created the public sphere that he inhabits, and has set the format that others will have to use to attack him, and thus battle for mastery of the genre that he has

created. In a way Hone becomes a plebeian Burke. As Michael Scrivener points out, looking back to the 1790's, writers such as 'Paine and Thelwall were not utterly free to construct a democratic ideology; rather, they had to revise and counter the powerful ideas and images that Burke had already supplied.'⁵⁶

Opponents of Hone were forced to do the same.

The Political House that Jack Built is a squib about the impoverished state of the country and the people identified by Hone as bringing it to such a pass, but its main focus is the Regent, 'The Dandy of Sixty', and in the personal nature of Hone's attack its closest literary precursor, in my view, is John Skelton's *Colin Cloute*, with which the antiquarian Hone would probably have been familiar.

Both poems employ the same roughness of the nursery rhymes couplet form, and both centre on attacking an individual, Wolseley in Skelton's poem and the Regent in Hone's, and there is more than a superficial resemblance in the imagery they employ:

For though my rhyme be ragged,
Tattered and Jagged,
Rudely rain beaten,
Rusty and moth-eaten,
If ye take well therewith,
It hath in it some pith.
(Colin Cloute, 53-58).

These are the people
all tatter'd and torn,

Who curse the day
 wherein they were born,
 On account of Taxation
 too great to be borne,
 And pray for relief,
 from night to morn;
 (*The Political House that Jack Built*)

This verse is accompanied by a Cruikshank cut, which shows ‘the people’ not angry and seditious, as the loyalist association would portray them, and as Hone’s pamphlet certainly is, but beaten, tired, and without hope, resembling Hazlitt’s description of himself before he had a voice, ‘dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless’,⁵⁷ while the Manchester Yeomanry hack away in the background like a bad dream:



Figure 3: George Cruikshank, ‘These are the People all tatter’d and torn’, *The Political House that Jack Built* (London: William Hone, 1819)

As John Wardroper points out, this cut could have been produced for Shelley’s ‘England 1819’, with its ‘A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field’.⁵⁸

But, for Hone, there exists a voice, which is fighting to end their troubles – the printing press:



Figure 4: George Cruikshank, cut of a Stanhope press. From *The Political House that Jack Built*.

The radical press will defy the new acts, regardless of any force that the authorities can employ, and in doing so will defeat Old Corruption through education of the people. In *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Street Gang*, Hone even claims that the late Lord Castlereagh ‘had been PRESSED to death’:

Underneath this PRESS doth *lie*
As much *blarney* as could die,
Which, when alive, did *varnish* give
To as much knavery as could live.

And, one would think that the press had actually suggested Castlereagh’s chosen method of dying. Cruikshank had drawn Castlereagh cutting his own throat, two

years before his death, in the cut ‘Thus Perish All’ from *The Queen in the Moon*⁵⁹, published in April 1820:



Figure 5: George Cruikshank, ‘Thus Perish All’, *The Queen in the Moon*. (London: Grove, 1820)

There is a collective suicidal frenzy; Canning accompanies Castlereagh, his former duelling foe, by blowing his own brains out, while Sidmouth, the man responsible for many judicial murders hangs himself.

The image of the modern iron Stanhope press, used in *The Political House*, highlights a contradiction in Hone’s work. Accompanying all of Cruikshank’s cuts are quotations from Cowper’s *The Task*. As Kyle Grimes observes, Hone seems to share ‘Cowper’s scepticism about the eighteenth-century passion for scientific experiment and discovery’.⁶⁰ Nevertheless Hone embraced the benefits of modern technology, which allowed him to reach a greater readership.

However the appeal of Hone’s squib lay in its sense of fun juxtaposed with its

revelation of the nasty characters he identifies as ruining Britain. Cruikshank's portrayal of the fat ridiculous Regent became infamous:



—————'Great offices will have
Great talents.'

Figure 6: George Cruikshank, 'The Dandy of Sixty', *The Political House that Jack Built*

George's *fleur de lys* are arranged like peacock's feathers, and he is squeezed into the absurdly decorated sort of military uniform that he was fond of, bearing, alongside medals and orders, a corkscrew. But Hone's accompanying text was anything but funny:

This is THE MAN—all shaven and shorn,
All cover'd with Orders – and all forlorn;
THE DANDY OF SIXTY,
Who bows with a grace,

And has *taste* in wigs, collars,
 cuirasses and lace;
Who, to tricksters, and fools,
 leaves the State and its treasure,
And, when Britain's in tears,
 sails about at his pleasure:
Who spurn'd from his presence
 the Friends of his youth,
And now has not one
 who will tell him the truth;
Who took to his counsels,
 in evil hour,
The Friends to the Reasons
 of lawless Power;

Hone refers to George's desertion of the Whigs in 1812, and suggests that his new allies, who made the decision to attack the people in St. Peter's Field, are counselled, and were therefore instructed, by the Regent himself to carry out the attack on the people.

Often sold with *The Political House* is *The Clerical Magistrate*; in this Hone attacks the Reverend Charles Ethelston – the churchman and magistrate who was reputed to have read the Riot Act at St. Peter's Field:

THIS IS A PRIEST,
 made 'according to Law',
Who, on being ordain'd
 vow'd, by rote, like a daw,[...]
Commits starving vagrants,
 and orders Distress
On the poor, for their Rates, --
 signs warrants to press,

And beats up for names
to a Loyal Address:
Would indict, for Rebellion,
those who Petition;
And, all who look peaceable,
try for Sedition;
If the People were legally Meeting,
in quiet,
Would pronounce it, decidedly – *sec. Stat.*
– a Riot,
And order the Soldiers
‘to aid and assist’,
That is – kill the helpless,
who cannot resist.
He, through vowing ‘from all worldly studies
to cease’,
Breaks the Peace of the Church,
to be Justice of Peace;
Breaks his vows made to Heaven –
a pander for Power;
A Perjurer – a guide to the People
no more;
On God turns his back,
when he turns the State’s Agent;
And damns his own Soul,
to be friends with the ____.

Hone’s attack on Ethelston is along the same lines as the one he makes on John Murray. In him he sees a hypocrite, because he ‘Breaks the Peace of the Church, to be Justice of Peace’. It may seem strange that Hone, who had been tried three times for his parodies on the Ten Commandments, should be bothered about a churchman who was an agent of the state. But in fact Hone was a

deeply religious man, who had uniquely and successfully claimed for his defence that he was attacking the state in his parodies, not the church, and this defence was successful with three juries. In Ethelston he sees a 'Perjurer' who has renounced God in favour of the Regent, who once again is associated with Satan.

There were many imitations of Hone's *Political House*, but as Marcus Wood, writing about *The Constitutional House*, observes:

In its grim self-righteousness the publication is almost completely humourless. This is a common failing in the loyalist imitations of the Hone pamphlets. They do not capture the combination of fantasy, frivolity, and rage which underpins the originals. This is hardly surprising given that the didactic impulse behind loyalist propaganda was one of reassurance. It is hard to work up a tone of savage indignation when one's basic message is to tell people that, despite appearances, they are really living in an ideal state.⁶¹

The numbers of these loyalist association texts that were sold was not large, the verse employed lacks the immediacy and anger of Hone's, and the cuts are often of a very poor quality; although sometimes George Cruikshank, who did not seem to mind taking money from the other side even if it meant attacking his friend, was employed. In the following cut from *The Men in the Moon*, 'A Printer and his Devil Restrained' (a loyalist pamphlet illustrated by Cruikshank), we see Castlereagh whipping Hone, as Sidmouth and Canning stand by and watch appreciatively:



Figure 7: George Cruikshank, 'A Printer and his Devil Restrained', *The Men in the Moon: or, The Devil to Pay*. (London: Dean & Munday, 1820)

Lockhart identified Cruikshank as 'a clever, sharp caricaturist, and nothing more—a free-handed, comical fellow, who will do anything he is paid for, and who is quite contented to dine off the proceeds of a "George IV" to-day, and those of a "Hone" or a "Cobbett" to-morrow.'⁶² Cruikshank had in fact taken pay-offs from Carlton House not to portray the King 'in any immoral situation'.⁶³ The artist continued to ridicule George, but seems to have stopped short of the pornographic representations of the King and his mistresses that J. L. Marks was producing for Benbow. But this is not to say that Cruikshank was entirely mercenary. In a cut produced for the loyal association pamphlet, *The Radical Ladder, or Hone's Political Ladder and his Non Mi Ricordo Explained and Applied*,⁶⁴ 'The Funeral Pile', (this cut is reproduced in the Caroline section) we

see Cruikshank himself alongside Hone and the mob—clearly stating to his loyalist employers where his own allegiances lie.

A text which Hone claimed not to have written⁶⁵ (though he does not name the author), is *The Man in the Moon*, from January 1820. An unnamed reviewer, in *The Monthly Magazine*, wrote of the squib:

Mr. Hone, who has struck out an entirely new line of political satire, between the caricatures of Hogarth and the rhymes of Butler, has published a matchbook to his House that Jack built, in the *Man in the Moon*. It is impossible to describe either; and there is little occasion, where the sale is by tens of thousands.⁶⁶

This verse squib was written in response to the Regent's speech at the opening of Parliament on 23rd November 1819:

I regret to have been under the necessity of calling you together at this period of the year; but the seditious practices so long prevalent in some of the manufacturing districts of the country have [...] led to proceedings incompatible with the public tranquillity, and with the peaceful habits of the industrious classes of the community; and a spirit is now fully manifested, utterly hostile to the constitution of this kingdom.⁶⁷

One week later the Six Acts were announced. These measures were particularly oppressive. Unauthorised military drilling was banned; justices were allowed to search houses without warrants; meetings in excess of fifty people were prohibited; newspapers and periodicals were taxed almost out of existence, causing radical papers like the *Medusa* to fold, with many others brought to the brink of bankruptcy. The fifth and sixth acts extended the powers of the authorities to the extent that a second conviction for libel, might incur banishment from the British Empire. An example of the heightened state of government control is that of Richard Carlile, the printer, and his employees.

Collectively, they spent a total of 200 years in prison for publishing works like *Queen Mab*, and *The Rights of Man*.⁶⁸

The Man in the Moon is actually a fairly faithful parody of the Regent's speech. In this squib George is ruler of Earth's regent, who rules the tides, the moon. The pamphlet's frontispiece by George Cruikshank shows the corpulent Regent with his back to us, facing the 'Commons' in which the individuals are represented as stars, resembling the shape of the order of the knight of the garter, pressing the point that commoners are not present in government. The Regent is enclosed in a moon-like spotlight and above him is a quotation from *Cymbeline*, "If Caesar can hide the Sun with a blanket, or put the Moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light."⁶⁹ The Regent's buttocks are suitably enlarged implying that he has the moon in his pocket, reminding us of Shelley's *The Devil's Walk*, written in 1812, 'And pantaloons are like half-moons / Upon each brawny haunch'.⁷⁰ And in his hand the Regent holds a sword bearing a blanket to 'hide the sun', which has a printing press on it:



Figure 8: Frontispiece of *The Man in the Moon* (London: William Hone, 1820)

The dedication inside, to George Canning, is initially presented in the form of inverted pyramids, repeating the imagery employed in John Cam Hobhouse’s *A Trifling Mistake*⁷⁰. In this dedication, Hone highlights Canning’s lampooning of Lord Sidmouth, and Castlereagh with whom Canning had famously fought a duel:

THUS,
 BY HIS PARODIES,
 HIS PISTOLS, AND HIS WITS,
 FIGHTING AND WRITING HIS WAY
 TO PLACE AND PROFIT UNDER MINISTERS,
 WHOM THE DERISION OF HIS PEN
 HAS DRIVEN TO THE MISERY
 OF HIS ALLIANCE.

However the main target of Hone’s squib is the Regent. And, interestingly, the feel of the poem is Blakean. In his introduction, the narrator, like Shelley in *The*

Mask of Anarchy, is asleep: ‘I LATELY dream’d that, in a huge balloon, / All silk
and gold, I journey’d to the Moon’. And in the moon he finds a country like
England:

And Judge of my astonishment, on seeing
All things exactly, to a hair, agreeing:
The mountains, rivers, cities, trees, and towers,
On Cynthia’s surface, seem’d like ours;
Men, women, children, language, dress, and faces,
Lords, Commons, Lackies, Pensioners, and Places,
Whigs, Tories, Lawyers, Priests, and men of blood,
And even *Radicals* – by all that’s good!

This description is very close to Blake’s *The Island in the Moon*:

In the Moon, is a certain Island near by a mighty continent, which small island seems to
have some affinity to England, & what is more extraordinary the people are so much
alike & their language so much the same that you would think you was among your
friends. (Ch. 1)

It has not yet proved possible to determine whether Hone, or the squib’s
author, knew of Blake’s work, but it is certain that Hone knew of Blake by 1825
when he printed ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ in his *Every-Day Book*.⁷¹

Thereafter follows ‘A Speech from the Throne, to the Senate of Lunataria’:

My L_rds and G__tl_n,
I grieve to say,
That poor old Dad,
Is just as – bad,
As when I met you here
the other day.[...]
But lo!
CONSPIRACY and TREASON are abroad!
Those imps of darkness, gender’d in the wombs

Of spinning-jennies, winding-wheels, and looms,
In Lunashire—
Oh, Lord!
My L__ds and G__tl_n, we've much to fear!

Reform, Reform, the swinish rabble cry—
Meaning of course, rebellion, blood, and riot—
Audacious rascals! you, my Lords, and I,
Know 'tis their duty to be starved in quiet:

In his speech to parliament the Regent had begun with the state of his father's health. The poet then plays on the similarity between 'Lunashire' and Lancashire, the scene of unrest. There are echoes of Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant* with the reference to Burke's 'swinish multitude' and in the line 'tis their duty to be starved in quiet'. The author then suggests that it was the Regent himself who instructed the Manchester magistrates to attack the crowd at St. Peter's Field:

I've given orders for a lot of Letters,
From these seditious, scribbling, scoundrels' betters,
N_d_n⁷² and N_rr_S⁷³, F_ch_r⁷⁴, W_t⁷⁵ and H_Y,⁷⁶
"To *lie*, for your instruction,'
Upon the table:
From which said promises you'll soon be able
To make a fair deduction,
That some decisive measures must be taken,
Without delay,
To quell the *Radicals*,
and save our bacon.

The poem then describes the post-war condition of the people, before moving on to the massacre itself, and one of its most enduring images:



STEEL LOZENGES

will stop their pain,
And set the Constitution
right again.

Figure 9: George Cruikshank, 'Steel Lozenges', *The Man in the Moon*

'Steel Lozenges' were actually a popular brand of nostrum; 'Aromatic Lozenges of Steel',⁷⁷ and all of the people in the cut are having them thrust down their throats—a reference to the new 'gagging acts'. With the battle won the Regent then dances with the devil at his right, and a clergyman at his left, around a pyre consuming Liberty on top of a printing press, tied to a pole topped with the Cap of Liberty:



HOLY COMPACT AND ALLIANCE,

Figure 10: George Cruikshank, 'Holy and Compact Alliance', *The Man in the Moon*

At the end of the poem the author awakes from his nightmare:

His Highness ceased—
The dissonance of Babel
Rose from the motley
Moonitarian rabble:
The yell of loyalty—
 the dungeon groan—
The shriek of woe—
 the starving infant's moan—
The brazen trumpets' note—
 the din of war—
The shouts of freemen
 rising from afar—
Darted in horrid discord
 through my brain:--
I woke, and found myself
 on Earth again.

Again one is reminded of Blake, with ‘The shriek of woe--the starving infant’s moan—’:

[...] And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every Infant’s cry of fear[...]
(From ‘London’)

Just as the loyalists copied *The Political House*, *The Man in the Moon* was answered by both *The Men in the Moon*, and *The Loyal Man in the Moon*. This squib shows John Bull in the position occupied by the Regent, addressing caps of Liberty.



Figure 11: Frontispiece to *The Loyal Man in the Moon* (London: C. Chapple, & J. Johnston, 1820)
The pamphlet only follows Hone’s superficially in that it reverses the roles taken up in *The Man in the Moon*. Inside there are no attempts to justify Peterloo; the

pamphlet's main remit is to work as a piece of anti-radical propaganda before the forthcoming elections.



Figure 12: Cut of Cobbett, Paine and Hunt, from *The Loyal Man in the Moon*

Here Cobbett, the ‘Hampshire Hog’, is shown carrying Tom Paine’s bones followed by Henry Hunt with the radical subscriptions.



Figure 13: ‘People in the Moon’, *The Loyal Man in the Moon*

In this cut, the central figure is Hunt, flanked by Burdett and Hobhouse.

Between Burdett and Hunt is Wooler (always shown as a black dwarf). The

figures touching chins at the bottom of the cut are, John Gale Jones and Cobbett, portrayed as lunatics pressing for reform; to the right of Cobbett is Thelwall. The shadowy figure behind Hunt is thought to be Francis Place.⁷⁸

The final pamphlet produced by Hone that includes references to Peterloo is *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Street Gang*. This was first released as a broadsheet made up to resemble Stoddart's *New Times* in format and style, before being re-issued as a pamphlet. This work which utilises a mixture of prose, verse, songs and fake advertising is Hone's widest ranging attack on the vices of the government and the lackeys who support it. It attacks Stoddart, Southey, the Cabinet, the new King, the Peterloo massacre and it addresses the Caroline affair. The pamphlet's innovative use of fake advertisements for subscriptions to commemorate the actions of the Manchester Yeomanry serves to undermine the symbols of the state and the rewards offered by it, such as one for a Peterloo medal:⁷⁹



Figure 14: George Cruikshank, 'Peterloo Medal', *A Slap at Slop* (London: William Hone, 1821)

This mock advertisement from the front page of *A Slap at Slop* is, as Marcus Wood points out, a copy of an anti-slavery medallion released by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787 showing a black slave on his knees begging, with an inscription above him reading ‘AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?’⁸⁰ As Wood asserts Cruikshank’s mock advertisement for a medal takes advantage of the Waterloo/Peterloo conflation, and deflates the status of the new Waterloo medal, which was then the highest-ranking medal to have been minted.⁸¹ Hone extends this conceit by asking if the medals can be minted from brass reclaimed from the melted down remains of the murderous Edward Meagher’s trumpet. Hone, wishing to keep the actions of the Yeomanry in the public eye, includes another mock advert in this pamphlet, this time proposing the erection of a Peterloo monument ‘to be erected in commemoration of the achievements of the MANCHESTER YEOMANRY CAVALRY, on the 16th August 1819’:

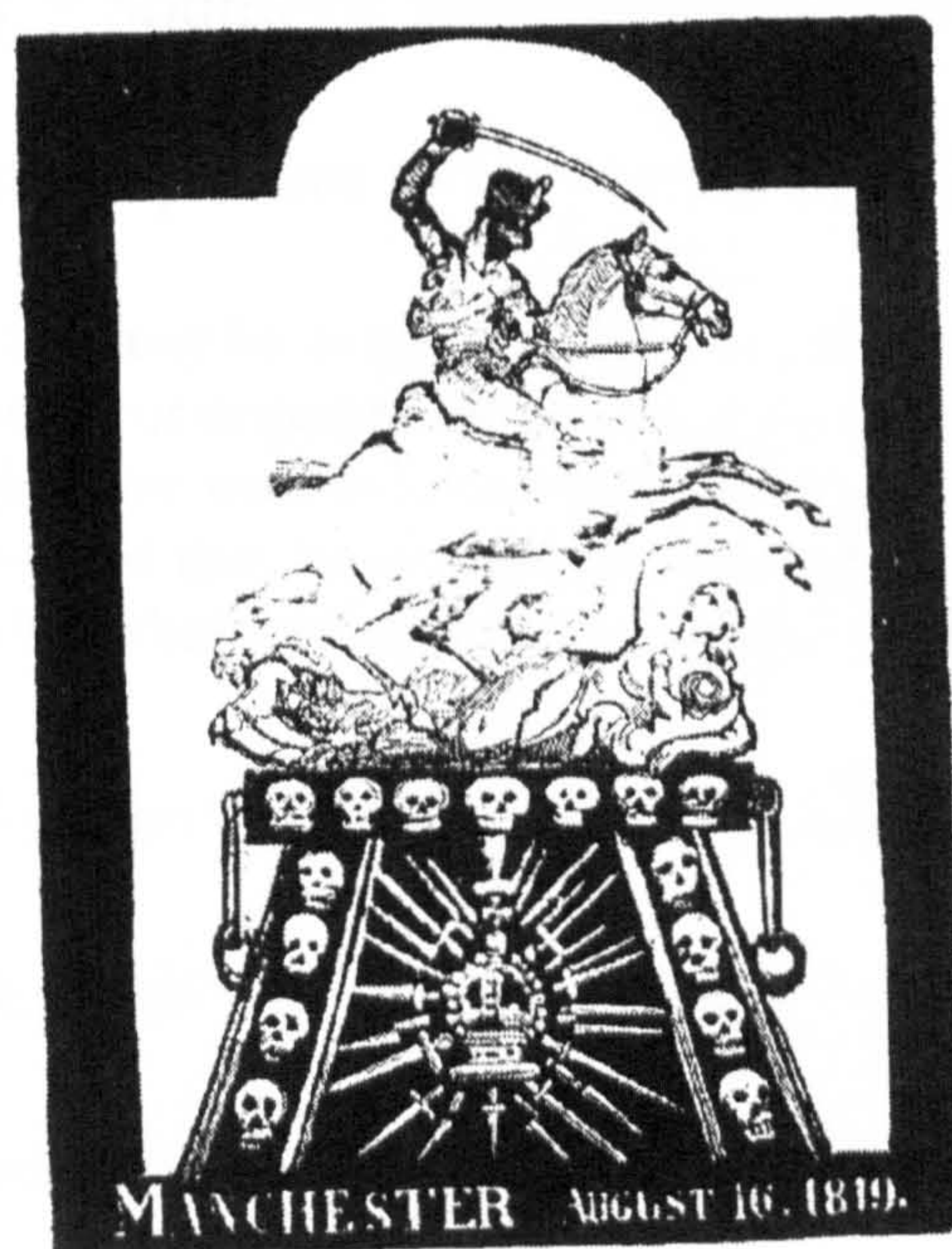


Figure 15: George Cruikshank, ‘Peterloo Monument’, *A Slap at Slop*.

Around the monument will be the names of the soldiers who took part and of the people who died because ‘It has been called a *battle*, but erroneously; for, the multitude was unarmed, and made no resistance to the heroes *armed*; there was no contest – it was a *victory* [...] This event, more important in its consequences than the Battle of Waterloo, will be recorded on the monument.’⁸²

Also included in *A Slap at Slop* is a parody of Southey’s memorial poem on the death of George III, *The Vision of Judgement*: Hone’s ‘A NEW VISION, By ROBERT Southey, Esq.! L.L.D.!! Poet Laureate!!! & c. !!!! &c. !!!!! &c. !!!!!’ The poem finds Southey at Stoddart’s office in Bridge-Street, where he sees the ‘*Pension List*’ and finds his own name ‘sweet to my eyelids’. This is a reference to Southey’s sycophantic dedication of ‘A Vision of Judgement’ to the new king: ‘We owe much to the House of Brunswick; but to none of that illustrious House more than your Majesty.’⁸³ Southey’s ‘experiment’ with the hexameter form also drew fire from Byron in the preface to his parody of the poem:

‘It is not impossible that it may be as good as his own, seeing that it cannot, by any species of stupidity, natural or acquired, be *worse*, [...] So much for his poem – a word on his preface [...] He might have written hexameters, as he has written everything else, for aught that writer cared—had they been upon another subject. But to attempt to canonise a monarch, who, whatever were his household virtues, was neither a successful nor a patriot king.’⁸⁴

Hone does not attack Southey’s fawning preface with text, instead the poem is accompanied by a Cruikshank cut showing George as an angel playing a lyre—with a noose hanging from his left boot, while Southey mouths ‘Sing we Now

Apollo's praise' as he extracts 'A Vision of Judgement' from his sack-butt. He is Shelley's 'bard bartering rhymes / For sack' in *Peter Bell the Third*.⁸⁵

In Hone's version of the Laureate's poem, John Murray then enters Stoddart's office. Both he and Southey are greeted by a command from the heavens shouting 'GO to HELL'. Southey responds, unlike Dante his 'great master', by rushing up to Paradise where he meets his friends who support the state: the King, the Constitutional association, members of the church and government, 'the *Manchester Yeomanry* Cavalry, riding down women;' Coleridge, Croker ('mangled' as Hazlitt has already 'cut him up' on earth), Gifford, the King's mistresses, manufacturers, '*Lottery-contractors*':

And all the Gentlemen of the *Stock Exchange* were there;

And all the Gentlemen of the *Shipping Interest* were there;

And all the Gentlemen of the *Landed interest* were there;

But all the people *without Interest* were not there;

This 'Paradise' then transforms, Southey is caught by 'a vehement whirlwind, /

TO FLAMES and SULPHEROUS DARKNESS, where certain of my *Minor*

Poems were scorching,' where he then goes through the equivalent of Dante's

'cleansing fire'.⁸⁶ This fire consumes all but 'Truth, nothing *but* the Truth,

suffered the burning', and so he finds himself purified, in the company of those

killed by the Yeomanry, Queen Caroline, and 'the friends of my childhood – not

leaving out *Coleridge*;' as if he and they had never become apostates. But this is

only a vision; Southey awakes and:

[...] instead of the voice of the honest,

I heard only Murray's *yap! yap!* and *hop! hop!* through the silence of evening:

Yap! hop! and *hop! yap!* – and hence came the hop, step, and jump, of my verses.

Hone's publication was widely condemned. The following letter to

Sidmouth, dated 4 October 1821, from a member of the public, is an example of the kind of opposition that Hone's work faced:

There is a most dreadful news paper in circulation called a Slap at Slop -- Endeavouring to sow discord amongst the people—and to inflame their minds and set them against the King and Government [...] And if the editor of this demagogue and mischievous news paper is not prosecuted and put a stop to; the Bible and Testament will soon be of little use.

Peter Tarlem.⁸⁷

Hone's Reading Public.

Olivia Smith writes of Hone's work:

Similar to early eighteenth-century satire, *The Political House that Jack Built* could be called a modern, political *Dunciad*. Its extreme allusiveness proclaims the existence of an informed and critical public, sharing particular values, activities and ideas. The allusions point out that the audience both shares a body of information and composes it within a similar analytical framework. Unlike *The Dunciad*, however, the parody does not make a virtue of excluding those without adequate knowledge to understand it fully. Although readers might not know that the Regent went sailing, their lack of information would not interfere with their reading of the poem. The simplicity of the language, the method of illustration, the parody's length, and its inexpensive price are reminiscent of the chap-book. Call it a chap-book *Dunciad* then, simultaneously esoteric and available to anyone. The language is basic and the sequence of illustration is significant in itself. Anyone who had heard of the massacre or who knew the original rhyme would find it meaningful.⁸⁸

Having a good distribution system for his works was also part of the key to

Hone's success as Kyle Grimes points out:

Hone was able to exploit a kind of informal, underground distribution system in order to disseminate his work throughout England. During the previous century, the country was blanketed by as many as 20, 000 pedlars whose wares typically included among other cheap household items an array of chapbooks and ballads, and, though the chapbook industry was on the wane in the early nineteenth century, this network for the dissemination of cheap literature was still intact.⁸⁹

But the pamphlets were actually not that ‘cheap’ at a shilling, when the average wage for a hand-loom weaver was ‘4/ 3 ½ d. per week from which, when the usual expenses for the loom were deducted, there remained no more than 3/ 3d. to support human life (in some cases of five persons) for seven days.’⁹⁰ It is impossible to imagine that anyone earning this sort of wage would be in a position to buy one of Hone’s pamphlets (it also shows the stupidity of the Loyal Association in thinking that their target audience would buy their productions). Being ‘on the Parish’ provided a barely imaginable 4d. per day to a single unemployed man of ‘20 years of age and upwards’.⁹¹ But Hone’s works were available to anyone who could travel to his shop at 45 Ludgate Hill and find a position at the window where the latest squib would be pasted. One of those who visited Hone’s shop was a young William Thackeray, upon whom Hone and Cruikshank’s caricatures made a great impression:

Knights in Sweeting’s alley; Fairbairn’s in a court off Ludgate Hill; Hone’s in Fleet Street – bright, enchanted palaces [...] –Slop, the atrocious Castlereagh, the sainted Caroline (in a tight pelisse, with feathers in her head), the “Dandy of sixty,” who used to glance at us from Hone’s friendly windows [...] There used to be a crowd round the window in those days of grinning, good-natured mechanics, who spelt the songs, and spoke them out for the benefit of the company, and who received the points of humour with a general sympathizing roar.⁹²

Hone makes the same observations of his reading public in *Don Juan Canto the Third*. Juan refuses to paste his paper onto the windows of his print shop like many of his rivals, and tries to justify this to his Judy:

XXIX

“Tis very well,” said he, “shut up in study,
By Gas Light to be conning learned lore,
Or reading papers to our dearest Judy,

While she our breakfast from a teapot pour;
But horrible indeed, when streets are muddy,
To queer a mob *that paper* spelling o'er,
With visages no doubt for wise and grave meant,
And have to elbow them, or quit the pavement."

The educated wealthy reader and the poor reader are juxtaposed, although the mobs do have 'visages no doubt for wise and grave meant', implying that it is possible in Juan's eyes that they may have some right of access to literature. A swipe is taken at Coleridge for his attitude toward the mob in *The Courier*,⁹³ (Hone's second most hated publication after *The New Times*), 'For He like Coleridge would with ready club lick/That million headed beast, a READING PUBLIC. (XXVIII). Coleridge is portrayed as the club wielding Giant Despair from the *Pilgrims Progress*, and the old hydra imagery which had been employed since the French Revolution is enlarged to a 'million headed beast' which would take rather a long time to kill with Coleridge's club. But this is of course also a continuation of Byron's dig at Coleridge in canto one of *Don Juan*, over his attempt in *Biographia Literaria* to 'explain metaphysics to the nation', and Byron asks him to 'explain his Explanation'.⁹⁴

A function of Hone's verse squibs and Cruikshank's cuts was to educate the public. Both the verse and the cut could exist independently, but together each enhanced the significance of the other, and helped to educate the 'grinning, good-natured mechanics, who spelt the songs, and spoke them out for the

benefit of the company'. This is something that Hone was criticised for by John Stoddart, who is obviously jealous of the Cruikshank/Hone partnership:

Without a wood-cut to explain the sense,
And help along it's lame Incompetence.

Therefore the wisest job that ever you did,
(Next to your well known trial and subscription)
Was your flash bargain with a wag concluded
To aid your threadbare talent for description;
For who, in fits at Cruiky's droll designs,
Can stay to criticise lop-sided lines?⁹⁵

For those who could neither afford Hone's squibs, nor travel to London, there were the Hampden clubs and radical societies who would club together to buy radical literature, with members usually contributing 1 d. per week.⁹⁶ These they would take on the road and use to further their political arguments. Samuel Bamford relates an incident at the Knightsbridge Barracks where he engages in a political discussion with some soldiers:

[...] we were soon in a free conversation on the subject of parliamentary reform. When objections were stated, they listened candidly to our replies, and a good-humoured discussion, half serious, half joking, was prompted on both sides. I and Mitchell had with us, and it was entirely accidental, a few of Cobbett's Registers, and Hone's Political Pamphlets, to which we sometimes appealed, and read extracts from. The soldiers were delighted; they burst into fits of laughter; and on the copies we had, being given them, one of them read the Political Litany through, to the further great amusement of himself and company. [...] Very soon after this a law was passed, making it death to attempt to seduce a soldier from his duty.⁹⁷

Despite the dispute about the number of Hone's pamphlets sold, it seems that his readership encompassed the full range of society, from the Ultra-Tory Mrs Arbuthnot who possessed a copy of *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, to the illiterate. It may seem strange then that Hone's first response to Peterloo was

written in a 'high' style, when we compare him with Shelley who deliberately adopted 'a voice not his own' to speak to those with whom he felt most closely allied politically, before returning to his native 'high' style. But I think that there is a good reason for this; the audience one wishes to speak to. In *Don Juan Canto the Third* Hone wants to address the elite, an elite who pride themselves on gentlemanly conduct, and rash acts of honour such as duelling. And yet Murray and Byron will not even put their names to a poem that was unlikely to have been prosecuted, whereas people like Richard Carlile, the Hunt brothers, Hobhouse and Hone had all risked, and at times given up their liberty, to defend freedom of speech. Just as Cobbett calls the ruling classes 'paupers' due to their poor conscience, Hone adds the title of coward, and this cowardice is detectable in every facet of the ruling class: the unarmed are stabbed, pregnant women such as Elizabeth Gaunt are feared enough to be imprisoned, and the truth is not allowed to be published. *Don Juan Canto the Third* failed to find a wide audience—it was not meant to. However Hone's more popular works were read by the full spectrum of society, from soldiers to Shelley, achieving a level of popularity which might have been achieved by Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy*, had it been published at the right time.

¹ From a loyalist pamphlet: Old Tom of Oxford, *An Affectionate Condolence with the Ultra's* (London: W. Wright, 1820)

² Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.269.

³ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴ Hone's colleague George Cruikshank produced three cuts on the conspiracy for Hannah Humphrey's shop. See Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times and Art*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), I, p.175.

⁵ There is an undated letter in which Hone writes to Hobhouse, 'at eight o'clock this evening I will take tea with you as you desire'. The note precedes another letter dated 24 February 1820. My point is that it looks like Hobhouse wished Hone to be at Newgate that evening rather than anywhere else. (British Library, Additional Manuscripts, Broughton Papers, MS. 36458 f95).

⁶ Cited by Hackwood, pp.130-31.

⁷ Ibid. p.131.

⁸ See Grimes's William Hone website which includes a digitised version of *The Political House that Jack Built* (<http://www.uab.edu/english/hone/etexts/etexts.htm>)

⁹ Hone was proud of the circulation of his pamphlets in comparison to that of other papers:

Even so that Evening Mail's eventful Ghost,
That's sold by twenties and by thirties; or
The Morning Chronicle or, Morning Post,
Or Morning Herald, or Advertiser,
Or Courier, that adorns, at England's cost,
Miss Constitution, and then dirties her,
By stumbling into some confounded sink,
And covering her with mud and printer's ink.
(*Don Juan Canto the Third*, LVI).

¹⁰ Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life From Winterslow to Frith Street* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.304.

¹¹ Rickword, p.22.

¹² Wu, *Hazlitt*, 4, p. xiv.

¹³ Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.51.

¹⁴ Howe, *Life*, p.418.

¹⁵ *Quarterly Review*, 26 (1822), p.103.

¹⁶ First used in 1807 in *Salmagundi: or the Whim-whams and Opinions of Lancelot Langstaff, Esq. & Others* (London: Routledge, 1859), p. 67.

¹⁷ *Quarterly Review*, 26 (1822), p.104.

¹⁸ Cited by Wu, 4, p.xviii. *Edinburgh Review*, 3 (1820), p. 297.

¹⁹ Howe, *Life*, p.277.

²⁰ *The Examiner* 29 August 1819.

²¹ Wu, *Hazlitt*, 4, p.263.

²² *The Examiner* 29 August 1819.

²³ William Carew Hazlitt, *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1867), I, p.300.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thomas Davison first published cantos 1 and 2 of Byron's *Don Juan* on 15 July 1819.

²⁶ For details of the other forgeries of *Don Juan* see Samuel C. Chew, *Byron in England; his Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924), pp. 27 – 75.

²⁷ William Hazlitt in an unsigned review of *Wat Tyler* featured in *The Examiner* on 9 March 1817 calls Southey, 'a literary prostitute [...] The author of *Wat Tyler* was an Ultra-Jacobin; the author of Parliamentary Reform is an Ultra-royalist; the one was a frantic demagogue; the other is a servile court-fool.'

²⁸ Cited by Hone in his preface to *Wat Tyler; A Dramatic Poem* (London: William Hone, 1817), p. v.

²⁹ From, *Five Romantic Plays, 1768-1821*, ed. by Paul Baines and Edward Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.72.

³⁰ See *Five Romantic Plays*, p.333.

³¹ In August 1819 *Blackwood's* published a review of the poem, claiming it contained a 'thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice – power and profligacy – than in any other poem which had ever before been written in the English, or indeed in any other modern language. [...] The moral strain of the whole poem is pitched in the lowest key.' *Blackwood's Magazine*, 29 (1819), pp. 512-513.

³² William Hone, *Don John, or Don Juan Unmasked; being A Key to the Mystery, Attending that Remarkable Publication! With a Descriptive Review of the Poem, and Extracts*, 3rd. ed. (London: William Hone, 1819), p.6.

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- ³³ From, *The Late John Wilkes's Catechism of a Ministerial Member Taken From an Original Manuscript in Mr. Wilkes's Handwriting, Never Before Printed, and Adapted to the Present Occasion*. (London: William Hone, 1817).
- ³⁴ 'A Vision of Judgment', *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey. Complete in One Volume* (London: Longmans, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), p.777.
- ³⁵ See *The Making*, p.75. Hone would have identified with this arson attack as he too had his shop in Fleet Street burnt out. See Hackwood, p.104.
- ³⁶ *The Letters of John Keats* ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I, p. 19.
- ³⁷ See Aileen Ward, 'Keats's Sonnet, "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream"', *Philological Quarterly*, 34 (1955), pp. 177 – 188.
- ³⁸ Thomas Brown (Thomas Moore), *Replies to the Letters of the Fudge Family in Paris*. Cited by Rickword, p. 21.
- ³⁹ Letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to T. Monkhouse, January 1818, *The Letters of Dorothy and William Wordsworth; The Middle Years*, ed. by Earnest De Selincourt, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), II, p. 804.
- ⁴⁰ Olivia Smith, p. 165.
- ⁴¹ *Don Juan Unmasked*, p.6.
- ⁴² *The Sinecurist's Creed* (London: William Hone, 1817), p.7.
- ⁴³ Letter to John Murray, Ravenna, 9bre. 1820, *Byron Letters*, 7, p.238.
- ⁴⁴ Letter from Hone to Hobhouse, 24 Dec. 1821. (B.L. Add. mss. 36459, f189).
- ⁴⁵ See *The Quarterly Review*, 30 (1824), pp. 472-81.
- ⁴⁶ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour* (IV, 7).
- ⁴⁷ Henry Addington (1757 – 1844), 1 st Viscount Sidmouth, Prime Minister, 1801-04, Home Secretary, 1812-21.
- ⁴⁸ *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Street Gang* (London: William Hone, 1822), p.26.
- ⁴⁹ From *The Political House that Jack Built*.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Gaunt is also mentioned in Southey's *Wat Tyler*.

When they destroyed the palace of the Gaunt;
 And hurled the wealth his avarice had amassed,
 Amid the fire: the people fierce in zeal,
 Threw in the flames a wretch whose selfish hand
 Purloined amid the tumult. (3, I, 66-70)

- ⁵² *Don Juan Canto the Third*, p. 23n.
- ⁵³ See the *Marino Faliero* chapter for Byron on these alliances.
- ⁵⁴ *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. by Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1965), II, p. 210
- ⁵⁵ Cited by Hackwood, p.220.
- ⁵⁶ Michael Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories John Thelwall & Jacobin Writing* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2001), p.20
- ⁵⁷ 'My First Acquaintance with Poets', *William Hazlitt Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.211
- ⁵⁸ John Wardroper, *The Caricatures of George Cruikshank* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1978), p.84
- ⁵⁹ *The Queen in the Moon* (London: Grove & Co. 1820).
- ⁶⁰ <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/contemps/hone/jacknote.htm#acc2>
- ⁶¹ Wood, p.263.
- ⁶² Cited by Patten, p.168.
- ⁶³ Ibid. p.176.
- ⁶⁴ *The Radical Ladder, or, Hone's Political Ladder and his Non Mi Ricordo Explained and Applied, The Designs of the Radicals Developed, and Their Plans Traced, A Satirical Poem, with Copious Notes. Printed at the Expense of the Loyal Association* (London: W. Wright, 1820).
- ⁶⁵ See Hackwood, p.223.
- ⁶⁶ *The Monthly Magazine*, 49 (1820), p.72.
- ⁶⁷ Cited by James Chandler, *England in 1819 The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.21.
- ⁶⁸ See Scrivener, *Radical*, p.55.
- ⁶⁹ Hone may well have been aware of Shelley's poem. Richard Holmes claims that in April of 1816 Shelley was in communication with Hone about the printing of some of his political works. *Shelley The Pursuit*, p.366.

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- ⁷⁰ See Patten, p.184.
- ⁷¹ See G. E. Bentley, Jr, *The Stranger from Paradise A Biography of William Blake* (Yale University Press, 2001), p.472.
- ⁷² Joseph Nadin, Manchester deputy-constable at the time of Peterloo. Frequently mentioned by Bamford in *Passages in the Life of a Radical*.
- ⁷³ James Norris, Manchester stipendiary magistrate, and the main contact with the Home Office for Manchester region in the run-up to Peterloo.
- ⁷⁴ Colonel Ralph Fletcher, Bolton magistrate.
- ⁷⁵ Ralph Wright, magistrate.
- ⁷⁶ Rev. William Robert Hay, magistrate.
- ⁷⁷ See Rickword, p. 313.
- ⁷⁸ I am indebted to Mary Dorothy George's *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 11 vols. (London: British Museum, 1952), x, pp. 27-28.
- ⁷⁹ For a fuller account of advertising in the period see Wood, pp. 155 – 214.
- ⁸⁰ Wood, p.212.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, p.211.
- ⁸² *A Slap at Slop*, p.35.
- ⁸³ Preface to 'A Vision of Judgment', *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), p.766.
- ⁸⁴ Byron, preface to 'The Vision of Judgment', *Lord Byron; The Complete Poetical Works*, 7 vols. ed by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 309.
- ⁸⁵ *Peter Bell the Third*, 'Part the Second; The Devil'
- ⁸⁶ *The Revolt of Islam*, II, xiv.
- ⁸⁷ HO44/10, f. 6
- ⁸⁸ Olivia Smith, p.168.
- ⁸⁹ Kyle Grimes, 'William Hone's Liturgical Parodies', *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain, 1775 – 1848; Essays in Honour of Michael I. Thomis*, ed. by Michael T. Davis (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 149.
- ⁹⁰ *Summary of the Report of a Select Committee Appointed to Enquire Into the Causes which have Led to the Extensive Depreciation or Reduction in the Remuneration for Labour in Great Britain and the Extreme Privation and Calamitous Distress Consequent Thereupon* (London: J. Millar, 1823), p.16.
- ⁹¹ Ibid. p.17.
- ⁹² William Thackeray, *An Essay on the Genius of George Cruikshank with Numerous Illustrations of his Works* (London: Henry Hooper, 1840), pp. 6-7.
- ⁹³ Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p.239.
- ⁹⁴ *Don Juan*, I, iii.
- ⁹⁵ *From Slops Shave at a Broken Hone* (London: W. Wright, 1820).
- ⁹⁶ Grimes, 'William Hone's Liturgical Parodies', p.149.
- ⁹⁷ *Passages*, p.24.

Shelley: Assimilating Doggerel and Dialectics

Michael Scrivener writes of *The Mask of Anarchy*: ‘For one thing, it has to be recognised as contradictory, at war with itself, not entirely resolved. The different elements making up the poem do not necessarily meld into a unity’.¹ Scrivener might as well be writing about Shelley the man. It is a commonplace observation that within Shelley’s life contradictions and tensions are apparent: on the one side we find the classically educated gentleman, born to privilege, and, if he had played the game, probably a comfortable seat in the House of Commons like his Whig M.P. father, Timothy Shelley, and on the other we find the atheist, radical, ‘revolutionary social and political thinker’.² These contradictions between Shelley’s birthright, and work, have obsessed critics ever since his death. Leigh Hunt, in his preface to *The Mask of Anarchy*, (which he finally decided was safe to publish in 1832), anticipates future criticism of Shelley by addressing these tensions head on: ‘Mr. Hazlitt, when asked why he could not temporise a little now and then, or make a compromise with an untruth, [said], that it was “not worth his while”. It was not worth Mr. Shelley’s while to be an aristocrat.’³ By linking these two republicans it seems that Hunt is still arguing, in the year of the Reform Bill, that the work of reform is not over. But this is the closest that Hunt gets to portraying Shelley as a dangerous figure. The main thrust of his preface is directed towards portraying his friend in much

the same way that Mary Shelley had in the *Last Man*, with the gentle Adrian. Shelley is softened towards becoming an Uncle Toby figure who only wants us to love each other a little better; the radical revolutionary side is pushed into the background to fit the new political situation of 1832. This chapter will take Shelley's Peterloo poems back to the political moment when they were written, and will determine where Shelley stood in relation to reform, revolution, violence and poetic style. I shall focus on Shelley's work in the few months immediately following the massacre at St. Peter's Field, when he decided to temporarily renounce classicism in favour of the popular ballad form, and the language of the radical press, in poems such as: *The Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell the Third*, 'England 1819', and 'Men of England'. Many critics have pointed out the impact of the political pamphlet and broadsheet poem on Shelley's poetry produced after the Peterloo massacre, yet few cite any precise instances where Shelley's verse can be shown to have been infiltrated by the popular press. Following work already carried out by Richard Cronin, Steven E. Jones and Michael Scrivener, I will point to specific instances where Shelley has assimilated both radical doggerel and radical dialectics.

In *The Mask of Anarchy*, which R. J. White calls 'the most ghastly of his poems [...] The horrors of Shelley's doggerel almost match the ignorant injustice of his judgements',⁴ Shelley begins by confessing that news of the Peterloo massacre found him 'asleep':

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in Visions of Poesy.

The report of Manchester massacre is represented as awakening the poet from hibernation, and yet the news arrived when he had just completed his *Prometheus Unbound*. Michael Scrivener claims that the poem was completed in December 1819 -- 'Peterloo intersects the *Prometheus Unbound* period at the mid-point between the composition of the first act and the publication of the entire volume of poetry'.⁵ Yet, in a letter to Charles and James Ollier, dated September 6 1819, Shelley seems to date the play before the massacre: 'My "Prometheus," which has been long finished, is now being transcribed, and will soon be forwarded to you for publication.'⁶ However Kelvin Everest notes that Shelley continued 'to alter and add to Acts II and III right up to, and indeed beyond the despatch in December 1819.'⁷ In the first stanza of *The Mask* Shelley leads us to believe that the reports of the events at Manchester had found him unaware of the troubled political situation in Britain, yet it is apparent from *Prometheus Unbound* that he was already informed of a growing polarisation between the classes, and even the emergence of an embryonic class consciousness, the point, as Marx states, when 'a class in itself becomes a class for itself'.

Prometheus Unbound and *The Mask of Anarchy* share a plot. In both, a tyrant, Jupiter or Anarchy, is overthrown; in both the agent of destruction is a 'shape',

Demogorgon or a 'Shape arrayed in mail', and in both the agent of destruction is set in motion by a woman, Asia or Hope. But stylistically the two poems could not be more different. *Prometheus Unbound* is, as Harold Bloom writes, 'a work written almost entirely in the high style.'⁸ Even Shelley in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound* states, 'my purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly – refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence'. The choice of Prometheus as the protagonist for an allegory of man existing under tyranny recalls the larger myth surrounding the Titan. Prometheus steals fire, either from the wheel of the sun, or concealed in a hollow stalk from the forge of Hephaestus, to give it to man who has been denied it by Jupiter. Prometheus is then punished by being chained to Mount Caucasus and has his regenerating liver, the seat of the passions, devoured by an eagle. Prometheus is also credited with teaching man the art of writing (perhaps reminding us of the role of political journals in the education of the working classes), architecture, and medicine. As Michael Simpson says of the play: 'Not only does the drama insinuate a radical agenda and articulate it before an internal audience that expands sufficiently to imply an external one, but it also shares this figure of an expanding readership, as a problem of cultural production, with its external audience.'⁹ In one version of the tale, Prometheus delivers Athena from the head of Jupiter by splitting it open (Apollod, 1.3.6) – a powerful symbol of the birth of a new consciousness. And it should be remembered that it is Prometheus who saves the human race from destruction

when Jupiter plans to destroy man in order to make way for a new race of beings.

In Shelley's text the primary concern is with the timing of rebellion against Jupiter, and the methods that should be employed in its actuation. Mercury asks Prometheus when the time will come for Jupiter's defeat, yet he refuses to say, his foreknowledge being apparently limited:

Mercury. Oh that we might be spared – I to inflict

And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:

Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.

Mercury. Alas!

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign; nor more, nor less

Do I desire or fear.

(I, 410-16)

It is Demogorgon, the 'people monster', who must indicate when the time has come, as we can see in his dialogue with *Asia*:

Asia. One more demand; and do thou answer me

As my own soul would answer, did it know

That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise

Henceforth the Sun of this rejoicing world:

When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon. Behold!

(II, iv, 124-9)

There is a sort of proto-Marxism at work here, an anticipation of Marx's theory that a class only becomes self-aware immediately before a revolution.

Demogorgon, by articulating his new found consciousness, has instituted revolution. The effect of the revolution is to transform the world:

The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed – but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree,— the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise – but man.
(III, iv, 193-7).

In the new world man will be free to act independently, his potential will be realised. The polarisation of classes has ended in a revolution after which class-consciousness disappears.

But, whatever the implications of his allegory, in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley is still writing for the classically educated. Though sympathetic toward the dispossessed, he speaks of and not to them. After 16 August 1819, there is an abrupt change: Shelley begins to write poetry of a very different kind. As

Scrivener notes:

Shelley's immediate response to Peterloo is interesting, because in *The Mask of Anarchy* he encourages the poor to act [...] His militance is not without its qualifications and ambiguities, but what distinguishes Shelley's response is a desire to push the reform movement leftwards, to risk even revolution.¹⁰

A letter from Shelley to Leigh Hunt, written from Florence in November 1819, supports this analysis: 'You do not tell me whether you have received my lines on the Manchester affair. They are of exoteric species, and are meant, not for the *Indicator*, but the *Examiner*.'¹¹ The telling word is 'exoteric': *The Mask of Anarchy* is 'intelligible to the public', 'popular, ordinary' (OED). That is, the poem is for the benefit of the reading public that had been brought into

existence by the radical press, by such journals, that is, as *The Examiner*. In contrast *Prometheus Unbound* is directed at a limited, elite readership. The poem, according to Mary Shelley, expresses 'mystic meanings' which 'elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction'.¹² *The Mask of Anarchy* is quite different. Shelley hoped that it would be published in *The Examiner* rather than the more literary *Indicator*, which in itself indicates that *The Mask of Anarchy* is intended for the radical reformers, the lower and middling rather than the ruling classes. As Richard Cronin suggests:

The freedom that Shelley's poem espouses, unlike the freedom celebrated in his earlier poem, is both social and material [...] Shelley's poem allows those whose station in life distances them from 'the murmur of distress' a presence in the 'great Assembly' that will constitute the true Parliament of the nation, but a place alongside those who live in huts, workhouses, prisons, 'the haunts of daily life', not at their head. Shelley's poem seems free from 'the canker of aristocracy'.¹³

For the journal-reading working classes, the imagery with which Shelley represents those currently ruling Britain would be immediately intelligible:

I
I met Murder on the way -
He had a mask like Castlereagh,
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven bloodhounds followed him: [...]

IV
Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell, [...]

VI
Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,

Like Sidmouth, next Hypocrisy

On a crocodile rode by.

Such representations would be familiar to the sort of reader that Hone, Benbow, Carlile, Thelwall and Cobbett were attracting. Shelley, by using the conceit of the ‘mask’, which of course has two meanings, repeats a trope he had used as early as 1812 in *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, written in support of Daniel Eaton who was imprisoned for publishing Paine’s *Age of Reason*:

Wherefore, I repeat, is Mr. Eaton punished? Because he is a Deist? And what are you, my Lord? A Christian. Ha then! The mask is fallen off; you persecute him because his faith differs from yours. You copy the persecutors of Christianity in your actions and are an additional proof that your religion is as bloody, barbarous, and intolerant as theirs.¹⁴

Interestingly this trope features in a poem printed in *The Black Dwarf* only five days after the massacre, by ‘Hibernicus’, entitled, ‘Stanzas Occasioned by the Manchester Massacre!’:

The mask for a century worn,
Has fallen from her visage at last;
Of all its sham attributes shorn,
Her reign of delusion is past.¹⁵

The Mask of Anarchy is a poem that has obviously been permeated by the popular press. This generally accepted view is at odds with Harold Bloom's comment that, ‘Though it has become a commonplace of recent criticism and scholarship to affirm otherwise, I do not think that Shelley changed very much, as a poet, during the last (and most important) six years of his life, from the summer of 1816 until the summer of 1822.’¹⁶ But *The Mask of Anarchy* in particular differs radically from anything Shelley had written since 1816. The

poem has demonstrably been contaminated by imagery and ideas that are elsewhere only to be found in popular political pamphlets and caricatures.

The conflict between the official positions of the characters in Shelley’s apocalyptic procession and their actions would not be lost on the journal-educated public that he was addressing. We meet: Castlereagh, the Foreign Secretary, sanctioned the use of torture during the Irish risings at the end of the eighteenth century, earning him two names from Hone, ‘Derry Down Triangle’ and ‘Dirkpatrick’; Eldon (‘Bags’) the Lord Chancellor,¹⁷ would frequently weep when passing the death sentence.

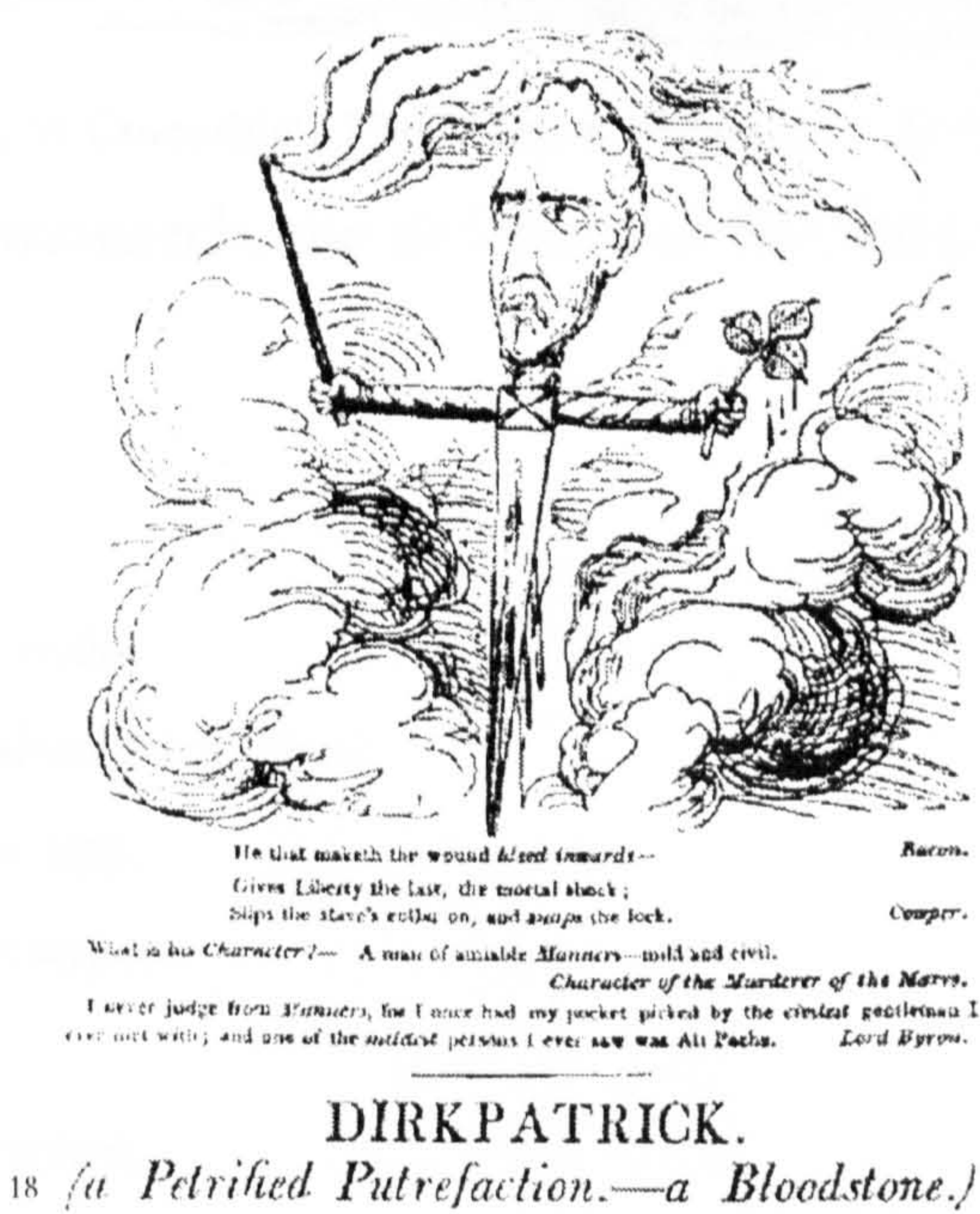


Figure 16: George Cruikshank, ‘Dirkpatrick’, *The Political Showman__At Home!* (London: William Hone, 1821)

Next comes the shadowy head of the country's spy system, Henry Addington, Lord Sidmouth (‘Doctor’), the Home Secretary, who allows his fellow subjects to be massacred. Sidmouth rides a ‘crocodile’, but Shelley’s editors have thus far

failed to explain the allusion. However, a pamphlet-reading public would have recognised the crocodile as Sir John Leach,¹⁹ the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the Milan Commission of 1818, who employed spies to gather evidence against the then Regent's wife, Caroline of Brunswick. Fittingly Sidmouth is followed by 'many more Destructions', 'All disguised, even to the eyes, /Like bishops, lawyers, peers or spies.'

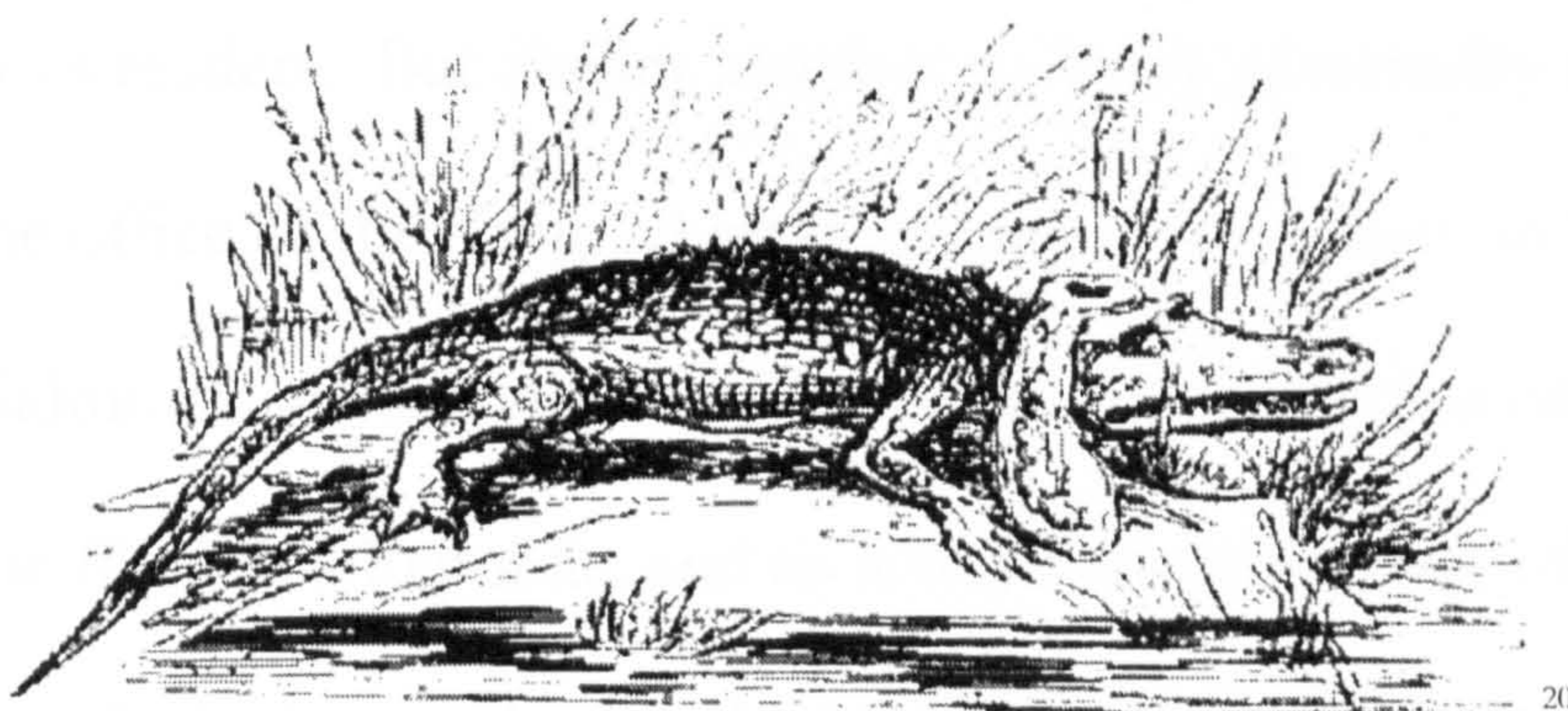


Figure 17: George Cruikshank, 'A Crocodile', *The Political Showman—At Home!*

And, finally we see the monarch, the defender of the faith who bears the mark of the devil:

VIII

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX

And he wore a kingly crown,
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw —
'I AM GOD, AND KING AND LAW!'

The image is taken from Revelation, 'And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.' (6:8) But it

seems certain that Shelley also has in mind the painting by Benjamin West (painter to the King), 'Death on a white horse', exhibited in 1817 with a dedication to the Regent, and again an image familiar, because of its circulation as a print, to a wide readership.²¹ After Peterloo, West's dedication had become a macabre joke. Death had ridden across St. Peter's Field, and the Regent had publicly congratulated him on having done so. The joke would not have been lost on Shelley's readers. But Shelley attaches no living personality to 'Anarchy'. He attacks the office of the King, whereas the attacks he makes on Castlereagh, Eldon, and Sidmouth are individual and personal. High political offices would continue to be filled in a Republic, and so it is the abuse of these offices by particular individuals that needs to be highlighted. Shelley does not recognise the need for any institution of monarchy, and so the personality of the King is irrelevant: it is the office that must be dissolved. In this *The Mask of Anarchy* differs from 'England in 1819' where Shelley does attack the King and his wastrel sons:

An old, mad, blind, despised and dying king;
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn – mud from a muddy spring;²²

In the following cut from Hone's *The Political Showman at Home!* we can recognize representations of some of the characters in Shelley's procession close enough to Shelley's to indicate that they were common currency at the time:



Figure 18: George Cruikshank, ‘The Triumph of the Press, *The Political Showman at Home!*

On the left-hand side Lord Eldon appears as a ‘Mask’; Wellington as a locust; and two lawyers as rats. From the top right, there is the Duke of Clarence; ‘Dirkpatrick’ (Castlereagh); Sidmouth as an enema bag; ‘Boots’, the Regent, with the motto of the Order of the Garter, *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense* draped around him; and John Stoddart’s ‘Slop Pail (*The New Times*), being emptied into the crown. All of these characters are vanquished by Liberty holding a portrait of Queen Caroline, and a Stanhope Press emanating light.²³

In Shelley’s poem, Anarchy the King, who tramples the multitude at St. Peter’s Field, is followed by his ‘hired murderers’, the Yeomanry, who realise that in order to keep their bourgeois positions they need a figurehead who will keep the people down:

XVI

‘We have waited, weak and lone,
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.’

The Yeomanry were of course instructed by the Manchester magistrates to carry out the charge at Peterloo:

XVII
Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the Earth their pale brows bowed,
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering –‘Thou art Law and God.’

The Reverend Ethelston, and the other magistrates looked down on St. Peter’s Field from Buxton’s house, when he allegedly read the Riot Act, ‘Like a bad prayer not over loud’. Anarchy had ‘sent his slaves before / To seize upon the Bank and Tower.’ As Cronin points out, Shelley inverts the attempt by ‘Doctor’ Watson and Arthur Thistlewood to capture the Bank of England and the Tower of London at Spa Fields in 1816. Here it is the Ultra –Right government which is represented as having hijacked the state's institutions.²⁴

When Hope lies down in front of Anarchy and the Yeomanry, she echoes, as Cronin and Jones point out, Britannia being ravished in George Cruikshank’s ‘Death or Liberty’.²⁵ But there is also a specific reference to Peterloo here, as the first casualties of the massacre were a mother and child (Ann Fildes and her two year old son William), who were trampled by the Yeomanry in Cooper Street on their way into St. Peter’s Field. Mrs. Fildes was injured but the child

was killed. In *Peter Bell the Third* there is a more specific reference to the fate of Ann Fildes and her son: “Let thy bodyguard yeomen /Hew down babes and women,” (Part the Sixth), and “[...] no man would stir / To save a dying mother.’ (Part the Seventh). Much of Shelley’s verse on the event includes references to mothers, as in ‘Lines Written During the Castlereagh Administration’:

Stones on the pavement are dumb,
Abortions are dead in the womb,
And their mothers look pale –like the white shore [...]
The abortion, with which she travaileth,
Is Liberty – smitten to death.

Shelley, like Bamford and Hone, may have been thinking of Elizabeth Gaunt, who, when heavily pregnant, was cut, trampled, and then arrested at the hustings, and was subsequently kept in solitary confinement for twelve days.²⁶ The loyalists, anxious to excuse themselves for this particularly barbarous action, claimed that she was Henry Hunt’s whore, and as such deserved having her face rearranged when she was arrested: ‘His mistress sent to the hospital her face to renew / For she got it closely shaven on the plains of Peterloo.’²⁷

In *The Mask of Anarchy* it is Hope who gives birth to a ‘Shape’ which then vanquishes the oppressors. When Hope lies down in front of Anarchy and his forces a ‘Shape’ appears, which leaves Anarchy dead in its wake, and the

Yeomanry are then trampled when Anarchy's horse bolts. The drops of blood spilt by the soldiers become an 'accent unwithstood,' exhorting the people to:

XXXVIII

"Rise, like Lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you--
Ye are many--they are few".

The inference is that the massacre was necessary in order to awaken the people to their oppressed position in an unequal society.²⁸ 'Shapes' make frequent appearances in Shelley's poems from *Prometheus Unbound* to *The Triumph of Life*, but in *The Mask of Anarchy* the word functions in a manner that brings it very close to the word 'thing', as used in the radical press. For Cobbett 'Thing' means the 'System', the 'Scotch Philosophies' that have destroyed old England, whereas, for Hone, 'The Thing' is the Press -- which will force reform through education of the people; this is a clash of systems. Shelley's 'Shape' is an unstoppable revolutionary force like Demogorgon, but, as I briefly mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, the revolutionary process as it is described in *The Mask of Anarchy* brings it much closer to the process as it is described by a writer such as Samuel Bamford:

And now, gloomy famine shall stalk thro' the land,
No comfort the poor shall receive at thy hand;
And the widow shall curse thee whilst life doth remain,
And the orphan shall lisp back her curses again.

And the night wind shalt sound like a scream in thine ear,

And the tempest shalt shake thee with terrible fear,
And the Zephyr, which fans thee, shall bring thee no cure;
It will whisper a tale which thou can'st not endure.²⁹

In this poem, in which Bamford attacks the Reverend Ethelston, famine rather than Hope releases the tempest that will voice Shelley's 'accent unwithstood', and will shake a corrupt church and government. For Bamford, who was actually on the ground at Peterloo as a weaver fighting for reform, starvation will ignite the revolutionary force that will change the structure of society, whereas in Shelley's more optimistic analysis the agent will be Hope. William Hone represents the softer side of radicalism, placing his faith in the power of the popular press to eradicate governmental corruption, whereas Shelley and Bamford, though speaking from very different standpoints, at least agree that only revolution will free the people.

The Mask of Anarchy has frequently been adduced by those who wish to represent Shelley as a proto-Marxist revolutionary, but after the Peterloo massacre Shelley's views were rather widely shared even within the middle class. If one looks at contemporary newspapers, condemnation of the Peterloo massacre as angry as Shelley's was widespread. The editorials of even middle-class newspapers sympathised with the people at Peterloo in almost the same way as Shelley:

30,000 people, half employed and half starved, were congregated to a single spot, there to be puffed up by prodigious notions of their strength [...] all such considerations all such suspicions, sink to nothing before the dreadful fact, that nearly a hundred of the

King's unarmed subjects have been sabred by a body of cavalry in the streets of a town in which most of them were inhabitants, and in the presence of those magistrates whose sworn duty it is to protect and preserve the life of the meanest Englishmen. (*The Star* 17 August, printed in *The Times*, 19 August 1819).

Many newspapers, like Shelley, were conscious of Peterloo as an incident in a class war. *The Times*, after the arrest of its reporter Tyas, expressed particular sympathy with the oppressed class. The extract above actually reads like a prose version of 'England in 1819':

A people starved and stabbed on the untilled field;
An army whom liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;

Shelley learned to write in the style he utilises in *The Mask of Anarchy* from contemporary popular journals and newspapers, such as Wooler's *Black Dwarf*, Cobbett's *Political Register* and the pamphlets of William Hone. Richard Cronin points out that Peacock regularly sent Shelley copies of the *Political Register*. 'By 1820, the *Political Register* seems to have replaced *The Examiner* as Shelley's most trusted source of information on English affairs.'³⁰ His reliance on journals for information on the political situation in England has been offered as an indication of Shelley's distance from England, but his reliance was of course shared by the working classes, as Samuel Bamford notes:

The writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts of South Lancashire, in those of Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham; also in many of the Scottish manufacturing towns. Their influence was speedily visible: he directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings – misgovernment; and its proper corrective – parliamentary reform.³¹

Shelley, like Byron and like his own Prometheus, has his own roots in the oppressive class, a fact that has often been used to elucidate what are felt to be

contradictions in poems such as *The Mask of Anarchy*. Shelley is, for example, often said to be radically undecided on the question of the methods that should be employed in a revolution. In fact the question of whether Shelley advocates violent or passive resistance has become something of a cliché in Shelley studies. Paul Foot argues that the distinction between the two is more apparent than real: both are forms of resistance, and 'passive' resistance may prove an effective way of disrupting the state, whether it takes the form of disabled people chaining themselves to railings outside the House of Commons, or anti-road protesters occupying soon to be felled trees. Although 'passive' such activities cost the state money through disruption of trade, and are therefore effective. And it is apparent in Shelley's political poems, written in 1819, that he was aware that the political war in which he was engaged was at root an economic war:

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed, --but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, --let no impostor heap;
Weave robes, let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, --in your defence to bear.

(From 'Men of England: A Song')

Again Shelley is in agreement with the radical press, such as *The Medusa* of 3 July 1819:

You have it in your own power, the wealth of the empire centres in your skill and industry; you are the granary from whence the NATIONAL PAUPERS and DRONES of SOCIETY draw their succour and support: You are powerful beyond your own calculation, yet you are weak, decrepid [sic], dejected, and despised; you are rich in all the materials that constitute wealth, yet you are poor and wretched. Your families are in rags, and destitute of the necessities of life, your habitations are the scene of misery and want.³²

As in Shelley's verses this extract points out the relationship between the poor and their employers, but while stating 'You are powerful beyond your own calculation', the above extract does not suggest action, whereas Shelley's stanzas marry economic protest with an exhortation to bear arms.

At such moments Shelley's stance is in fact more radical than that adopted by the likes of Cobbett and Henry Hunt before the Peterloo massacre. Hunt advocated a campaign based on economic boycotts, abstention from heavily taxed goods such as tea, tobacco, and spirits. Hunt only moved further leftward during his incarceration at Ilchester Jail, which, after a few months, he begins referring to as 'Ilchester Bastille' in his fortnightly addresses. In *The Mask of Anarchy* Shelley insists in several passages that all resistance must be non-violent:

LXIX

"Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.

Stuart Curran writes that Shelley advocates 'an active and primarily educative force similar to that of Gandhi.'³³ Other less sympathetic commentators may suggest that in his repudiation of violence in such passages Shelley shows a

squeamishness that betrays the distance between the class position from which he is writing and the class that he is addressing. But it seems far more important to note that even in such passages Shelley is following closely the radical line taken at this political moment by the likes of Henry Hunt:

You will meet on Monday next, my friends, and by your *steady, firm* and temperate deportment, you will convince your enemies, that you feel you have *an important and imperious public duty* to perform [...] Our enemies will seek every opportunity, by means of their sanguinary agents, to excite a Riot, that they may have a pretence for SPILLING OUR BLOOD [...] Come, then, my friends, to the Meeting on Monday, armed with NO OTHER WEAPON but that of a self-approving conscience; determined not to suffer yourselves to be irritated or excited, by any means whatsoever, to commit any breach of the public peace.³⁴

This exhortation to avoid violent conflict was preached for good reason: the radicals knew that if it came to an armed clash between themselves and the government then they would be likely to fail. Violent revolution would become a real possibility only if a sizeable percentage of the regular army could be persuaded to recognize their class identity with the reformers. Hence, the insistence of many radicals in the aftermath of Peterloo on making a clear moral distinction between the behaviour of the regular army and the behaviour of the Yeomanry. The newly formed Yeomanry regiments were drawn mainly from the manufacturing classes.³⁵ In an unpublished letter to *The Examiner* (in which he seems to echo the article from *Sherwin's Weekly Political Register* quoted in the Bamford chapter), Shelley makes it clear that he differentiates between the two types of soldier present on St. Peter's Field: 'we hear that a troop of enraged master manufacturers are let loose with sharpened swords upon a multitude of their starving dependents & in spite of the remonstrances of the regular troops

that they ride over them & massacre without distinction of sex or age, & cut off women's breasts & dash the heads of infants against the stones.'³⁶ After Peterloo, the radical press very generally showed that it shared Shelley's reluctance to criticise the 'regular troops', the 15th Hussars, who were in fact probably responsible for most of the actual injuries, as a Lieutenant in their rank, William Jolliffe, related twenty-five years later:

The Hussars drove the people forward with the flats of their swords, but sometimes, as is almost inevitably the case when men are placed in such situations, the edge was used, both by the Hussars, and, as I have heard, by the yeomen also; but of this last part I was not cognizant, and believing though I do that nine out of ten of the sabre-wounds were caused by the Hussars, I must still consider that it redounds onto the humane forbearance of the men of the 15th that more wounds were not received.³⁷

Strangely, the normally reliable E. P. Thompson perpetuates the radical myth that, for the most practical of reasons, absolved the regular soldiers of responsibility for the killings: 'It was the panic of class hatred. It was the *Yeomanry* – the Manchester manufacturers, merchants, publicans, and shopkeepers on horseback – which did more damage than the regulars (Hussars).'³⁸ Thompson then goes on to cite an act of gallantry by one of the officers of the Hussars, taken from Hone's publication *The Inquest on John Lees*:

When I got to the end of Watson-street, I saw ten or twelve of the Yeomanry Cavalry, and two of the Hussars cutting at the people, who were wedged close together, when an officer of Hussars rode up to his own men, and knocking up their swords said, 'Damn you what do you mean by this work? He then called out to the Yeomanry, 'For shame gentlemen; what are you about? The people cannot get away.'³⁹

Thompson is simply repeating the radical version of events voiced immediately after Peterloo in order to avoid alienating a possibly sympathetic regular army. Thompson's view of the Hussars has obviously been influenced by Bamford's

account: ‘The hussars, we have reason for supposing, gave but few wounds, and I am not aware that it has been shewn that one of those brave soldiers dishonoured his sword by using the edge of it.’⁴⁰ A note in the poem *The Field of Peterloo*⁴¹ (a parody of Walter Scott’s *The Field of Waterloo*), by Thomas Brown the Younger Esq. (it is uncertain whether this is by Thomas Moore)⁴² similarly praises the Hussars: ‘The Hussar’s lying at Manchester prevented the increase of murders in several instances by wresting the sabres from the hands of those modern HANNIBALS.’ (XVII)

Most radical accounts contrasted the actions of the Yeomanry with those of the 15th Hussars who only ‘used the flat of their swords’. Clearly the radicals from the outset wanted to make a clear distinction between the regular army and the Yeomanry, who, together with the Manchester authorities and the Government, are given full responsibility for the massacre. Again Shelley follows the radical press in making an emphatic distinction between the ‘hired murderers’, “‘And the bold true warriors, / Who have hugged danger in the wars [...]’ (LXXXIX). The Hussars, will, it is optimistically predicted, be ‘Ashamed of such base company’, that is, ashamed of their association with the yeomanry, and will side with the people, ‘turn to those who would be free’. The slaughter that we have previously witnessed -- ‘Let them ride among you there; / Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew’ -- will now serve as an ‘inspiration’ to the people and the Hussars, who will join together to overthrow the state and its

‘hired murderers’. Shelley repeats this analysis in *A Philosophical View of Reform*

where he writes:

If circumstances had collected a more considerable number as at Manchester on the memorable 16th of August, if the tyrants command their troops to fire upon them or cut them down unless they disperse, he will exhort them peaceably to risk the danger, and to expect without resistance, the onset of the cavalry, and wait with folded arms the event of the fire of the artillery and receive with unshrinking bosoms the bayonets of charging battalions. Men are every day persuaded to incur greater perils for a less manifest advantage. [...] The soldier is a man and an Englishman. This unexpected reception would probably throw him back upon a recollection of the true nature of the measures of which he was made the instrument, and the enemy might be converted into an ally.

Steven E. Jones, who finds ‘*The Mask of Anarchy* to be more reformist than revolutionary’,⁴³ fails to notice how closely Shelley follows the line adopted at once and in common by almost all the leading radical journals. He fails to notice the distinction that Shelley makes between the two very different types of soldier who were at Peterloo, when he writes of Shelley’s, ‘images of the hussars’ bayonets thirsting “with ... desire to wet / Its bright point in English blood”⁴⁴.

It is an important distinction, because as stanza 89 of *The Mask* details, Shelley joined with the radical journalists in entertaining the hope that these veterans could be persuaded to join the radical cause by contrasting the unarmed steadfast bravery of the people with the cowardice of the armed middle-class Yeomanry. It may not have been quite so unlikely a possibility as it now seems. Caroline, after all, was to receive enthusiastic support from sections of the army, many of whom, we now know, were themselves readers of the radical press. In the distinction that it makes between the Hussars and the Yeomanry the poem reveals again that it is designed to address a specific political moment. Leigh Hunt insists that ‘the poet recommends that there should be no active

resistance, come what might'.⁴⁵ Yet it is apparent in *The Mask of Anarchy* and even in *Prometheus Unbound*, with the role given to Demogorgon, that Shelley, like the young Bamford, despite wavering over how it is to be effected, accepts that revolution is the answer to society's ills.

Shelley, who wished to publish *Peter Bell the Third* anonymously, adopts the pseudonym 'Miching Mallecho' and dedicates the poem to Thomas Moore's fictitious author of *The Fudge Family* and *The Twopenny Postbag*, 'Thomas Brown, Esq. The Younger'. His Peter is a 'Rat' and an 'Apostate',⁴⁶ an appropriate companion for the Fudges, although 'he surpasses them in the more peculiarly legitimate qualification of intolerable dullness'.⁴⁷ In 'Part the First' Peter dies, and is taken by the Devil who has purchased his soul for half-a-crown. Like Byron's devil in 'A Vision of Judgement', Shelley's can assume many appearances. He may appear as a gentleman; or Robert Southey, 'a bard bartering rhymes / For sack'; or Sidmouth, 'a statesman spinning crimes'; or one of his employees, 'A swindler, living as he can;' (Castle or Oliver); or as:

III

A thief, who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like someone whom it were not right
To mention; - or the luckless wight,
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.
(Part the Second; The Devil,)

This is the Regent, ‘boots’ and ‘pantaloons’⁴⁸ who has stolen the wealth produced by John Bull.⁴⁹ George Cruikshank, in Hone’s *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder*, would later portray the Regent as a thief in the night:



Figure 19: George Cruikshank, ‘Publication’, *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder*

(In this cut George, accompanied by a crippled cupid, is trying to gather information about his wife, Caroline.)

Shelley’s devil seems to have influenced Byron’s ‘A Vision of Judgement’, in which Byron also lists the people whose form the devil may take: ‘Now Burke, now Tooke, he grew to people’s fancies, / And certes often like Sir Philip

Francis' (LXXIX), though he is actually, '*really, truly*, nobody at all.' (LXXX).

The description of Shelley's devil is particularly interesting:

IV

But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face, and eye severe,
On every side did perk and peer
Till he saw Peter dead or napping
(Part the Second; The Devil,)

Shelley takes his cue here from John Walcott's Peter Pindar, who attacks Benjamin West in Ode II: 'I'd buy much better at a Wapping shop, / By vulgar tongues baptised a slop!'. The reference to the Regent as 'pantaloons' is neatly followed by a stanza in which the devil takes the guise of a seller of baggy trousers. Michael Scrivener identifies this as one of several passages in the poem in which Shelley lapses into snobbish expressions of contempt for the vulgar: 'Some of the antibourgeois allusions also seem to be sneers, for example the jibes at Grosvenor Square and the slop-merchant from Wapping.'⁵⁰ But Scrivener misses the joke that Grosvenor Square was at this time acting as an unofficial seat of government. It was, as Arthur Thistlewood knew, where Lord Harrowby's house was situated, and where fashionable parties and Cabinet dinners were held. And in 1819 'slop' and 'Wapping' were words that had accrued quite specific significances. Wordsworth's Devil arrives in a form that Hone had made familiar to hundreds of thousands of readers, in the form of Wordsworth's friend of over twenty years and fellow ex-Jacobin, Hone's Dr.

Slop, the editor of ‘The Slop Pail’, and the head of the Society for the Suppression of Vice,⁵¹ Dr. John Stoddart. Stoddart had been christened Dr. Slop by Hone, for his virulent attacks against Buonaparte in *The Times* (from which he was sacked), in *Buonaparte-phobia* (first published in 1815 and re-published in 1820), in which he claims that Stoddart reminds him of Lawrence Sterne’s cursing obstetrician (Stoddart was actually a doctor of law⁵²). Hone promises that he will continue to refer to Stoddart by this nickname ‘so long as the Doctor daily empties his night-slush from his Slop-pail. By virtue of my public authority, I hereby ratify and confirm his right and title to the name of “SLOP;” and, it is my parodical will and pleasure, that he continue to bear it during his natural life.’⁵³ Hone was so fond of his coinage that he even introduced it into his defence before Lord Ellenborough during his third trial, which was covered in all of the major newspapers and also released in pamphlet form.⁵⁴ It was a name that was readily adopted by Stoddart’s enemies, including his brother-in-law, William Hazlitt:

‘Tis the editor of *The Times* [...] Dr. Slop’s curse upon the Allies and their proceedings; cursing them in Saxony, cursing them in Norway, cursing them in Finland, cursing them in Poland, cursing them in France, cursing them every where as they deserve, and as the people every where curse them; sending the Pope and the Inquisition to the Devil.⁵⁵

Thomas Moore was another who found ‘Slop’ a useful moniker for Stoddart, as in ‘The Three Doctors’:

Though many great Doctors there be,
There are three that all Doctors out-top,
Doctor Eady, that famous M. D.,
Doctor S---th-y, and dear Doctor Slop,

The purger --- the proser --- the bard ---
All quacks in a different style;
Doctor S---th-y writes books by the yard,
Doctor Eady writes puffs by the mile!

Doctor Slop in no merit outdone
By his scribbling or physicking brother,
Can dose us with stuff like the one,
Ay, and doze us with stuff like the other.

Moore offers a particularly apt parallel here, because he associates Slop with Southey, just as Shelley associates him with Wordsworth. Slop, as a name for Stoddart, was so well known that Thackeray could still use it over twenty years later. It is likely that Shelley would have been aware of the pamphlet in which Hone first coined the term, because in April 1817 Shelley had been negotiating with Hone about publishing some of his work.⁵⁶ Thereafter he seems to have had no contact with Hone until January 1818 when Shelley contributed five pounds to Hone's subscription fund.⁵⁷ Shelley also instructed Charles Ollier to sell his *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote Throughout the Kingdom, By the Hermit of Marlow*, at radical bookshops amongst which he named the publishers of *Wat Tyler*: Sherwood, Neely and Jones; and William Hone.⁵⁸ Shelley associates Wordsworth with Stoddart as a way of charging that the poet has become, like Dr Slop, a hack writer, paid by the government to disseminate government propaganda.

The reference to Wapping also requires explanation. Bridge Street, the location of Stoddart's office, is in Blackfriars not Wapping, although Blackfriars does border on Wapping. The change of location serves however to associate Stoddart with a notorious contemporary crime. Wapping was infamous as the scene of the recent horrific skull-smashing murders.⁵⁹ Shelley was interested in this case, and quickly associated the actions of the convicted murderer, Williams, with those of the State; writing on 6 April 1812: 'If the murderer of Marrs family containing 6 persons deserves a gibbet, how much more does a Prince whose conduct destroy[s] millions deserve it?'⁶⁰ John Williams, an Irishman, was convicted of killing six people, including a baby, in two separate incidents, with the aid of accomplices who were never found. Williams escaped the gallows by hanging himself in jail, but the authorities made up for this by parading his body through London. What is particularly memorable about the killings is the manner of death. Throats were cut so that the head was almost severed, and most of the skulls were smashed open. Shelley's point may simply be that the Devil, taking the form of the head of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, sells slop that damages minds, and that the production of such slop amounts to mental murder. In the following cut we can see Stoddart, depicted as an old woman, serving poisonous slop from his pail, outside the office of *The New Times*. The new King, all boots and mutton chop whiskers, is shown lapping it up while poor John Bull is made to vomit:



Figure 20: George Cruikshank, frontispiece to *A Slap at Slop*

Shelley seems to refer indirectly to the Wapping murders again in 'Part the Third', in the lines, 'All sorts of caitiff corpses planning, / All sorts of cozening for trepanning'. Tim Webb glosses 'trepanning' as 'catching in a trap, luring into a course of action, swindling'.⁶¹ But it more commonly refers to a surgical procedure usually carried out in a post-mortem, whereby the skull is opened by a circular saw. This works doubly; as a reference to the fate of hanged corpses at the hands of medical science, and to the Wapping murders. In 'Part the Fifth' Shelley again repeats this conceit, when Peter, enchanted by Coleridge's conversation, 'Would heedless of a broken pate, / Stand like a man asleep'.

Hazlitt similarly associates Stoddart with murder. In 'Common Places' he makes a list of things and people that a 'good hater may here find wherewithal to feed the largest spleen, and swell it, even to bursting!'⁶² Included in the list is

‘Slop raving at the bloodthirsty victims of courtly assassins, and whetting mild daggers for patriot throats’. Hazlitt hates Stoddart for his politics, and for the verbal assaults the former editor of *The Times* heaped on his hero Napoleon. Stoddart’s tirades against Napoleon are quoted by Hone in *Buonaparte-phobia*, and are often taken from *The Times* itself:

NAPOLEON THE GREAT! [...] an *Adventurer!* A blustering *Charlatan!* – such a *Fellow!* – a *Scoundrel!*, with a degraded character! – an *Impostor!* – a *Wretch!* A *desperate Wretch!* *Such a Wretch!* – a *Robber!* – a mere *Brigand!* An *atrocious Brigand*.⁶³

And so on. But in Hone’s squib Stoddart does not write these lines himself, they are delivered to him by the Devil:

Scene – a Room at DOCTOR SLOP’S in Doctors Commons.

Present — DOCTOR SLOP, MY FATHER, and MY UNCLE TOBY.

A single loud tap of a knuckle against the outside of the lower panel of the parlour door, gave not an humble earnest applicant for admission: -- ‘Come in,’ said Doctor Slop, in a tone of elevated condescension.

The door opened, and a Printer’s Devil entered. -----

With an air of eagerness, bespeaking also a consciousness of his being a messenger of importance, the Devil walked up to Doctor Slop, and placing his body in an angle of fifty-five degrees, and his hand in his bosom at the same time, he drew forth, from between his waistcoat and shirt, and delivered to Doctor Slop, a small white paper parcel, directed and folded letterwise, and closed with paste instead of a wafer. -----

‘The Proof of my leading article for to-morrow’s Times,’ said Doctor Slop, with complacency, bowing towards my Father and my Uncle Toby in an apologising posture for breaking the envelope. –

It may be that Shelley had this scene in mind in his representation of the dealings between Peter and the Devil in ‘Part the Sixth’:

V

[...] Grace after meat? Miscreant and Liar!

Thief! Blackguard! Scoundrel! Fool! Hell fire

Is twenty times too good for you.

VI

“By that last book of yours WE think
You’ve double-damned yourself to scorn;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The babe that is unborn.”

VII

All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had
Safely to Peter’s house conveyed.
For carriage, tenpence Peter paid—
Untied them—read them—went half mad.

The Devil has just delivered ‘The Idiot Boy’ to Wordsworth. He then gives
‘Kant’s book’ to P. Verbovale, Esquire, ‘And set his soul on fire.’

Shelley’s view of the characters on the political stage is well informed. In *Peter Bell* he offers a survey of the population of London, which includes:

II

A Castles, and a Canning,
A Cobbett and a Castlereagh
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning,
All sorts of cozening for trepanning
Corpses less corrupt than they.
(Part the Third; Hell)

Richard Cronin comments, ‘The informant and agent provocateur, Castles, properly Castle, Cobbett, and the government ministers are, the alliteration suggests, morally equivalent and practically in league, engaged in a single conspiracy against the peace of the nation.’⁶⁴ Cronin understands Shelley’s grouping of Cobbett with the state agents as a rehearsal of a bourgeois

commonplace, that radical demagogues, if they encourage violence, serve only to strengthen the forces of oppression against which they protest. But it may be that Shelley harbours the suspicion that Hone later makes explicit, that Cobbett, is indeed, like Castles, himself a paid agent of the state, primed to trick ‘corpses less corrupt than they’.

Peter himself becomes a willing propagandist on behalf of the devil, writing odes in his honour, poems closely based on Wordsworth's 'Thanksgiving Ode':

XXXVI

Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil—

In one of which he meekly said:

“May Carnage and Slaughter,

Thy niece and thy daughter,

May Rapine and Famine,

Thy gorge ever cramming,

Glut thee with living and dead!

XXXVII

“May death and damnation,

And consternation,

Flit up from hell with pure intent!

Slash them at Manchester,

Glasgow, Leeds, and Chester;

Drench all with blood from Avon to Trent.

XXXVIII

“Let thy bodyguard yeomen

Hew down babes and women,

And laugh with bold triumph till Heaven be rent,

When Moloch in Jewry,

Munched children with fury,
It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent.”
(Part the Sixth; Damnation)

As Steven E. Jones writes, Shelley is ‘simultaneously alluding to Wordsworth’s Waterloo ode and to Peterloo, a real-life example of poetic dullness and of the kind of social evil it supports.’⁶⁵ *The Mask of Anarchy* and *Peter Bell the Third* both seem to be written by a poet suspicious that the classical tradition of poetry, as exemplified by the ode with which Wordsworth celebrated the victory at Waterloo, which is also the tradition within which Shelley himself works when he writes poems such as *Prometheus Unbound*, has become inextricably associated with the kind of unjust social repression that provokes incidents such as the Peterloo massacre. For a brief period in late 1819 Shelley made strenuous attempts to detach himself from this tradition, and to open himself to the quite different tradition embodied in the work of Hone, Cruikshank and the radical pamphleteers. It is an irony that none of these, Shelley’s most urgently topical poems, addressed to a particular historical moment, were published at the time when they were written. Explaining his decision to delay the publication of *The Mask of Anarchy* until 1832, Leigh Hunt writes:

This Poem was written by Mr. Shelley on occasion of the bloodshed at Manchester, in the year 1819. I was editor of the Examiner at the time, and it was sent to me to be inserted or not in that journal, as I thought fit. I did not insert it, because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse.⁶⁶

Hunt had already suffered one lengthy term of imprisonment, and it is not easy to blame him for being unwilling to risk a second. But by 1832 Shelley’s poems

were no longer topical, nor even controversial: they recalled a political crisis that was safely distanced in the past. *Peter Bell the Third* had to wait until 1839 for its publication as did 'Men of England' and 'England 1819', by which time yet another King had died, and the Victorian era had begun. Shelley's poems had become mere period pieces. In fact, Shelley's view of the statesmen who had ruled Britain in 1819 was now generally accepted. Even Disraeli, writing in *Coningsby* in 1843 thought of Liverpool's as a government of 'mediocrities':

When we recall Mr. Vansitart with his currency resolutions; Lord Castlereagh with his plans for the employment of labour; and Lord Sidmouth with his plots for ensnaring the laborious; we are tempted to imagine that the present epoch has been one of peculiar ability, and marvel how England could have attained the present pitch under a series of such governors [...] it seems incredible that only five-and-twenty years ago the English mind could have been so ridden and hoodwinked, and that, too, by men of mean attainments and moderate abilities!⁶⁷

After Peterloo the radical campaign based on mass meetings to demand reform ground to a halt. The government had shown itself willing to respond to such meetings with violence. Peaceful protest had failed. The only remaining option seemed to be to espouse revolutionary violence. The attempt, when it was made, came to be known as the Cato Street conspiracy. There was no response to the event by Shelley, or indeed any of the prominent radicals such as Bamford or Hone. Instead, and rather oddly, the most powerful responses to the Cato Street conspiracy were those of liberals, such as Byron, Hobhouse and Charles Lamb.

¹ Scrivener, *Radical*, p.199.

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- ² Introduction to *The Works of P. B. Shelley* (Hampshire: Wordsworth, 1994), p.5.
- ³ *The Masque of Anarchy* (London: Edward Moxon, 1832), xii-xix.
- ⁴ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo*, pp. 6 - 7.
- ⁵ Scrivener, *Radical*, p.196.
- ⁶ *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), II, p. 116.
- ⁷ *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. by Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 2000), II, p. 458.
- ⁸ 'The Unpastured Sea: An introduction to Shelley', *Romanticism and Consciousness Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 380.
- ⁹ Simpson, p.255.
- ¹⁰ Scrivener, *Radical*, p.198.
- ¹¹ Shelley *Letters*, II, p.152.
- ¹² Mary Shelley, note to *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley, *Poems*, 1839, p. 135.
- ¹³ Cronin, *Politics*, p.174.
- ¹⁴ *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.64.
- ¹⁵ *The Black Dwarf*, 21 August 1820. The poem is reprinted in Michael Scrivener's *Poetry and Reform*, pp. 265-6.
- ¹⁶ Bloom, 'The Unpastured Sea: An introduction to Shelley', p. 377.
- ¹⁷ Leigh Hunt in his preface to *The Masque of Anarchy* mentions this reference to Eldon: 'The fourth and fifth stanzas, for instance, of this Poem, involve an allusion, which becomes affecting from our knowing what he must have felt when he wrote it. It is to his children, who were taken from him by the late Lord Chancellor.'
- ¹⁸ George Cruikshank, showing Castlereagh as 'Dirkpatrick' holding a scourge and a bleeding shamrock. William Hone, *The Political Showman at Home!* (London: William Hone, 1821).
- ¹⁹ Sir John Leach features again, in *Swellfoot the Tyrant* as the Leech. I am indebted to Edgell Rickword for identifying Leach as the subject of Cruikshank's cut. See Rickword, p. 317.
- ²⁰ A cut of Leach by George Cruikshank, from *The Political Showman -- at Home!*, inverting Gillray's representation of Paine as a Crocodile in *The New Morality*.
- ²¹ *A Description of Mr. West's Picture of Death on the Pale Horse; or, the Opening of the First Five Seals: Exhibiting Under the immediate Patronage of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, at no. 125 Pall-Mall, Near Carlton House* (London: C.H. Reynell, 1817).
- ²² Interestingly Byron uses Shelley's first line in his *The Vision of Judgment*, "'Look to the earth, I said, and say again: / When this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm / Began in youth's first bloom and flush to reign,' (XLII).
- ²³ See Rickword, p. 317.
- ²⁴ Cronin, *Politics*, p.175.
- ²⁵ Jones, pp. 98-99.
- ²⁶ Elizabeth Gaunt shares her name with the last woman executed in England for treason. Burned at the stake during the first year of James II's reign (1685) she is said to have 'rejoiced' to be the first martyr that suffered by fire in this reign' (DNB).
- ²⁷ Cited by Reid, p.185.
- ²⁸ Interestingly the image of the Lion waking is also used by the loyalists: 'The old British Lion with fury they'd wake, / Not to burst bags of smoke, but the King to unmake!', From 'Indignation', *The Radical Ladder*.
- ²⁹ *Ode to a Plotting Parson*.
- ³⁰ Cronin, *Politics*, p.161.
- ³¹ *Passages*, p.13.
- ³² Cited by Prothero, p. 97.
- ³³ Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis; The Maturing of an Epic Vision* (California: Huntington Library, 1975), p. 195.
- ³⁴ Cited by Marlow, p.113.
- ³⁵ At the turn of the century many of these regiments were formed in response to the invasion threat, however the post-war formation of regiments such as the Manchester Yeomanry was obviously only for internal national security.
- ³⁶ Shelley, *Letters*, II, p. 136.
- ³⁷ See 'Sir William Jolliffe's Narrative', Bruton, p.53.
- ³⁸ *The Making*, p. 752.
- ³⁹ Ibid. p.753.

⁴⁰ *Passages*, p.153.

⁴¹ *The Field of Peterloo: A Poem Written in Commemoration of the Manchester Massacre: With an Admonitory Epistle to the P__E R__T. The Whole Being an Anti-Sympathetic Response to the 'New Whig Guide'* (London: J. Fairburn, 1819).

⁴² James Chandler in *England in 1819*, claims that this is not by Moore, p.286, whereas the University of London Library catalogue states that it is. The British Library's copy bears the inscription 'to the editor of The Champion' from the author'. It may be possible to discern from the handwriting whether the poem is by Moore.

⁴³ Jones, p. 121.

⁴⁴ Jones, p. 110.

⁴⁵ Preface to *The Masque of Anarchy* (1832), xi.

⁴⁶ Preface to *Peter Bell the Third*.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See also 'The Devil's Walk' where the Regent is associated with 'pantaloon' (74-79).

⁴⁹ The significance of the number nine has so far eluded me, it may refer to the number of years of the Regency.

⁵⁰ Scrivener, *Radical*, p. 223.

⁵¹ This is obviously in Shelley's mind, as a footnote to 'Part the Third' reads 'I wonder the women of the town do not form an association, like the Society for the Suppression of Vice, for the support of what may be called the "King, Church, and Constitution" of their order. But this subject is almost too horrible for a joke.'

⁵² In the earliest surviving version of 'The Devil's Walk' Shelley associates Satan with a lawyer, 'He saw the Devil [for a lawyer] a viper slay' (25). *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. by Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1989), I, p.232.

⁵³ *Buonaparte-phobia, or Cursing made easy to the meanest Capacity* (London: William Hone, 1815).

⁵⁴ *The Third Trial of William Hone*, 3rd edn. (London: William Hone), p. 24.

⁵⁵ 'Illustrations of The Times Newspaper', Hazlitt *Works*, 7, p. 134.

⁵⁶ See Richard Holmes, *Shelley the Pursuit*, p. 366.

⁵⁷ Shelley, *Letters*, I, p.591.

⁵⁸ Shelley, *Letters*, I, p.533.

⁵⁹ De Quincey's 'On Murder', contains references to the Wapping murders of December 1811. See 'Murder' *The Works of Thomas De Quincey "The English Opium Eater" Including All His Contributions to Periodical Literature*, 2nd. edn. 15 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1863), 4, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁰ Shelley, *Letters*, I, p. 178.

⁶¹ See Percy Bysshe Shelley; *Poems and Prose*, ed. by Timothy Webb (London: J. M. Dent, 1995), p. 392.

⁶² Hazlitt, *Works*, 20, p.133.

⁶³ *Buonaparte-phobia*, p.7.

⁶⁴ Cronin, *The Politics*, p.152.

⁶⁵ Jones, p. 64.

⁶⁶ *The Masque of Anarchy* (1832), p. i.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby; or, the New Generation* (London: Longmans, Green & co. 1870), pp. 70-71.

Part II: CATO STREET

From 'Poverty to Guilt': Charles Lamb and the Cato Street Conspiracy.

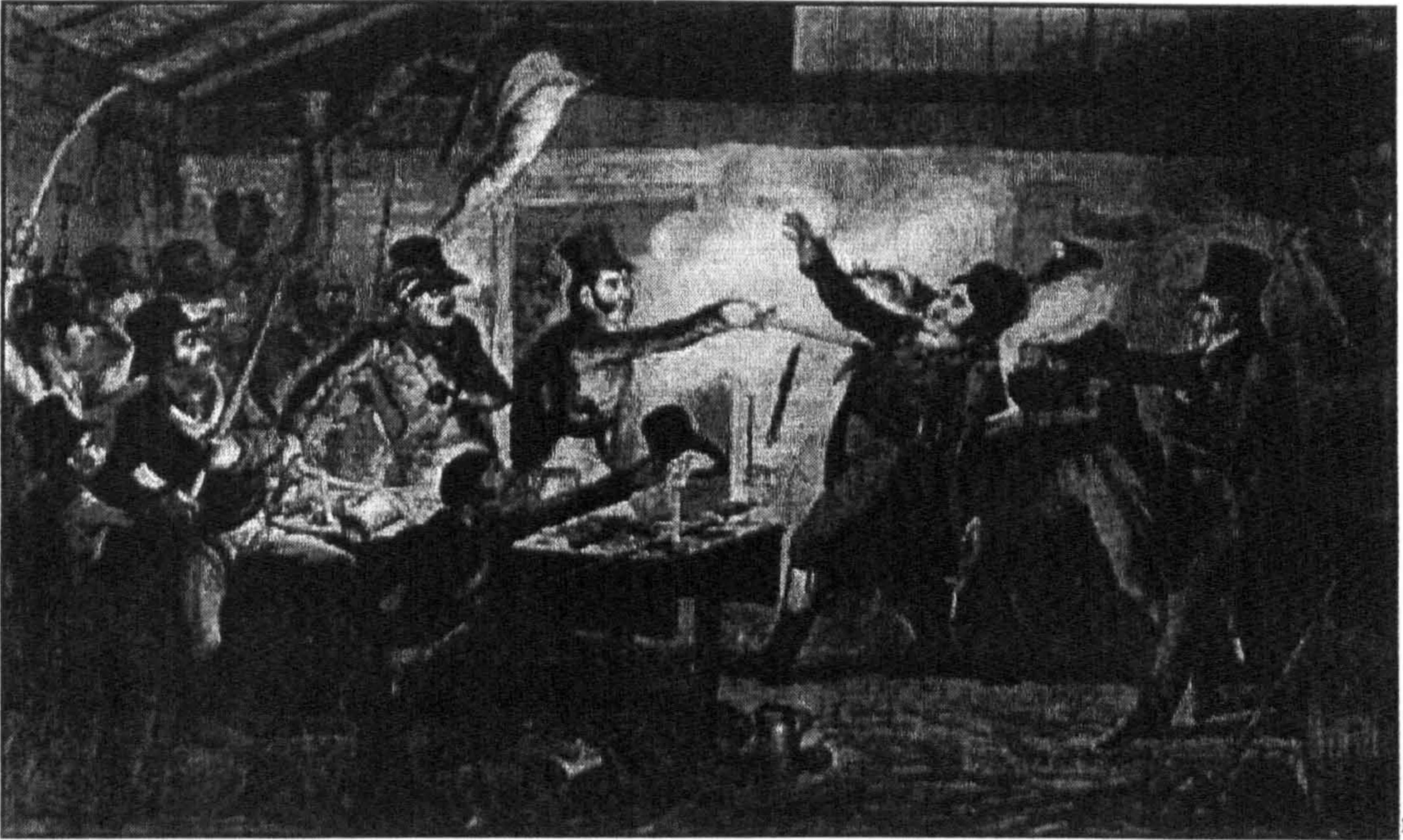


Figure 21: George Cruikshank, 'The Cato Street Conspirators' (London: G. Humphrey, 1820)

In his excellent edition of *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, E.V. Lucas seems puzzled by Lamb's bitter attack on George Canning, President of the Board of Control, in his 'Sonnet to Matthew Wood, Esq., Alderman and MP'.² Lucas places the poem in the context of the Queen Caroline affair, understandably, as Wood was a prominent supporter of Caroline's at the time of the poem's publication. In response to Lamb's tirade against Canning, Lucas can only suggest that the attack is misplaced, for 'Canning's opposition to her cause was not so absolute as Lamb seemed to think.'³ It is understandable why Lucas would think that Lamb was referring to the Queen Caroline affair, as Canning's stance was one that came in for some criticism in the newspapers, as

this excerpt from *The Times* demonstrates: ‘Will Mr. Canning continue upon the Continent while charges of this detestable kind are brought against the goddess of his idolatry? Will he not rather return and exclaim that, even if uncontradicted by other evidence, it is *impossible* they should be true?’⁴

Of all the Tory ministers Canning was the most sympathetic to Caroline, eventually resigning over the removal of her name from the Prayer Book. He was widely assumed to have once been ‘a lover of the Queen’s’.⁵ The King certainly seems to have believed that Canning and Caroline were lovers as we can see from Henry Hobhouse’s diary entry for 26 June 1820.

Mr. Canning yesterday had another long audience of the King, in which he tendered his resignation, avowing his belief in the truth of all the evidence laid before Parlt. respecting the Queen’s misconduct, but declaring that circumstances existed which must preclude him from taking an active part against Her Majesty. The King believes, and probably with great reason, that C.’s intimacy with the Queen has gone to the utmost extent.⁶

Canning’s behaviour on Caroline’s return to England (he immediately left for Paris to get himself out of the way) must have seemed, to the public, in stark contrast to Wood’s staunch support. But Lamb’s sonnet is best understood in relation to its companion poem, ‘The Three Graves’, ‘Written during the time, now happily almost forgotten, of the spy system’.⁷ Both poems refer to the Cato Street conspiracy of February 1820, and were first printed in the issues of *The Champion* dated 13 and 14 May 1820. In this chapter I will argue that they were written to support Matthew Wood’s motion in the House of Commons on 2 May and 9 May (the highlights of which were printed in the same issues of *The Champion* as Lamb’s poems) ‘Respecting the criminal conduct and proceedings

of George Edwards'.⁸ In the House Wood had moved: 'That a secret committee be appointed to examine evidence touching the criminal conduct and proceedings of George Edwards and his associates for the last two years, and especially his connexion with the parties forming the plot lately discovered in Cato Street.'⁹

The Cato Street Conspiracy was a quixotic enterprise. The plot to murder the Cabinet at a dinner to be held in the house of Lord Harrowby, seemingly hatched by a few half-starved men, never stood any chance of success. Even the dinner never in fact took place, and suspiciously, was only advertised in one newspaper, *The New Times*, edited by John Stoddart¹⁰ (William Hone's Dr. Slop, and Sarah Hazlitt's brother), rather than all of the major papers, as was customary.¹¹ The plan to kill the Cabinet had been in existence for several months. Henry Hobhouse (under-secretary to Sidmouth), states in his diary that the conspirators first planned to kill the Cabinet at Lord Westmorland's house in the middle of December 1819, provided that there would be no constables present. But Sidmouth was aware of the plan, and constables were in attendance.¹² The conspirators then shifted their target to Lord Harrowby's house in Grosvenor Square as a report from George Edwards, a government spy who had infiltrated Thistlewood's group, dated 27 January 1820 shows. Both he and Brunt had been 'ordered to Reconnaissance the Earl of Harrowby', to ascertain 'the situation at the back of the House'.¹³ However the decision to

carry out the assassinations at Lord Harrowby's on 23rd. February was only made the day before, when George Edwards, told the conspirators that a Cabinet dinner was to be held at Lord Harrowby's house on the following day. In HO42/199 we can read Edwards's detailed daily reports to Henry Hobhouse, written in pencil on thin strips of what look like printers slips where he discloses the information to the conspirators, 'I went to look at the *New Times* at the office in Fleet St. and then to the Room found them Hall Thistlewood Ings, Brunt Tidd and Bradburn.'¹⁴ Note that Edwards fails to mention to his employers that an attack is to be made at Lord Harrowby's; inferring that they already knew. Thistlewood then sent Abel Hall to buy a copy of Stoddart's ¹⁵ paper which made the announcement in its 'Fashionable Mirror' column. We cannot be sure whether it was Edwards acting on his own, or more likely Henry Hobhouse, who had the advertisement inserted in *The New Times*, but by the end of 1820 many believed it was Edwards. As Thomas Preston states: 'The wretch Edwards was the man who got the advertisement, announcing the dinner at Lord Harrowby's, inserted in the newspapers when such a dinner was never contemplated by Lord Harrowby or any other of Edwards' employers.'¹⁶ The announcement in *The New Times* led the previously aborted plan to kill the Cabinet to be resuscitated, and decided the fate of the conspirators, who were found organising in a loft in Cato Street just prior to carrying out their plan, and where the unfortunate constable Smithers was stabbed by Thistlewood as he tried to arrest him. This is the plan as revealed by Thistlewood:

I propose going to the door with a note to present to Earl Harrowby; when the door is opened, the men will rush in directly, seize the servants that are in the way, present a pistol to them, and directly threaten them with death, if they offer the least resistance or noise. This done, a party will rush forward to take command of the stairs [...] If any servants attempt to make a retreat these men with hand grenades are to clap fire to them, and fling them in amongst them. All these objects are for the securing of the house and those men who are to go in for the assassination are to rush in directly after.¹⁷

Thistlewood's co-conspirator Ings continues:

I will enter the room first, I will go in with a brace of pistols, a cutlass and a knife in my pocket, and after the two swordsmen have despatched them, I will cut every head off that is in the room and Lord Castlereagh's head and Lord Sidmouth's I will bring away in a bag. For this purpose I will provide two bags. As soon as I get into the room, I shall say, 'Well, my Lords, I have as good men here as the Manchester Yeomanry¹⁸. Enter citizens and do your duty.'¹⁹

After this the conspirators were to take the King Street Barracks, the Bishop of London's house, the Light Horse barracks in Gray's Inn Lane, Mansion House (to house the provisional government), and the Bank of England. It was an absurd scheme. First, there was to be no dinner at Harrowby's: Cabinet dinners had been cancelled since the old King's death and the new King's illness in January 1820. Second, the conspirators were far too few to carry out such an ambitious plan (only eighteen met in the Cato Street loft), and one of them was a spy. There had in fact been four spies in Thistlewood's group, Banks, Edwards, Hartley and Williamson, but by January of 1820 only Edwards remained.²⁰ Henry Hobhouse, through John Stafford of Bow Street, was Edwards's main contact and paymaster. Edwards remained under Hobhouse's instruction after the conspiracy was exposed, as we see from a letter written by Edwards (referred to in correspondence with Hobhouse as 'W---r'²¹ and later as George Parker²²) to Hobhouse in early May 1820 from the Isle of Guernsey: 'I think I may remain here in perfect safety till you direct otherwise.' He later

writes, ‘should anything occur that induce you to think it necessary that I pass over to France you will have the goodness not to forget to send me a passport.’²³ It should be noticed that the name of Edwards never crops up in any of the accounts offered by those close to Sidmouth, and fortunately there was no need to use him as a witness, as Robert Adams decided to turn King’s evidence, with Hiden, Monument and Abel Hall also testifying to the guilt of their comrades. Eleven were found guilty of high treason: Thistlewood, Ings, Tidd, Brunt and Davidson were executed, and the rest transported. The insidiousness of the government’s plot was captured in a burlesque printed in *The Black Dwarf* in 1820. The main characters are ‘Castlerag’, ‘Sidemouth’ and ‘Spywards’:

STATE CONTRIVANCES

SCENE [1]. – A Parlour in Grosvener [sic] Square.

Enter CASTLERAG, SIDEMOUTH AND SPYWARDS.

Side. – “Where hast thou been brother?”

Spy.—“Making *Pikes!*

Cas.— ‘Brother, where thou?’”

Side.—“The filthy swine, that would our Lordships’ *hang,*

And cry Reform! Reform! Throughout our land,

Such rapid strides are making, far and wide,

To stop the which, I’ve *made* us up a *plot!*

For as they roar out “Liberty or Death!”

We *won’t* give *one*, but they *shall* have the other!

To make up which, the which – the which – you’ll help.

Cas. – I’ll give thee gold!

Spy.—My Lord, thou’rt kind!

Sid.—And I, t’ insure thy escape will mind!

Spy.—I myself will get the other!—

With hand-grenades we’ll make a smother;

I’ll blow into their ears rebellion, loud!—

I'll give them beer and pistols, bread and cheese;
With gin, ball-carriages, and pikes, and powder—
And when they speak but *loud*—why, I'll speak *louder*!
I had forgot — *two bags* and 'tis compleat
To put your *Lordships' heads in*—happy feat!

Sid.—Adieu!

Cas.—Success!

Sid.—The plot's to kill us *all*!

At some great *dinner*, if it suit, or *ball*!²⁴

As *The Examiner* of 30 April 1820 put it after five of the conspirators were sentenced to death:

The Last Act of the Cato-Street tragedy is now completed by the conviction or confession of the wretched men on whom the consequences of a corrupt system have fallen. It is a bloody catastrophe, and yet, we are sure, it will be far from answering the expectations of the promoters. The machinery is too apparent: the revolting means taken to aggravate the plot, -the hypocrisy – the lying – the cold-blooded entrapping of human beings – the execrable tearing asunder of the most intimate connections – the base betrayal of the most unbounded confidence – the final hangings and beheadings, - all this must create feelings far different from those which the contrivers of the plot wished to produce, and must add to that mass of discontent and disgust, against which the Boroughmongers vainly hoped to be armed by the scheme.

The foremost conspirator, Arthur Thistlewood, has been remembered well by many, such as George Barrow in his 1857 novel *The Romany Rye*:

Thistlewood [...] was a brave soldier and had served with distinction as an officer in the French service; he was one of the excellent swordsmen of Europe; had fought several duels in France, where it is no child's play to fight a duel; but had never unsheathed his sword for single combat, but in defence of the feeble and insulted – he was kind and open-hearted, but of too great simplicity; he had once ten thousand pounds left him, all of which he lent to a friend, who disappeared and never returned him a penny.²⁵

However in 1820 he was viewed very differently. As a well-known malcontent with an infamous past, he was tailor-made to be set-up in a government-contrived plot. Thistlewood had been a lieutenant in a militia regiment before transferring to a marching regiment, where he served in the West Indies.

Thistlewood soon resigned his commission. Called a 'second edition of Colonel

Despard' by an informer, Thistlewood was reputed to have taken part in Despard's conspiracy of 1802. By 1813, having 'ruined himself by gambling', Thistlewood was making a living 'as a common informer profiting from successful *qui tam* prosecutions'.²⁶ Alexander Richmond (himself accused of being one of Sidmouth's spies by Peter MacKenzie) wrote:

Although Thistlewood's private circumstances were sufficiently desperate to render him reckless, many are of opinion, that a heated imagination and mistaken zeal have obtained for him the name of an assassin instead of a patriot. Some that knew him well affirm, that the charge made against him by Hunt, that he was employed by government, made a deep impression on his mind; and that, from that time, he seemed embued with an opinion, that he should perform some bold and daring act to wipe away the imputation.²⁷

Thistlewood became a member of a revolutionary group called the 'Patriots' whose aims were 'abolition of nobility and clergy, confiscation and sale of the great estates, the provision of a plot of land for everyone, and the revival of the old Anglo-Saxon laws.'²⁸ The group had hoped for an invasion by the French, but with the end of the war in 1815 this hope died. Thistlewood then went to France with £600 to meet up with exiled radicals, such as Richard Hodgson, a former member of the London Corresponding Society, who had been in France since the 1790s. However, Thistlewood lost most of this money gambling at the Palais Royale.²⁹ In 1816 Thistlewood along with the Watsons, Hooper and Preston took part in the Spa Fields riot. The authorities easily dealt with this, and a reward of 500£ each was offered for the ringleaders, who were promptly arrested and charged with high treason. The trial was brought into disrepute by the unreliable evidence of Castle who was exposed as a government spy. As a result Watson was acquitted, and the charges against the others were dropped.

The career of the presiding judge, Lord Ellenborough (he had previously sentenced Despard), who also failed to convict William Hone during his three trials, which also took place in 1817, was ruined by these acquittals. Leigh Hunt claimed that these failures led to Ellenborough's death: 'I have understood from pretty good authority, that for some time before his death, he was in the constant habit of repeating the names of Watson and Hone, with the most evident symptoms of horror and dismay'.³⁰ After the trial Thistlewood's behaviour became increasingly strange and desperate. In May of 1818 he was sent to Horsham Jail for challenging Lord Sidmouth to a duel. When released, Thistlewood pursued his grievance against Sidmouth by writing to his Permanent Under-Secretary, Henry Hobhouse (the cousin of John Cam), demanding £180, and the return of clothing and some household goods, such as a 'bed, a box of colours, a glass inkstand' and 'a new umbrella',³¹ which he claimed to have lost as a result of his imprisonment.³² He also announced in the pamphlet detailing the aforementioned correspondence between himself and Sidmouth that: 'I remain the avowed enemy of every species of villainy, whether disguised in the hypocritical cant of a supercilious aristocrat, or exhibited in the more vulgar depravity of a commissioned executioner.'³³ This self-destructive and futile behaviour persuaded the government spy Edwards of his fitness for the role that the Government had decided on: 'Thistlewood is the boy for us; he's the one to do our work: he will very soon be out of Horsham-gaol.'³⁴ And

from his release until his death on 1 May 1820, public records show that Thistlewood's movements were watched by Sidmouth's spy system.

On his release from prison in May 1819, Thistlewood immediately became active again, meeting George Edwards two days later at the house of Preston, the cobbler, whose group was supported with money generated by subscription or donations by individuals such as Jeremy Bentham.³⁵ After the 'Peterloo' massacre of 1819 large meetings no longer seemed a viable means of achieving reform, but the killings gave the more revolutionary radical elements every excuse for recommending more extreme measures. As the radical John Gale Jones recalls:

From that fatal day when the sword was drawn and war declared against the people of England, by the bloody and unavenged massacre of defenceless men, women and children of Manchester, I was one of those who made up their mind that all further praying and petitioning ought to be at an end, that the *time for Reform was past and the hour of Revolution come*.³⁶

This Demogorgon-like proclamation exemplifies the kind of support that genuine revolutionaries such as Thistlewood needed, and the atmosphere after Peterloo must have convinced him that the time had come when the bold actions of a few could capitalize on growing discontent and disaffection with the government. Thistlewood's co-conspirators were a similarly down at heel crowd with a chequered past, people such as William Davidson, the 'man of colour', who had been a journeyman tailor, a Wesleyan preacher, a secretary of the union of shoemakers and an ex-employee of Harrowby's, having worked for him at his

seat, Sandon-hall;³⁷ James Ings, a failed butcher and coffee-shop keeper, who had sold political pamphlets; Richard Tidd, a shoemaker who had become involved in the Despard plot; and John Thomas Brunt, a shoemaker, and occasional poet, who had fallen on hard times.³⁸

The spy sent to infiltrate such a group had to be of a similar type. This created the problem that he might prove to be an unconvincing witness for a jury, possibly resulting in acquittal for the accused – as happened at Spa Fields where the jury had refused to accept the testimony of John Castle. Edwards could not be risked in court. If men who were willing participants in a conspiracy could be persuaded to turn King's evidence, in order to save their lives, then the evidence of a paid spy became unnecessary. George Edwards was spirited away to Guernsey before the trial. Nevertheless, the other defendants all implicated Edwards in their evidence, blaming him for instigating the conspiracy. There was a clamour to bring him to justice, which resulted in Wood's motion in the House of Commons on 2 May and 9 May 1820. Wood claimed that 'he thought he could safely pledge himself to prove by indisputable evidence that Edwards was the sole plotter and founder of the Cato-street conspiracy.'³⁹ This was denied by the Attorney General who stated, 'that Edwards had never been employed by the government as a spy, and it was not in that character that he furnished that information which had enabled ministers to defeat one of the most horrible plots that had ever been formed.'⁴⁰

Wood had been seconded in this motion by Sir Robert Wilson, and supported by Sir Francis Burdett and Brougham, but most energetically by John Cam Hobhouse (who had only recently been elected as member for Westminster on 24 March 1820 alongside Sir Francis Burdett). When Matthew Wood began his evidence against Edwards, he was heckled and laughed at. Brougham was moved to say:

That he by no means understood [...] the expression of levity, which, very much to his surprise and pain, had been drawn from some hon. members by the grave and extraordinary statements which had been made- statements which, in his opinion were not at all of a character to provoke laughter.⁴¹

In 'Sonnet to Alderman Wood, Esq. Alderman and MP',⁴² Lamb explicitly draws attention to the levity of Wood's opponents in the debate, he exhorts Wood to:

Hold on thy course uncheck'd, heroic Wood!
Regardless what the player's son may prate,
Saint Stephens' fool, the Zany of Debate-

From the outset the poem personally attacks Canning, 'the player's son' (his mother had been an actress), 'the Zany of Debate'. I have suggested elsewhere⁴³ that Lamb may have been exercising an old grudge against Canning for his 1798 poem, 'The New Morality', where Canning attacks Lamb amongst others he associates with the Jacobins. Lamb had already attacked Canning in a similar fashion in 1802 in his 'MESSRS. C[ANNIN]G AND F[RER]E':

At Eton School brought up with dull boys,
We shone like *men* among the *school-boys*;
But since we in the world have been,
We are but *school-boys* among *men*.⁴⁴

John Cam Hobhouse would later attack Canning in precisely the same terms:

A smart sixth-form boy, the little hero of a little world [...] placed in the true line of promotion, he takes his beat with the more veteran prostitutes of parliament. There he rounds his periods; there he balances his antitheses; there he adjusts his alliterations; and plastering up the interstices of his piebald patchwork rhetoric with froth and foam – this master of pompous nothings becomes first favourite of the great council of the nation. His very want of sincerity and virtue qualifies him for a corrupted audience.⁴⁵

This is very close to Hone's charge against Canning in his *The Political House that Jack Built*, where he calls Canning the 'Spouter of Froth'.

In the parliamentary debates Canning had attacked Burdett and Wood in a confident, wounding, and playful speech⁴⁶:

He could not be responsible for the laugh which had been raised against the hon. Baronet, so he could not be responsible for the mirth called forth by the mere mention of the worthy alderman's name. The worthy alderman might himself know to what it was to be attributed, and know that it sprung from those amusing qualifications of which he was possessed. He knew that the worthy alderman was perhaps the most popular man that had ever been in the city of London, with the exception of his predecessor, the great Whittington.⁴⁷

Mockingly Canning refers to Wood's educational 'qualifications' and later notes 'Who tutored the worthy alderman he knew not'⁴⁸: 'They had all read somewhere that there was no royal road to geometry. He might parody this, and say that there was no aldermanic road to justice'.⁴⁹ The ultra-Tory *John Bull* was still attacking Wood in the same way on the second anniversary of the Peterloo massacre: 'I remember to have seen you sitting cheek by jowl with her late Majesty, smirking and chuckling like a great ape; even then I pitied you – I pitied your ignorance [...] You are, indeed, a pitiable object'.⁵⁰ Wood had been employed since the age of eleven, when he worked at his father's serge factory, and at fourteen was apprenticed to an apothecary, before becoming a hop merchant. Canning is implicitly striking a contrast between Wood's education

and his own triumphant progress from one schoolboy prize to another: ‘The worthy alderman must take his course like any other subject’.⁵¹ It is this that gives point to Lamb’s encouragement of Wood:

London’s twice Praetor! scorn the fool-born jest –
The stage’s scum, and refuse of the players-
Stale topics against Magistrates and Mayors –
City and Country both thy worth attest.
Bid him leave off his shallow Eton wit.

Wood had been elected Mayor of London in both 1815 and 1816. Canning had been educated at Eton, became Captain of the school and editor of the Eton magazine, the *Microcosm*. He then went to Christ Church, Oxford, where he won the Chancellor’s Latin Verse Prize. But as Lamb goes on to indicate, his claim to social superiority over Wood was precariously based. Canning’s mother had taken to the stage after the death of his father and remained there for thirty years, marrying an actor and then a linen draper. Henry Hunt is another who would attack Canning’s origins:

The Mountebank of the Honourable House, and who is he? Ah! My friends, *who* is he indeed! That’s a secret worth knowing! because nobody can possibly inform us, not even Madam Hunn⁵² herself; but this we know that he is the son of Mother Hunn, a *low-bred* actress, who did not figure above a third-rater, even in that profession.⁵³

Lamb then goes on to drag up two names from the past: ‘drunken Pitt, and that pickpocket Peer’. The ‘pickpocket’ is Henry Dundas, who, when First Lord of the Admiralty, had been impeached for embezzling money, but was acquitted.

E. V. Lucas sniffily states that his acquittal was ‘a circumstance that would hardly concern Lamb when in this mood.’⁵⁴ Canning had, of course, secured his political reputation with his contributions to *The Anti-Jacobin* in 1797 and 1798,

which had established him as the most redoubtable partisan of Pitt's and Dundas's government. Lamb's point may simply be that Canning is extending into the post-war years a vicious satiric rhetoric that has become inappropriate. But there is one suggestive additional clue. Hansard records that Wood cites the Lord Advocate of Scotland to illustrate the extent of the use of spies in Britain: 'There was evidence to show, that letters had passed between this man (Wood is referring to Watt, the spy hanged for high treason in Edinburgh) and Mr. Dundas, and that money had been given to him.'⁵⁵ It may simply have been the coincidence of the name that prompted Lamb's thoughts to turn to those years in which Pitt⁵⁶ and Dundas between them had ruled Britain. It was a sentiment echoed in the anonymous⁵⁷ 1827 pamphlet *The Life Political and Official, of John [Scott], Earl of Eldon*, 'If then, in the year 1817, the system of espionage was carried to perfection in this country, we have to thank the administration of 1794'.⁵⁸

In the 'The Three Graves',⁵⁹ the Cato Street connection becomes more explicit. Lamb takes the title of his poem from the poem that Coleridge began in 1797, another indication, perhaps, that Lamb saw in the response to the Cato Street Conspiracy a regrettable reversion to the conservative paranoia that marked that year. Lamb's 'Three Graves' and Coleridge's poem have only superficial similarities. Both are narrated by a sexton, both refer to toads (Lamb and his friend Lloyd had been portrayed by Canning as a pair of frogs in *The New*

Morality of 1798), and both poems have a supernatural theme. But it may again have been a coincidence of names that guided Lamb in his choice of title.

Coleridge's poem tells the story of the unfortunate marriage of a man called Edward, and Lamb's is concerned to expose and to denounce as the true instigator of the Cato Street plot the government-paid spy, Edwards.

In Lamb's 'The Three Graves' Satan is represented as a sexton digging graves for the 'living traitors'.

Close by the ever-burning beds
Where Bedloe, Oates and Judas, hide their heads,
I saw great Satan like a Sexton stand
With his intolerable spade in hand,
Digging three graves. [...]⁶⁰

The graves, not yet filled, as the 'living traitors' are still alive, lie next to the graves of three individuals who Lamb identifies as the greatest traitors in history; Bedloe, Oates, and of course, Judas⁶¹. Bedloe⁶² and Oates⁶³ had been the originators of the imaginary popish plot of 1678, and were commonly associated with Judas, by Dryden, for example:

More just was Judas, who his Saviour sold;
The sacrilegious bribe he could not hold,
Nor hang in peace, before he rendered back the gold.
What more could you have done, than now you do,
Had Oates and Bedloe and their plot been true.

(The Hind and the Panther, Part 3, 715-9)

With the help of his accomplice, Bedloe, it has been estimated that 'Oates had directly or indirectly contrived the judicial murder of thirty-five men'.⁶⁴ The three modern traitors are exposed in the last line of Lamb's poem, when Satan

names the individuals that will occupy the graves that he has dug: “[...] When the dark night comes, and they’re sinking bedwards, / -I mean for Castles, Oliver and Edwards.”” Castle and Oliver were already well known to the public from the trials that followed the Spa Fields riots, when they were revealed as spies and as *agents provocateurs* at the trial of Thistlewood and Watson. The sharp point of Lamb’s poem is revealed in its last word, when Lamb adds to their names that of Edwards, a name that had been revealed at the trial of the Cato Street conspirators, and had been vigorously pursued by Matthew Wood. It was a revelation so powerful that it prompted Edwards himself to change his name, and his Home Office employers to assist in an attempt to hide him from any enquiry.

Before entering their graves, the traitors are to be covered in ‘that cloth / Which Clotho weaveth in her blackest wrath’. Clotho, the spinner, is an appropriate Fate to preside over the death of those whose concern in life was to spin false stories. The graves are swarming with worms, including the worm which ‘never dies’, presumably remorse, and haunted by ‘headless ghosts and quarter’d forms’, and running with ‘Rivers of blood, from headless traitors spilt’, haunted by the ghosts, that is, of those hanged, drawn and quartered on the evidence that the Government spies had fabricated. These victims have been ‘By treachery stung from poverty to guilt.’ The supernatural was a theme that

reappeared in other poems pertaining to Cato Street which were published in *The Champion*, such as ‘A Congreve Rocket for Pandemonium’⁶⁵

When of murders the first was committed on earth,
A “Courier” was posted to Hell,
Where a Sid and a Slop gnash’d their teeth in their mirth
And “halloo for *New Times!* Was the yell.

The Council of Satan approv’d of the deed,
And publish’d their thanks thro’ the realm,
For what had begun they resolv’d should proceed,
Lest Reform should their empire o’erwhelm⁶⁶

Sidmouth and Stoddart are reincarnations of devils, they have always existed in hell trying to entrap victims, but now they have materialised in London, and the advert in *The New Times* for a Cabinet dinner is their trap to ensnare the Cato Street conspirators. The next stanza refers both to the new King's congratulations to the yeomanry at Peterloo when he was Regent, and also to the stand taken by Tory papers such as *The Courier* and *The New Times*. As in Shelley’s *Mask of Anarchy* the King bears the mark of the devil; he is in the ‘Council of Satan’.

That the victims of the government’s wrath have been reduced ‘from poverty to guilt’ is the charge at the centre of Lamb’s poem, and the central point of Wood’s Parliamentary motion. Wood had interviewed Thistlewood at the scaffold on May 1st. just prior to his execution:

Wood: I have some questions here written down, and I’ll put them to you Thistlewood. When did you first become acquainted with Edwards?

Thistlewood: About June last.

Wood: Where did you become acquainted with him?

Thistlewood: At Preston's.

Wood: At Preston in Lancashire?

Thistlewood: No at Preston's, the shoemaker.

Wood: Did he give you any money?

Thistlewood: Yes. I had a little from him, a pound note at a time.⁶⁷

Wood's concern is clearly to establish, first, that Thistlewood was inveigled into the conspiracy by bribes supplied by the Government and delivered by Edwards, and, second, that it was his poverty and the poverty of his co-conspirators that made him vulnerable to this tactic. It was, as even the Tory, Mrs Arbuthnot, recognized as early as March 2, the strongest argument that could be brought against the Government's handling of the affair:

The conspirators were committed to the Tower, charged with High Treason and murder, which I think a great misfortune. Summary justice has an immense effect; & all the Jacobin papers, when the first burst of indignation has subsided, will begin to write away the abhorrence now felt for the crime by dwelling upon the poverty and wretchedness of the conspirators.⁶⁸

Mrs. Arbuthnot's prediction did not take long to come true. In an article prefaced with:

"I tell you madam, it is all a trick.

He made the giants first and then he kill'd them.

As fox-hunters take foxes to the wood

To hunt them out again."

TOM THUMB

The Champion of 6 May reports:

As for poor Gilchrist, who seems really to have been merely seduced by starving hunger [...] "I have fought for my country twelve years", said the poor fellow, when sentence was passed upon him; "I have been starving almost to death; I borrowed a halfpenny to buy me a morsel of bread, and was taken to a place where I expected to get a morsel more, and this is my reward".

Wood and Lamb insist not only on the poverty of the plotters, but also on the malign role of Government agents in fomenting the conspiracy. Their analysis rather precisely coincides with Shelley's in *On the Devil, and Devils*, which only just predates the Cato Street Conspiracy⁶⁹. Shelley probably has in mind Castle and Oliver, as in *Peter Bell the Third*:

The dirty work is done by the Devil, in the same manner as some starving wretch will hire himself out to a King or a minister with a stipulation that he shall have some portion of the public spoil as an instrument to betray a certain number of other starving wretches into circumstances of capital punishment, when they may think it convenient to edify the rest by hanging up a few of those whose murmurs are too loud.⁷⁰

In politics Lamb was a liberal rather than a radical. He accepted, for example, the virtue of a limited monarchy. Given this, it seems odd to find him in May 1820 expressing views so similar to those of the republican Shelley, and openly proclaiming his sympathy for revolutionaries such as Thistlewood and his fellow conspirators. But to draw attention to these two neglected poems at least serves to expose the inadequacy of Hazlitt's characterisation of the bent of Lamb's genius:

Mr. Lamb has succeeded, not by conforming to the Spirit of the Age, but in opposition to it. He does not march boldly along with the crowd, but steals off the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction [...] He evades the present; he mocks the future.⁷¹

In fact, it was Lamb, not Hazlitt (who has little or nothing to say about the Cato Street conspiracy⁷²) who responded immediately and publicly to the most dramatic political event of 1820. Lamb was more interested in contemporary politics than Hazlitt gives him credit for, and than later critics have suggested. But perhaps the failure to recognize this should be explained by the special

character of Lamb’s political responses, which are not abstract and theoretical, but rather an expression of Lamb’s sense of himself as a citizen of London, and in particular of the City of London where he lived and worked. In his sonnet to Wood he expresses his outrage that a man such as Canning, a product of Eton and Oxford, should flippantly hold up to mockery a man such as Matthew Wood who had been twice elected Mayor of Lamb's own city, and in ‘The Three Graves’ his indignation extends to a central government that perverts the political life of the city by the use of paid spies. It is, I think, because he writes not as a political ideologue but as a Londoner that Lamb is able to make of Thistlewood, and his band of feckless absurdly inefficient co-conspirators, sad presences that will continue to haunt his city:

A doleful bell, inculcating despair,
Was always ringing in the heavy air.
And all about the detestable pit
Strange headless ghosts, and quarter’d forms, did flit;
Rivers of blood, from living traitors spilt,
By treachery stung from poverty to guilt.

¹ Detail from *The Cato Street Conspirators*, by George Cruikshank, showing Arthur Thistlewood fatally wounding constable Smithers. Pub. 9 March 1820 by G. Humphrey (Gillray’s former publisher).
² This is the title used in later publications of the poem, the original title used in *The Champion* is ‘Sonnet to Alderman Wood, Esq. Alderman and M.P.’
³ *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. by E.V. Lucas, 7 vols. (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), V, p.336.
⁴ *The Times*, 20 September, 1820.
⁵ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, p.22.
⁶ *The Diary of Henry Hobhouse*, ed. by Arthur Aspinall (London: Home & Van Thal, 1947), p.29.
⁷ This was the poem’s sub-title when it was reprinted in the *London Magazine* in May 1825.
⁸ Lamb’s choice of *The Champion* was perhaps appropriate, as Cabinet ministers reputedly read it. See *British Literary Magazines, The Romantic Age, 1798-1836*. ed. by Alvin Sullivan (London: Greenwood Press, 1983). p.99.
⁹ *Parliamentary Debates: Forming a Continuation of the Work Entitled “The Parliamentary History of England From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803.” New Series; Commencing With the Accession of George IV. Vol. I Comprising the Period*

From the Twenty-First Day of April to The Twenty-Sixth Day of June, 1820, ed. T.C. Hansard (London: T. C. Hansard, 1820). p.249.

¹⁰ Stoddart was a leading member of what William Hone would call 'The Bridge Street Gang'. See Hone's pamphlet, *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge Street Gang*. Subsequent to a Royal Proclamation in 1787 for the 'encouragement of piety and virtue, and for preventing and punishing vice, profaneness and immorality', William Wilberforce founded the Proclamation Society. This merged with the 'Society for the suppression of Vice and the encouragement of religion and virtue, throughout the United Kingdom, to consist of members of the Established Church' in 1802, before becoming the Bridge Street based 'Constitutional Association for Opposing the Progress of Disloyal and Seditious Principles' on 20 December 1820 under the leadership of the Duke of Wellington and Stoddart. See Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain 1789 – 1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 173-4. A prominent member who brought the society a great deal of embarrassment was Percy Jocelyn the bishop of Clogher, known in squibs as the 'arsebishop' who was witnessed by eight people engaging in a sexual act with a guardsman in the back-room of a London alehouse. For more on Clogher see Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld; Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.206.

¹¹ Lamb himself wrote for *The New Times*, contributing a review of Keats's poems on 19 July 1820.

¹² *The Diary of Henry Hobhouse*, p.12.

¹³ Signed W_ _ _ r (Edwards's pseudonym), Public Records Office, Home Office Papers, HO 42/199, f.604

¹⁴ HO 42/199, f622

¹⁵ *The New Times* was the only paper to advertise the dinner, rather than six as was the custom. John Stoddart had been editor of *The Times* before being sacked in 1816.

¹⁶ Thomas Preston, *A Letter to Lord Viscount Castlereagh; Being a Full Development of all the Circumstances Relative to the Diabolical Cato Street Plot* (London: T. Preston, 1820), p. 8.

¹⁷ Cited by Stanhope, p.86.

¹⁸ A reference to Peterloo.

¹⁹ Stanhope, p. 87.

²⁰ Prothero, p.128.

²¹ Prothero, p.128.

²² Stanhope, p.168.

²³ Stanhope, p.168.

²⁴ *The Black Dwarf*, 4 (1820), 795-96. Cited by Michael Scrivener, *Poetry and Reform; Periodical Verse from the English Democratic Press 1792-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 267.

²⁵ George Borrow, *The Romany Rye* (London: John Murray, 1900), p.365.

²⁶ Prothero, p. 89.

²⁷ Richmond, Alexander B., *Narrative of the Condition of the Manufacturing Population and the Proceedings of Government which Led to the State Trials in Scotland* (London: John Millar, 1824). p. 183.

²⁸ Prothero, p.89.

²⁹ See Prothero, p.90.

³⁰ Stanhope, p.73.

³¹ Cited by Stanhope, p. 152.

³² See Arthur Thistlewood, *An interesting Correspondence between Thistlewood and Sidmouth Concerning the Property Detained, In Consequence of an Arrest, On a Charge of High Treason* (London: A. Seale, 1817).

³³ Ibid. p. 8.

³⁴ Cited by Matthew Wood, See Hansard, I, p.55.

³⁵ Prothero, p.124. This is around the time when Bentham is evicting Hazlitt from Milton's old house for falling behind with the rent.

³⁶ Cited by Royle, p.53.

³⁷ During his trial Davidson wrote to Harrowby stating 'it was impossible I could be guilty of the slightest intention to harm your lordship in any way [...] in truth my lord, Mr. Edwards must know that I am not that man of colour that was in their party.' This letter had no effect on Davidson's fate. Contradicting this is the evidence offered by Ruthven during the trial claiming that when Davidson was arrested "he damned and swore against any man who would not die in liberty's cause – that he gloried in it. He sung a song 'Scots wha' hae' wi' Wallace bled'" (Cited by Stanhope, p.35).

³⁸ See *The Making*, p.773.

³⁹ 2 May 1820. Hansard, I, p.58.

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- ⁴⁰ 9 May 1820. Hansard, I, p.268.
- ⁴¹ Hansard, I, p.59.
- ⁴² This poem is signed R. et R., a signature that Lamb had used in 1812 for his 'The Prince of Whales'.
- ⁴³ 'Caroline and Lamb', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 113 (2001), pp. 2-22.
- ⁴⁴ First printed in *The Morning Post*, January 8, 1802.
- ⁴⁵ Speech to the house April 19, 1821. Cited by Michael Joyce, *My Friend H. John Cam Hobhouse Baron Broughton de Gyfford* (London: John Murray), p.158.
- ⁴⁶ *The Champion*, which reported a summary of Canning and Wood's debate in the same issues as Lamb's poems calls Canning 'flashy and flippant'.
- ⁴⁷ Hansard, I, p.282.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. p.283.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. p.284.
- ⁵⁰ *John Bull*, 19 August 1821.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. p.284.
- ⁵² Canning's mother had married Mr. Hunn, a linen draper.
- ⁵³ Henry Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (Ilchester Jail: July 1st. 1820), p.4
- ⁵⁴ Lamb, *Works*, V, p.337.
- ⁵⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, 9 May 1820, Hansard, I, p.244.
- ⁵⁶ This mention of Pitt tends to negate Lucas's assertion that Lamb's sonnet pertains to the Queen Caroline affair. Robert Huish claims that Pitt had been Caroline's 'constant friend and protector' until his death in January 1806. Robert Huish, *Memoirs of George the Fourth Descriptive of the Most Interesting Scenes of his Private and Public Life, and the Important Events of his Memorable Reign; With Characteristic Sketches of All the Celebrated Men Who Were his Friends and Companions as a Prince, and his Ministers and Counsellors as a Monarch*. 2 vols. (London: T. Kelly, 1830), II, p.300.
- ⁵⁷ This pamphlet may possibly have been written by William Hone. In 1827 Hunt and Clarke of Tavistock Street were publishing his *Facetiae and Miscellanies*.
- ⁵⁸ *The Life Political and Official, of John [Scott], Earl of Eldon, Late Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, &c. &c.* (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827), p.45.
- ⁵⁹ Despite appearing on the same page as 'Sonnet to Alderman Wood, Esq. Alderman and M.P.' this poem is signed 'Dante'. There are perhaps two reasons for this: firstly the obvious one, the fate of souls notable for their vices, and secondly Dante as a patriot who had served his state as a soldier and politician, but was exiled when the Neri took power.
- ⁶⁰ First printed in *The Champion*, May 14, 1820. Reprinted in the *London Magazine*, May 1825, with the sub-title 'Written during the time, now happily almost forgotten, of the spy system.' The names of 'Castles, Oliver and Edwards' in the final line of the poem are indicated with initials and dashes. See Lamb, *Works*, V, p. 336.
- ⁶¹ Seamus Perry quotes Lamb at dinner with Coleridge, saying of Judas, 'One of the things that made me question the particular inspiration they ascribed to Jesus Christ, was his ignorance of the character of Judas Iscariot. Why did not he and his disciples kick him out for a rascal, instead of receiving him as a disciple'. S. T. Coleridge: *Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by Seamus Perry (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p.228.
- ⁶² William Bedloe (1650-1680). Bedloe's chief work was: *A Narrative and Impartial Discovery of the Horrid Popish Plot, Carried on for the Burning and Destroying the Cities of London and Westminster, With Their Suburbs and C.; Setting Forth Several Consults, Orders, and Resolutions of the Jesuits Concerning the Same. By Captain William Bedloe, Lately Engaged in That Horrid Design, and one of the Popish Committee for Carrying on Such Fires* (London: 1679).
- ⁶³ Titus Oates (1649-1705).
- ⁶⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 63 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1885-1900), 41, p.300.
- ⁶⁵ Sir William Congreve, an inventor, and a friend of the Regent, had designed a 'Castle of Discord' for a fete given at Carlton House on 19 June 1811 to inaugurate the Regency. From the 'Castle' fireworks were discharged to symbolize 'the horrors of fire and destruction'. See Venetia Murray, *High Society in the Regency Period: 1788-1830* (Penguin, 1998), p. 218.
- ⁶⁶ *The Champion*, 15 April, 1820.
- ⁶⁷ Cited by Stanhope, p.134.
- ⁶⁸ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, p. 7.
- ⁶⁹ Timothy Webb dates this essay from January 1820. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Poems and Prose*, p.401.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 'On the Devil, and Devils' p.187.

⁷¹ William Hazlitt, 'Elia –Geoffrey Crayon', *The Spirit of the Age*, ed. by E. D. Mackerness (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1991), pp.285-88.

⁷² The only thing I can find that Hazlitt says of the conspiracy is in his 'Notes of a Journey Through France and Italy': 'There is also the conspiracy of Catiline, by Savator Rosa, which looks more like a Cato-street conspiracy than anything else, or a bargain struck in a blacksmith's shop.' Hazlitt, *Works*, X, p.226.

Hobhouse, Cato Street and Marino Faliero

Marino Faliero impressed neither its first audience nor its first readers. Hazlitt's response is representative:

Lord Byron [...] sympathizes readily with Dante, who was a poet, a patriot, a noble Florentine, and exile from his country: he can describe the feelings of Dante, for in so doing, he does little more than describe his own: he makes nothing out of Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice, and cares nothing about him, for he himself is neither a warrior, a statesman nor a conspirator [...] Marino Faliero is without a plot, without characters, without fluctuating interest, and without the spirit of dialogue.¹

When published and performed in 1821 (the version performed at Drury Lane was censored heavily²) the play was received badly, and sank from view. A contemporary reviewer from *The British Critic* wrote: 'The impression left by this tragedy, as a whole, is that of immeasurable heaviness' and agreed with Hazlitt that Byron's 'heroes' 'more or less [...] have always been types of his own character.'³ But it was *The British Critic* reviewer who first suggested the argument of the twentieth-century critics who have sought to revive interest in Byron's play:

But his Lordship has drawn from real life, as well as from the storehouse of recorded poetry. If Thistlewood and Ings could have delivered themselves in blank verse, they would have spoken much the same words (for they did utter the same sentiments) as the Doge, and his accomplice Israel Bertuccio. This is as it should be, and if Lord Byron consulted his own bosom, instead of the newspapers, it proves his deep knowledge of the worst parts of human nature. ⁴

The reference to Thistlewood and Ings serves to indicate that for this reviewer the pretext of *Marino Faliero* was the Cato Street conspiracy of 23 February 1820, which reached its final bloody outcome on May 1st 1820, when Arthur Thistlewood, James Ings, and three of their fellow conspirators were executed outside the Old Bailey.

As early as 1962 David V. Erdman wrote that ‘the immediate literary consequence of Cato Street was Byron’s first regular tragedy, *Marino Faliero*’,⁵ and his lead has since been followed by critics such as Malcolm Kelsall and Richard Cronin. As Erdman notes, ‘the plot to kill Lord Harrowby confronts Byron with the implications of a rebellion against his own peers. What he *does* in the next few days is begin writing *Marino Faliero*, the plot of which is a Venetian conspiracy led by (but not noticeably purified by) a Byronic nobleman: the story of “a prince *with* the Commons against the aristocracy”’.⁶ For Erdman, Kelsall and Cronin news of the conspiracy shocked Byron into writing a play through which he could examine his own relationship with a British politics that had come into being only after he had left the country. It was a line of thought that had preoccupied him ever since news had reached him of the Peterloo

Massacre:

I think also that if the Manchester Yeomanry had cut down *Hunt only* – they would have done their duty – as it was – they committed *murder* both in what they did – and what they did *not* do, -- in butchering the weak instead of piercing the wicked, in assailing the seduced instead of the seducer – in punishing the poor starving populace, instead of that pampered and dinnered blackguard. [...] Upon reform you have long since known my opinion – but *radical* is a new word since my time – it was not in the political vocabulary in 1816 – when I left England – and I don’t know what it means – is it uprooting? [...] I protest, not against *reform* – but my most thorough contempt and abhorrence – of all that I have seen, heard, or heard of the persons calling themselves *reformers*, *radicals*, and such other names, -- I should look upon being free with such men, as much the same as being in bonds with felons.⁷

But it was given new urgency when he learned of Thistlewood’s desperate plot to kill the whole of the Cabinet as they had dinner at the house of Lord Harrowby. It was a house that Byron knew well: ‘And if they had killed poor Harrowby – in whose house I have been five hundred times – at dinners and parties – his wife is one of “the Exquisites” – and t’other fellows – what end

would it have answered.’⁸ The Doge seems to paraphrase Byron’s letter when he insists that his fellow, plebeian conspirators recognize the peculiar horror that attends his own involvement in their plot:

Doge. [...] but *you* ne’er spake with them;
You never broke their bread, nor shared their salt;
You never had their wine-cup at your lips;
You grew not up with them, nor laugh’d, nor wept,
Nor held a revel in their company;
Ne’er smiled to see them smile, nor claim’d their smile
In social interchange for yours, nor trusted
Nor wore them in your heart of hearts as I have;[...]

(III, ii, 458-465)

And can I see them dabbled o’er with blood?
Each stab to them will seem my suicide.

(III, ii, 471-472)

For Erdman, Kelsall and Cronin, *Marino Faliero* is the play in which Byron examines most fully the contradiction that had so dramatically emerged between loyalty to his political principles and loyalty to his class, and registers most feelingly the horror with which Byron contemplated the position he would find himself in, were he ever, as he so often threatened, to return to England, and ‘take a decided part in politics’ because any such decision would require him either to abandon his reforming politics, or to agree to associate with ‘blackguards’ such as Henry Hunt and Arthur Thistlewood. As he was forced to admit, it was a notion so embarrassing that it left him ‘not quite sure what part he would take’.¹⁰

Recently critics have chosen to minimise the topical relevance of Byron's play. Richard Lansdown, in his *Byron's Historical Dramas*, points to Shakespearean influences in *Marino Faliero* that qualify Byron's claim to have revived the classical drama in English. Critics thereafter have tended to ignore the play, or have been overly general in placing the play in an historical context, for example Michael Foot argues that the play is unconcerned with British politics:

It is hard to imagine [...] how it could be occasionally argued that the main subject matter was [...] the political situation in England, with its revolutionary potentialities, and Byron's ambivalent attitude towards it. If so (to pose no more than one insoluble question), who do Israel Bertuccio or Philip Calendaro, who went valiantly to their deaths for their revolutionary cause, represent; who are their English counterparts? There are none in Byron's eyes.¹¹

Jerome Christensen, in his *Lord Byron's Strength*, sensibly claims that '*Marino Faliero* both represents and enacts Byron's ambivalence about his own social status and about the possibility of effective political action in contemporary England,'¹² but 'contemporary England' is immediately abandoned for a Girardian reading of the play in which Marino becomes the sacrificial victim or scapegoat who preserves aristocratic power by saving Venice from the impending threat of class war. Lansdown and Christensen share, one suspects, the suspicion of any critical method that locates the meaning of a poem or play in some antecedent historical circumstance that Michael Simpson, in the most recent study of Byron's dramas, makes explicit. Simpson dismisses the suggestion, by the reviewer in *The British Critic*, that the play might reasonably prompt comparisons with the Cato Street conspiracy:

Despite this incriminating analogy, the review is perhaps more concerned with demonstrating its even deeper knowledge of Byron's "deep knowledge of the worst parts of human nature" than with constructing a prosecution on the grounds of how Byron's

knowledge might be nefariously used and applied. The extreme equation that the review formulated seems mainly to show what the review can know.¹³

He also rejects similar equations when drawn by modern critics, taking as his example Martyn Corbett's *Byron and Tragedy*,¹⁴ which had suggested: 'Marino Faliero needs to be read against the background of certain political events in contemporary England. The Cato Street conspiracy, which confirmed Byron's worst fears about the Radicals had taken place in February 1820.'¹⁵ Simpson castigates Corbett for his theoretical naivety:

The model of historical reference that these remarks assume, in which historical "events" are "the background" to a literary text, is disabled, because "reference" here is not part of a notion of cultural production, just as "event" is not part of a notion of process. Consequently, having noted this possible historical conjunction, Corbett then generates an exclusively literary reading of this text.¹⁶

In this chapter I want to risk a similar rebuke, by reverting to the reading of *Marino Faliero* first proposed by Erdman. I will suggest that Erdman's error was not to seek to explain Byron's play in terms of the historical "events" that supply its "background", but simply that he did not press his interpretation far enough.

The Cato Street conspiracy offers itself to the kind of Girardian reading proposed by Christensen even more readily than the conspiracy entered into by Marino Faliero, for the 'conspirators' did not themselves instigate the plot in which they agreed to take part. The conspiracy, as public records now make clear, and as was widely recognised at the time, was instigated not by Thistlewood, or by any of his fellows, but by the Government itself. At a time when radical agitation was becoming increasingly violent and threatening,

Thistlewood was selected as the scapegoat whose sacrifice would secure the power of the oligarchy that ruled Britain.

In his revealing preface to *Marino Faliero*, Byron tries to distance himself from contemporary politics by claiming ‘it is now four years that I have meditated this work.’ And in a letter to John Murray he insists on dissociating his play from contemporary events, but in an oddly revealing self-contradictory manner:

I suspect that in *Marino Faliero* you and yours won’t like the *politics* which are perilous to you in these times – but recollect that it is *not a political* play - & that I was obliged to put into the mouths of the Characters the sentiments upon which they acted. – I hate all things written like Pizarro to represent france [sic] England & so forth- all I have done is meant to be purely Venetian – even to the very prophecy of it’s present state.¹⁷

Byron claims that the idea to write a play that would reveal the true face of the

only Doge whose countenance the Venetian Senate had refused to

commemorate was the result of a visit to the Ducal palace in Venice on 12

December 1816.¹⁸ John Cam Hobhouse accompanied Byron on that visit, and

there is certain appropriateness in this, because the play that Byron finally

completed in 1820 is more closely associated with Hobhouse than previous

commentators have suspected. Throughout the years of his ‘exile’ in Italy

Hobhouse was Byron’s main source of information on politics in England.¹⁹

These were the years in which he fully assumed his role as ‘Byron’s bulldog’, the

man who ‘relayed messages, read galleys, wrangled with lawyers, negotiated with

publishers, and gauged the public pulse for his absent friend.’²⁰ Since their days

as undergraduates, when they were members of the same Whig club, Byron and

Hobhouse’s friendship had been strengthened by the closeness of their political

views, but in 1819 and 1820 that friendship came under threat, and the threat

was posed by what seemed to Byron Hobhouse's betrayal of the political views that had once united them. Byron remained content to call himself a Whig, but Hobhouse when campaigning in 1819 for the Westminster seat, for which he had been an unsuccessful candidate in 1818, flamboyantly asserted that he could no longer see any difference between the Whigs and the Tories. Byron was still more horrified by Hobhouse's attendance at the congratulatory dinner given in London to Henry Hunt in recognition of his staunch behaviour in Manchester on the occasion of the Peterloo massacre. Hobhouse seemed to have distanced himself from the 'genteel reformers' such as Burdett and Kinnaird with whom Byron was happy to associate himself, and to have thrown in his lot with the group of radical reformers who were not at all genteel, such as Major Cartwright, whom Byron despised, and, still worse, with the 'blackguard' Henry Hunt, whom Byron cordially detested. By the end of 1819 Hobhouse was a prisoner in Newgate,²¹ condemned for a pamphlet in which he had vied with Henry Hunt himself in the violence of the rhetoric that he deployed: 'What prevents the people from walking down to the House and pulling out the members by the ears, and locking up their doors, and flinging the key into the Thames? [...] Individually there is scarcely a poorer creature than your mere member of parliament; though in his corporate capacity the earth furnishes not so absolute a bully.'²² For his 'Trifling Mistake'²³ Hobhouse served three months in Newgate prison where he was visited by people such as Major Cartwright, whom he had run against in the 1818 Westminster election—splitting the radical vote. Cartwright had gone to Newgate with the intention of persuading

Hobhouse not to recant on the offence that had sent him to jail – as his family urged. However Cartwright said of his visit ‘my errand was unnecessary; the young man is firm’.²⁴ Another, still less reputable man, tried to visit Hobhouse in his cell. Arthur Thistlewood came to Newgate in an attempt to see Hobhouse, but was refused entry by the gaoler.²⁵

Hobhouse was enraged by Byron’s response to his imprisonment, a verse squib sent to John Murray, and eventually seen by Hobhouse on 25 March 1820, the day on which he was finally returned as M.P. for Westminster:

NEW SONG TO THE TUNE OF

Whare hae ye been a’ day,
My boy Tammy O?
Courting o’ a young thing,
Just come frae her Mammie O.

How came you in Hob’s pound to cool,
My boy Hobby O?
Because I bade the people pull
The House into the Lobby O.

What did the House upon this call,
My boy Hobby O?
They voted me to Newgate all.
Which is an awkward Jobby O.

Who are now the people’s men,
My boy Hobby O?
There’s I and Burdett – Gentlemen,
And blackguard Hunt and Cobby O.

You hate the House – why canvas, then

My boy Hobby O?
Because I would reform the den
As a member for the Mobby O.

Wherefore do you hate the Whigs,
My boy Hobby O?
Because they want to run their rigs
As under Walpole Bobby O.

But when we at Cambridge were,
My boy Hobby O,
If my memory don't err,
You founded a Whig Clubbie O.

When to the mob you make a speech
My boy Hobby O,
How do you keep without their reach
The watch within your fobby O?

As Erdman notes, publication and re-publication in newspapers very probably ensured that it was Byron's most widely read poem. Understandably, Hobhouse was outraged:

I had, I say, made up my mind to quarrel with you for that which I assure you has annoyed me much more than my imprisonment and than all the attacks which have been made upon me, I now verily believe, by every writer of any distinction in England. I have had Courier, Chronicle, Cobbett, Jeffry, Brougham, Croker, Gifford, Ld. Holland, Wooler, Leigh Hunt (a little), Cartwright, and more Reviews and Magazines, Monthly, New and Old, Quarterly, and weekly, than you have ever heard of playing off their large and small shots at me for near two years, and your ballad completes a list as extensive and various as ever was arrayed against a public man. [...] You have now, I believe lampooned your friends all round, and I was a ninny not to know that I should be entered upon your poetical list at the first convenient opportunity.²⁶

Hobhouse took Byron's lampoon so much to heart that, as he recorded in his diary, he considered breaking off his friendship:

I am exceedingly unwilling to record this proof of the nature of my friend. He thought me in prison; he knew me attacked by all parties and pens; he resolved to give his kick too, and in so doing he alluded to my once having belonged to a Whig Club at Cambridge. Now I believe this to be perversity as much as anything, and to have arisen from mistaking the nature of my imprisonment and the line of popular politics which I

have thought it my duty to adopt. Yet for a man to give way to such a mere itch of writing against one who has stood by him in all his battles, and never refused a single friendly office, is a melancholy proof of want of feeling. It has at any rate affected the mirage through which I have long looked at this singular man, and I know not that it is in the power of any suite of circumstances hereafter to make me think of him again exactly as I thought of him before.²⁷

In the event, the friendship did survive. Hobhouse advised Byron to ‘recollect

Helena’s speech to Hermia,’²⁸ and Byron replied apologetically. David V.

Erdman presents the incident as evidence that ‘Hobhouse lacked a humorous

imagination’.²⁹ Similarly, Peter Quennell writes, ‘John Cam, who had always a

solemn sense of his own importance [...] was much annoyed by the levity of the

doggerel verses’.³⁰ But it is easy to see why he was so upset. The ultra-Tory John

Murray enthusiastically circulated the poem, and, no doubt through his offices, a

version of it appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*. To compound the insult the squib

was subsequently picked up by the cheapest of all the broadside publishers,

James Catnach of Seven Dials:

“Oh, Cammy Hobby is the man,
And so is daddy Sir Frankie, O;
The Hon. G. Lamb is going mad
And kicking like a donkey, O.”³¹

I want to argue that Byron’s quarrel with Hobhouse is, like the Cato Street

Conspiracy itself, a crucial pretext for *Marino Faliero*. But first I must present

evidence that the two events were more closely connected than has previously

been supposed. The Tory Mrs. Arbuthnot suggests in her journal entry for May

8 1820, that J. C. Hobhouse had been actively involved with the conspirators.

Arbuthnot claims that Wellington informed her that Hobhouse had been asked

to head Thistlewood’s prospective provisional government, and had accepted:

The Duke of Wellington came to ride with us, which he always does of a Sunday. He brought me to shew me the deposition of a man of the name of Hall, one of the Cato Street conspirators who was not tried but confessed his share in the transaction & told all he knew upon the plot. Among other curious things he said that Thistlewood, at one of their meetings, had informed them of an interview he had had with Mr. Hobhouse, in which he had stated to Mr. H. their intention of effecting a revolution & asked him whether, in the event of their succeeding, he wd place himself at the head of the provisional Government, that Mr. Hobhouse had said he w^d! Hall also stated in his affidavit that Thistlewood had gone again to see Mr. H., when he was in Newgate for contempt of the House of Commons, but had been refused admittance by the jailer. I asked the Duke if he credited this statement; for I confess I doubted Mr. Hobhouse being such a fool as to commit himself with such a man as Thistlewood. The Duke said he dared say Thistlewood had made the most of the story in reporting it to his confederates, but he had no doubt of the interview having taken place & that, whatever Mr. Hobhouse had said, he had no doubt of his inclination to place himself at the head of any revolutionary Government.³²

Mrs Arbuthnot's journal is well known to scholars of the period, and their failure to draw attention to this entry suggests that it has been dismissed as idly scandalous gossip of the kind not worth repeating. But a visit to the Public Records Office demonstrates that her claim is not without foundation. In the Treasury Solicitor's papers box file TS11/204, there is an undated transcript of Abel Hall's testimony that is very close to Mrs. Arbuthnot's version:

A few days after Mr. Hobhouse was sent to New Gate Thistlewood at his own house told me that he had waited on Mr. Hobhouse at a House in Spring Gardens & that he Thistlewood told him Mr. Hobhouse that there was a plan to destroy the Ministers and that he wished Mr. Hobhouse to give him an answer whether he Mr. Hobhouse would take the Reins of Government after they were destroyed or not, and Thistlewood said that Mr. Hobhouse said that he would. Thistlewood further said that he went to Newgate to see Mr. Hobhouse the day on which or the day after he was apprehended and that the Keeper of Newgate told him that they were making arrangements to make Mr. Hobhouse comfortable and until that was done no one was permitted to see him – Thistlewood said if he had seen him that he intended to have asked if he wished to be brought out of Newgate and if so that he would have offered to get it done.

In the Home Office file on Abel Hall (HO 44/6), dated 8 May (the same date as Mrs. Arbuthnot's journal entry), there is another strand of evidence linking J. C. Hobhouse to Arthur Thistlewood. The following testimony was recorded by Richard Birnie, a Bow Street magistrate, and the deposition is from William Simmons, whose statements relating to the Cato Street conspiracy are normally

to be found in HO44/4 and HO44/5. It seems therefore that the document has been misplaced. Simmons's account is as follows:

Thistlewood [...] says he will introduce me to many respectable people at his end of the town friends [...] some of whom will surprise me, that he had lived in Sir Benjamin Hobhouse's family & knows the young one the member for Westminster, and has often conversed with him and that he is a perfect republican, and that he Simmons thinks that Mr Hobhouse will be the man who will gain this Country its Liberty.³³

Simmons then goes on to say that Hobhouse 'will see what can be done among the higher orders of people [...] and that he will teaze [sic] oppose & punish the Borough mongers.' The fact that statements implicating Hobhouse in the conspiracy had been sent to two separate government departments (and possibly more) suggests that this information on Hobhouse was probably known at every level of the government, and beyond, as Mrs. Arbuthnot's reliable journal entry suggests. It is not improbable to suppose that even Byron would have heard through Hobhouse's rival claimant to being his most trusted friend, Thomas Moore, who was a confidant of Lord Harrowby's. Byron perhaps suggests this when he wrote to Hobhouse, 'you will find some day that your radicals will embarrass you sufficiently.'³⁴ Hobhouse had been associating with radicals who were linked to the conspirators, such as Cobbett and William Hone, but it cannot be known, and there may seem every reason to doubt, that J. C. Hobhouse had ever agreed to 'head any revolutionary government'. Nor can it be demonstrated that Byron was aware of a claim originating with Thistlewood himself, and given some credence by Wellington, that Hobhouse was actively involved in the conspiracy. It seems hard to credit that Hobhouse gave sufficient credence to Thistlewood and his suicidal enterprise ever to have seriously agreed to become the leader of the revolutionary government that the

Cato Street conspirators dreamed of installing, but there is reason to suppose that Thistlewood claimed he had done so, and, given Mrs. Arbuthnot's journal, it seems reasonable to suppose that rumours to that effect circulated widely. But it was gossip of a kind that a man who had himself dreamed of becoming an English Lord Edward Fitzgerald could only have found intriguing, and there were several avenues through which it could have reached him. The best evidence for Byron's close knowledge of the details of the Cato Street Conspiracy is to be found, however, in the play *Marino Faliero* itself. I would even, if tentatively, suggest that Byron included in his preface a passage that registers, though in a very guarded code, his recognition that Hobhouse's recent political activities had given him an important clue for his understanding of Marino's story. The passage concerns the friendship between a poet and a man of action. The man of action is Marino, and the poet is Petrarch:

The [...] Italian translation from the Latin epistles of Petrarch proves – 1stly, That Marino Faliero was a personal friend of Petrarch's; “antica dimestichezza,” old intimacy, is the phrase of the poet. 2ndly, That Petrarch thought he had more courage than conduct, [...], 3rdly, That there was some jealousy on the part of Petrarch; for he says that Marino Faliero was treating of the peace which he himself had “vainly attempted to conclude.”³⁵

I find particularly revealing the suggestion that there was ‘some jealousy on the part of Petrarch’. Byron offers no very convincing grounds for suspicion, but it is easy to see how Byron, surveying from Italy an English political scene that had become more volatile and more dramatic than the scene in which he had been an actor in 1812, might have felt when he contrasted the flamboyant role that his friend Hobhouse had assumed with his own political insignificance at least ‘some jealousy’.

Marino Faliero begins with the Doge's displeasure at the ruling of the council of Forty to imprison Michael Steno for the insult to his wife. Steno receives merely a month's imprisonment, prompting the Doge to say, 'For such as him dungeon were acquittal; / And his brief term of mock-arrest will pass' (I, ii). As a result Faliero's fury is channelled away from Steno to the Forty, believing that their insult to him and his position, in not appropriately punishing Steno, is greater than the insult to Angiolina:

Ang. You would not have him die for this offence?

Doge. Not now: - being still alive, I'd have him live

Long as he can; he has ceased to merit death;

The guilty hath damned his hundred judges,

And he is pure, for now the crime is theirs.

(II, i, 235-239)

Whilst wondering how he could adequately revenge himself on the Forty, Faliero is approached by Israel Bertuccio, a Captain, and previously unknown to him, an old comrade from the siege of Zara. Bertuccio, rather like Thistlewood, is seeking redress after a run-in with a social superior, Barboro. Bertuccio and Faliero share their grievances, which neither seem to be in a position to address. However, Bertuccio then widens the debate:

I.Ber. Not thou,

Nor I alone, are injured and abused,

Contemn'd and trampled on; but the whole people

Groan with the strong conception of their wrongs;

(I, ii, 459-462)

It seems important that Israel is an old soldier, a former comrade of Faliero's in war against a foreign foe. Old soldiers who had 'rescued' their country from 'foreign foes' only to be 'injured and abused, / Contemn'd and trampled on'

were attracting a lot of attention in 1819 -20. The case of John Lees had caused a public outcry. Lees had fought at Waterloo and survived to return to England and his trade as a cotton spinner. But at St. Peter's Field on August 16 1819, he was cut at with a sabre, struck with a truncheon and finally trampled on by the Manchester Yeomanry. It took three weeks for Lees to die, before which he said that 'he was never in such danger at Waterloo', 'at Waterloo it was man to man but there it was downright murder.'³⁶ *The Examiner* of 9 January 1820 concurred, reprinting a letter signed by seven out of the twelve jurors sitting at the Oldham inquest, stating 'we are of opinion, that in the case of John Lees, a foul murder was committed'. The case of Lees, a war veteran who had helped save his country, was readily contrasted with the conduct of a corrupt and self-interested aristocracy, fitly represented by the Prince Regent who had publicly congratulated the Manchester Yeomanry on their conduct at St. Peter's Field.

Israel Bertuccio then tells the Doge that there are a group of men who feel as they do:

I. Ber. Know then, that there are met and sworn in secret
A band of brethren, valiant hearts and true;
Men who have proved all fortunes, and have long
Grieved over that of Venice, and have right
To do so; having served her in all climes,
And having rescued her from foreign foes,
Would do the same from those within her walls.
They are not numerous, nor yet too few
For their great purpose; they have arms, and means,
And hearts, and hopes, and faith, and patient courage.
(I, ii, 482-491)

Bertuccio's staunch 'band of brethren' are quite differently characterised by the loyal aristocrat Lioni:

I know that there are angry spirits
And turbulent mutterers of stifled treason,
Who lurk in narrow places, and walk out
Muffled to whisper curses in the night;
Disbanded soldiers, discontented ruffians,
(IV, I, 223-227)

The Examiner, after its reviewer watched *Marino Faliero* being performed at Drury Lane, stated, 'We regard the conspirators as rather a sorry assembly.'³⁷ It seems an odd remark unless we assume that the reviewer had made the connection that the reviewer of *The British Critic* was to make explicit: 'If Thistlewood and Ings could have delivered themselves in blank verse, they would have spoken much the same words (for they did utter the same sentiments) as the Doge, and his accomplice Israel Bertuccio'. Faliero is tormented by his decision to ally himself with such men:

At midnight, by the church Saints John and Paul,
Where sleep my noble fathers, I repair –
To what? to hold a council in the dark
With common ruffians leagued to ruin states!
And will not my great sires leap from the vault,
Where lie two Doges who preceded me,
And pluck me down amongst them? Would they could!
(I, ii, 579-585)

What follows is Faliero's agony, the tortured awareness that his aristocratic sense of self demands revenge on the class that has slighted him, and that the only means of vengeance available requires him to outrage the very self he seeks to vindicate:

Doge. [...] I have set my little left
Of life upon this cast: the die was thrown
When I first listen'd to your treason. –Start not!
That is the word; I cannot shape my tongue
To syllable black deeds into smooth names,
Though I be wrought on to commit them.
When I heard you tempt your sovereign, and forbore
To have you dragg'd to Prison, I became
Your guiltiest accomplice: now you may,
If it so please you, do as much by me.
I. Ber. Strange words, my lord, and most unmerited;
I am no spy, and neither are we traitors.
Doge. *We – We!* – No matter – you have earned the right
(III, I, 54-66)

However Bertuccio seems unaware of the conflict of loyalties that the Doge is facing, now he is ‘To lead a band of – Patriots’:

I. Ber. And add too, that his mind is liberal,
He sees and feels the people are oppress'd,
And shares their sufferings. Take him all in all,
We have need of such and such have need of us.
(II, ii, 174-177)

It is hard to read these lines without being reminded of Thistlewood's reported confidence that Hobhouse was ‘a perfect republican’, and even, perhaps, of Thistlewood's sanguine expectation that, through Hobhouse, the conspirators might garner support amongst the right-thinking amongst those of Hobhouse's own class, the ‘many respectable people at his end of the town’. Calendaro doubts the staunchness his fellow-conspirator Bertram:

Cal. I do not doubt the elder; but in Bertram
There is a hesitating softness, fatal
To enterprise like ours: I've seen that man
Weep like an infant o'er the misery
Of others, heedless of his own, though greater;

And in a recent quarrel I beheld him
Turn sick at sight of blood, although a villain's.
(II, ii, 67-73)

Bertram's response to Calendaro's insistence that the whole of the patrician class must be extirpated, that not a single noblemen be allowed to remain alive, confirms the shrewdness of his assessment of Bertram's character:

Bert. How say you? *all!*
Cal. Whom wouldst thou spare?
Bert. I spare?
I have no power to spare. I only question'd,
Thinking that even amongst these wicked men
There might be some, whose age and qualities
Might mark them out for pity.
(III, ii, 22-26)

The character of Bertram is Byron's version of the historical Beltramo Bergamasco, who appears in Francis Cohen's translation of Sanudo's version of the story, which Byron gives as an appendix to his play, a translation which Byron states 'I could not myself – though after many years intercourse with Italian – have given by any means so purely and so faithfully.'³⁸ But, significantly, Bergamasco is not himself a conspirator:

But the Lord, who hath always helped this most glorious city, and who, loving its righteousness and holiness, hath never forsaken it, inspired one Beltramo Bergamasco to be the cause of bringing the plot to light, in the following manner. This Beltramo, who belonged to Ser Niccolo Lioni of Santo Stephano, had heard a word or two of what was to take place; and so, in the above-mentioned month of April, he went to the house of the aforesaid Ser Niccolo Lioni, and told him all the particulars of the plot. Ser Niccolo, when he heard all these things, was struck dead, as it were, with affright. He heard all the particulars; and Bertramo prayed him to keep it all secret; and if he told Ser Nicolo, it was in order that Ser Niccolo might stop home on the 15th. Of April, and thus save his life.³⁹

Similarly, the plot in Byron's play is betrayed when Bertram warns the patrician Lioni that his life is in danger:

Bert. I come
To save patrician blood, and not to shed it!
And thereunto I must be speedy, for
Each minute lost may lose a life; since Time
Has changed his slow scythe for the two-edged sword,
And is about to take, instead of sand,
The dust from sepulchres to fill his hour-glass! –
Go not *thou* forth tomorrow!
(IV, I, 153-160)

It is easy to explain why Byron changed the name of the character. Beltramo Bergasimo is a name far too close to Bartolomeo Bergami, or Pergami, who, in the early months of 1820 was the most famous Italian in Britain, the man charged with being the lover of Queen Caroline. Byron's play, in which the action is precipitated by a slander on the reputation of the Doge's wife, already courted the possibility that it would be understood as a comment on the Queen Caroline affair, inviting its reader to make a pointed contrast between Marino's concern for his wife's reputation and the Regent's. But Byron's identification of Bertram as himself an active member of the conspiracy again has the effect of bringing the Venetian and Cato Street conspiracies together.

In his diary entry for 24 February 1820, Henry Hobhouse writes that one of the Cato Street conspirators, Thomas Hiden, 'being struck with remorse' wrote a letter to Castlereagh on 22 February disclosing the plans for the assassination. Hiden was 'at a loss how to convey it to Lord C': 'He happened to know the person of Lord Harrowby, whom he met riding in Hyde Park, stopped him, and with great agitation requested him to convey the letter [...] to ld. C.' and 'gave

his name and address to Lord Harrowby. The letter reached its destination about 4 o'clock and upon inspection appeared to corroborate exactly intelligence previously obtained by Lord Sidmouth.'⁴⁰ Henry Hobhouse goes on to state that the following day another 'conspirator', Dwyer, entered the Home Office and gave information that 'corresponded precisely with the facts antecedently ascertained'.⁴¹ Again, Mrs. Arbuthnot seems to have been aware of these events, she notes in her journal entry for 23rd February 1820:

It has been for some months known that a band of Radicals, with Thistlewood at their head, had formed a plan for assassinating the Ministers when they sh^d be assembled at a Cabinet dinner [...] Fortunately, it always happens that, in the midst of such a set of Ruffians, there is always one or more who betray their secret, & one of the band acted as a spy & revealed the whole plot to the Secretary of State. In addition to this information, one of the parties felt some remorse for the part he was about to act & wrote to L^d Castlereagh detailing the plot and putting him on his guard. The day fixed was Wednesday the 23 of Feby.⁴²

This statement is revealing. The government knew of the plot. Edwards is almost certainly the spy Mrs. Arbuthnot refers to, and Hiden is the man who revealed the plot to Castlereagh. The final sentence of the entry tellingly leaves it uncertain whether the date of Wednesday February 23 was 'fixed' by the conspirators or by Sidmouth and Castlereagh. Lord Greville's journal entry for 24th. February as much as says this:

I was at Lady Harrowby's last night, and about half-past one o' clock Lord Harrowby came in and told us the following particulars: -- A plot has been in agitation for some time past, of the existence of which, the names and numbers of the men concerned, and of all particulars concerning their plans, Government has been perfectly well informed. ⁴³

Of course Hiden's information had public relations rather than intelligence value, the plot itself having been instigated by Edwards, acting on government instructions. In the event, during the Cato Street trial, under the pressure of

questioning, Lord Harrowby was forced to undermine the government's deception:

Mr. Curwood. Will your Lordship permit me to ask whether you had any previous knowledge of the matter to that communicated by that witness?

Lord Harrowby. A previous general knowledge.

C. I believe there was a man of the name of Edwards had given information. Does your Lordship know a man of the name of Edwards?

H. No I do not.

C. How long previous to that had your Lordship known of this?

H. If you refer to a general knowledge of some plan being intended, we had had for some time reason to suspect such an intention, the precise period I cannot fix.

C. A fortnight, or three weeks, or a month?

H. I should say longer⁴⁴

Later, in 1829, Harrowby would be more candid about the events surrounding the Cato Street conspiracy, with Thomas Moore: 'Lord Harrowby gave a detailed account of Thistlewood's conspiracy and of the share he himself had had in detecting it – All seemed to consider Thistlewood as a very extraordinary man.'⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Moore is discreet enough not to reveal what Harrowby actually says.

In *Marino Faliero*, the 'poor plebeian Bertram' warns Lioni because 'My father was your father's client'. Again this detail may have been prompted by details of the Cato Street Conspirators. There is no evidence of Thomas Hiden having worked for Harrowby or Castlereagh, but 'the man of colour' in the Cato Street Conspiracy, William Davidson, had. Throughout questioning Davidson denied that he was part of the plot, and wrote to Harrowby claiming that it was "impossible I could be guilty of the slightest intention to harm your lordship in any way" because he had been employed in Harrowby's household: "in truth

my lord, Mr. Edwards must know that I am not the man of colour that was in their party.’”⁴⁶ But of course Harrowby would have been aware of Edwards’s daily reports, one of which, dated 25th January stated: ‘Thistlewood said that Davidson and Wilson had long been endeavouring to kill the Lord of Harrowby and that Davidson knows every part of the House.’⁴⁷ Harrowby did not reply to Davidson’s letter and the ‘man of colour’ was executed.

Execution as Theatre

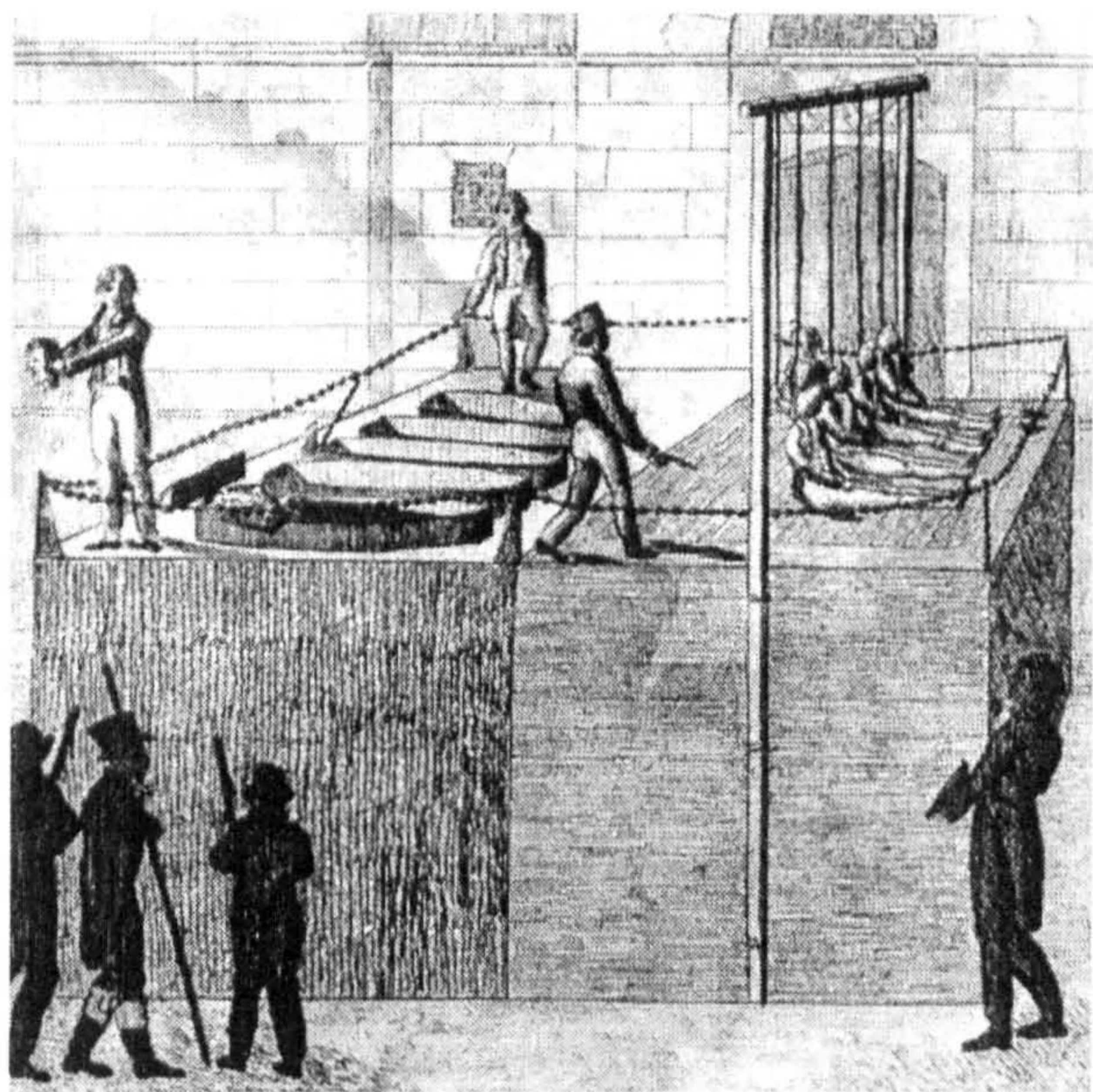


Figure 22: ‘The Execution of the Cato Street Conspirators’ (London: 1820)

Choose a day on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; appoint the most favourite actors; spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting, and musick; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of real sympathy.

(Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, I, XV)⁴⁸

The ending of Byron’s play is rarely commented on, yet it is something of a literary oddity. In act five scene three the Doge is executed, before which he

make a long speech in which he curses Venice and finally commands the executioner:

Slave do thine office!
Strike as I struck the foe! Strike as I would
Have struck those tyrants! Strike deep as my curse
Strike – and but once!
(V, iii, 101-104)

The Doge is out of earshot of all, and the sight of most, of the crowd who have gathered to watch the execution. The scene then closes, and is followed by the play's final scene in which the same event is re-enacted as it is witnessed by the citizenry who have gathered to witness the execution of the Doge:

First Cit. His voice is inarticulate, but the voice
Swells up like mutter'd thunder; would we could
But gather a sole sentence!

Second Cit. Hush! We perhaps may catch the sound.

First Cit. 'Tis vain,
I cannot hear him. – How his hoary hair
Streams on the wind like foam upon the wave!
Now – now – he kneels – and now they form a circle
Round him, and all is hidden – but I see
The lifted sword in air – Ah! Hark! It falls!

[The people murmur]

Third Cit. Then they have murder'd him who would have freed us.

Forth Cit. He was a kind man to the commons ever.

Fifth Cit. Wisely they did keep their portals barr'd.

(V, iv, 12-23)

The whole of this final scene was cut in the version of the play acted at Drury Lane. The cut may have been prompted simply by a fear that Byron's innovative dramaturgy might confuse the audience, but it is at least as likely that the cut was an example of the rigorous political censorship to which Elliston subjected

Byron's play, for the execution, as it is enacted in the play's final scene, works to conflate the execution staged at the top of the Giant's Staircase with the executions that took place outside Newgate on May 1, 1820.

The first citizen is one of the few who can see the execution over the gate, and it is his role to describe the event to the crowd. The device whereby an event is seen by, and then described to, an audience, is as far as I can tell, a new one.

Probably the closest literary antecedent is to be found in John Webster's *The White Devil*. There is some evidence that Byron had been thinking of Webster's play at the time of writing *Marino Faliero*, as we can see in a letter to J. C.

Hobhouse dated July 16 1820 where he mentions both *The White Devil* and *Marino Faliero*.⁴⁹ In act two scene two of *The White Devil* we witness the dumb show where Isabella is killed by kissing Brachiano's poisoned picture:

Enter, suspiciously, Julio and Christophero; they draw a curtain where BRACHIANO'S picture is, they put on spectacles of glass which cover their eyes and noses, and then burn perfumes afore the picture, and wash the lips of the picture; that done, quenching the fire, and putting off their spectacles they depart laughing [...] Enter Isabella [...] she kneels down as to prayers, then draws the curtain of the picture, does three reverences to it, and kisses it thrice, she faints and will not suffer them to come near it, dies.'

The Conjuror then repeats the episode by describing the action that the audience has just witnessed:

She's poisoned,
By the fum'd picture: 'twas her custom nightly,
Before she went to bed, to go and visit
Your picture, and to feed her eyes and lips
On the dead shadow; Doctor Julio
Observing this, infects it with an oil
And other poison'd stuff, which presently

Did suffocate her spirits.

(II, ii)

This is very similar to the device Byron employs; excepting that Webster's Conjuror uses a mixture of past and present tenses as opposed to Byron's repetition of time.

As one would expect, there are many first hand reports concerning the executions of the Cato Street conspirators, which was probably the most celebrated public execution of the century. All of the condemned men died bravely, with Thistlewood even refusing wine on the scaffold,⁵⁰ and, excepting Davidson, all remained true to their Painite principles and refused the services of the church. The most widely read account was given in George Theodore Wilkinson's *An Authentic History of the Cato Street Conspiracy*:

Thistlewood struggled slightly for a few minutes, but each effort was more faint than that which preceded; and the body soon turned round slowly, as if upon the motion of the hand of death. Tidd, whose size gave cause to suppose that he would "pass" with little comparative pain, scarcely moved after the fall. The struggles of Ings were great. The assistants of the executioner pulled his legs with all their might; and even then the reluctance of the soul to part from its native seat was to be observed in the vehement efforts of every part of the body. Davidson, after three or four heaves, became motionless; but Brunt suffered extremely, and considerable exertions were made by the executioners and others to shorten his agonies.⁵¹

John Stoddard's *The New Times*, is really the only paper which attempts to undermine Thistlewood's courage when faced with the scaffold:

At a quarter before eight Thistlewood made his appearance on the scaffold. His step faltered a little as he mounted the platform, and his countenance was somewhat flushed and disordered on being conducted to the extremity of the drop. However his deportment was firm.⁵²

Mrs. Arbuthnot gives an account in her journal entry for May 3rd. 1820:

Thistlewood & 4 other of the leaders were hanged & beheaded, exhibiting to the last the most hardened & brutal want of religion or any proper feeling. One really ought to thank God that the world is rid of such monsters, for their avowals of guilt on the

scaffold & when they were brought up for judgement were quite terrific. Six others, who pleaded guilty were sent off the night before for transportation to Botany Bay.⁵³

Mrs. Arbuthnot animus is understandable as Wellington, her alleged lover, had, according to evidence provided by John Monument at the trial, been a particular target of the conspirators, prompting Mrs. Arbuthnot to write, 'The Duke of Wellington, whom every English person ought to worship, was singled out as particularly obnoxious; & one of them declared that, after having murdered him, he w^d publish that he had gone on his knees to beg for mercy, "in order that such a story might lower the pride of his family"'.⁵⁴ Mrs. Arbuthnot then relates her brother's experience of the execution:

My brother Cecil, who had never seen an execution, told me he had a great curiosity on this occasion & went. He wished very much to see how they w^d behave: but, when they were tied up, he felt so nervous & in fact felt so much more than they themselves did that he retired into a corner of the room & hid himself that he might not see the drop fall, which excited great contempt in the people who were in the room with him; amongst whom was one woman, young & pretty & very decent looking, who kept her eyes fixed on it all the time &, when they had hung a few seconds, exclaimed, "There's two on them not dead yet"!!⁵⁵

Cecil and his friends have surveyed the execution from the equivalent of an expensive theatre box. Hobhouse, in his journal, draws attention to the multitude of onlookers who did not have such a privileged view of the ceremony, and, according to him, their feelings were quite different:

May 1. – Thistlewood, Ings, Brunt, Davidson, and Tidd executed this morning at the Old Bailey. Their heads were cut off by a man in a mask. The people hissed violently during the operation. Soldiers were in readiness everywhere. The men died like heroes. Ings, perhaps was too obstreperous in singing "Death or Liberty," and Thistlewood said, "Be quiet, Ings; we can die without all this noise." They admitted they intended to kill the Ministers, but without malice, and as the only resource. It is certain that Edwards, a Government spy, was the chief instigator of the whole scheme. The people cried out for him during the execution. The government will gain nothing by this execution.⁵⁶

Ings sings 'Oh, give me death or liberty', ⁵⁷ because it is a famous revolutionary song, but it is a sentiment that, surely not by coincidence, is repeated by Byron's

Philip Calendaro:

Cal. Let us but deal upon them, and I care not
For the result, which must be either death or freedom!
(II, ii, 52-53)

There are more similarities between the execution in *Marino Faliero* and those that took place outside Newgate on 1 May 1820. The Chief of the Ten shouts to the crowd “Justice hath dealt upon the mighty Traitor!” rather like the executioner of the five Cato Street Conspirators holding up a newly decapitated head shouting “This is the head of John Thomas Brunt, the traitor”.⁵⁸ But Byron then adds a little more horror for the plays final line. Once the gates of the Ducal Palace are opened the crowd ‘*rush in towards the “Giants Staircase,” [...] The foremost of them exclaims to those behind, “The gory head rolls down the Giants Steps!”*’ The fate of the Doge’s head perhaps reminds us of Orpheus, his head floating away singing, which implies that despite his portrait being blacked out in the Doge’s Palace, Faliero’s story will go on being told and his plan to free Venice from corruption will finally be realised. But perhaps Byron is given his clue for this invention (it is not in any of his sources) from the fate of Brunt whose head was dropped by the executioner and rolled about the scaffold to the ‘howlings and groans of the spectators.’⁵⁹

Byron’s one explicit reference to the Cato Street executions is included in a letter to Murray in which he comments on Felicia Hemans’s latest volume, disputing her pious insistence that only Christian faith can support the individual in the hour of death:

Mrs. Hemans is a poet also—but too stilted & apostrophic -- & quite wrong—men died calmly before the Christian era -- & since, without Christianity – witness the Romans -- & lately Thistlewood, Sandt, and Louvel – men who ought to have been weighed down with their crimes—even had they believed. — A deathbed is a matter of nerves & constitution -- & not of religion.⁶⁰

Thistlewood remains for Byron a criminal, but he is not described as a ‘blackguard’. In fact Byron seems to allow him the kinship with the republican heroes of ancient Rome that his Venetian conspirators claim for themselves, Israel Bertuccio, for example:

When wicked men wax mighty, and a state
Turns servile. He and his high friend were styled
“The last of the Romans!” Let us be the first
Of true Venetians, sprung from Roman sires.
(II, ii, 106-109)

It is easy to understand why Hazlitt and the reviewer of *The British Critic* thought of *Marino Faliero* as a vehicle that allowed Byron grandiloquently to project the contradictions of his own political position into the person of the Doge who became, out of personal pique and out of high principle, a traitor to the Venetian state. After all, Byron even contrived, when he learned that his drama was to be acted out before the mixed audience of a London theatre, to undergo an agony the same in kind, however different in degree, from that suffered by the Doge when he feels degraded by his association with his plebeian co-conspirators. But I want to suggest that the play can also be understood as a response to Byron’s quarrel with Hobhouse, his best friend. Hobhouse reconciled himself with Byron, gracefully and generously, with an allusion to a play. Byron, ever attracted by the grand gesture, went one better. *Marino Faliero* is his peace offering to his friend. In 1818 Hobhouse had suffered political

humiliation. Selected by Burdett to be his running mate for the Westminster constituency he had been defeated; thereafter Hobhouse's strategy was clear. All that he did, from his attendance at the congratulatory dinner for Henry Hunt to the composition of the incendiary pamphlet for which he was imprisoned and his staunch refusal to make the accommodation with the Ministry that would secure his release, had a single aim: to placate the increasingly powerful radical group that Byron identified with 'blackguard Hunt, and Cobby O', and firmly distinguished from his own political associates – 'There's I and Burdett – Gentlemen'. The good sense of the strategy was confirmed in 1820, when he was returned as member for Westminster with a large majority, but the same strategy threatened and came close to ending the friendship that meant as much to Hobhouse as his political career. Byron seems to have finally recognised Hobhouse's motives, in a letter to John Murray dated April 16 1820 Byron includes an epigram:

Would you go to the House by the true gate
Much faster than ever Whig Charley went
Let Parliament send you to Newgate
And Newgate will send you to Parliament.

Beneath this Byron writes 'Hobhouse is a man of true talent however and will make the best of his situation as he has done hitherto.'⁶¹ *Marino Faliero* can perhaps be understood as the poem in which Byron attempts not to castigate but to understand his friend's behaviour. It can even be understood as a splendid apology for that other poem that Hobhouse had so bitterly resented, 'My boy Hobby O'.

Not only Byron and Hobhouse came to a truce, despite their political differences. Following the defeat of peaceful and forceful attempts to intervene in the British political system, the radicals and a section of the royalists now formed an uneasy and unlikely alliance. Peterloo and the Cato Street conspiracy had seen bottom up attempts at reforming the country. John Cam Hobhouse now saw the necessity of alloying the aims of militant radicals, characterised by Henry Hunt and Arthur Thistlewood, with the softer side of radicalism, such as Burdett's and Byron's, to further the cause of reform. Hobhouse saw the need for reform from the top, and, having suffered two defeats in the space of six months the radicals now agreed with him. Their next attempt to gain political representation was a move to secure support, or rather, a figurehead to carry their arguments now that peaceful demonstrations, and ideas of a forceful intervention in politics, had failed, and this influential ally was none other than the new king's wife, Caroline of Brunswick.

¹ Hazlitt, *Works*, XIX, pp.44-46.

² In a review of the play's first performance (25 April 1821), The Times reviewer wrote 'Lord Byron's tragedy of Marino Faliero last night performed at this theatre, under circumstances which are likely to produce many lamentations from the Lord Chancellor, who hates theatricals, [...], We have said that Lord Byron's tragedy was performed, but we ought rather to have stated, that fragments, violently torn from that noble work, were presented to the audience.' (*The Times*, 26/4/1821).

³ *The British Critic*, New Series, 15 (1821), p. 472.

⁴ Ibid. p. 471.

⁵ *Shelley and His Circle 1773 – 1822*, ed. By Kenneth Neil Cameron, and Donald H. Reiman, 8 vols. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961-1986), 3, p.321.

⁶ David V. Erdman, 'Byron and "the New Force of the People"', *The Keats-Shelley Journal*, 11 (1962), p. 62.

⁷ Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 81.

⁸ Ibid. 7, p. 62.

⁹ Ibid. 8, p. 240.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Michael Foot, *The Politics of Paradise; A Vindication of Byron* (London: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 274.

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- ¹² Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 264.
- ¹³ Michael Simpson, *Closet Performances; Political Exhibition and Prohibition in the Dramas of Byron and Shelley* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 237.
- ¹⁴ Martyn Corbett, *Byron and Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).
- ¹⁵ Cited by Simpson, p. 435.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p. 435.
- ¹⁷ Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 184.
- ¹⁸ See Richard Lansdown, *Byron's Historical Dramas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 102.
- ¹⁹ See Richard Cronin, *The Politics*, pp. 156-161.
- ²⁰ *Byron's Bulldog, The Letters of John Cam Hobhouse to Lord Byron*, ed. by Peter W. Graham (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1984), p. 4.
- ²¹ Hobhouse was imprisoned from December 14, 1819 to February 29, 1820.
- ²² *A Trifling Mistake*, cited in *Byron's Bulldog*, p. 284.
- ²³ Even Francis Burdett did not support Hobhouse's pamphlet, but this may have been because the more inflammatory passages were said to have been written by Francis Place. Thomas Carlyle had written 'Even in going to Newgate, by order of the House of Commons, the then Mr. Hobhouse fathered a pamphlet which was not his own, but which was written by Mr. Place.' (*Monthly Magazine*, May 1836). Cited by Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place, 1771-1854* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), pp. 148-9.
- ²⁴ *The Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright*, ed. by F. D. Cartwright, 2 vols. (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), I, p. 163.
- ²⁵ PRO, Abel Hall File, TS 11/204
- ²⁶ Cited by Michael Joyce, *My Friend H.*, p. 142.
- ²⁷ Ibid. pp. 141-2.
- ²⁸ See *Byron's Bulldog*, p. 288.
- Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us – O, all is forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
(*A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III, ii.)
- ²⁹ 'Byron and "the New Force of the People"', p. 60
- ³⁰ Peter Quennell, *Byron in Italy* (London: Collins, 1941), p. 171.
- ³¹ Cited by Charles Hindley, *A History of the Catnach Press at Berwick-Upon-Tweed, Alnwick and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in Northumberland and Seven Dials, London* (London: Charles Hindley, 1886), p. 93.
- ³² *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, p. 17.
- ³³ HO 44/6 f. 208.
- ³⁴ Letter to John Cam Hobhouse, Ravenna, 9th November, 1820, Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 222.
- ³⁵ From *The Works of Lord Byron, Poetry* ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, *Letters and Journals* ed. by Rowland E. Prothero, 13 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898-1904), IV, p. 469.
- ³⁶ Cited by Reid, p. 201.
- ³⁷ *The Examiner*, 13 May 1821.
- ³⁸ *The Works of Lord Byron*, IV, p. 462.
- ³⁹ Ibid. p. 465.
- ⁴⁰ *Diary of Henry Hobhouse*, p. 13.
- ⁴¹ Ibid. p. 14.
- ⁴² *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, pp. 5-6.
- ⁴³ Greville, Charles C. F., *The Greville Memoirs 1814-1860*, ed. by Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, 8 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1938), 1, p. 89.
- ⁴⁴ Cited by Stanhope, p. 46.
- ⁴⁵ *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. by Wilfred S. Dowden, 5 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 3, p. 121
- ⁴⁶ Cited by Stanhope, p. 128
- ⁴⁷ HO42/199, f604
- ⁴⁸ *The Works of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke*, ed. by Henry Rogers, 2 vols. (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1867), I, p. 35.

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- ⁴⁹ Byron *Letters*, 7, pp. 122-3.
- ⁵⁰ George Theodore Wilkinson, *An Authentic History of the Cato- Street Conspiracy; with the Trials at Large of the Conspirators for High Treason and Murder; a Description of their Weapons and Combustible Machines, and Every Particular Connected with the Horrid Plot* (London: Thomas Kelly, 1820), p.373.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² *The New Times*, May 2nd. 1820.
- ⁵³ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, p.16.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. I, p.9.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid. I, p.16.
- ⁵⁶ Lord Broughton (John Cam Hobhouse), *Recollections of a Long Life with Additional Extracts from his Private Diaries*, ed. by Lady Dorchester, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1909), I, p.126.
- ⁵⁷ Stanhope, p. 139.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. p.145.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. p.145.
- ⁶⁰ Byron *Letters*, 7, p. 113.
- ⁶¹ Byron *Letters*, 7, p.78.

Part III: *CAROLINE*

Lamb and Cruikshank: Introducing the Players

‘Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.’
(Byron *Don Juan*, I, 31)

Looking back on the Queen Caroline affair, Hazlitt writes:

It was the only question I ever knew that excited a thorough popular feeling. It struck its roots into the heart of the nation; it took possession of every house or cottage in the kingdom; man, woman, and child took part in it, as if it had been their own concern [...] it spread like wildfire over the kingdom; the public mind was electrical. So it should be on other occasions; it was only so on this.¹

The return of Caroline to claim her place as Queen after the death of George III in January 1820, and the repercussions provoked by her demands, captivated the attention of the public and press. It seemed that the political impact of Caroline challenging George IV for her rights might be enough to bring down the new King and his ministers, such was her popular support. All sections of the public appeared to be polarised. In a letter to Barron Field of August 1820 Charles Lamb asks, ‘Pray are you for the King’s or Queen’s men in Sydney? (Field was resident in Australia).’² John Clare asks the same question of Augustus Hessey: ‘are you “St. Caroline” or “George 4th.”’³ Most of the royal couple's battles were carried out in the press; thousands of pamphlets were sold for and against the Queen’s cause. More volumes of verse were published in 1820 than in any other year between 1814 and 1835 (321 volumes against an average of 223), and many of them responded directly to the controversy.⁴ *The Times* consistently featured the proceedings from her trial in its pages and its circulation soared to 20 000 copies a day. Pamphleteers and pornographers also seized upon the affair; releasing accounts and illustrations of the King and Queen in various amorous situations. Iain McCalman notes that the gutter

pressman James Catnach made over £10,000 from the sale of squibs and single page broadsheets produced to exploit the scandal.⁵ And yet, interest in the Queen Caroline affair was not confined to the hacks, opportunists and radicals; the literary elite too decided that the affair was worthy of their attention: Byron featured Caroline in his *Don Juan*, Shelley in his *Swellfoot the Tyrant* and even Charles Lamb added his voice in a series of poems printed in John Thelwall's paper *The Champion*.

In this section I am going to look at how the public perceptions of George and Caroline were shaped by exponents of both 'high' and 'low' literature by examining areas of convergence between the two, beginning with George Cruikshank and Charles Lamb, who, more than any other artists, created the caricature of George that held sway in the minds of the general public and those of the ruling class alike. I will then look at the bizarre alliances that the affair produced, such as William Cobbett becoming Caroline's adviser and the writer of many of her addresses; Byron's confusion about what part he could play, as, like the plight of his own hero, Marino Faliero, Caroline's was a cause that would ally him with 'blackguards', and Brougham – both of whom he detested. I will then move on to Shelley's drama *Oedipus Tyrannus* and its relationship to works produced by the likes of William Benbow, George Cruikshank, William Hone, Charles Lamb, J. L. Marks, and a number of anonymous radical and loyalist authors.

Interest in the relationship between Caroline and George was not a sudden phenomenon; it had steadily been building since their marriage. In the course of twenty-five years, George and Caroline had become inseparable from their representations in thousands of caricatures, squibs and press reports. They had, as it were, been replaced by their public images.

The marriage between Caroline of Brunswick and her cousin George, Prince of Wales was not a love match. As a young man George acquired the expensive habits of gambling, drinking, taking on extravagant building projects and acquiring a succession of costly mistresses. Horace Walpole wrote that aged eighteen the prince along with the Duke of York 'drank hard, swore, and passed every night in brothels [...] He passed the nights in the lowest debaucheries, at the same time bragging of intrigues with women of quality, whom he named publicly.'⁶ His most infamous early attachment was to Mrs. Robinson, an actress known as Perdita after her most famous performance in the *Winters Tale*, and later herself an important poet.⁷ By 1794 the Prince had accumulated debts of almost three quarters of a million pounds. There were now no creditors left who were prepared to loan him the significant amounts of money that he needed to sustain his lifestyle. He and his brother, the Duke of York, had ruined a Jewish banking firm at the Hague by refusing to repay a loan of 350,000 guilders.⁸ The only way to increase his income was to marry. William Hone describes the Prince's situation in *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*: 'In love, and in drink, and o'ertoppled by debt; /With women, with wine, and with duns on the

fret.' John Clare (who would later be published by Hone in his *Everyday Book*) drew on Hone's portrayal of the Regent in his *Don Juan*:

Love worse than debt or drink or any fate
It is the damnest smart of matrimony
A hell incarnate is a woman-mate
(*Don Juan*, 33-35).

Hone had taken his clue for the poem from Bish's lottery, which was advertised using an illustration by George Cruikshank titled *Fortune's Ladder*.¹⁰ The ladder showed, in ten steps, how the life of a poor couple had been transformed from poverty and misery to a life of wealth after buying a winning Bish Lottery ticket.

The first rung reads:

A wight, by poverty oppress'd
By duns and creditors distress'd
Thus to his dame in dungeon said,
While dreams of horror fill'd his head.

In an innovative move, which anticipated modern marketing techniques, Hone produced a children's toy ladder, which was supplied free with *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*. The ladder showed, again in ten steps, the progress of the Queen's miserable marriage. It is a children's toy with a very adult theme, telling the story of the marriage of George and Caroline in a way that even children could understand, just as the cuts accompanying Hone's text helped aid the comprehension of the semi – literate:

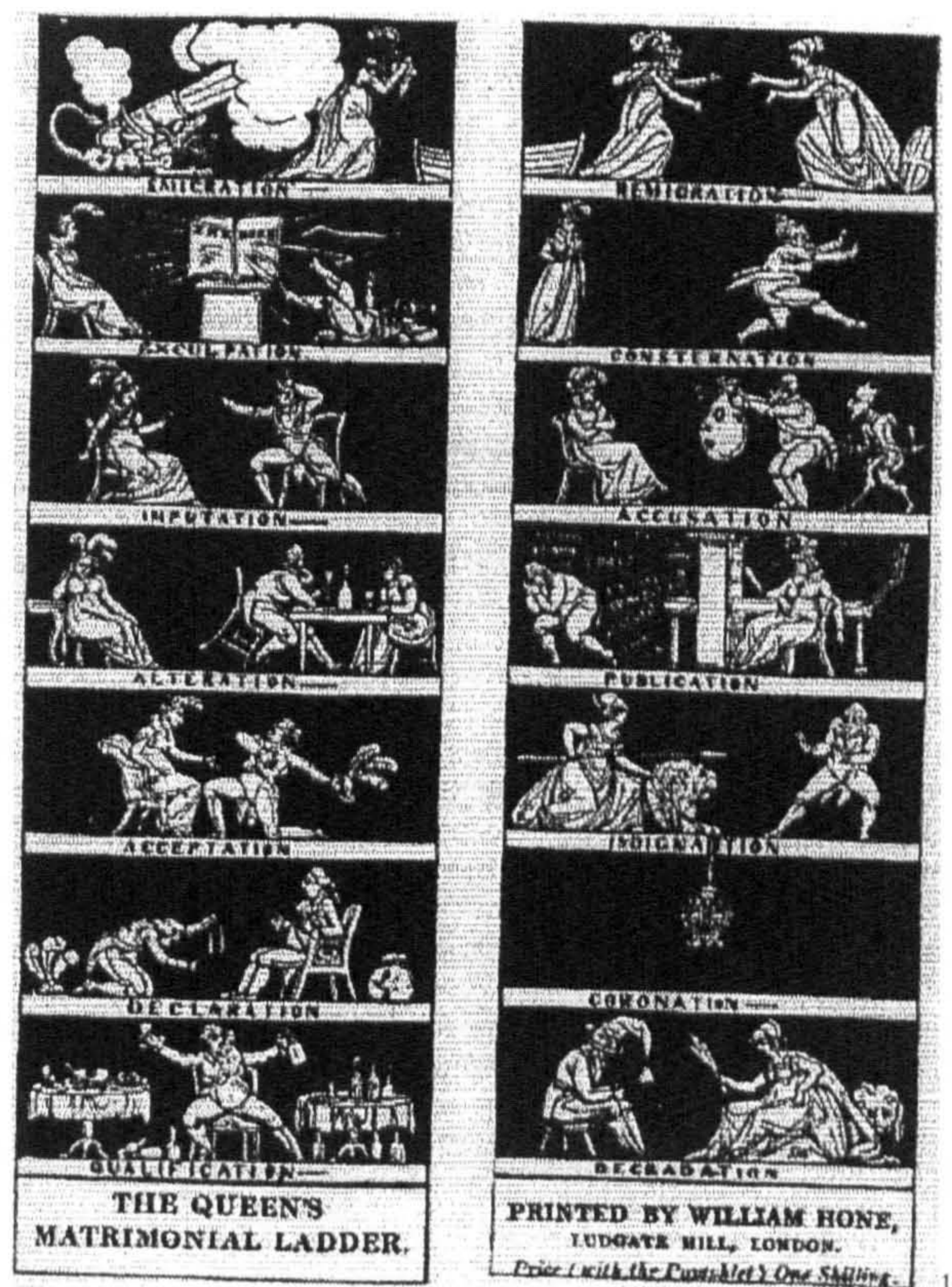


Figure 23: George Cruikshank, 'The Toy Ladder', *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*

As Marcus Wood remarks in *his Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822*:

Hone's Parody would not have taken the forms it did, or have reached the market it did, without the development of the early nineteenth-century advertising industry. Advertising popularised, appropriated, and imitated different writing styles and systems of iconography. It had the effect of loosening and challenging established linguistic divisions and notions of social empowerment.¹²

For the more literate, there was the pamphlet, in which Hone tells of the circumstances that encouraged George to marry his cousin:

DECLARATION

The Prodigal Son, by his perils surrounded,
Vex'd, harassed, bewilder'd, asham'd, and confounded,
Fled for help to his Father, confessed his ill doing,
And begged for salvation from stark staring ruin;
The sire urged—"The People your debts have twice paid,
"And to ask a third time, even Pitt is afraid;
"But he shall if you'll marry, and lead a new life, -
"You've a cousin in Germany-make her your wife!"

One inaccuracy here is that George III did not advise his son to marry Caroline -- but he was pleased with his choice, even though he was normally opposed to marriages within the family. There was however one major problem: the Prince was already married,¹³ secretly in 1785 to Maria Fitzherbert a twice widowed Roman Catholic, with whom he is thought to have produced 'at least one child, and possibly two'.¹⁴ The Prince was also, as Sheridan put it, 'too much every lady's man to be the man of any lady',¹⁵ and was currently involved with Lady Jersey and an actress called Mrs. Crouch, who had played Polly Peachum in *The Beggars Opera*. Despite his secret marriage and numerous affairs, George was perceived as the most eligible prince in Europe, yet he was constrained as to whom he could choose to be his wife by the royal marriage act of 1772, which stated that no member of the royal family could marry without the king's approval, and the king's approval would only be given if George married a princess from a good Protestant family. In effect, George's choice was severely limited: he had to find himself a German princess.

Caroline of Brunswick was the daughter of Prince Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, and Augusta, sister of George III. At twenty-seven Caroline was already perceived as having been left on the shelf, and already had a rather dubious reputation when the Prince of Wales sent Malmesbury to propose to her on his behalf - without ever having seen her himself. By all accounts their first meeting was not a happy one; Caroline found the prince 'very fat, and nothing like as handsome as his portrait'.¹⁶ In the first plate by

Beechey we find a flattering portrait of George in the uniform of the tenth light dragoons.



Figure 24: Sir William Beechey, The Prince of Wales in 10th Light Dragoons Uniform

We can compare this idealised portrait to a representation by Gillray, of the Prince aged only twenty-eight¹⁷:



Figure 25: James Gillray, *A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Digestion* (London: H. Humphrey, 1792)

Littered around the prince are the paraphernalia of his life of excess; food, drink, cures for syphilis: his already massive girth is barely contained by his expensive clothing. On the floor are two notebooks, *Debts of Honor, Unpaid*, and *Faro Partnership Account Self, Archer Hobart & Co*. Gillray playfully suggests that the Prince had an interest in the infamous faro-tables of Lady Archer and Mrs. Hobart.¹⁸ Robert Huish, an early biographer of George IV, claims that the Prince was introduced to Mrs. Archer's faro tables by a Mr. Errington, a cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the 'protector' of Mrs. Archer. Huish claims that the prince went on to have an affair with the daughter of Mrs. Archer.¹⁹

George was similarly unimpressed by Caroline: he found her manners and want of personal hygiene repellent enough to call for brandy on their first meeting.²⁰ However the marriage went ahead. Lord Melbourne stated (appropriately, considering George's previous relationship with Mrs. Crouch) that 'the Prince was like a man doing a thing in desperation; it was like Macheath going to execution; and he was quite drunk.'²¹ The marriage ceremony became infamous, with the Prince of Wales being practically carried up the aisle crying and inebriated, as Thackeray relates in *The Four Georges*:

Malmesbury gives us the beginning of the marriage story; - how the Prince reeled into the chapel to be married; how he hiccuped out his vows of fidelity- you know how he kept them: how he pursued the woman whom he had married; to what state he brought her; with what blows he struck her; with what malignity he pursued her; what his treatment of his daughter was; and what his own life. *He* the first gentleman of Europe! There is no stronger satire on the proud English society of that day, than that they admired George.²²

The royal couple supposedly spent only two nights together as husband and wife. Caroline claimed to Lady Charlotte Campbell that the prince 'passed the greatest part of his bridal-night under the grate, where he fell, and where I left him'.²³ George, on his part, complained to Malmesbury that Caroline was not a virgin: 'there was no appearance of blood' and 'her manners were not those of a novice'.²⁴ Nevertheless they did manage to produce a child together, Princess Charlotte, who died in 1817.²⁵ But the next twenty-five years saw the royal couple warring with each other. In 1796 they separated: Caroline retreated to Montague House, Blackheath, and the Prince of Wales to Carlton House and Brighton. According to Lady Cholmondely the Prince disliked his new wife so much that he 'declared in the strongest terms his antipathy towards her, adding

that he had rather see toads and vipers crawling over his victuals than sit at the same table with her!!!'²⁶ In 1806, George, determined to get rid of his wife, instigated the 'Delicate Investigation', a commission set up to investigate the conduct of the Princess of Wales. The inquiry centred on allegations made by Lady Charlotte and Sir John Douglas, stating that Caroline had given birth to an illegitimate child, William Austin. A number of spies were sent out to report on Caroline's actions --the prince had long used spies to his advantage: Frances Wynn relates in her diaries that when George III was suffering his bouts of madness 'he was surrounded by spies from the Prince'.²⁷ Unfortunately for George the allegations were unfounded; but they did highlight Caroline's enjoyment of the company of young men. The investigation's findings were published in 1807 and reprinted in 1813 as *The Book* or *The Genuine Book*.

In 1811 George became Regent, after his father finally descended into the madness that had sporadically haunted him since 1763. On becoming Regent the Prince was expected to place his friends the Whigs in power and appoint a Whig ministry. Instead George broke his promises to the Whigs and retained Spencer Perceval's Tory administration. This prompted Charles Lamb to write the following poem:

EPIGRAM.²⁸

(1812)

I

Princeps his rent from tinneries draws,

His best friends are refiners;-

What wonder then his other friends

He leaves for under-*miners*.

II

Ye Politicians, tell me, pray,
Why thus with woe and care rent?
This is the worst that you can say,
Some wind has blown the wig away,
And left the hair apparent.

Lamb is referring to the Prince's title as Duke of Cornwall and the rents he drew from the Cornish tin mines. The Prince has deserted his friends by transferring his support from the Whigs, or 'wigs', to the Tories.

In 1814, lonely and isolated, Caroline left for the continent accompanied by William Austin, her adopted son, and spent the next five and a half years travelling in Europe. From the outset she was followed by spies sent by the Prince, who was determined to make a case against her. The result was the Milan commission of 1818, headed by Sir John Leach. The commission's main remit was to prove that Caroline had committed adultery with Bartolemeo Bergami, her courier. As Lamb writes in his 'Epilogue to "The wife: A Tale of Mantua," by James Sheridan Knowles':

A Wife and princess see me next, beset
With subtle toils, in an Italian net,
While knavish courtiers, stung with rage or fear,
Distilled lip-poison in a husband's ear.

Following the death of George III, Caroline returned to England to claim her rights as Queen. As the historian Iorwerth Prothero points out:

The reception she received was sensational, from her landing at Dover and her journey through Kent to the solid crowds that stretched from Greenwich all the way to London. Here radicals had prepared horns, flags and music, and for a while great crowds gathered each day and insulted and molested any who did not cheer or take off their hats. In the

night time they broke the windows of unpopular ministers, especially Castlereagh. In contrast when the new King went to the House of Lords to give personally the royal assent to the first bill passed in his reign, he was greeted by crowds shouting. 'The Queen! Where's the injured Queen?'²⁹

George immediately instituted divorce proceedings on the grounds of adultery to prevent Caroline taking her place as Queen alongside him. He also had her name removed from the Anglican liturgy, preventing the new Queen from being crowned. Newspapers such as *The Morning Post* were supportive of the King's plan:

England ought not to be involved in misery from an ALIEN and UNWORTHY OBJECT [...] to the ruin of our happiness and repose; and, as the Queen alone stands in the way of the arrangement, we say she ought to yield to the Universal Good, we care not whether as a MARTYR or a CRIMINAL.³⁰

William Benbow suggests that this is tantamount to a 'Proposal to Murder the Queen'³¹ -- 'Martyrs, you know, have sometimes been burnt; sometimes buried alive; sometimes boiled; sometimes stabbed'.³² Benbow's suspicion is not quite so far-fetched as it seems. A diary entry by Henry Hobhouse shows that the new King had considered pursuing a course that could have led to Caroline's execution:

In the last month the King's Advocate and the Attorney and Solicitor General made their report, in which they came to the conclusion that a Queen Consort, or the wife of the King's eldest son, committing adultery within the realm or with a British subject, is guilty of high treason by the Stat. 25 Edw. III Stat. 5 cap2, as aider and abettor of the adulterer, who is within the express words of that Act. But if the adultery is committed out of the realm with a foreigner, she is not guilty of high treason, because there is no treason in him, and therefore can not be so in his abettor.³³

In the event, and fortunately, the main prosecution evidence linked her with Bartolomeo Bergami, an Italian. It is unsurprising that Canning, who was himself widely supposed to have been Caroline's lover in England, got out of the country.

The evidence against Caroline was contained in a ‘Green Bag’ - a kind of container very often used for legal documents. This green bag, however, captured the public imagination. People were desperate to find out its contents. But much of the evidence contained in the bag was provided by Italian spies, and in court they did not stand up to Brougham’s questioning. This reflected badly on the new King who had employed these spies to gather evidence against his wife. The Bill to divorce Caroline only got through the Lords on its third reading with a majority of twenty-eight votes. Liverpool was forced to abandon the Bill, which he knew would not get through the House of Commons. This was seen as a great victory for Caroline. However a motion in the Commons to keep her name in the Anglican liturgy was defeated by 310 to 209 votes and George was crowned without her. The coronation controversy prompted Lamb to respond with the following poem:

SONG FOR THE C---N. ³⁴

Roi's wife of Brunswick Oëls!
Roi's wife of Brunswick Oëls!
Wot you how she came to him,
While he supinely dreamt of no ills?
Vow! but she is a canty Queen,
And well can she scare each royal orgie.---
To us she ever must be dear, ,
Though she's for ever cut by Georgie.---
Roi's wife, &c. Da capo.

Caroline, an already unwell woman, made a last stand by turning up at the Abbey for the coronation on July 19 1821 with a £20 ticket which she had purchased herself, but, as Cobbett writes, ‘she was actually thrust back by *the hands of a common prize-fighter*’.³⁵ Caroline died a few weeks later from a bowel

obstruction; however the consensus among her supporters was that her persecution had brought on an early death.

All of this was going on against a backdrop of civil unrest. As E.P. Thompson writes: ‘The Wars ended amidst riots [...] During the passing of the Corn Laws (1815) the Houses of Parliament were defended with troops from menacing crowds. Thousands of disbanded soldiers and sailors returned to find unemployment in their villages.’³⁶ Repression of the people had been on the increase since the end of the war; culminating in the Spa Fields riot, and the Peterloo massacre -- the first major event to split the nation. Barely six months later the Cato Street Conspiracy was uncovered. And in Scotland, three reformers, Wilson, Baird and Hardie were executed as an example to radicals in the North. The gap between rich and poor had probably never seemed so wide. The post-war years had been difficult, yet displays of wealth and power were rife. Despite the poor summer of 1816 and the grim economic situation, the gold standard was adopted, and the use of paper money extended. The Strand Bridge was opened by the Regent, sailing on a ‘crimson and scarlet’ barge, and Brighton Pavilion was swallowing up enormous amounts of money.³⁷ By 1818 all of the properties on the new Regent Street had been taken. And industry, by producing coal gas, enabled the more exclusive streets, shops and houses to be lit. As Eric Hobsbawm states, ‘Britain thus developed the characteristic combination of a revolutionary social base and [...] an apparently traditionalist

and slow-changing institutional superstructure.’³⁸ Cobbett puts the situation a little more aggressively in his *Rural Rides*:

I reflected that in spite of all the malignant measures that had brought so much misery upon England, the gallant French people had ridded themselves of the tyranny which sent them to the galleys for endeavouring to use without tax the salt which God sent upon their shores [...] When, great God! When shall we be allowed to enjoy God’s gifts in freedom, as the people of France enjoy them?³⁹

So here we have this petty royal quarrel going on at a time when conspicuous evidence of affluence sat unfeelingly alongside starvation and poverty.

Surprisingly, it was a period during which Charles Lamb, much more effectively than any other poet, established himself as one of those who would shape the public's perception of George and his government. One of Lamb’s best-known lampoons on George, ‘The Triumph of the Whale’, has close ties with the work of the pamphleteers:

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WHALE.

Io! Pæan! Io! sing
To the finny people's King.
Not a mightier whale than this
In the vast Atlantic is;
Not a fatter fish than he
Flounders round the polar sea.
See his blubbers---at his gills
What a world of drink he swills,
From his trunk, as from a spout,
Which next moment he pours out.
Such his person---next declare,
Muse, who his companions are.---
Every fish of generous kind
Scuds aside, or slinks behind;
But about his presence keep
All the Monsters of the Deep;
Mermaids, with their tails and singing.

His delighted fancy stinging;
Crooked Dolphins, they surround him,
Dog-like Seals, they fawn around him.
Following hard, the progress mark,
Of the intolerant salt sea shark.
For his solace and relief,
Flat fish are his courtiers chief.
Last and lowest in his train,
Ink-fish (libellers of the main)
Their black liquor shed in spite:
(Such on earth the things that write.)
In his stomach, some do say,
No good thing can ever stay.
Had it been the fortune of it,
To have swallowed that old Prophet,
Three days there he'd not have dwell'd,
But in one have been expell'd.
Hapless mariners are they,
Who beguil'd (as seamen say),
Deeming him some rock or island,
Footing sure, safe spot, and dry land,
Anchor in his scaly rind;
Soon the difference they find;
Sudden plumb, he sinks beneath them;
Does to ruthless seas bequeath them.
Name or title what has he?
Is he Regent of the Sea?
From this difficulty free us,
Buffon,⁴⁰ Banks,⁴¹ or sage Linnæus.⁴²
With his wondrous attributes
Say what appellation suits.
By his bulk, and by his size,
By his oily qualities,
This (or else my eyesight fails),
This should be the Prince of Whales.

This poem marks the expiry of the one-year limitation on the powers of the Regent in February 1812. It was first published in *The Examiner* on March 15 1812, signed R. et. R., usually meaning Rex et Regina, but perhaps standing here, for Romulus and Remus. It was after all a poem in which Lamb revealed himself as more of a wolf than a lamb. Like the poems that Lamb had printed in *The Champion*, this poem is topical. Io and Paeon are asked to sing ‘To the finny people’s King.’ Io, who was metamorphosed into a heifer (perhaps making us think of Iona Taurina in Shelley’s *Oedipus Tyrannus*), was tormented by a gadfly and driven from land to land, echoing the experience of Caroline who had just left the country and was travelling on the continent surrounded by spies. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Shelley similarly has a Gadfly chase Iona Tauria all the way to hell. Paeon, the healer, was physician to Hades, god of the underworld and unfaithful husband of Persephone. The Prince is portrayed as a combination of two powerful representatives of the underworld: a whale and Hades. Lamb then leans on the grotesquely obese image of George, which caricaturists, like Gillray, had already fixed in the public imagination:

Not a fatter fish than he
Flounders round the polar sea.
See his blubbers--at his gills
What a world of drink he swills,

George’s appetite for food was legendary: Venetia Murray reprints some of his extensive menus in her *High Society*. As Byron states in his *Don Juan*: ‘Gaunt Famine never shall approach the throne- / Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone.’ (Canto VIII, CXXVI). George’s ministers are portrayed as

‘monsters of the deep’ and his current mistress, the marchioness of Hertford, who was reputed to be influencing his political decisions, is alluded to in the line, ‘Mermaids with their tails and singing. / His delighted fancy stinging’.

Lamb inverts Donne’s song on the inconstancy of women, ‘Teach me to hear mermaids singing, / Or to keep off envy’s stinging’,⁴³ and applies it to George and his reputation for promiscuity. Lamb also refers to George’s occasional habit of being sick in company as a result of his gluttony, ‘In his stomach, some do say, / No good thing can ever stay.’ George is such a strange beast that he defies classification: the most celebrated naturalists Buffon, Banks and Linnaeus cannot define him. ‘This (or else my eyesight fails), / This should be the Prince of Whales’. In his *Don Juan*, Byron extends this conceit, stating that the difficulty of classifying George will vex future generations:

Think if then George the Fourth should be dug up,
How the new Worldlings of the then new East
Will wonder how such animals could sup!
(*Don Juan*, Canto 9, xxxix).

E. V. Lucas insists that the authorities took ‘No notice [...] of Lamb’s couplets’.⁴⁴ This seems strange, as they were published one week before Leigh Hunt’s piece on the Regent calling him ‘a corpulent man of fifty’. Hunt’s, in my opinion, less inflammatory text, resulted in him receiving two years imprisonment.

In the following plate, *The Prince of Whales or the fisherman at Anchor*, by George Cruikshank, which was published in *The Scourge* two months after *The Triumph of the Whale* in May 1812, we can see Lamb's squib taken up by the popular press.



Figure 26: George Cruikshank, 'The Prince of Whales or the Fisherman at Anchor', *The Scourge*, 1 May 1812.

The Scourge, however, is conscious of Lamb's influence on Cruikshank and is anxious not to be seen stealing from *The Examiner*, and so claims that 'the idea of the caricature is taken from Milton's description of the mariners casting anchor on the scaly rind of the huge Leviathan.'⁴⁵ But Lamb's influence is obvious enough. In the centre of the picture we see George, an enormous whale, swimming in the sea of politics, while Lady Hertford, a mermaid (another name for a prostitute) plays her lyre to him. Behind her is Lord Hertford her husband, the cuckold, sporting antlers. Lord Eldon is featured as a rat, and Sheridan is portrayed as a rhinoceros. In front of the Prince we see Maria Fitzherbert, George's abandoned first wife. Through the prince's nose is an anchor from Spencer Perceval's boat, bearing the inscription 'Delicate inquiry', from the pierced nose spout two fountains, 'The Liquor of Oblivion', which

falls on the Whigs; and ‘The Dew of Favour’ which falls on the Tories. In Perceval’s boat are the “Gudgeons” and “Flatfish” from Lamb’s squib, ‘his courtiers chief’. A swordfish (McMahon of the Privy Purse) pierces the Prince’s side (the Privy Purse) which haemorrhages gold sovereigns, and in the background we can see the portico of Carlton House.

In another of Lamb’s squibs, ‘The Godlike’, we find that the future defender of the faith is divine after the manner of the pagan rather than the Christian Gods:

THE GODLIKE⁴⁶

In one great man we view with odds
A parallel to all the gods.
Great Jove, that shook heaven with his brow,
Could never match his princely bow.
In him a Bacchus we behold:
Like Bacchus, too, he ne'er grows old.
Like Phoebus next, a flaming lover;
And then he's Mercury---all over.
A Vulcan, for domestic strife,
He lamely lives without his wife.
And sure---unless our wits be dull---
Minerva-like, when moon was full,
He issued from paternal skull.

George begins as Jove, but is immediately reduced to a drunken Bacchus, before becoming ‘Mercury - all over’: doses of mercury were the commonest treatment for syphilis. Then he is Vulcan, a comparison which suggests Lamb has accepted that Caroline has cuckolded her husband. Finally the Prince becomes Minerva, not because of his wisdom, but because he has emerged, like Minerva,

out of the skull of his father - George's father was of course insane. But Lamb's animosity is not only confined to the Prince, it extends to his government.

THE UNBELOVED.⁴⁷

Not a woman, child, or man in
All this isle, that loves thee, C---ng.
Fools, whom gentle manners sway,
May incline to C---gh,
Princes, who old ladies love,
Of the Doctor may approve, ⁴⁸
Chancery lads do not abhor
Their chatty, childish ⁴⁹Chancellor.
In Liverpool some virtues strike,
And little Van's⁵⁰ beneath dislike.
Tho, if I were to be dead for 't,
I could never love thee, H---t⁵¹:
(Every man must have his way)
Other grey adulterers may.
But thou unamiable object,---
Dear to neither prince, nor subject;---
Veriest, meanest scab, for pelf
Fastning on the skin of Guelph,
Thou, thou must, surely, loathe thyself.

Lamb attacks the main figures of Liverpool's government, but his first hit is against George Canning. Lamb's attack may betray an old grudge against the man who had lampooned him as early as 1798 in the poem, 'The New Morality', which featured in the final issue of *The Anti-Jacobin*⁵²:

Courier's and Stars, Sedition's Evening Host,
Thou Morning Chronicle, and Morning Post,
Whether you make the Rights of Man your theme,
Your Country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still blasphemous or blackguard, praise LEPAUX



long memory -- although he was not alone in attacking Canning's conduct toward Caroline in her time of need.

¹ Hazlitt, 'Common Places'. First printed in *The Literary Examiner* 15 November 1823. Hazlitt, *Works*, 20, p.136

² Letter to Barron Field, 16 August, 1820. *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. by E. V. Lucas. 3 vols. (London: J. M. Dent, 1935), II, p. 282.

³ Letter to Augustus Hessey, Friday 1 December 1820. *The Letters of John Clare*, edited by Mark Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p.110.

⁴ See Dyer, p.141.

⁵ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p.176.

⁶ Cited by E. A. Smith, p.1.

⁷ Pierce Egan's released a satire on this affair: *The Mistress of Royalty: or, The Loves of Florizel and Perdita, Portrayed in the Amatory Epistles, Between an Illustrious Personage, and a Distinguished Female: With an Interesting Sketch of Florizel and Perdita* (London: P. Egan, 1814).

⁸ Cited by Christopher Hibbert, *George IV Prince of Wales 1762-1811* (London: Longmans, 1972), p.127.

⁹ William Hone, *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, 43rd ed. (London: William Hone, 1820) This hugely popular pamphlet ran through approximately fifty editions and even sold well in France where it was translated. *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* had a huge circulation and it seems that William Hazlitt (who may have had a hand in its composition) was so impressed that he took it to Florence with him. William Carew Hazlitt tells the following story: 'My grandfather relates that when he was at Florence in 1825 the people lifted up their hands when they were shown the caricatures in the *Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, and asked if they were really likenesses of the king?' *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, I, p.300.

¹⁰ See Wood, pp. 166, 174-176.

¹¹ A contemporary reviewer wrote of the toy, 'We particularly recommend this Toy as an amusement for Tory gentlemen in the country, after dinner, or at tea parties, instead of Kaleidoscopes, bagatelles, and similar trifles, which have of late too much engaged their attention.' *The Monthly Magazine*, 50 (1820), p.66

¹² Ibid. p.4.

¹³ The marriage between George and Mrs. Fitzherbert would not have been considered legal due to the Royal Marriages Act. However, the marriage would have been recognised in canonical law, as it was officiated by the Reverend John Burt and a marriage certificate was issued.

¹⁴ See Saul David, *Prince of Pleasure: The Prince of Wales and the Making of the Regency* (London: Abacus, 1999), p.75

¹⁵ Cited by Christopher Hibbert, p.130.

¹⁶ Thea Holme, *Caroline: A Biography of Caroline of Brunswick* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), p.23.

¹⁷ This illustration was copied by Cruikshank for Hone's *The Queens Matrimonial Ladder* of 1820.

¹⁸ Gillray had previously issued an etching of a large Mrs. Hobart (not dissimilar to George), at her gaming table, *The Loss of the Faro-Bank; or - The Rook's Pigeon'd* (London: H. Humphrey, 1792).

¹⁹ See Huish, I, pp. 248-52.

²⁰ Thea Holme, pp. 22-23.

²¹ See Hibbert, p.147.

²² William Thackeray, *The English Humourists; The Four Georges*, (London: J. M. Dent, 1929), p. 414.

²³ Thea Holme, p.32.

²⁴ Saul David, *The Prince of Pleasure*, p.2.

²⁵ Caroline was abroad at this time and was not officially informed of the death of her daughter or invited to the funeral. See Thomas W. Laqueur, 'The Queen Caroline Affair: Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV', *The Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982), p.443.

²⁶ Cited by Flora Fraser, *The Unruly Queen; The Life of Queen Caroline* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.90.

²⁷ Frances Williams Wynn, *Diaries of a Lady of Quality, From 1797 to 1844*, ed. by A. Hayward, Esq. Q.C. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1864), p. 213.

²⁸ First published in *The Examiner*, March 22, 1812.

²⁹ Prothero, pp. 134-5.

³⁰ *The Morning Post*, 26 June 1820.

³¹ This bill-poster was pasted all over London at the end of June, 1820. See Prothero, pp. 137-8.

³² *Proposal to Murder the Queen* (London: W. Benbow, n.d.).

³³ Diary entry for 12 February, 1820. *Diary of Henry Hobhouse*, p.5.

³⁴ 'Song for the Coronation'.

³⁵ William Cobbett, *History of the Regency and Reign of King George the Fourth*, 2 vols. (London: William Cobbett, 1830 – 1834) I, 435.

³⁶ *The Making*, p.660.

³⁷ See Arthur Bryant, *The Age of Elegance* (London: Collins, 1950), pp. 378-9.

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire; From 1750 to the Present Day* (Penguin, 1984), p.17.

³⁹ *Rural rides in the counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex and Hertfordshire with Economic and Political Observations Relative to Matters Applicable to, and Illustrated by the State of Those Counties Respectively* (London: William Cobbett, 1830), p. 239.

⁴⁰ Buffon, George Louis le Clere (1707-1788). French naturalist.

⁴¹ Banks, Joseph (1743-1820). Naturalist, president of the Royal Society 1777-1820.

⁴² Linnæus, or Von Linne, Carl (1738-1783). Swedish naturalist. Inventor of a method separating plants and animals into classes.

⁴³ 'Goe and Catch a Falling Starre'

⁴⁴ E. V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2nd. edn. 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1905), I, p.322

⁴⁵ Cited by Patten, I, p.103. I am indebted to Patten for his reading of Cruikshank's illustration.

⁴⁶ First printed in *The Champion*, March 18 & 19, 1820.

⁴⁷ First Printed in *The Champion*, September 23 & 24, 1820.

⁴⁸ Lord Sidmouth.

⁴⁹ John Scott, Earl of Eldon (1751-1838).

⁵⁰ Nicholas Vansittart, Baron Bexley (1766-1851). Chancellor of the Exchequer.

⁵¹ Thomas Taylour, Marquis of Headfort (1757-1829).

⁵² From *The Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner*, 9 July 1798.

⁵³ See Cronin, *Politics*, pp. 62-63.

Caroline and Cobbett

Caroline was never officially informed of George the Third's death, but with it she found that her status in European courts had changed. The reception she received in France 'was so impertinent, I could never submit to it a second time',¹ and in Rome she was afforded no official recognition on the instructions of the new English King, George IV. Caroline had written to Cardinal Consalvi, the Secretary of State for Rome, requesting guards at her residence there, but she was met with a terse reply indicating her revised status now her benevolent uncle George III was dead:

The royal person, who has now come to Rome, is not announced as the Princess of Wales, but as the Queen of England, and for this a guard is requested. But as no communication has been made to his Holiness's Government by the Government of his Majesty the King of England and Hanover upon the change that has taken place, nor upon the rank of the said royal person, the Papal Government does not know that the Queen of England is in Rome, and in consequence cannot grant a guard to the same.²

Friendless in Europe the Queen resolved to return to 'dear old England',³ requesting, through her lawyer, Brougham, to stay at the late Queen Charlotte's palace, which was of course refused. In fact she ended up staying at the house of the reformer MP Alderman Matthew Wood, in South Audley Street near Hyde Park. Wood had met Caroline at Mont Bried before accompanying her to Dover, where they arrived on 5th June 1820. From there they travelled on to London, where William Cobbett claimed she was met by a 200,000 strong, welcoming crowd.⁴ Cobbett had recently experienced the same self-imposed exile as the Queen. He had left for America in 1817 to avoid imprisonment, and

returned to England on the 21st November 1819 accompanied by Thomas

Paine's bones, an uncharacteristically romantic gesture as Hazlitt points out:

The only time he ever grew romantic was in bringing over the relics of Mr. Thomas Paine with him from America, to go a progress with them through the disaffected districts. Scarce had he landed in Liverpool, when he left the bones of the great man to shift for themselves; and no sooner did he arrive in London, than he made a speech to disclaim all participation in the political and theological sentiments of his late idol.⁵

Cobbett claimed he had brought Paine's bones back so that they could be

afforded the decent Christian burial they had been denied in America. But the

comrades he had left in 1817 met this with derision, informing him that Paine

was an atheist. Cobbett replied that he was unaware of this, having never read

The Age of Reason, or any of Paine's theological works. It was a farce and Cobbett

looked like a fool. Byron obviously found the whole affair funny, writing:

In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,
Will. Cobbett has done well:
You'll visit him on earth again,
He'll visit you in Hell.⁶

Cobbett, like Caroline, also found that his status was revised on his return to

England. His 'Two-Penny Trash' *Political Register*, which had been left in the care

of William Benbow, had trebled in price to 6d. due to the new tax on

newspapers of two sheets or more. The *Register's* prominence had also been

eroded by the huge popularity of Hone's pamphlets, and its radical content now

looked tame in comparison to *Sherwin's Political Register*, and Wooler's *Black*

Dwarf. The *Political Register's* circulation was now a quarter of what it had been in

1817.⁷ Cobbett then decided to try and fast track himself back to the centre of

British political life by standing as MP for Coventry in April 1820. But

Coventry was one of the most corrupt seats in the country. Anyone voting for a candidate could charge the expenses they incurred getting to the polls to the person they voted for. As Anthony Burton points out, a Coventry man living in London could send his candidate a bill for £15.⁸ This attempt at election ruined Cobbett; he met with violence, came bottom of the polls, and was left £28,000 in debt.⁹ Cobbett's influence on political life in Britain seemed to be waning: he had been ridiculed by fellow reformers and radicals, his eminence as a spokesman for the people had been diminished, and, to make matters worse, in April of 1820 he was declared bankrupt. Cobbett's ego and his identification of himself with John Bull impelled him to find a cause he could make his own.

Cobbett wrote to Caroline only five days after her arrival in England, informing her of the support she enjoyed amongst the people, and offering his services as an expert manipulator of their sentiments:

If her Majesty should have advice offered her, he implores her to consider what may be possible for them not wholly to overlook, on so important an occasion, their own interests and the gratification of their own ambition. Her Majesty knows, perhaps, little of what is passing amongst the public. Already are the windows of the shops exhibiting her Majesty's Person, attired in Royal Robes, with a Crown on her head and a sceptre in her hand. And the person who humbly submits this paper to her Majesty assures her, that the united soul of this loyal and just nation is poured out in prayer, that she will not yield, either to threats or entreaties, any portion, or particle, of her rights as *Queen of this kingdom*.¹⁰

Cleverly Cobbett tells Caroline that 'her strength and safety lie in the Public opinion',¹¹ and asserts himself as a man of the people with specialist knowledge of how they think and what they will respond to, implying that the aristocratic Caroline can have no conception of how the public, who are, he alleges, her

only ally, should be addressed by her. Cobbett mentions the windows of the shops carrying effigies of Caroline in order to sell her an image of herself as Queen, by claiming that the public already acknowledge her as such, therefore there is no need to accept her lawyer Brougham's favoured compromise, which would have given her £50 000 a year, but would have meant giving up a substantial proportion of her rights and agreeing to remain abroad. Cobbett was worried that the Queen would accept the money because he realised that she was the reformers', and his own, final trump after the disasters of Peterloo and the Cato Street conspiracy: 'if she went away it was pulling us down who had upheld her; and it was losing a most powerful means of mortifying and inflicting just punishment upon our political enemies.'¹² This clause is the key to Cobbett's reasons for supporting the Queen, and the devices he used to gain her trust could be particularly cloying: 'the offer made in her Majesty's name to *quit the country* has filled the women's eyes with tears and the men's hearts with a feeling which never before existed in them with regard to her Majesty.'¹³ In a letter to Caroline dated 23 June, Cobbett enclosed a 'Proposed Answer' to the 'Gentlemen of the House of Commons'. This Cobbett wrote in the person of Caroline, clearly stating that it was her (his) intention that she should stay in England and fight for her rights. Caroline actually used part of his 'Proposed Answer' to Cobbett's great delight, not least for personal reasons of his own:

Thus she was fixed: thus this grand point was decided, to the lacerating mortification of all the sons and daughters of corruption, and to that of the "legal advisers of her majesty"; who were fairly beaten here, and beaten too, by the man whom they hated more than they hated adders and toads. I will not pretend that vindictive feeling had nothing to do with my conduct upon this occasion. I had been two years in jail, and had

paid a thousand pounds fine besides, for an act which merited the applause and admiration of all good men, and this king had my thousand pounds in his pocket.¹⁴

In 1810 Cobbett had been fined £1000 and sentenced to two years in Newgate

for denouncing military floggings, and candidly he reveals that he supports

Caroline only to lay a few hits on those who have offended him in the past.¹⁵

He is ambiguous about her guilt, but insists that 'I was a faithful adviser of the

queen, at the same time I availed myself of her cause to further what I deemed

the political interests of the people.'¹⁶ In fact over the term of the affair Cobbett

devoted over 1500 pages of *The Political Register* to the Queen's cause.¹⁷ Caroline

was impressed by Cobbett, and sounding rather like Dryden and Davenant's

slatternly alter-ego for Miranda, Dorinda, she commented after meeting him:

'Well now, if that is Mr. C no wonder such fine writing comes from him, he is

the finest man I have seen since I came to England, aye, aye, if there be such a

few such men as that to stand by me, I shall not care for the Lords.'¹⁸

The support Caroline received from William Cobbett and women are

inexorably linked. If Shelley was forced into an act of ventriloquism after

Peterloo, then Cobbett turned to literary transvestitism. As Tim Fulford notes:

Unlike some of the London radicals, Cobbett did not attack the King through bawdy innuendo and pornographic caricature. His campaign was powerful because it reached beyond the 'under-world' of London based republicans and hack writers, employing a wide range of discourses designed to attract, rather than alarm, different social audiences. Cobbett appealed not only to labourers and artisans but explicitly to the loyal middle classes and to the 'ladies' of the nation in open letters. He also addressed Canning, Liverpool and the King himself. And he wrote not just in his own person, but penned the Queen's address to her husband, loyal addresses made to her by the people, and her replies to those addresses.¹⁹

The letters that Cobbett wrote in the name of Caroline would frequently attack the King by depicting him as an oppressor of women, as the following *Queen's Letter to the King* which was printed in full in *The Times* on 14 August 1820 illustrates:

You have cast upon me every slur to which the female character is liable instead of loving, honouring, and cherishing me, agreeably to your solemn vow, you have pursued me with hatred and scorn, and with all the means of destruction. You wrested me from my child, and with her my only comfort and consolation. You sent me sorrowing through the world, and even in my sorrows pursued me with unrelenting persecution. Having left me nothing but my innocence, you would now, by a mockery of justice, deprive me even of the reputation of possessing that. The poisoned bowl and the poniard are means more manly than cruel, inasmuch as life is less valuable than honour.

Cobbett calls George's behaviour towards Caroline and their child 'unmanly'.

George takes on feminine attributes whereas Caroline is depicted as embodying the features of the perfect mother and monarch, 'life is less valuable than honour'. As Flora Fraser points out, Henry Hunt was another who penned fake addresses to the Queen.²⁰ And like Cobbett, Hunt uses the sex of Caroline to attack the state, and again calls her oppressors 'cowardly' and 'unmanly':

One of the greatest crimes that she has committed is that she has been welcomed by the Radicals, [...] accordingly the editors of the *Courier*, the *Post*, and the *Mock Times*, daily vomit forth their cowardly maledictions against her, and pour out their time-serving, unmanly, obscene, and unfounded insinuations against the honour of this unprotected, defenceless female.²¹

As a woman who seemed to be oppressed Caroline actually did attract the attention of a number of newly mobilised women's groups. On 18 September 1820 *The Times* published a list of seventy-eight organisations who had presented addresses to the Queen, among which were addresses from women such as the:

London (Married Ladies), 8,700

Nottingham (Ladies), 7800

Sheffield (Ladies), 11,100

Bristol (Ladies), 11,050

Halifax (Ladies), 3,700

For supporting Caroline's cause *The Times* itself became associated with the radicals, an association it was at pains to distance itself from:

It is very rarely that we give ourselves the trouble of reading even any part of the trash contained in the journals paid for calumniating the QUEEN [...] It was therefore with some surprise, as well as indignation, that we found ourselves (firm friends as we are to the constitution in church and state – ardent defenders of the dignity and purity of the chief female personage of the Royal Family) charged with Jacobinism or Radicalism.²²

As Thomas Laqueur notes, 'Women who addressed the Queen were portrayed as little better than prostitutes'²³ by sections of the loyalist press:

Go on Ladies, proceed in your mad careers. Lead a life of dissipation and pleasure [...] when you find yourself despised and forsaken and rejected, thank your gracious Queen [...] the pure, the innocent, the persecuted. Remember that you addressed an Adulteress; that you stand identified with infidelity.²⁴

The ultra-radical newspapers similarly linked women with Caroline's cause, but whereas the loyalists concentrated on resurrecting all of the hackneyed vices that women were alleged to exclusively embody in the radical papers women were represented as embodying virtues which might prove still more powerful than the traditional 'manly' virtues in their ability to change history as in the following 'poem', written by Benbow and published in *The Black Dwarf* on 12 July 1820:

Glorious Deeds of Women!!!

Woe be to the age wherein WOMEN lose their influence, and their judgement is disregarded.

Reflect on the glorious and virtuous Rome. It was there that the WOMEN honoured the exploits of renowned Generals.

All the Grand Events were brought about by WOMEN.

Through a WOMAN Rome obtained Liberty.

Through WOMEN the mass of the people acquired the rights of the Consulship.

A WOMAN put an end to the oppression of the *ten tyrants*.

By means of WOMEN, Rome, when on the brink of destruction, was screened from the resentment of an enraged and victorious outlaw.

France was delivered from her invaders and conquerors, in the fourteenth century, by a WOMAN.

It was a WOMAN who brought down the bloody tyrant, Marat.

A WOMAN nailed the tyrant, Sisera, to the ground.

A QUEEN caused the cruel Minister, Haman, to be hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high, of his own erecting.

And a QUEEN will now bring down the corrupt Conspirators against the Peace, Honour, and Life of the INNOCENT.²⁵

In the spirit of Cobbett's *Queen's Letter to the King*, women encapsulate the virtues of strength and honour. And with an allusion that reminds us of Shelley's assertion in *The Mask* that a corrupt government have hi-jacked the state's institutions, the actions of the Cato Street conspirators are transferred to the government. However the radicals now have a powerful ally, Caroline, who will help them 'bring down' the 'corrupt Conspirators' who control the state. The poet Eliza Treagher, who wrote for Pitts, Catnach's rival for producing the cheapest and roughest squibs of the period, similarly attributes Caroline with the power to bring down the government, but it is tempered. There is violence, but not revolution: Caroline must take a 'legal' path to victory:

Now's the time and now's the hour
When England's Queen with legal power,
Shall crush her foes and on them shower,
Revenge from Caroline [...]²⁶

For the first time, poems and prose were appearing in newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides, which acknowledged women as being potentially powerful, and as having a role in politics. I have implied that Cobbett's interest in Queen Caroline was self-serving: he liked having her in his pocket so to speak. But as

Tim Fulford points out, Cobbett's work for Caroline did have an impact on women readers:

Women readers of the *Register* were thereby politicised not just as individuals but as a collective group cutting across the social hierarchy, since Cobbett pointed out that feminine virtues were displayed as much by labouring as by middle-class women. Women were invited not only to identify themselves as a readership but then to act. Cobbett had extended the political sphere to include a female reading public which his rhetorical appeals helped to politicise. Cobbett's women readers would become writers and campaigners, penning joint addresses to Caroline and even processing through the streets to present them.²⁷

Cobbett's daughter Ann writes in a private letter that Caroline's cause brought many women a new found sense of empowerment:

It is not of little credit to our sex that all the reformers, radicals, Jacobins &c. &c. have ever been able to perform in the work of years to shake the present system has almost failed, but been completed by a *woman*! at last. An *Old Woman* will not now be thought so foolish a thing. Papa says that for the future Husbands must be content to be henpecked, and he has given Mama notice that she may begin to exert her Sovereign authority forthwith.²⁸

But as E. A. Smith notes:

The Queen herself did not take up the feminist cause, but, as with her Radical supporters in general, maintained a passive attitude: she was interested only in her own case and not with its wider ramifications, and this may have been one reason why this sudden burst of feminist activity died away as rapidly as it had arisen at the end of 1820. The Queen Caroline affair, here as in general, proved to be a temporary phenomenon with little lasting effect, a memory of the past rather than a stimulus for the future, but while it lasted it brought women as well as men into the political arena.²⁹

Anna Clark agrees with Smith in this, but develops it further: if Peterloo could produce a class-consciousness among the working classes, then the Caroline affair provided a platform for women to assert and organise themselves in society and be taken seriously:

Radicals could not marginalize women in the Caroline affair, for their issues had mobilised the populace. Yet women were not *just* defending "traditional communal morality"; they were, in an inchoate way, hoping for a revision of traditional values. By defending Queen Caroline's rights as an abused wife, radicals admitted that the rights of women were a political issue.³⁰

Although Cobbett's interest in the Caroline affair was often selfish, he did help to politicise women who had far fewer rights than the meanest labourer, and he embodies an extreme example of the interaction between 'high' and 'low' literature. That the son of a small Sussex farmer and publican could become the Queen's address writer, and at the same time subvert her cause to his own radical agenda, and in doing so help to extend political action to include the most disenfranchised sections of the public, is something that could never have occurred before this political moment.

¹ 'Letter from Queen Caroline to a Friend', Rome 23rd February, 1820. Cited by Lewis Melville, *An Injured Queen; Caroline of Brunswick*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1912), II, p. 398

² 'Cardinal Consalvi to the Queen's Chamberlain', Rome, February 24, 1820. Cited by Melville, II, p. 400.

³ 'The Princess of Wales to a Friend', Melville, II, p. 401

⁴ Cobbett, *History of the Regency*, II, vi, 425

⁵ 'Mr. Cobbett', *The Spirit of the Age*, p. 255

⁶ Letter to Thomas Moore, 2 January 1820. *Byron Letters*, 7, p. 17.

⁷ Anthony Burton, *William Cobbett Englishman* (London: Aurum Press, 1997), p.185

⁸ Ibid. p. 186

⁹ Ibid. p. 189.

¹⁰ Cited by E. A. Smith, p. 39

¹¹ Cited by Melville, II, p.449

¹² William Cobbett, *History of the Regency*, II, vi, 428

¹³ Cited by Melville, II, p.444

¹⁴ Cobbett, *History of the Regency*, II, vi, 434

¹⁵ For details on Cobbett's imprisonment see Burton, pp. 127-142.

¹⁶ Cobbett, *History of the Regency*, II, vi, 435

¹⁷ See George Spater, *William Cobbett: the Poor Man's Friend* (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1982), p. 407

¹⁸ Cited by Burton.

¹⁹ Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.162

²⁰ Flora Fraser, p. 432

²¹ Henry Hunt, *To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (Ilchester Jail: July 1st. 1820), p.1

²² *The Times*, 25 September, 1820.

²³ Laqueur, p. 447

²⁴ *Gynecocracy, with an Essay on Fornication, Adultery and Incest* (London: J. J. Stockdale, 1821), p. 369. Cited by Laqueur, p. 447.

²⁵ From *The Black Dwarf*, 12 July 1820.

²⁶ Treager, Eliza, *Queen Caroline* (London: J. Pitts, 1820).

²⁷ Fulford, p. 163

²⁸ Letter from Ann Cobbett to Miss Boxall, August 14. Cited by E. A. Smith, p. 102

²⁹ E. A. Smith, p. 100

³⁰ Anna Clark, 'Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820' *Representations*, 31 (1990), p. 62

Byron and the Loyalists

Byron has no interest in 'blackguards' or women taking an active part in politics. As Malcolm Kelsall points out, he retained a firm idea of who should be in power:

Byron's empathy is with aristocratic revolutionaries (and men who failed) and not with the radicals [...] Hence the importance of the Queen Caroline affair for Byron and the Whigs, for here was an issue in which 'gentlemen', on a surge of popular protest might emerge in their traditional roles as leaders of 'the people'.¹

In the eyes of the general public Byron seemed to be a supporter of the Queen's cause. When *Marino Faliero* was first performed in the theatre it was cheered by Caroline's supporters who saw the story of Angiolina being slandered by Steno as an allusion to the essence of George's divorce case against his wife: 'others kiss her, but he keeps her'.² The Italian setting for Byron's play further convinced people that this was Caroline's story, at a time when Italians arriving in Britain were being attacked because it was thought that they were being brought into the country to give evidence against the Queen. To a contemporary audience the play also seemed to contain a powerful attack on the King's conduct toward his wife, his response to the charges being laid against her being, as it were, contrasted with the manly Faliero's violent reaction to those who had sought to damage Angiolina's reputation. But Byron's private responses to the Caroline affair, which are to be found in his letters and squibs sent to friends, are complex and often contradictory. On the one hand he supports Caroline, writing 'I think the Queen will win - I wish she may - she was

always very civil to me'.³ However Byron, unlike Shelley or Cobbett, believes that the Queen's guilt or innocence is an issue: he worries that she may be guilty and changes his mind frequently:

The papers announce the Queen's arrival and its consequences.—They have sent a message to our house. What the opinion in England may be, I know not — but *here* (and we are in her late neighbourhood) there are no doubts about her and her blackguard Bergami. — I have just asked Madame la Comtesse G[uiccioli] who was at Pesaro two years ago — & she answers that the thing was as public as such a thing can be. —It is to me subject of regret—for in England she was ever hospitable & kind to me.⁴

That this is a 'subject of regret' may seem strange coming from Byron, but with Caroline he seems oddly protective, later referring to her as 'our Queen'.⁵ Byron would later contradict this judgment (maybe for the benefit of his correspondent, John Murray), writing, 'Nobody here believes a word of the evidence against the Queen—the very mob cry shame against their countrymen and say—that for half the money spent upon the trial—any testimony whatever may be brought out of Italy.'⁶ Privately Byron looks for excuses to prove the Queen's innocence; but they are often implausible, as in the following:

The *Queen's* defence is not reticent- unless Bergamo's *rod* be with his "b-ll--s in the bottle" because in Italy the women prefer the "Musici" for two reasons - first they do *not* *impregnate* them - and next they never ("sbor[s]avo? mai") spend - they go on "in eterno" and serve an elderly lady at all times....On her Majesty's part - I have done my best through some acquaintance here - to get persuaded the Macchiarelli's ... to attest her Majesty's morality.--For myself I see not what good I could do her.⁷

In this letter Byron argues that Caroline is innocent because he believes that if her wish were to satisfy her sexual desires, then she would naturally prefer a castrato to Bergami, who, he believes, perform better sexually (Hobhouse was later to tell Byron that Brougham informed him that Bergami was a eunuch and he had evidence.⁸) Byron seems absurdly desperate to establish the Queen's

innocence in his own mind, because it seems to affect his sympathy toward her and the trials she is facing in England:

In England the Queen has been bountiful to the Scandalmongers [...] Her Majesty's innocence is probably like another person's guilt. -However she has been an ill-used woman-that's the truth on't-and in the nature of things the women ought to get the better. They generally do - whether they ought or not.⁹

Byron has a personal interest in the affair: Lord Eldon, whom Shelley blamed for the loss of his children, led the prosecution against Caroline, and Brougham, who became Byron's most hated enemy when he acted for Lady Byron, fronted Caroline's defence. This was Byron's excuse to Hobhouse for not returning to England to support Caroline: 'For myself I see not what good I could do her -- as my first duty is to call out her Attorney General'.¹⁰ A rumour had actually gone around that Byron had arrived in London in August of 1820 to support the Queen. Byron himself learnt of this from the *Milan Gazette* whilst in Filetto.¹¹ As Richard Cronin points out, Byron was ambivalent about returning to Britain:

Byron still occasionally entertained thoughts that he might come home and attempt to resuscitate his political career, but he was no longer sure what side he would be on: 'If I came home (which I never shall) I should take a *decided* part in politics [...] but am not yet quite sure what part'.¹²

The rumour of Byron's return prompted Hobhouse, who was anxious for his friend to come back to England, to write to him, 'The Queen somehow or other heard you were coming over - The poor creature was very much affected at this mark of recollection of her former attentions - she said several very handsome and true things of you.'¹³ Even one of the loyalist pamphlets decided to give credence to the rumour, and used it to launch an attack on Byron:

The ex- Lord B--n, by permission, is just arrived [...] Everybody has one of his verses on their lips-

“’Twas Jove’s, tis Mahomet’s, and other creeds”, & c &c.

By the way, it is become extremely fashionable to drink out of skulls, and draw thence “conclusions most forbidden.”¹⁴

Despite not returning to England, Byron feels that it is his duty to help Caroline:

My Dear H., - If I could be of any real use to the Queen, or to anybody else, I would have come long ago, but I see no advantage to her, nor to others, [...] Here at Ravenna nobody believes the evidence against the Queen: they say that for half the money they could have any testimony they please, this is the public talk.¹⁵

The extent of Byron’s help was to persuade Count Gamba to write to his relatives, the Machiarellis in Pesaro (where Caroline had lived for a short time), in order to prove the unreliability of witnesses against the Queen. But there was really no need for this as Italian witnesses were faring badly in court under Brougham’s questioning.¹⁶ There was in fact a wave of anti-Italian feeling which frequently resulted in violence. Nevertheless Byron included a stanza on Caroline in his *Don Juan*:

That injured Queen, by chroniclers so coarse,
Has been accused (I doubt not by conspiracy)
Of an improper friendship for her horse
(Love like religion, sometimes runs to heresy):
This monstrous tale had probably its source
(For such exaggerations here and there I see)
In writing “Courser” by mistake for “Courier;”
I wish the case would come before a jury here.
(*Don Juan*, Canto 5, LXI)

Although the stanza tends to support Caroline by alleging that there is a government plot against her, Byron voluntarily suppressed it at the request of Hobhouse who believed that it would harm the Queen’s cause.¹⁷ ‘Do not cut at poor Queeny in your Don Juan about Semiramis & her *courser* courier – She

would feel it very much I assure you – she never sees me without asking after you & desiring to be remembered'.¹⁸

In the event Byron did very little to aid the Queen's cause, but he was excited by the outcome of her trial, which he had been following closely:

The Bill is thrown out *entirely* and *completely* - the expression "read again this day six months" is nothing more than a *form* used on the rejections of *all Parliamentary Bills* whatsoever [...] The great struggle *now* will be to throw out the *ministers* - How this may end, we cannot yet know [...] Whether the Ministers in their agony will try some censure or other in a *different shape* against the Queen - is not certain - but if they do they will be beaten probably.¹⁹

This is the closest that we will ever find Byron come toward advocating a revolution in his own country, with his reference to 'the great struggle' and the throwing out of ministers, and it marks a departure from his reaction to Peterloo and the Cato Street conspiracy. But of course he is also pleased that there was no need for him to become involved in the scandal, writing to Count Gamba, 'My friends in England have reproached me severely for not being present to do my duty on her Majesty's trial, but it is a satisfaction to me to see by the result that my humble vote and voice were not necessary.'²⁰ However Byron's support for Caroline is tempered by her association with the 'blackguard reformers', of whom he had written in 1819: 'Those blackguard reformers [...] I am for *reform* always - but not for the *reformers* - I saw enough of them at the Hampden club - Burdett is the only one of them in whose company a Gentleman would be seen unless at a public meeting - or in a Public House.'²¹

Byron would have been well aware of the support that Caroline was receiving from the radicals as addresses to the Queen, and Cobbett's replies to them, were being circulated around Europe, and were reprinted in the *Gazzetta di Milano*,²² which he read.

Byron views are those of the aristocracy. Even if members of the ruling class supported Caroline, they still believed that she had betrayed her class by utilising a weapon that threatened ultimately deprive them of their right to power. Mrs.

Arbuthnot makes this point:

I understand the Whigs say that there are 5000 Radicals prepared to draw the Queen from Dover to London if she sh^d come to England. However, I think she will know better than to trust herself here. They likewise say that the King is so angry with his ministers that he does not speak to them, all on account of the divorce being refused & that Lady Conyngham fans this flame. All this is a *radical lie*.²³

The responses of Byron and Arbuthnot are exactly the same as those being put about by the Loyalist press. As Henry Hunt notes from Ilchester Jail:

One of the greatest crimes that she has committed is that she has been welcomed by the Radicals [...] accordingly the editors of the *Courier*, the *Post*, and the *Mock Times*, daily vomit forth their cowardly maledictions against her, and pour out their time-serving, unmanly, obscene, and unfounded insinuations against the honour of this unprotected, defenceless female.²⁴

Perhaps it is hatred of the radicals that prompted Byron to take the odd swipe at the Queen, as we can see in an epigram sent to John Murray:

Mr. Hoby the Bootmaker's soft heart is sore,
For seizing the Queen makes him think of Jane Shore,
And, in fact, such a likeness should always be seen -
Why should Queen's not be whores?
Every *whore* is a Queen.²⁵

Caroline is likened to Jane Shore, the mistress of Edward IV, who was later tried for witchcraft and sentenced to do public penance. Caroline was certainly being humiliated in public, but Byron may also have been aware of a piece of contemporary gossip which insinuated that Caroline dabbled in witchcraft. Thea Holme claims that Caroline had made a wax effigy of George that she used to torture: ‘She began [...] to indulge in a form of witchcraft. Every day after dinner she modelled a wax figure of her husband wearing a large pair of horns. She then “took three pins out of her garment, and stuck them through and through, and put the figure to roast and melt at the fire.”’²⁶ Obviously Caroline thought of her husband as a cuckold. Caroline’s dabbling in witchcraft may well have been common knowledge as there is a Cruikshank cut called ‘The Fat in the Fire’ showing George being melted over a flame – he is said to have been particularly offended by this illustration.



“The Fat in the Fire”

27

Figure 28: George Cruikshank, “The *Fat in the Fire*”, “*Non Mi Ricordo!*” (London: William Hone, 1820)

But more serious and damning in Byron's epigram is his inference that Caroline has behaved like a 'Quean', a prostitute. This is at the centre of most of the loyalist attacks on Caroline, who portray her as being little better than a whore.

The format of the loyalist responses is rarely original and instead often co-opts features utilised by Caroline's supporters. As Hone had the largest circulation amongst the radical pamphleteers, the loyalists attempted to undermine his work by releasing parodies of it such as *The New Pilgrim's Progress; or, A Journey to Jerusalem*, published by Hone's hated rival William Wright in 1820. In this squib the more salacious aspects of the evidence against the Queen are concentrated on. Following Hone's *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, the squib parodies Caroline's journey to the Continent, her subsequent hiring of Bergami, and their alleged affair. The squib ends with her return to England with Alderman Matthew Wood, and her trial.

From the outset *The New Pilgrim's Progress* portrays the Queen in a derogatory fashion: in 'The Embarkation', 'she jigs/ In all the youthful bloom of white lead, / Patent rouge, and auburn wigs.' In 'Hiring', Bergami arrives dressed as a beggar, wearing torn clothes with his undergarments showing through a hole in the seat of his trousers and toeless boots, soliciting the Queen for work:

"Come, honest Bergami, let *me* know
"Where you've in service been already?"
"Madam, I've lived with Mrs. Pino,

“And I rode and drove my lady!” [...]

‘What for Mrs. Pino you did,

“You for me shall also do-

“Wages, boarding, all’s concluded!

“You shall RIDE and drive *ME* too.”

The sort of work that Bergami has been hired for is made obvious. But the

‘HIRING POST’ moves to political matters when the loyalists assert that the

Queen is not a patriot and therefore can have no entitlement to the throne:

Drive on and reach the nearest place,

Where English do not stay;

For I will shun that hated race,

And drive some other way.

The allegations laid against Caroline in her trial are then retold in bawdy detail:

Not for a moment will she free him

From her touch or from her sight:

Happy all day long to see him,

And to feel him all the night.

Nay, upon a Queer occasion,

When affection waxed colder,

She, in dread of an invasion,

Deigns to be his *bottle-holder!*

This explicit description of Caroline’s loose morals leads her to be identified

with Claudius’ wife, Messalina. The juicier details from the trial, such as

Caroline taking a bath with Bergami, are then described with no detail however

smutty left out:

THE weather’s hot - the cabin’s free!

And she’s as free and hot as either!

And Berghy is as hot as she!

In short, they all are hot together!

Bring then a large capacious tub,
 And pour great pails of water in,
 In which the frowzy nymph may rub
 The itchings of her royal skin.



Figure 29: George Cruikshank, 'The Bath', *The New Pilgrim's Progress* (London: W. Wright, 1820)

Obviously this pamphlet is at the extreme end of opposition toward Caroline.

But there were other sections amongst both the loyalists and the radicals who still hoped for reconciliation between George and Caroline, if only to avert the threat of civil war:

Address to Her Majesty ²⁹

What! Caroline with Cato-Street Radicals join?
 No! She'll pause ere she pass the dread boundary line,
 A party to marshall gainst Albion's King,
 And the knell of her glory with madness to ring!
 Shall Caroline, once great Britannia's joy,
 Like Helen of Greece fire another great Troy?
 Shall Civil discord spread its furious flame,
 Fann'd by mock zeal a Queen's fair rights to Claim!
 Shall Britons fam'd on Waterloo's dread plains,
 Tarnish their fame e'en where the Monarch reigns?
 Heave to the laws the Queen's just rights it prove,
 Be yours to serve them both with duteous love.

To associate Caroline with the Cato Street conspirators is to associate her with the most extreme side of radicalism, and there is a fear that through Caroline the ideas of the ultra-radicals may attract a far larger group than a few half-starved men. For example, the couplet, 'Shall Briton's fam'd on Waterloo's dread plains, /Tarnish their fame e'en where the Monarch reigns?', refers to a mutiny of the Guards in favour of Caroline on the 15th of June. General Sir Robert Wilson relates the incident in a private letter to Earl Grey: 'The 3rd Regt. of G[uard]s stationed in the King's mews mutinied yesterday -- Abt 3 days since a Private was heard to say to his Comrades -- 'The Queen is going to the Tower.' The answer was -- 'If she does the King will have blood for supper and a bloody Quantity too'.³⁰ As had been anticipated by Shelley, and by many loyalists and radicals alike, sections of the army seemed to be shifting towards an identification not with their regiment but with their class, as was noted in a memorandum to the Prime Minister:

We have already been *surprised* by a mutiny in one corps, where we know not, and cannot know under existing circumstances, whether seeds of discontent are laid or not in other corps, and where the Government depend for their protection against insurrection and revolution, and individuals for their personal safety and property, upon the fidelity of 3,000 Guards, all of the class of the people, and even of the lowest of that class. In my opinion the Government ought, without the loss of a moment's time, to adopt measures to form either a police in London or military corps, which should be of a different description from the regular military force, or both.³¹

This is really the essence of the Rev. Thomas Berguer's appeal for a middle-class army (see Peterloo section) – it is an acknowledgment that violent class conflict, involving the army on the side of the radicals, is possible. What must have also appealed to the regular soldiers' sense of honour would be that in supporting Caroline, they would still in a way be adhering to their oath to the crown.

Furthermore the precedent of replacing an unpopular monarch with an acceptable one had already been set in 1688.

For a short time after Caroline's demise poems were released that continued to criticise George's treatment of his wife, such as *A Tragic Ballad of the Ninth Century, (Set to a New Tune)*. This poem is similar to *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* in that we are again taken through the events of the Royal marriage: the necessity for George to pay his debts, separation, the spies sent to follow Caroline on the continent and finally the Queen's death:

XIII

So the people all did mourn,
And with anger they did burn
Against those who had destroyed their Queen---
Queen---Queen:
But the King a gadding went,
Nor did her foes repent,
But in revelling and drinking were seen---seen---seen.³²

This stanza refers to George's presence in Ireland when he was informed of his wife's death, and his failure to return for her funeral procession. However there is no real anger here or exhortation to revolt, only a sense of closure and a desire for the event never to be repeated:

XIII

So here my ballad ends:
And now, my honest friends,
Heard you e'er such a tale before---fore---fore:
Let us all devoutly pray
That we soon may see the day
When such doings will ne'er be known more---more---more.

We can contrast Byron's response to the same event in *The Irish Avatar*.

I

Ere the daughter of Brunswick is cold in her grave,
And her ashes still float to their home o'er the tide,
Lo! George the triumphant speeds o'er the wave,
To the long-cherish'd isle which he loved like his bride!

George travels to Ireland, a place he has shown as much affection for as he has

his wife. Byron seems to have Lamb's 'The Triumph of the Whale' in mind:

'Lo! George the triumphant speeds o'er the wave,'.

V

But he comes! the Messiah of Royalty comes!
Like a goodly Leviathan roll'd from the waves;
Then receive him as best such an advent becomes,
With a legion of cooks, and an army of slaves!

Byron presents the new king as the latest in a long line of dictators:

XVI

[...] From Caesar the dreaded to George the despised [...]

XX

The fourth of the fools and oppressors call'd "Georgel"

And he deplures the fact that George has been welcomed in Ireland, but, "The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it.'"

From Peterloo to the conclusion of the Caroline affair we can see a progression in Byron's views, from staunch class loyalty to ambivalence, produced no doubt by a growing belief that revolution was inevitable, and a

suspicion that it would not be his gentlemen Whigs who would spearhead it.

Byron's reaction to the Peterloo massacre is somewhat muted; on balance he approves of it, thinking it no crime to kill the radical leaders, but killing the people should have been avoided. The Cato Street conspiracy presents him with other difficulties, as this was an attack on his class and his friends, such as 'poor Harrowby'. But the affair is complicated for Byron by Hobhouse's possible involvement, and his admiration for the futile bravery of Thistlewood and his men for having the courage to pursue such a foolhardy plan. The Caroline affair would further test his aristocratic loyalty. He does not become involved, but the aristocratic background that he is so proud of has been tarnished by the event, making him feel that being part of the aristocracy is less noble than it purports to be, and I think that by the end of the Caroline affair Byron no longer believes that one is born to nobility but that one may earn it, as his grudging recognition of Thistlewood, and his assertion that 'The king-times are fast finishing', shows. This saddens him, but he feels its inevitability.

¹ Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1987), p.38

² *Marino Faliero*, I, ii.

³ Letter to John Murray, Ravenna, July 22d. 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.139

⁴ Letter to John Cam Hobhouse, Ravenna, June 22nd 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 122

⁵ Ravenna, July 17, 1820, Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 130

⁶ Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.180

⁷ Letter to Hobhouse, Ravenna, August 8th. 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.153

⁸ See *My Friend H*, p.154.

⁹ Letter to Augusta Leigh, Ravenna. October 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.208

¹⁰ Letter to John Cam Hobhouse, Ravenna, August 8th 1820, Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.153

¹¹ See Leslie A Marchand, *Byron, A Biography*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1957), II, p.883

¹² Cronin, *Politics*, p.160.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.868.

¹⁴ *Radical State Papers Now First Collected* (London: W. Wright, 1820), p.31

¹⁵ Letter to Hobhouse, Ravenna, September 21st., 1820. Byron *Letters*, 7, pp.177-8

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- ¹⁶ See William Hone's *Non Mi Ricordo*
- ¹⁷ *Byron, A Biography*, II, p.884
- ¹⁸ London, June 19, 1821. *Byron's Bulldog*, p.311
- ¹⁹ Letter to Count Guiseppe Alborghetti, 3 December, 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, pp. 243-244. Murray had sent Byron the second reading of the bill of pains and penalties.
- ²⁰ Byron, *Letters*, 7, p. 237.
- ²¹ Letter to John Cam Hobhouse, Ravenna, June, 1819. Byron, *Letters*, 6, pp.165-6.
- ²² Flora Fraser, p. 432.
- ²³ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, p.14.
- ²⁴ *To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (Ilchester jail: July 1st, 1820), p.1
- ²⁵ To John Murray, Ravenna, 17 August, 1820. Byron, *Letters*, 7, p.159. Byron repeats this epigram in a letter to Moore on 5 November 1820.
- ²⁶ Holme, pp. 123-4
- ²⁷ From 'Non Mi Ricordo!' &c. &c. &c., 26th ed (London: William Hone, 1820)
- ²⁸ From *The New Pilgrim's Progress; or, A Journey to Jerusalem* (London: W. Wright, 1820)
- ²⁹ From *The Radical Ladder*.
- ³⁰ General Sir Robert Wilson to Earl Grey, 16 June 1820, cited by E. A. Smith, p. 40.
- ³¹ Cited by E. A. Smith, p. 41.
- ³² *A Tragic Ballad of the Ninth Century; Set to a New Tune* (London: Hodgson & co. n.d.)
- ³³ Ravenna Journal, 13 June, 1821, Byron, *Letters*, 8, p.26.

Swellfoot the Tyrant

Prerogative, the Gods! Will soon look fierce,
Hunt with hounds the shops for prints and verse,
And find the likenesses of *men on high*...

(Peter Pindar, 'Odes to an informer' from *Liberty's Last Squeak*).

In the introduction to his essay, 'Shelley's *Swell-Foot the Tyrant* in Relation to Contemporary Political Satires',¹ Newman I. White writes: 'Few readers of Shelley devote much time to *Oedipus Tyrannus*, or *Swell-foot the Tyrant*, and for very good reason. Intrinsically, the play is not worth it. Mrs. Shelley, ever careful of the poet's reputation, warns us not to take this piece for more than was meant.'² White's introduction at least serves to pose the question of what was 'meant' by the play? Why is Shelley, a republican, interested enough in a petty royal squabble to devote a play to it? In answering this question I will cover some old ground – many critics (including Newman I. White) have, as with *The Mask of Anarchy*, detected within the play the aesthetics of the popular political pamphlet. There have been a number of recent studies of Shelley's play that examine the poet's attitude to contemporary ideologies, such as Michael Scrivener's *Radical Shelley* in which he argues that the play is an attack on Malthus.³ Michael Erkelenz interestingly looks at the play's basis in Aristophanic comedy and Steven Jones follows a similar line by looking at the play's satirical antecedents. I shall simply compare the views expressed in Shelley's play with the ideas being expressed by radical supporters of Caroline, and examine the reason why so

many republicans seemed to find themselves in the odd position of trying to give a throne to a Queen.

Shelley, in common with Cobbett, Byron, and Lamb, broadly supports Caroline's cause, but he is not quite so generous toward her, as we can see from a letter to Peacock dated July 12, 1820:

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as their heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry. I for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners everyone would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues should be turned into a heroine, because she is queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king; and he no less than his ministers, are so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them is admirable.⁴

So much for Shelley's opinion of Caroline. However it is the closing line indicating that everything opposed to George and his ministers 'is admirable' that we should bear in mind when we find Shelley apparently writing from within Caroline's camp in *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. Shelley, unlike Byron, has no personal reason to support Caroline: they had never met, although a scurrilous 'Diary' published in 1839 tries to prove otherwise. In *A Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth*, the anonymous author invents a meeting between Shelley and Caroline, printing what purports to have been a letter from Caroline:

Talking of books, we have lately had a literary Sun shine forth upon us here, before whom our former luminaries must hide their diminished heads – a Mr. Shelley of University College, who lives upon arsenic, *aqua fortis*, half an hours sleep in the night, and is desperately in love with the memory of Margaret Nicholson. He hath published what he terms 'Posthumous Poems', printed for the benefit of Mr. Peter Finnerty, which, I am grieved to say, though stuffed full of treason is extremely dull, but the author is a great genius, and if he be not clapped up in Bedlam or hanged, will certainly prove one of the sweetest Swans on the tuneful margin of the Cherwell.⁵

C. R. Christ Church, Oxford, 15 March 1811.

This very funny ‘letter’ is actually quite useful in that it tells us how the author views Shelley on the eve of Mary Shelley’s publication of his works. Caroline and Shelley are associated through being scandalous disreputable figures from the past, but while Caroline has been resurrected as a poetry critic, Shelley, although ‘a great genius’, produces poetry ‘stuffed full of treason’.

On its release *Swellfoot the Tyrant* was viewed as seditious; only seven copies of the play, printed by Johnston, were sold before the run was seized by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. The play is a fairly straightforward allegory of the state of Britain under George IV. The action of the play begins in Thebes at Swellfoot’s court (the Temple of Famine), where the condition of Swellfoot’s subjects, the famished Pigs, is described:

Semichorus: Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation!
Now if your Majesty would have our bristles
To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make brawn out of our gristles,
In policy—ask else your royal Solons—
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw,
And sties well thatched; besides it is the law!
Swellfoot: This is sedition, and rank blasphemy!
Hol! there, my guards!
(I, 60-68)

This is the essence of the ‘settled Swellfoot system’ (II, I, 27). However there is a prophecy that foretells a better future for the Pigs:

Purganax: The words went thus:--
‘Boeotia, choose reform or civil war!
When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,

Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.'

(I, 112-116)

The mass of Swellfoot's subjects are undernourished pigs whose expanding population is causing problems for Swellfoot's Malthusian triumvirate, Moses, Solomon and Zephaniah, who are charged with finding ways to keep down their numbers. These pigs have a vague memory of having once been powerful man-bulls. The potential for change arrives when a Gadfly drives Iona Taurina, Swellfoot's estranged wife, to his hellish kingdom where a green bag full of poison, supplied by the Leech, confronts her. This bag is meant to destroy her, but instead she empties its contents over Swellfoot and his ministers turning them into rodents. Then, in what seems to be a mixture of Bamford's *Ode to a Plotting Parson* and Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy*, Famine and Liberty work together to create a race of empowered 'man-bulls', rather like the *Mask's* image of 'Lions rising after slumber'. Iona then rides on the Ionian Minotaur's back trampling Swellfoot and his government.

Swellfoot the Tyrant was begun at the Baths of San Giuliano near Pisa in August 1820 and published anonymously. Mary Shelley writes that Percy Shelley got the clue for his poem on 24 August 1820 whilst reading his *Ode to Naples* to her and Lady Mountcashell (Mrs Mason) when they were disturbed by the 'grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair held in the square beneath [his] windows.'⁶ This interruption reminded him of the scene in Aristophanes where Dionysus, rowing Charon's boat to the underworld, is angered by the sound of croaking frogs; thereby giving us the first scene of *Swellfoot*. Of course Shelley is

also thinking of Burke's 'Swinish Multitude'. However, it is clear from Shelley's letter to Medwin on July 20 1820 that he had already largely formulated the plot for his poem before this event: 'I wonder what in the world the Queen has done. I should not wonder, after the whispers I have heard, to find that the Green Bag contained evidence that she imitated Pasiphae, and that the Committee should recommend to Parliament a bill to exclude all Minotaurs from the succession.'⁷

Swellfoot the Tyrant was written on the premise that the Caroline affair might weaken the institutions of the State to the extent that a revolution would begin. *Oedipus Tyrannus* or *Swellfoot the Tyrant* is a play concerned with translation and transformation. Shelley announces this by juxtaposing the English and Greek titles of the play; on the first page we find *Oedipus Tyrannus* alongside its literal translation *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, and in the last scene we find that the Ionian Minotaur is John Bull. This is a play that marries 'high' literature with the popular radical pamphlet, a poem that combines the classical with the caricatures of the radical press. As Gary Dyer points out, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* 'depicts Queen Caroline's accusers in terms that were common in the pamphlets Hone and others were publishing that year'. Sophocles and Aristophanes come together with the caricatures of Cruikshank, Rowlandson, Heath and Gillray.⁸

George as Oedipus is obviously not the good king Oedipus of Sophocles, he is quite literally Oedipus: 'Swollen foot' alluding to George's gout. His excessive

appetites offer a stark contrast to the condition of the famished pigs. It is a representation which shows Shelley, like Lamb, drawing on the work of Gillray, Cruikshank, and the radical pamphleteers. Shelley's Swellfoot reminisces about being in the 'arms of Adiposa oft' (I), alluding to George's love of mature large women, a vice frequently seized upon by the caricaturists of the day as we can see in the following J. L. Marks illustration, 'Quite well again', published in 1820 after the new King's illness:



Figure 30: J. L. Marks, 'Quite Well Again' (London: J. L. Marks, 1820)

Mrs Arbuthnot, it seems, agreed with Marks's view of the King, writing in her journal on March 7 1820:

The King is gone down to Brighton, much better & enjoying the society of L^y Cunningham [sic]! The reigning favourite. The Duke of Wellington told me that, a few days ago, a dispatch of one of the foreign ministers was seen at the Office in which was the sentence, "Le Prince Regent d'Angleterre, age de soixante-cinq ans, a quitte la Marquise de Hertford, agee de soixante-cinq ans, pour devenir amoureux fou de la

Marquise de Cunningham, agee de cinquante ans.” Pretty ideas foreign powers must have of our gracious Sovereign!!⁹

Shelley utilises a stock, easily identifiable image of George in his *Swellfoot*, which required no classical training in his anticipated audience. Lord Eldon as Dakry, literally ‘Teary’, was similarly a man made public property by the caricaturists. Shelley, who had blamed Eldon for the loss of custody of his children, follows the pamphleteers in identifying Eldon by his penchant for crying when passing sentence, as in *The Mask of Anarchy*:

IV

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell,

Castlereagh as Purganax is more subtly drawn. Shelley mocks the garbled prose of Castlereagh’s speeches, giving Mammon the line ‘You Purganax, who have the gift o’ the gab’. (I). This was a common criticism of Castlereagh, who was renowned for poor speechmaking, which is probably why he was always called upon to announce measures introduced by the government. Byron was another who would draw attention to this:

Bid Ireland’s Londonderry’s Marquis show
His parts of speech; and in the strange displays
Of that odd string of words, all in a row,
Which none divine, and every one obeys,
Perhaps you can pick out some queer no meaning,
Of that weak wordy harvest the sole gleaning.
(Don Juan, Canto 9, XLIX).

Also like Byron, Shelley further identifies Castlereagh by referring to Ireland:

A spot or two on me would do no harm,
Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad Genius

Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
Upon my brow - which would stain all its seas,
But which those seas could never wash away!
(*Swellfoot*, II, ii, 78-81)

William Hone was another who had insistently identified Castlereagh with the savage British repression of Ireland. As Chief Secretary for Ireland between 1797 and 1801 Castlereagh had been responsible for the putting down of Irish rebels during the ill fated rising of 1798. Cruikshank, Hone and Wooler pursued him mercilessly until his death for the methods he employed suppressing the rising. In the following cut, from Hone's *A Slap at Slop*, Cruikshank depicts Castlereagh exercising the scourge on a prisoner, tied to a triangular framework, and standing on a sharp point, dripping blood. Hone called Castlereagh 'Derry Down Triangle' after this method of flogging. The following cut by George Cruikshank was commissioned by Hone to remind his reading public of the reputation Castlereagh had gained in Ireland twenty years previously:

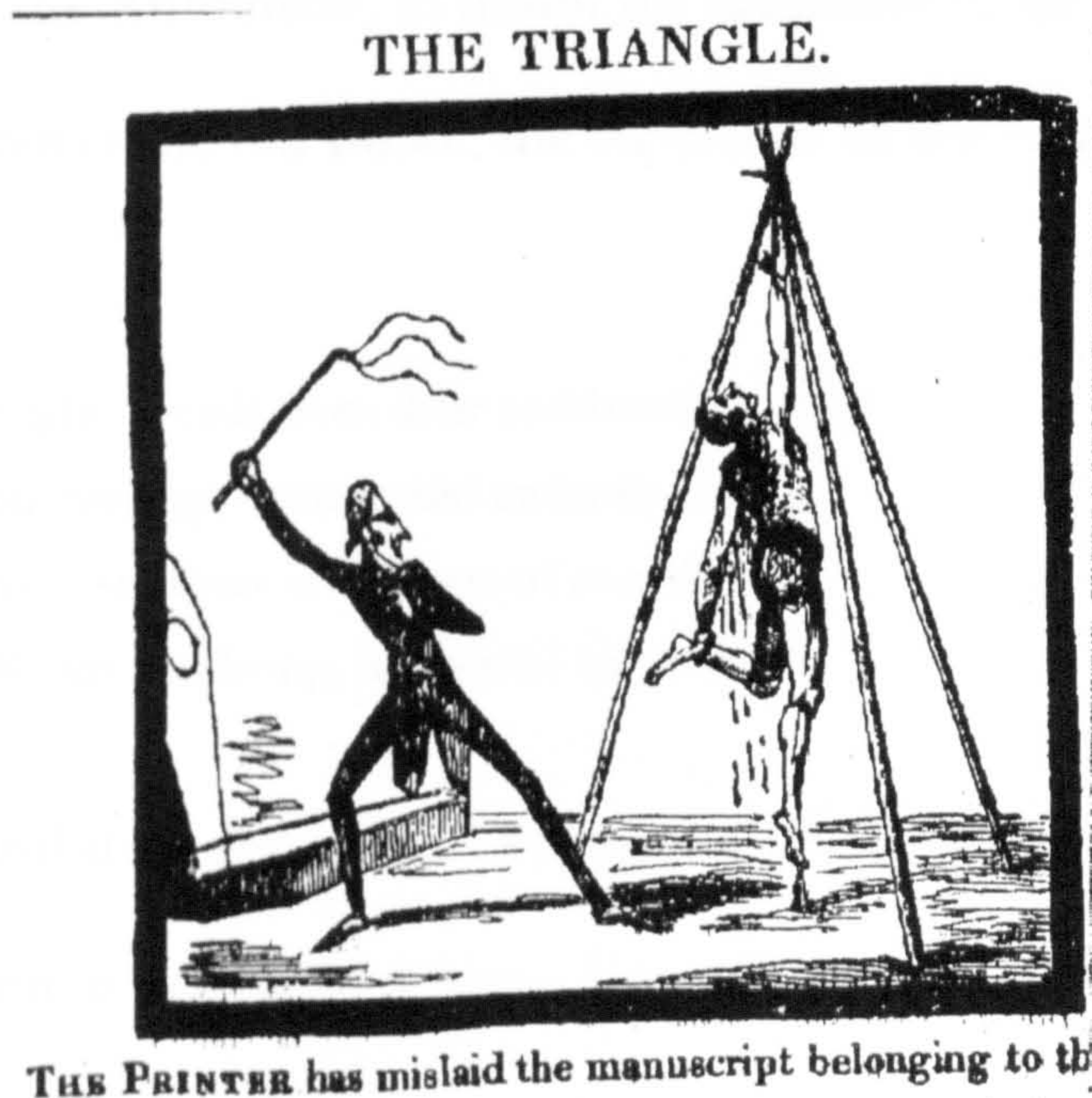


Figure 31: George Cruikshank, 'The Triangle' *A Slap at Slop*.

Hone takes his title from the popular ballad refrain, used for example in the anonymous ‘The Three Ravens’, ‘*With a down, derry, derry, down, down.*’ This title captured the imagination of a number of poets, such as Alexander Rodger in his *A Bundle of Truths A Parody*, but it was used to more violent effect in the anonymous, but probably by Hone, ‘Derry Down Triangle’¹⁰ published by J.

Tyler in 1820:

Oh! chivalrous Burke! if thou wert now living,
Thou would’st surely be seized with some woeful misgiving,
On seeing a Queen, of Brunswick’s fam’d race,
An object of *slander*, and threatened disgrace,
Derry down, &c.

In an opening which playfully inverts the now conservative Wordsworth’s ‘London 1802’, ‘Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour,’ we find the loyalists’ most able weapon being claimed by the radicals for Caroline. The dreadful treatment of the new Queen by the monarch would cause even Burke, the defender of Marie Antoinette, to doubt his allegiance to the loyalists. This cause would rediscover the old Burke, the supporter of the American Revolution:

“Ten thousand bright swords from their scabbards shall fly
To avenge her foul wrongs,” you would instantly cry;
But hold, pray, good sir, there is no want of swords;
And, though YOU are not living, no lack of big words.
Derry Down, &c.

Burke is claimed and then discarded. If living he would join Caroline’s supporters, but there is no need for him. The radicals have their own writers to further their cause; they do not need to suborn the loyalists’ most potent literary weapon. The people have:

[...] nought to fear from those stupid elves,
Who have managed so neatly *to outwit themselves*. [...]
The SPOUTER OF FROTH is now grown too cunning,
On the present grave subject to treat us with punning;
But leaves to *his friend*, the LORD DERRY DOWN,
To furnish out *froth* and *mirth*, for the Town.
Derry down, &c.

In short the whole GANG are completely entangled,
And the more they shall struggle, the more they'll
be mangled;
Come, ye RADICALS all, then, in Country and Town,
Let's rejoice and be merry, singing down derry down,
Derry down, & c.

God save the Queen; and *take care* of L_____ C_____.

Canning, Castlereagh and the rest will be the architects of their own downfall.

Canning, the 'SPOUTER OF FROTH', will not comment on the Caroline affair, due to his past involvement with her and so leaves it to Castlereagh. In a powerful conclusion, a revolutionary stance is taken: 'Country and Town' must combine to overthrow the 'GANG'. This is further emphasised in the actual broadsheet in which the poem is printed. Alongside the poem is an epitaph on James Wilson (a Scottish weaver and no relation to the Cato Street conspirator of the same name who was deported), who was hanged in Glasgow in August 1820. Not only the rural 'Country' must take part in ridding the Nation of its oppressors, but the whole United Kingdom. National differences are erased by the new emphasis on a transnational class warfare. The Queen, who has not been mentioned since the first stanza of this six-stanza poem, is remembered at the end, almost as an afterthought, included in a prayer for God to '*take care*' of Lord Castlereagh. The poem is prefaced by a crude sketch of a man being

hanged from the apex of a triangle echoing the more detailed cut by Cruikshank from Hone's *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Street Gang*¹ shown above. Beneath the illustration by Cruikshank is the inscription 'THE PRINTER has mislaid the manuscript belonging to this *cut*'. There certainly seems to be a connection between Tyler's squib from late 1820 and this, as many of the same names are used: the 'DOCTOR', the 'GANG' and 'LORD DERRY DOWN'.

Another prominent political figure of the period featured in *Swellfoot the Tyrant* is Wellington, represented by Shelley as Laoctonos, the 'people slayer'.

Laoctonos is a killer who enjoys blood:

Laoctonos. Claret, somehow,
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!
Swellfoot. Laoctonos is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood, than any man in Thebes.
(II, ii, 35-39)

This is reminiscent of William Hone's 'Legitimate Vampire':

His presence is 'plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, and murder, and sudden death.' His bite rapidly *undermines the strongest* CONSTITUTION, and dissolves the whole into an entire mass of CORRUPTION. He has no *brain* but the *walls* of the skull emit a *tinkling* sound, that attracts his victims, and lulls them into *passive obedience*. In this state he clutches them in his coils, and *screws* and *squeezes* them to destruction—*slaving* them over, and sucking in their *substance* at leisure.¹²

Liverpool is given the role of Mammon and Leech is Sir John Leach, the Vice Chancellor who organised the Milan commission, transformed into a bloodsucker. Malthus has a large part to play in *Swellfoot*. He is not represented by one character, but by three followers of his teachings:

Swellfoot. Call in the Jews, Soloman the court porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah the hog-butcher.

Guard.They are in waiting Sire.

[*Enter Soloman, Moses and Zephaniah*]

Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those sows

[The PIGS run about in consternation.]

That load the earth with pigs; cut close and deep.

Moral restraint I see has no effect,

Nor prostitution, nor our own example,

Starvation, typhus fever, war, nor prison-

This was the charge which the arch-priest of Famine

Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy-

Cut close and deep, good Moses.

(I, I, 69-79)

The policy of Malthus (who it should be remembered wished to abolish relief for the poor) now extends to castration in order to control the population.

Michael Scrivener argues that the Queen Caroline affair is secondary in *Swellfoot*.

Shelley's target is Malthus: '[Shelley] takes the Queen Caroline affair as the plot material which he transforms into an argument against Malthus and in favour of libertarian reform.'¹³ However Michael Erkelenz, whilst having some 'sympathy' with Scrivener's view, argues that Shelley was well aware of the political significance of the Queen's cause: 'To claim [...] that Shelley's partisanship for the Queen's cause was feeble and to suggest thereby that his interest in *Swellfoot* was lukewarm is surely misguided. The Queen's cause and the cause of reform were inextricably linked.'¹⁴ Arthur Bryant would agree with Erkelenz:

'Revolution now seemed certain. Night and day the streets resounded with shouts of "No Queen, No King!"'¹⁵ In *Swellfoot* Shelley seems to move toward this extreme radical viewpoint:

'Boeotia, choose Reform or civil war!

When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,

A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.'
(I,113-116)

Steven Jones in his *Shelley's Satire* claims that the 'suggestion seems to be that the nation must "choose" its future *at the signal of the Queen's hunt*'. I agree with much of Jones's analysis, the people do have to choose between reform and rebellion; but if rebellion is chosen then it is always at the bidding of the people, not at the signal of the Queen, and if we look back to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, we find that it is Demogorgon (literally the 'People Monster') who announces the moment of revolt.

The trope of the King being hunted by Caroline, and the radicals, was also used by William Wright, Hone's hated publisher for the Loyal Association:

HUNTING¹⁶

A Royal Stag hunted by blood-hounds is seen;
But not chaste Diana, the bold huntress Queen.
They would hunt him, till thirsty and panting for breath,
And then slake his thirst with the chalice of death!
The system pursued is the KING TO DETHRONE,
A system which thousands, too late, may bemoan.
A HUNT or a THISTLEWOOD, COBBETT or QUEEN,
Is all one to the *Radical Ruffians*, I ween,
My muse the whole system shall faithfully trace,
And develop its spirit to shame and disgrace,
May Britons attend, and the warning receive,
Ere ruin remediless their hopes undeceive!

This poem is interesting in its denial of individual agency, 'A HUNT or a THISTLEWOOD, COBBETT or QUEEN, / Is all one to the *Radical Ruffians*, I Ween'. Bigger forces are at work than may be embodied in any individual. For

this author it is a battle between systems: the radical 'system' which the pamphlet claims to expose and the rival system which Shelley identifies as the 'settled Swellfoot system'.

In *Swellfoot* the transformation of the pigs into the empowered 'man bull' takes place when the goddess Liberty intervenes in the trial of Iona Taurina:

Remit, O Queen! Thy accustomed rage!
Be what thou art not! In voice faint and low
FREEDOM calls *Famine*, - her eternal foe,
To brief alliance, hollow truce. - Rise now!
(II, ii, 99-102)

Freedom and Famine combine to take the role of Demogorgon, but again this is Bamford and Shelley combined, with experience (Famine) joining forces with idealism (Liberty), and it represents a more mature view of the forces which will cause a revolution than can be found in *The Mask of Anarchy* or *Prometheus Unbound*. Iona begins the process that will result in a revolution by exposing the King and his ministers' true characters when she empties the green bag of evidence, which was meant for her, over Swellfoot and the court:

[Purganax, after unsealing the Green Bag, is gravely about to pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole expression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches it from his hand with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it over Swellfoot and his whole Court, who are instantly changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush out of the temple.

(II, ii)

Immediately we see the Green Bag of evidence, which is supposed to expose Caroline, transform George and his ministers into baser animals than his subjects. This scene seems related to a cut by Cruikshank in Hone's *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*:

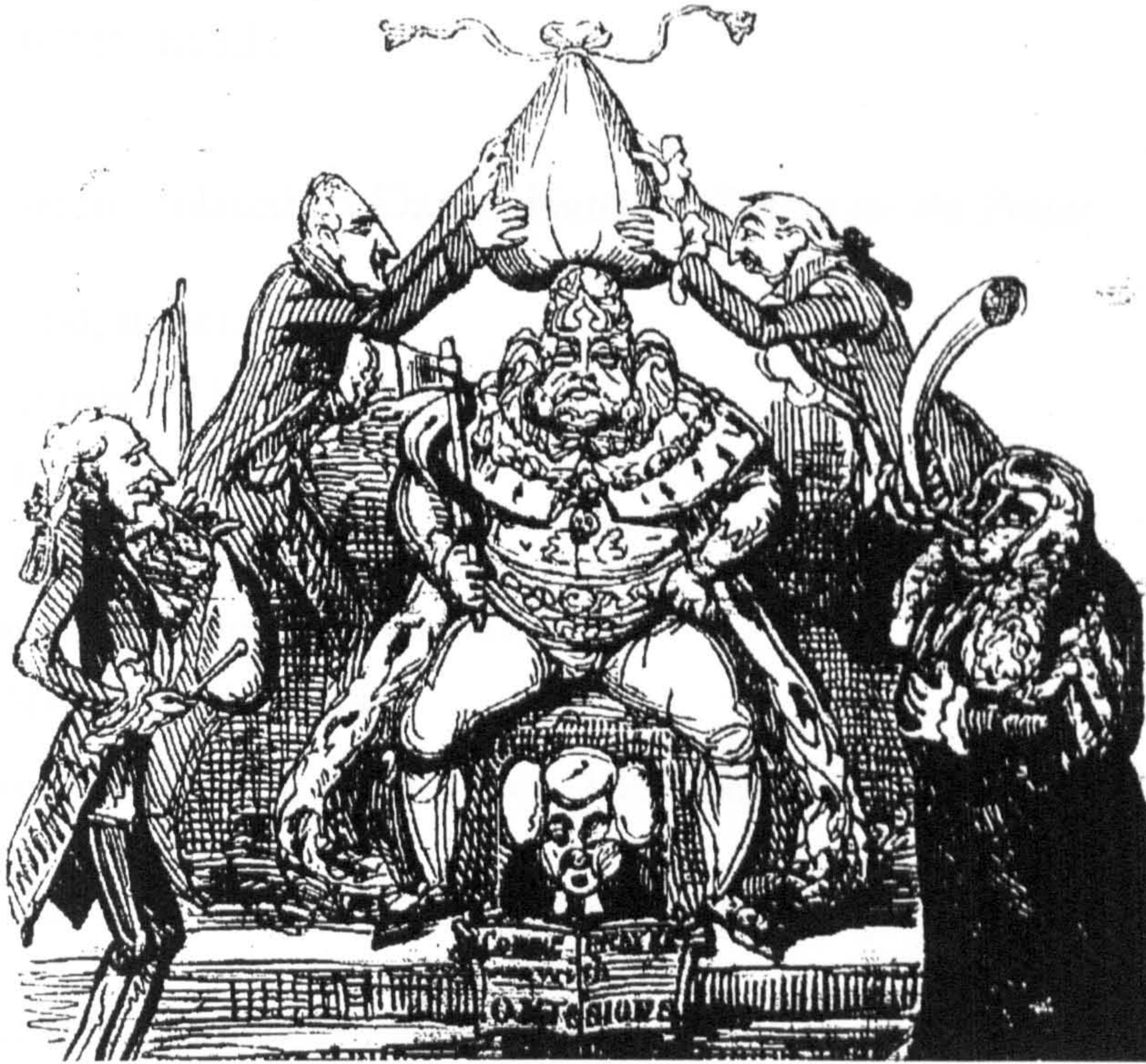


Figure 32: George Cruikshank, 'Coronation', *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*

He call'd for the crown-and
They gave him the *Bag!*
Exposed thee, for all men to see!

Here we see the new King being crowned with the green bag by Castlereagh and Sidmouth, whilst a minister is reading from 'Comm. Prayer with Omissions' – a reference to the absence of Caroline's name from the Anglican liturgy. In *Swellfoot*, Famine then arises - taking a similar role to that of Demogorgon. By bringing bread to nourish the pigs, she announces the period of Swellfoot's misrule.

All those who EAT the loaves are turned into BULLS,
[...] The image of FAMINE sinks through a chasm in the earth, and a MINOTAUR rises.
(II, ii)

The Minotaur then announces himself:

Minotaur. I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa's taurine progeny-
I am the old traditional Man-Bull;
And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,

Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
My name's JOHN BULL;
(II, ii, 103-111)

This episode seems related to Daniel Eaton's *Politics for the People*,

Thy magic Rod, audacious Burke
Could metamorphize Man to Pork,
And quench the Spark divine;
But Eaton's Wonder-working Wand;
By scattering Knowledge through the Land
Is making Men of Swine.¹⁷ (I, I)

The transformation having taken place, John Bull now invites the Queen to ride on his back, and they then trample Swellfoot and his ministers:

And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
At least till you have hunted down your game,
I will not throw you.
(II, ii, 113-115)

Shelley may have been influenced by Gillray's 'Presages of the Millennium; with The Destruction of the Faithful' from 1795 in having Iona trample the court.



Figure 33: James Gillray, *Presages of the Millennium* (London: H. Humphrey, 1795)

Pitt as 'Death', carrying both a sword of fire and a liberty cap, rides the mad-eyed Hanoverian horse, which is metamorphosed into a serpent. Riding pillion with Pitt is an Imp wearing the royal plumes of the Prince of Wales. Beneath Pitt are the stampeding 'swinish multitude', running in confusion over each other, but also over the party of Fox and Wilberforce who desire peace with France.

At this point we should ask, who would have been Shelley's intended audience had the play not been suppressed by Stoddart's Society for the Suppression of Vice. Gary Dyer argues:

[...] despite Shelley's tongue-in-cheek pretence that this work is a translation of an ancient Greek drama, he intended it for the heterogeneous crowd who frequented London printshops and publishers, or who bought or borrowed satirical pamphlets rather than for the people he termed "the chosen spirits of the time".¹⁸

Dyer's assessment of Shelley's audience seems too simple. First, we cannot be sure of the social depth of the penetration of the popular political pamphlet, just as we are unsure of the level of literacy. Olivia Smith states that in the early nineteenth century literacy amongst the lower classes rose to 60 %, with the urban and middle classes at between 75 and 95%, levels of literacy 'ranging from that of reading with difficulty to the advanced reading skills of the literati.

Moreover the non-literate, especially in London, were not as excluded from political debate as one might assume. Political cartoons and other pictorial prints were designed to be "read" by the non-literate'.¹⁹ Works which combined text with detailed illustrations, like the *Political House that Jack Built* sold in numbers in excess of 100 000 copies, yet priced at a shilling they were expensive

compared with Cobbett's *Political Register*, or the halfpenny squibs being produced by the rival ballad and broadsheet printers Catnach and Pitts. However bad these cheap publications may have been, the ideas of the more expensive publications often filtered down to them. Catnach and Pitts and their band of ballad sellers made rather a lot of money during the Caroline affair. Often they would compose their own doggerel such as:

Ye Britons all, both great and small,
Come listen to my ditty,
Your noble Queen, fair Caroline,
Does well deserve your pity.²⁰

But more often they would plagiarise work, such as that currently being published by the likes of Hone, Byron and Pierce Egan. Therefore we can be fairly sure that even the poorest, and I include the illiterate, would often be informed by, and learn to read from, texts which contained the same ideas as the more expensive publications which would only be available to those earning a decent wage.

But what of the literary elite? I have tried to demonstrate that there was often a mutual borrowing, an exchange between 'high' and 'low' literature, but there was also often competition between the two, suggesting that their audiences overlapped: Byron berates John Murray for allowing people like Hone to sell forgeries of his *Don Juan*; Shelley's *Queen Mab* was pirated; and Carlton house spent a significant amount of money and convicted a large number of people in an attempt to suppress and lessen the impact of political tracts. Shelley's choice of Johnson the publisher for his *Swellfoot* indicates that he wished to reach a wider

audience than he normally would, as do his two titles: *Oedipus Tyrannous* for the classically trained and *Swellfoot the Tyrant* for the masses. *Swellfoot* is not meant for as narrow an audience as *The Mask of Anarchy*: it is meant to appeal to both the literary elite and the readers of broadsides and radical papers. From 1819 Shelley had been attempting to reach the groups to which he now felt drawn, but Shelley is always aware of his inability to be truly part of popular working class culture as Richard Cronin points out:

[Shelley] was separated from the balladeer by the culture he was heir to, an elitist culture, his participation in which made him a masquer. Shelley predicts through Hope the victory of the people, but he also expresses through the poem his own separateness from them.²¹

Cronin is writing about the *Mask of Anarchy* in the above extract, but the same argument might be applied to *Swellfoot*. Shelley may be writing in his 'own voice' again, but this does not entirely exclude the poem from those who are not classically educated, people such as Bamford, who would identify themselves with the 'pigs'. The phrase the 'Swinish multitude' became very influential from the moment that Burke coined it. Alexander Richmond wrote 'Mr. Burke's epithet, of swinish multitude, has never been forgotten nor forgiven'²² But, as Olivia Smith argues in *The Politics of Language 1791-1819*, it was an insult that might be embraced: 'Burke's phrase, the 'swinish multitude', occurs more frequently than any trace of Paine's style [...] The charge of being swine was gleefully accepted, by many of those who included themselves among the swinish multitude.'²³ In his preface to *The Weaver Boy; or Miscellaneous Poems*, Bamford is one of those who accepted the epithet and announces that he is 'one of old Burke's Pigs, who has the audacity to lift his snout on high in the

congregation of the Public, and thus “rebelliously” to grunt in the presence of his “betters”.

To conclude I must address the question that I set at the beginning of this chapter: Why should such a broad range of radicals and reformers, a group that includes figures as disparate as Bamford, Benbow, Brougham, Byron, Catnach, Cobbett, Hone, Lamb and Shelley, choose to support Caroline? Why, as E. J. Evans writes, support ‘a queen who was profligate, unattractive, lazy and vulgar against a king who was merely profligate, unattractive and lazy?’²⁴ Hazlitt too wonders why the ultra-radicals supported Caroline: ‘Here were all the patriots and Jacobins of London and Westminster, who scorned and hated the king, going to pay their homage to the queen, and ready to worship the very rags of royalty.’ The answer seems to be that it was a cause in which, however temporarily, even those of very different political sympathies could unite, Lamb and Shelley for example. Lamb found a cause that excited his sense of fair play, a cause that focused his hatred of the Regent’s unprincipled corruption, and also a cause in which he could display all his relish of the vitality of the popular press with its grotesque caricatures and lampoons. For Shelley, on the other hand, the affair was of interest, because it promised to bring nearer a political revolution of the kind that would never have been countenanced by Lamb. Shelley makes explicit his reason for supporting Caroline in act two scene two of *Swellfoot*, where we find the lines:

At least till you have hunted down your game,
I will not throw you.
(II, ii, 114-115)

As Paul Foot suggests in his *Red Shelley*, the Queen is merely a tool to bring down the monarchy.²⁵ Caroline is only useful until George and his lackeys have been ‘hunted down’, and then she will be thrown. In the anonymous poem ‘The Queen of Hearts Or John Bull’s best Trump is Caroline’ the aims of the more radical of the Queen’s supporters are still more explicit:

John Bull, one day
At cards to play,
A pack lay on the table, O;
And well he knew
The knavish crew
Would cheat him were they able O.

They cut for deal, when faith it fell
On John who is a man of parts;
He dealt around - with joy he found
His trump it was the Queen of Hearts;
Though cards of Court were thrown about,
And Aces, Knaves, and Kings did shine,
To win the game, and stamp his fame,
John plays his trump, Queen Caroline!
Queen Caroline!
Queen Caroline!
John Bull’s best trump is Caroline!

Caroline, for this group of her supporters, is only a card in the political game that they are playing. As Arthur Thistlewood stated before the Queen’s arrival, ‘we shall now see when the Princess arrives if the Whigs or the Tories are strongest – and then will be the time for the Radicals to come in.’²⁶ In assessing the impact of the Caroline affair for the radicals Iain McCalman rightly points

out: 'Caroline provided a 'rallying point' for metropolitan popular radicalism when the movement was badly fractured as a result of the Six Acts and post-Cato Street dragnet.'²⁷ This was no secret at the time of the affair. John Wilson Croker had anticipated such an event three years before the Caroline affair as he reveals in a letter to Peel dated November 1817: 'the public is in [...] rather a sulky humour, waiting for any fair or unfair excuse to fly into a passion [...] If there should arise any division in the Royal Family, it will be the match to fire the gunpowder.'²⁸ Similarly, the ultra-loyalist *John Bull* was aware of the reason why the radicals supported Caroline:

These spouting, mouthing, blind devotes to disorder and riot, care as little for the Queen as they did for Hunt. She serves as the pole to hoist the revolutionary Cap of Liberty on. Burdett was the pole at one time [...] Hunt was the last pole before the Queen: and now her Majesty is established the *veritable* Mother Red-Cap of the faction.²⁹

In *The Radical Ladder; or Hone's Non Mi Ricordo Explained and Applied*, Caroline is seen in precisely these terms. In this she climbs a ladder exactly like the matrimonial one used as the frontispiece of Hone's *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, only now the supporting straps say 'Ruin', 'Anarchy', and 'Revolution', and the steps detail a specific series of events: 'Peterloo', 'Cato Street', 'Queens Arrival', 'Radical Addresses' and at the top 'Mob Government'. Beneath Caroline are the radicals huddling together under the protection of her skirts, comically extending the metaphor of a 'petticoat government'³⁰:



Figure 34: George Cruikshank, frontispiece to *The Radical Ladder* (London: W. Wright, 1820)
 In the following cut 'The Funeral Pile' Caroline is seen wearing a fool's cap, being toppled and burned along with the King, Lords, and Commons, by the radicals being led by Hone and Cruikshank on the ladder, with Wooler fanning the flames beneath the pile.



Figure 35: George Cruikshank, 'The Funeral Pile', *The Radical Ladder*

By 1821, and Caroline's failed attempt to gain entrance to her husband's coronation, the Caroline affair was dead, as she would be herself two weeks later. Caroline was forgotten and the fight moved on to Catholic emancipation, reform and Chartism. But Charles Lamb remembered her, as we can see from a letter to Bernard Barton written in late 1827: 'strolling to Waltham Cross the other day, I hit off these lines. It is one of the crosses which Edwd. caused to be built for his wife at every town where her corpse rested between Northamptonsh. and London.'

A stately Cross each sad spot doth attest,
Whereat the corpse of Elinor did rest,
From the Herdby fetch'd - her spouse so honour'd her-
To sleep with royal dust at Westminster.
And, if less pompous obsequies were thine,
Duke Brunswick's daughter, princely Caroline,
Grudge not, great ghost, nor count thy funeral losses:
Thou in thy life-time had'st thy share of crosses.³²

It is a little poem that suggests that Lamb, unlike Shelley, felt a real sympathy for this ill-used Queen. On 26 June 1830 George too died, but there was no Lamb to mourn his passing. Instead *The Times* published this piece the day after his funeral:

There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased King. What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one throb of unmercenary sorrow? Was there at any time a gorgeous pageant on the stage more completely forgotten than he has been, even from the day on which the heralds proclaimed his successor? [...] If George IV ever had a friend - a devoted friend - in any rank of life, we protest that the name of him or her has not yet reached us. An inveterate voluptuary, especially if he be an artificial person, is of all known beings the most selfish. Selfishness is the true repellent of human sympathy.³³

¹ Newman I. White, 'Shelley's Swell-Foot the Tyrant in Relation to Contemporary Political Satires', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 36 (1921), pp. 332-46

² Ibid. p. 332.

³ Scrivener, *Radical*, pp. 262-267.

⁴ Shelley, *Letters*, II, p. 213

⁵ *A Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth Interspersed with Original Letters from the Late Queen Caroline*, 4 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1838-39), p.54. Volumes 1 and 2 give no editorial details, however 3 and 4 claim to have been edited by 'the late John Galt'.

⁶ *The Complete Poetical Works of Shelley*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson, corrected by G. M. Matthews (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 410

⁷ Ibid. p. 806

⁸ Dyer, p.76

⁹ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, I, p.8. (Their ages actually were fifty-eight; sixty; and fifty-one respectively.)

¹⁰ *Derry Down Triangle! A Satire on the Trial of Queen Caroline, with Especial Reference to Robert Stewart, 2nd Marquis of Londonderry. With 'Epitaph on James Wilson, who was Executed at Glasgow, August 30th, 1820, After Being Recommended to Mercy'* (London: J. Tyler, 1820)

¹¹ See William Hone's *A Slap at Slop*, p.37

¹² 'The Boa Desolator, or Legitimate Vampire', from *The Political Showman—At Home! Exhibiting his Cabinet of Curiosities and Creatures—All Alive!*, 2nd ed. (London: William Hone, 1821)

¹³ Scrivener, *Radical*, pp. 262-3.

¹⁴ Michael Erkelenz, 'The Genre and Politics of Shelley's Swellfoot the Tyrant', *Review of English Studies*, 47 (1996), p. 513

¹⁵ Arthur Bryant, *The Age of Elegance*, p.393.

¹⁶ From *The Radical Ladder*.

¹⁷ *Politics for the People: or a Salmagunday for Swine* (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1793-5)

¹⁸ Dyer, p.76.

¹⁹ Olivia Smith, p.161.

²⁰ Cited by Charles Hindley, *The Life and Times of James Catnach, (Late of Seven Dials), Ballad Monger* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1878), p. 105

²¹ Richard Cronin, *Shelley's Poetic Thoughts* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 54-55

²² Alexander Richmond, p.169

²³ Olivia Smith, pp. 79-80

²⁴ E. J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State* (London: Longmans, 1983), p.186

²⁵ Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980) pp. 51-53.

²⁶ Prothero, p.133.

²⁷ McCalman, p. 177

²⁸ *The Croker Papers; 1808-1857*, ed. by Bernard Pool (London, Batsford, 1967, p.39.

²⁹ *John Bull*, 24 December, 1820, cited by E. P. Thompson, *The Making*, p.778.

³⁰ See Wood, p. 260.

³¹ George Cruikshank, 'The Funeral Pile' from *The Loyal Investigation and Radical Non Mi Ricordo; or the History of the Snug Family; Caroline-Bergami-Relatives, and Lieutenants; their Pleasant Pilgrimages, Suffocating Trial; Published at the Expense of the Loyal Association* (London: W. Wright, 1820).

³² The poem was first printed in *The Englishman's Magazine*, September, 1831 In the following form:

LINES Suggested by a Sight of Waltham Cross

Time-mouldering CROSSES, gemm'd with imagery
Of costliest work, and Gothic tracery,
Point still the spots, to hallow'd wedlock dear,
Where rested on its solemn way the bier,
That bore the bones of Edward's Elinor
To mix with Royal dust at Westminster._
Far different rites did thee to dust consign,
Duke Brunswick's daughter, Princely Caroline.
A hurrying funeral, and a banish'd grave,
High-minded Wife! Were all that thou could'st have.
Grieve not, great Ghost, nor count in death thy losses;
Thou in thy life-time had'st thy share of crosses.

³³ *The Times* 16 July 1830.

Conclusion

The period that I have argued in this thesis was so distinctive was a short one; it lasted for only two years: from the Peterloo massacre in August 1819 to the funeral of Queen Caroline late in 1821. Yet in this time frame poetry and politics became almost inseparable as disparate groups of poets struggled to control the representation of the narratives of political events and thereby intervene in them. Conceptions of literary stratification, what constitutes ‘high’ and ‘low’ verse, became undermined as a new kind of writing emerged, writing that became authorless, and classless in its form. But what happened to radical politics and literature in the decades immediately following the three political events that I have argued affected poetry so dramatically? Marilyn Butler points out that ‘after the noisy demonstration accompanying Queen Caroline’s divorce had subsided, a curious period of relative stasis followed.’¹ Iain McCalman makes a similar point: ‘The execution of the Cato Street conspirators in 1820 and the death of Queen Caroline in 1821 are seen as having marked the end’.² Abel Hall, the Cato Street conspirator who had turned King’s evidence against his comrades, and alleged that John Cam Hobhouse had agreed to head a provisional government, became a spy after the Cato Street trial, but he was no longer necessary in the way that Castle, Oliver and Edwards had been. As McCalman notes:

In a series of intelligence reports filed towards the end of the 1820s the government’s most reliable and conscientious spy, Abel Hall, pronounced the death of the old Spencean ultra-radical underworld. Hall, a Finsbury tailor and ex-Cato Street conspirator who had been recruited as a spy in prison in 1820, reported that his former ‘dangerous’

associates of ten years earlier had changed their dispositions, opinions and principles. Not only had they become preoccupied with earning a living like everyone else, but they met openly in coffee-houses to read and discuss the news of the day.³

Why did it all end so quickly, why did thirty years of radical organisation so suddenly collapse? E. P. Thompson offers an economic explanation. He points to 'the onset of the years of general prosperity, from 1820 to 1825' and draws the conclusion that 'falling prices and fuller employment took the edge off Radical anger.'⁴ Thompson also subscribes to the explanation first advanced by Halévy, that Revolution in Britain was averted by the growth of Methodism, which reached a peak in the twenties and thirties and encouraged in its adherents sobriety, discipline, and political quietism. This is an argument that has been fiercely contested, and Thompson replies to his critics in the postscript to later editions of his book: 'R. Currie and R. M. Hartwell criticise, usefully, my figures for national Methodist growth. Then they relapse into a caricature in which I am supposed to welcome Methodist revivalism as "a counter-revolutionary tool."'⁵ Thompson insists that 'Methodism was only of secondary interest to me',⁶ and that his focus had been on 'Methodism's function as a carrier of work-discipline',⁷ and hence as an index of the new kind of industrial relations that developed in a period of economic prosperity. Ann Hone and Iorwerth Prothero follow Thompson in offering an economic explanation of the radical collapse. Hone writes, 'it would be extremely hard to show that the increase in real wages which is measurable after 1820 did not have this effect.'⁸ Prothero argues that the twenties did witness the growth of working class organisations, since this was the decade that saw the formation of embryonic

trade unions. Perhaps, then, the radical campaign did not come to an end, but rather re-invented itself, by focusing on conditions of employment rather than the issue of Parliamentary representation. But Prothero too represents the Caroline affair as marking the end of one particular burst of radical activity:

It had further shaken the prestige of monarchy and government, restored freedom of political agitation, [and] brought trade societies into open political activity. [...] The Queen Caroline affair showed, as did the Reform crisis later, the reliance of the radicals on a general air of political agitation created by those in much more influential situations. Only in that context could large numbers be attracted into political activity. Despite very widespread radical notions among the artisans, the radicals of themselves could not attract large numbers into activity—they needed a context of general political excitement.⁹

Prothero's argument here seems to be upside down. It is hard to believe that the Caroline affair in itself was sufficient to generate a national mood of political excitement. Rather, George IV's marital problems came to constitute an 'affair' because they took place within a political atmosphere that was already highly charged. Peterloo and Spa Fields had already shown that large numbers of working-class people would be willing to come together in a demand for political representation, and a diminution of the financial and educational gap between the rich and the poor that was being deliberately widened by the government.

The campaign came to an end with the death of Caroline for a complex of reasons, amongst which must be included the economic upturn and the failure of new causes to emerge around which reformers might unite. But Prothero and Thompson are unwilling to accept another reason why the campaign came to an

end, namely that it had been defeated, by a government that deployed against it, methods that, though they may be morally reprehensible, were both innovative and effective. For those of my generation the defeat inevitably recalls that of the miners in 1984-85 that brought to a sudden close forty years of assertive trade unionism. Even the methods employed were similar, involving as they did the use of trade union spies, oppressive anti-strike legislation and occasionally violence. The resounding defeat of the miners inaugurated a new quietly brooding climate in Britain, characterised by an endemic fear of unemployment, a collapse in trade union membership, and the lowest level of active conflict between workers and bosses since the Second World War.¹⁰

The campaign of peaceful demonstration had been crushed at Peterloo, and this provoked a huge poetic response, which often bordered on the revolutionary in tone. Next came a 'rebellion' – a manufactured one, it is true -- designed to dissipate revolutionary tendencies among the population at large. The Cato Street conspiracy revealed, as it was intended to do, a strong well-organised state that was always vigilant, and always ready to deal with dissent. It also revealed, although this was information that the government had rather have kept secret, a system of government control heavily dependent on the use of paid spies. Finally came the Queen Caroline affair, which for a moment seemed to offer the possibility that the government might be toppled from within, by choosing as the standard-bearer around whom radicals might unite

the consort of the King himself. With the death of Caroline this avenue too was closed. There were no rallying causes left for the radicals.

But the focus of this thesis has not been on the political campaign but on its literary consequences, and, in particular, its consequences for the poets. Radical leaders such as Cobbett and Hunt challenged not just their political opponents, but the right of aristocratic radicals, Byron's genteel reformers, such as Burdett, Kinnaird and Hobhouse to speak on their behalf. Similarly, a school of radical poets, or versifiers, or manufacturers of squibs emerged who challenged the role of poets such as Byron and Shelley who had set themselves the task of articulating in poetry the radical voice of the nation. Writers such as Hone and Bamford entered the print culture of the period, often publishing in innovative ways, and some of them, none more so than Hone, commanding audiences that eclipsed even Byron's. Poets such as Lamb, a survivor of the political agitation of the 1790s, and the poets of the younger generation of radicals, such as Byron and Shelley, were forced to come to terms with this new phenomenon. They responded variously, by allowing their verse to be permeated by the subaltern voices coming up from below, like Shelley in *The Mask of Anarchy* or *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, or by aggressively sealing their verse against the possibility of contamination by the voice of 'blackguardism', as Byron seems to have done in *Marino Faliero*. But, whatever the response, it demonstrated that the two years from 1819-1821 constituted a literary as much as a political period, a period in

which the manner in which the voice of the nation should be articulated and the question of who should articulate it were fiercely contested. The texts that I have identified as most distinctive of the period are those in which strange alliances are formed -- between a Venetian doge and a band of plebeian conspirators in *Marino Faliero*, between Sophoclean drama and scurrilous political prints in *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, between a senior employee of the East India Company and a group of violent revolutionaries in Lamb's poems on Cato Street, and between an aristocratic poet and a threatened resident of Grub Street in Hone's continuation of *Don Juan*. It was a period in which the gulf that separated 'high' literature from the literature of the streets shrank, and even, at times, disappeared to allow a glimpse of a new kind of writing that denied the possibility of literary stratification, and that, for this very reason, threatened the stratified society out of which it had been produced. Poets were at the forefront of lessening the intellectual gap between rich and poor by applying their talents to events that affected everyone in the country and therefore their work would be accessible to anyone who had even the slightest knowledge of contemporary politics. But did the death of Caroline mark an end to the literary period as decisively as it had to the political campaign? The answer must be yes, and no.

Byron, Keats and Shelley were dead within three years of Caroline. Samuel Bamford lived on until 1872, and, although his opposition to the Chartists distanced him from the radicals of the thirties and forties, he still dined off

recollections of his old radical days, always revising them, and never making a proper living as a poet or a historian. William Hone left political parodies behind after the death of Caroline, and concentrated on his antiquarian interests, publishing his remarkable *Ancient Mysteries Described*, a book on medieval miracle plays based on the apocryphal New Testament, and later his *Every-Day Book* and the *Table Book* which were well respected in literary circles. The *Every-Day Book* prompted Lamb to write warmly:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "EVERY-DAY BOOK."

I LIKE you, and your book, ingenious Hone!
In whose capacious all-embracing leaves
The very marrow of tradition's shown;
And all that history—much that fiction—weaves. [...]

Dan Phoebus loves your book—trust me, friend Hone—
The title only errs, he bids me say:
For while such art, wit, reading, there are shown,
He swears, 'tis not a work of *every day*.

More remarkably, even Robert Southey, Hone's old adversary, warmed to him after the publication of these books, writing in his *Life of Bunyan*:

In one of the volumes collected from various quarters, which were sent to me for this purpose, I observe the name of W. Hone, and notice it that I may take the opportunity of recommending his 'Every-Day Book' and 'Table Book' to those who are interested in the preservation of our national and local customs. By these very curious publications their compiler has rendered good service in an important department of literature, and he may render yet more, if he obtain the encouragement which he well deserves.¹¹

Despite these weighty recommendations for his books, Hone, ever the poor economist, lurched from one financial crisis to another before dying in poverty. However there did emerge after the death of Caroline, a new kind of literature

that was not directly political, but that still functioned powerfully to dissolve the differences between the elite and the popular.

George Cruikshank and Hone's partnership ended soon after the death of Queen Caroline. But, and at exactly the time of the Queen's death, Pierce Egan, the author of the 1814 satire on the Regent and Mrs. Robinson, and of *Boxiana*, employed both George Cruikshank and his brother Issac Robert, to provide cuts for his new book *Life in London*¹². Ironically, considering that these three men, and especially George, had profited financially by their ridicule of the Regent, this new book was dedicated to the new King George the Fourth. In the preface to his book, though, Egan warns his illustrators: 'Let me invoke your superior talents, Bob and George Cruikshank (ye *Gillray* of the day, and of *Don Salitero* greatness), to my anxious aid. [...] But, before I dismiss you to your studies, bear in remembrance, "nothing to extenuate, or set down in aught in malice"¹³. Egan insists that his illustrators are made aware of his desire to avoid alienating sections of his anticipated reading public, which McCalman identifies as a 'more respectable middle-class audience'.¹⁴ But this is also a book that consciously draws together the 'high' and the 'low'. Egan had in a sense always tried to unite the popular with the elite. His first publication was a continuation of Francis Grose's *Dictionary of Buckish Slang*,¹⁵ and in his preface to *Life in London* Egan appeals to the man who had reached the most disparate audience of any writer thus far:

And thou, too, Hone, thou king of parodists! turn not a deaf ear to my request, but condescendingly grant the petition of your most humble suitor. In my diversity of research, teach me “how to tell my story”, that I may not only woo the public with success and fame, but produce so fine an edge in *sharpening* up my ideas, yet withal so smooth and *oily*, that, instead of *wounding* characters, I may merely *tickle* them, and produce a smile!¹⁶

Egan wants Hone’s popular appeal, but he also wants to produce work with a ‘fine’ ‘edge’ to lift it out of the vulgar environment it emanates from. Even in the manner in which he echoes Pope by using the words ‘tickle’ and ‘wound’ Egan contrives to step outside of the radical agenda that had characterised much of Hone’s work. The literary elite’s interest in boxing also helped to move Egan’s work upwards in the social scale. Byron and Keats were famously keen on boxing, but it was Hazlitt with his essay “The Fight” who helped to elevate the sport and by association, the working-class culture of which it was an expression (George the Fourth himself disliked the sport, after seeing a man die in the ring).¹⁷ Egan, in order to give his *Life in London* some prestige has Hazlitt, his fellow sporting journalist, appear in his pages, drinking Hock and writing lectures ‘to be delivered at the Surrey institution.’¹⁸ *Life in London* continued the work of Hone and other pamphleteers in that its contents tend to dissolve the differences between the ruling and the working class, whilst trying to distance itself from politics, and in it we can see the antecedents of later popular fiction such as *The Pickwick Papers*.

It could be argued that Charles Dickens is the next major popular leveller in literature after the great period of conflict from 1819 to 21. And of course he

forged a connection to this period by employing the man whom Hone had engaged when he was only in his teens and still learning his trade. Cruikshank came to regret losing touch with Hone, but they renewed their friendship just before the antiquarian's death. Hone had asked Cruikshank if he could meet the young Dickens, who was then only thirty. Dickens relates the incident in a letter to Mr. Fenton:

I am going out to Tottenham this morning, on a cheerless mission I would willingly have avoided. Hone, of the 'Every-Day Book,' is dying, and sent Cruikshank yesterday to beg me to go and see him, as having read no books but mine of late, he wanted to see and shake hands with me before (as George said) "he went."¹⁹

Dickens's mission could not have been totally cheerless as he and Cruikshank visited Hone again. When Hone 'went' a month later, Dickens accompanied Cruikshank to his funeral, as he relates below ('C' is 'Cruikshank' and 'H' is Hone):

I saw a scene of mingled comicality and seriousness at his funeral some weeks ago, which has choked me at dinner-time ever since. C---- and I went as mourners; and as he lived poor fellow, five miles out of town, I drove C---- down. It was such a day as I hope, for the credit of nature, is seldom seen in any parts but these—muddy, foggy, wet, dark, cold, and unutterably wretched in every possible respect. Now, C--- has enormous whiskers, which straggle all down his throat in such weather, and stick out in front of him, like a partially unravelled bird's nest; so that he looks queer enough at the best, [...] I really cried with an irresistible sense of his comicality all the way; but when he was dressed out in a black cloak and a very long black hatband, by an undertaker (who, as he whispered with tears in his eyes—for he had known H--- many years—was "a character, and he would like to sketch him"), I thought I should have been obliged to go away. However, we went into a little parlour where the funeral party was, and God knows it was miserable enough, for the widow and children were crying bitterly in one corner, and the other mourners—mere people of ceremony, who cared no more for the dead man than the hearse did—were talking quite coolly and carelessly together in another; and the contrast was as painful and distressing as anything I ever saw. There was an independent clergyman present, with his bands on, and a Bible under his arm, who, as soon as we were seated, addressed us thus, in a loud, emphatic voice: "Mr. C---, have you seen a paragraph respecting our departed friend which has gone the round of the morning papers?" "Yes, sir," says C---, "I have," looking very hard at me the while, for he had told me it was his composition. "Oh!" said the clergyman, "then you will agree with me, Mr. C---, that it was not only an insult to me, who am the servant of the Almighty, but an insult to the Almighty whose servant I am." "How is that, sir?" said C---. It is stated,

Mr. C---, in that paragraph,” says the minister, “that when Mr. H--- failed in business as a bookseller, he was persuaded by *me* to try the pulpit, which is false, incorrect, unchristian, in a manner blasphemous, and in all respects contemptible. Let us pray.” With which my dear Fenton, and in the same breath, I give you my word, he knelt down, as we all did, and began a very miserable jumble of an extemporary prayer. I was really penetrated with sorrow for the family, but when C--- (upon his knees, and sobbing for the loss of an old friend) whispered me “that if that wasn’t a clergyman, and it wasn’t a funeral, he’d have punched his head,” I felt as if nothing but convulsions could possibly relieve me.²⁰

Dickens did not always find Cruikshank funny -- not only did Cruikshank later claim responsibility for many of Hone's ideas, but he also claimed to have suggested the plot of *Oliver Twist*.²¹

William Benbow was another who continued to merge these different literary styles, but significantly he remained a radical, intent on using literature to subvert the institutions of the state in publications such as *Crimes of the Clergy*.²² He also continued to pirate the work of others. As Neil Fraistat points out, Benbow ‘seized on pirating as a form of proto-class warfare.’²³ And, in a sense, it really was. Mary Shelley had published Shelley’s *Posthumous Poems* in 1824 at an expensive fifteen shillings. As Fraistat notes the book was aimed squarely at the middle and upper classes, as its price and its content (it was free from Shelley’s more radical poems) demonstrate. The book had been published for only two months and sold around three hundred copies before Shelley’s Whig MP father, Timothy Shelley, demanded that Mary, who relied on him for financial support, withdraw the publication. In 1826 Benbow pirated Mary Shelley’s edition and added eight more poems including, ‘A Vision of the Sea’, ‘The Sensitive Plant’, ‘To a Sky-Lark’ and ‘Lines, Written on Hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon’. Benbow’s *Miscellaneous and Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* cost only a third of Mary Shelley’s book. Benbow’s edition had to be cheap, for the

book was aimed at a different readership than the Hunt brothers had addressed in their edition. It was addressed to the reading public that Benbow had long tried to capture, not for personal reasons, but for altruistic ones, as he insists in an article published in *The Rambler's Magazine* in 1822: 'The enormous high price of books has long prevented the humble in place and purse from acquiring information, and we are not sorry to see the 'gates of knowledge' opened so that all ranks may enter therein for a mere trifle.'²⁴

Benbow, unlike most of his contemporaries, remained a true revolutionary. In April 1831 the National Union of the Working Classes (NUWC) was formed. Benbow was a founding member. This attempt at forming a general trade union was, as Prothero notes, a forerunner of the Chartist movement²⁵. The NUWC's formation seems have been founded in response to the formation of the government's new spy system -- Peel's 'Bourbon police' force -- in 1829. This seemed to be the Reverend Thomas Berguer's appeal for a middle class army, made flesh:

Their object was, evidently, to put down all constitutional remonstrance and free discussion on the part of the people, to suppress public meetings, to shackle the press, and to make each man afraid of his neighbour. [...] Already the ears of the freeborn Englishman were daily assailed with the police mandate of 'Move on there!' a cry that was enough to make our forefathers start from their graves, to reproach their pusillanimous sons for the loss of rights and privileges for which they spent their energies and their lives (hear). The present police had been ordered to provide themselves with watches, for the purpose of making the system of espionage more complete. They were also provided with report-books, in which they entered the names, the ages, the residence the habits, and everything connected with every man whom they discovered to be at all engaged in public and political meetings.²⁶

Richard Carlile and Benbow saw this new police force as having nothing to do with safeguarding the nation's inhabitants, for them it functioned to protect its rulers. It was the state's middle-class army, and the radicals responded accordingly. In 1831 there were riots in Nottingham, Derby and Bristol, as well as clashes between the new police force and the ultra-radicals. New legislation had been brought out legalising man-traps and spring-guns to combat poachers. A meeting was proposed, to be held at the Rotunda on 7 November. Carlile and Benbow anticipated a clash between their members and the new police force. Carlile published a booklet by Macerone on street fighting against troops, and Benbow sold staves to be taken to the meeting. The clash never happened, because Melbourne banned the meeting, although a few hundred still turned up, armed with staves. It was around this time that Benbow began to champion his 'Grand National Holiday', his proposal for which was published as a pamphlet in 1832. This was first voiced at the Rotunda (Abel Hall was providing spy reports to the Home Office on these meetings from 1830-34, see HO 40/25 and HO 64/11-16). This 'Holiday' was to be a month long general strike which Benbow, probably rightly, thought would lead to an armed clash between the state and the strikers. Benbow believed that the strike would empower the working class, and, echoing the *Spirit of the Hour's* lines in *Prometheus Unbound* (III, iv)²⁷, Benbow had forecast in his *Grand National Holiday*: 'we shall legislate for all mankind [...] that would place every human being on the same footing. Equal rights, equal enjoyments, equal toil, equal respect, equal share of

production'.²⁸ Unsurprisingly Benbow was again arrested. Undeterred Benbow continued to advocate a general strike after his release, and travelling around the country he tried to solicit support for a month long strike to begin on August 12 1839. Benbow was again arrested eight days before the strike was due to start; it was called off and he was sentenced to sixteen months imprisonment. He died a revolutionary's death in prison in 1841.

The brief period that I have studied in this thesis ended, it is true, with the death of Caroline. Writers such as Egan, followed by Dickens, may have continued the project of producing a kind of literature that cut across social divisions, but their project was purged of the fiercely political agenda that marks the radical writing of 1819-21. But endings are never absolute, and so I am glad to be able to conclude my study with a brief description of the later career of the neglected, William Benbow, who never wavered in his devotion to the project of 1819-21, and who lived to see that project renewed by the Chartists.

¹ Butler, *Romantics*, p. 173.

² McCalman, p.181.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *The Making*, p. 778

⁵ Ibid. p. 917

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. p. 918

⁸ J. Ann Hone, *For the Cause of Truth; Radicalism in London 1796-1821* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 356.

⁹ Prothero, pp. 153-4

¹⁰ Interestingly, Lord Liverpool is the Prime Minister that Margaret Thatcher claimed she most closely identified with.

¹¹ Cited by Hackwood, p. 298

¹² Pierce Egan, *Life in London; or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, etc., in Their Rambles and Sprees Through the Metropolis* (London: Sherwood, Jones & Co. Paternoster Row, 1823)

¹³ *Life in London*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴ McCalman, p. 236.

¹⁵ Pierce Egan, *Lexicon Balatronicum. A Dictionary of Buckish Slang, University Wit, and Pickpocket Eloquence. Compiled Originally by Captain Grose. And Now Considerably Altered and Enlarged, with the Modern Changes and Improvements, By a Member of the Whip Club* (London: C. Chappell, 1811).

¹⁶ *Life in London*, p. 10.

¹⁷ Venetia Murray, p. 19.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 32

¹⁹ Cited by Hackwood, p. 351.

²⁰ Cited by Hackwood, pp. 349-50.

²¹ Ibid. p.348.

²² William Benbow, *The Crimes of the Clergy, or the Pillars of Priest-craft Shaken; with an Appendix, entitled the Scourge of Ireland, etc.* (London: William Benbow, 1823)

²³ Neil Fraistat, 'Illegitimate Shelley: Radical Piracy and the Textual Edition as Cultural Performance', *PMLA*, 109 (1994), p. 413.

²⁴ From *The Rambler's Magazine*, March 1822, cited by Fraistat, p. 413.

²⁵ Prothero, p. 268.

²⁶ John Simpson at Surrey Radical Association, 20 Nov. 1836. Cited by Prothero p. 273.

²⁷ 'Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed – but man:/ Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless, [...]'

²⁸ *Grand National Holiday*, ed. by S. A. Bushell (London: Pelagian Press, 1996), p. 9.

Appendix A: 'Doctor Southey's New Vision'

A NEW VISION, BY ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. LL.D.!!

POET LAUREATE !!! &c.!!!! &c.!!!! &c.!!!!

'Twas at that sober hour when the light of day is receding,
I alone in Slop's Office was left; and, in trouble of spirit,
I mused on old times, till my comfort of heart had departed.
Pensive at least I shall be, methought—*sua. per coll.* surely!
And therewithal felt I my neckcloth; when lo! on a sudden,
There came on my eyes, hanging mid-way 'twixt heav'n and St. James's,
The book call'd the *Pension List*. There did I see my name written,
Yea ev'n in that great book of life! It was sweet to my eyelids,
As dew from a tax! and *Infinity* seem'd to be open,
And I said to myself, 'Now a blessing be on thee, my Robert!
And a blessing on thee too my pen! and on thee too my sack-but!'

Now, as thus I was standing, mine ear heard a rap at the street-door,
Ev'n such as a man might make bold with, half gentle half footman;
And lo! up the stairs, dotting one, one, after the other,
Came the leg of a wonder, hop! hop! through the silence of evening;
And then a voice snarling from the throat of the him they call MURRAY,
Who said, as he hopp'd, 'Must the *Mack Times* be mournful at *all* times?
Lo, Slop, I've a sop, for your mop; yes—hop! hop! I've a *story*,
With which I'll light *you* up, if you'll light me, Slop, up another.'

'Don't be so bold!' methought a *larving* voice from the skylight
Answer'd, and therewithal I felt fear as of frightening;
Knowing not why, or how, my soul seem'd night-cap to my body.
Then came again the voice, but then with a louder squalling—
'Go to *HELL*,' said the voice. 'What *I*,' said I, inwardly, 'I go!
When lo, and behold, a great wonder!—I, I, ROBERT SOUTHEY,
Even I, ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esquire, LL.D. POET LAUREATE,
Member of the Royal Spanish Academy, of the
Ditto of history too, of the Institute Royal
Of Dutchland, and eke of the Welch Cymmodorion wonder,
Author of Joan of Arc, of much Jacobin Verse, and Wat Tyler,
Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera, et cætera, et cætera,
(For it's unknown all the things that I am, and have written),
I, as I said before, ev'n *I*, by myself, *I*,
Unlike, in that single respect, to my great master Dante,
(For Virgil went with him to help him), but like in all others,
Rush'd up into Paradise boldly, which angels themselves don't,
Yea ev'n into Paradise rush'd I, through showers of *Amusics*,
All as good as the Bank, and for hailstones I found there were *Sovereigns*,
Spick and span new; and anon was a body all glorified,
Even all the great Host both of Church and State, Crosses, Grand Crosses,
Commanders, Companions, and Knights of all possible orders,
Commons and Peers, the souls of the sold, whom Pensions made perfect,

Flocking on either hand, a multitudinous army,
 Coronet, Crosier, and Mitre, in grand semicircle inclining,
 Tier over tier they took their place, aloft in the distance,
 Far as the sight could pierce, Stars, Garters, and Gold Sticks.
 From among the throng bless'd, all full dress'd, in a Field Marshal's uniform,
 Rose one, with a bow serene, who, aloft, took his station;
 Before him the others crouch'd down, all inclining in concert,
 Bent like a bull-rush sea, with a wide and a manifold motion :
 There he stood in the midst alone; and in front was the presence,
 With periwig curling and guy, and a swallow-cut coat-tail.

Hear ye of long ears! Lo! in that place was *Canning*,
 He who strengthens the Church and State, with his Manton's hair-triggers,
 And sneers on his lips, and eyes leering, and rapturous speeches;
 With him *Fletcher Franklin* I saw, and *Sir Robert*, my namesake,
 Worthy the name! even *Baker*, *Sir Robert*, of Bow-street;
 And *Gifford*, with face made of lachrymose, savage and feeble,
 Who delighteth with *Croker* to cut up men, women, and young men,
 And therefore did *Hazlitt* cut him up, and so he stood mangled.
 There, too, brocaded and satin'd, stood smiling and bowing,
 With Court-mask'd appearance, the *Fearful One*, him of *Triangle*!
 And there, too, the *Foolish one*, circular-conscienced, the *Doctor*!
 And I saw in the vision, the *Generals*, *Sol.* and *Attorney*;
 And *Sacchi*, was there too, and him surnamed *Non mi Ricordo*;
 And Mad'moiselle *Dæmon*, and *Barbara Kress*, and *Rastelli*;
 And *Mister*, and *Mister-ess Jessop*, and eke the *Miss Jessops*;
 And *Mar———s H———d*, and *M———s C———m*, also;
 And *Mrs. Fits———t*, and *C———ch*; and in sooth all the *Beauties*
 Of the 'Georgian age,' except *Robinson Mary*,
 Whom great G. first sent to the D——, and little G. after,
 (Namely *Gifford*, who smote at her sorely, yea, ev'n at her crutches,
 So that she fell in her grave, and said, 'Cover me kind earth!')
 And the great minded *C7———* was there, looking like to Behemoth;
 And the *Lauderdale* disinterested, great Scotch standard-bearer,
 And there, too, the king's much-conspired-against-stationer, *King*, stood,
 The Lord Mayor of Dublin, who sendeth his Majesty's whiskey;
 And the Members of *Orange Clubs* all, anti-Irish shillelahs;
 And a heav'nly assembly of *parsons*, some, lately, expectant—
 Parson *Hey?* Parson *B.* called, otherwise, Parson *Black-cow*, divine brute!
 Parson *C.* alias *Croly*, or *Crawley*, or *Coronatorly*,
 Who putteth forth innocent pamphlets on pure coronations,
 Expecteth Milleniums, and laudeth the *Blackguard* of Blackwood's,
 And looketh both lofty and slavish, a dreariness high-nosed,
 As if he had, under the chin been, by worshipful men, chuck'd;
 And great Parson *Eat-all-stone*, who'd swallow any thing surely;
 And the *Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry*, riding down women;
 And *Alderman Atkins*, with *Curtis*, that big belly-gerent;
 And *Flower*, and *Bridges*, *C. Smith*, and the rest of the *Burton Gang*;
 All cloth'd for the heav'nly occasion in their best Indictments!
 And there all the *Lottery-contractors*, and such like, were also;

And there Mr. *Strong-i-th'-arm*, his Majesty's Seal-Engraver, was also ;
 And they all who *forged*, lol the French Assignats, were there also ;
 And the *Court-newsmen* also was there———

(The Spirit now bids me write *prose*, but that, you know's all the same thing)

And *Colburn* with his *Muck Monthly Magazine* was there ;

And *Ward*, the Animal Painter, with a piece of spoil'd canvas, 35 feet
 wide by 21, was there ;

But *Bird* who, most disloyally, died of a broken heart, was not there ;

And the *Duke of Wellington*, with the Sword of State, was there ;

And *Sir John Silvester*, the Recorder of London, and his *assistant*, were there ;

And Messrs. *Rumell and Bridge*, the Jewellers who repair'd the Crown,
 were there ;

And the *Pigtails* cut off from his Majesty's guards were there ;

And the *Guards* themselves in their *new* uniforms, and new white gaiters,
 were there ;

And the *State Coach and Coachmen and Horses* were there ;

And the *other Ministers of State* in their new State Liveries were there ;

And the *Clerks of the Council* and the *two Silver Inkstands* were there ;

And all the Gentlemen of the *Stock Exchange* were there ;

And all the Gentlemen of the *Shipping Interest* were there ;

And all the Gentlemen of the *Landed Interest* were there ;

But all the people *without Interest* were not there ;

And all the *Peers* who voted the Queen of England *guilty* were there ;

And all the *Ministerial Members* of the House of Commons were there ;

And Dr. *Slap* with '*fresh fig-leaves for Adam and Eve*' was there ;

And the *Royal Proclamation* against Vice and Immorality was posted up there.

And behold, while I read it, thinking to put it, excellent as it was, into
 language still better,

Methought, in my vision, I dreamt—dream within dream intercircled—

And seem'd to be hurried away, by a vehement whirlwind,

To FLAMES and SULPHUROUS DARKNESS, where certain of my *Minor Poems*
 were scorching,

Yet unconsum'd, in penal fire ; and so was I purified

For deeds done in the flesh, being, through them, burnt by proxy !

There, too, roasted the Bishop of Osnaburgh's *Doxy*,

But the Righteous-one, the Prince Bishop himself, was in Heaven ;

And *two Boots* were there, as a burnt-offering for *peccadillo*,

But the *Owner* thereof was a glorified spirit above,

Where, as in duty bound, I had sung to him '*Twang-a-dillo*,

He that loves a pretty girl, is a hearty good fellow !'

And in *Torment* (but here the blest rage of the bard returns on me)

And in torment was *She*, who, on earth, had been also tormented

By *Him* who is never, nor can be accused, of aught *vicious* ;

With her were the friends of my childhood—not leaving out *Coleridge* ;

And they who were *kill'd* by the Manchester Yeomanry also ;

And *Truth*, the whole Truth, nothing but the Truth, suffered the burning.

Then I turn'd my meek eyes, in their gladness, to Heaven, and my place there,

And ascending, I flew back to Paradise, singing of Justice ;

Where, fill'd with divine expectation of merited favour,

The gathering host look'd to him, in whom all their hopes center'd,
 As the *everlasting* hand; and I, too, press'd forward to obtain—
 But old recollections withheld me;—down, down, dropp'd my sack-but,
 And my feet, methought, slid, and I fell precipitate. Starting,
 Then I awoke, with my hair up, and lo! my young days were before me,
 Dark yet distinct; but instead of the voice of the honest,
 I heard only Murray's *yap! yap!* and *hop! hop!* through the silence of evening:
Yap! hop! and *hop! yap!*—and hence came the *hop, step, and jump*, of
 my verses.



DOCTOR SOUTHEY'S NEW VISION.

D O N J U A N,

CANTO THE THIRD.

There never was such times.

Radical Reflections.

LONDON:

WILLIAM HONE, LUDGATE HILL.

1812.

1164.7.12

But in this kind, to come in braving arms,
Be his own carver, and cut out his way.
To find out right with wrongs—it may not be.

RICHARD II.

441.
11. 1.
88.

Printed by F. DAVIES, 102, Minster, London.

DON JUAN.

THE THIRD CANTO*.



I.

MISS Haidee and Don Juan pleaded well ;

At least my publisher of *late* so tells me,

Although the world he does not chuse to tell,

Yet, every body knows 'tis he who sells me :

To sing what furthermore the *pair* befel,

(As he declines my book and thus compels me,

Because my "*guinea trash*" he will not own,)

I send this Canto into Mr. Hone.

* * * * *

To the Printer advertising a surreptitious Edition of my Third Canto.

Don't think you can bamboozle folks---

Whatever merit lies in it,

You know, your Canto's all a hoax

So don't be advertising it.

But should you call--which Heaven forbid !

My Juan a senility.

He'll come as Blackwood's Welchman did,

To prove his own identity.

B

II.

I don't know why Drab John so cavalierly,
Should manifest at large his timid organ;
I never baited women *too* severely,
Just see the Quarterly on Lady Morgan;
To call her 'worm' was using her but queerly,
They might as well at once have called her

Gorgon:

I'm sure no one can say I've treated Haidee
As *Ultracrepidario* did that lady.

III.

John owes me much and need'nt have been
ashamed

To put his name upon the title page,
Although he deemed my muse a little lamed,
And fitter to be warbling from a cage;
I'd have him know she is not yet so tamed,
Although she scorns to shew it by a rage,
As crouch to any one so ministerial:
Was it not *I* that lent him wings ethereal?

IV.

You're witness here I don't get passionate,
I never yet was cooler in my life;
But all men know, Drab John was rendered
fashionable

When my son Harold took the Muse to wife:
I flatter me I still am dash-on-able,
And so I scorn to lengthen out our strife:
I am a decent *judge* of Nerve and Bone
I'd rather *try* Drab John than Mr. Hone.

V.

They say as folk grow older they get wiser,
And Juan in his wisdom thought so too;
But if his actions gave, or not, the lie Sir,
Unto this axiom shall be left to you;
He'd travelled in most lands * areath the sky, Sir,
France, Italy, and Spain had wandered thro',
And Germany and Holland scrambled over---
Until the Packet landed him at Dover.

* *Αὐτὸς περιηγήσατο..... ἐν πάσαις ταῖς*
Ἰταλίαις.....
Παλαιῇ δ' ἐκδημήσατο ἐν Ἑλλάδι.....
Παλαιὰ δ' ἐν Ἐν Πόντῳ (see my Second Canto) πάλαι,
ἀλλὰ. Odyss: Lib. 1.

VI.

But not to spy the bareness of the land,
 Or quiz her laurell'd Statesmen did he come;
 Tostea! our Daughte's?—no—he'd some on hand;
 Or kiss our Wives? oh! no! he'd one at home:
 But occupations being at a stand
 Upon the Continent, he swore he'd roam,
 And find some folk so apt to cram a lie
 That he might feed his wife and family.

VII.

For I've forgot to tell you until now,
 That Miss Haidee (they're married by the bye,)
 Had brought him, somewhat strange as I allow,
 Six strapping boys as ever met the eye;
 And young Haidees as many, for somehow,
 Whether to tame his noted gallantry,
 Or in strict retribution for his Sins,
 For six successive years she brought him twins.

VIII.

And twins can't live on air;—and no reliance
 On life a moment can *exist* in Spain;
 Since the exertions of our grand alliance
 Have given the Spaniards their tenth plague
 again,
 Who sets all calculations at defiance
 By the embroidery of his hand and brain:
 So, twins not feeding as I said on air,
 Thought Juan I must try my luck elsewhere.

IX.

And so he came to Dover in the Packet,
 Losing no time in getting up to town;
 But left, as he was wont to leave, a racket
 Among the bright eyes black and blue and
 brown;
 I vouch the fact*, and Mrs. Payne will back it,
 Who told it me the last time I was down:
 Unless I'm sure of facts I ne'er advance 'em,—
 Besides she said he was so very handsome.

* Νικήτα πρὸς ἱμερὶς Καὶνὸν δὲ θάλασσαν

Ἐν ἑστῶσι ἡλασθηῖς ἀλαλαγήσῃ πρὸς ἡμᾶς

Ἐν ἑστῶσι γλαφυροῖς (quasi Bathing Machine.)

ἀλαλαγήσῃ πρὸς ἡμᾶς.

X.

Juan liked London well enough, 'twas winter;

In summer weather London's rather dull,

Unlike the brain, where hearty dinners centre,

Becoming gayer as the streets get full.

And forth he daily went that every inter-

-E sting sight of London he might cull:

A week or so all this was very well,

But as his purse grew low his spirits fell.

XI.

He saw the Devil's Houses, great and small,

Lounging to one or other every night;

He saw the Tower and Pidcocks and St. Paul,

And wondered how the streets were made so
light;

And then he took to thinking after all,

He might present her not so rare a sight,

Yet one of greater Interest than any,

A man in London streets without a penny.

XII.

One day he thought of taking to the Law,

But that required both too much time and
reading;

And then the Church, for every where he saw

Its followers exhibited high feeding;

Then a thought struck his pericranium—"pshaw!

For Church or Law I ne'er had College breeding,

I don't see how my family to fix

In London, better than by Politics."

XIII.

Now, Juan left a mort of debts behind him,

In Judgment bonds and many a post obit,

And, if his Creditors should ever find him,

He thought it equity, like William Cobbett,

To allow no Incumbrances to bind him:

"As for my dear friend's purse I'll never rob it,"

Quoth he—"but then my family so motly

Must first be well established *à la Botley*."

3. DON JUAN.

XIV.

This was safe argument, let men deny it,
So Juan boldly set himself to work
At once, with all his might and main, to try it,—
And if he wrote no parodies on Kirk,
And only could prevail on folks to buy it,
Himself a Pagan, Infidel or Turk,
He knew it matter'd not a silver Groat
Whate'er he printed, penned or said or thought.

XV.

He took an office, hard by the *Change Gate*,
Which had been tenanted, time immemorial,
By men who sit in all the pride of *State*,
And daily place in even ranks before ye—all
The scandal of the *Little*, or the Great,
Both magisterial and senatorial,
But 7 pence charge (if up you want to scrape any,)
A short time since 'twas only Sixpence halfpenny

DON JUAN. 9

XVI.

There lay the Chronicle, and there the Sun,
The Globe, and once a week th' Examiner;
The Advertiser, the Republican,
The Herald and the Statesman and the Star;
The Courier too, enough to startle one,
The greatest Liar of the whole by far;
Besides the Times, and *sheeted* Evening Mail,
That issues from it like a double tail.

XVII.

And Mr. Clements's Observer, and
A long string more, whose names I have for-
gotten,
But mostly published in or near the Strand,
Which were without them like a herring shotten.
Juan however thought it second hand
To deal in politics so rank and rotten,
And being, as he deemed, as good a Railer,
He cut the Business of a News Retailer.

XVIII.

And sat up for himself as publisher
 Of Rubbish on Reform ; and no bad bit
 Was this of Juan's, if, as I aver,
 He had been dubbed in *Scio* for a Wit.
 Then, prythee, wherefore should not Juan stir
 About a Radical Reform a bit?
 As well as Dons, with Sculls no atom fuller,
 Sherwin, or Watson, Hunt, Carile, or Wooler.

XIX.

Not but the last has certainly his Quantum
 Of Courage, Nerve and Game, as well as brain;
 And, tho' in ireful mood my Lord of Grantham,
 Once flourished over him a whangbee cane,
 The Dwarf's a tightish little Bit of Bantam:
 Herein I merely venture to maintain,
 That if he flock with birds of such a feather,
 He can't complain if they get shot together.

XX.

I'll tell you what were some of Juan's Qualities,
 (That aren't possessed by every learned Editor,)
 He'd pen you Sonnets on *the day's realities*,
 Mislaid the Contributions of *Proveditor*,
 Write poems on Italian immoralities,
 And mightily conceive himself your Creditor:
 Then if you blamed his muse, for morals damning
 her,
 He'd call his Wife, and bid you cross *Examine her*.

XXI.

Besides, I've reason to believe his Head
 Of Classicalities a perfect Storehouse;
 In very good Translations he had read
 Whole heaps of such old bucks as Tryphiodorus.
 Altho' he never was at college bred:
 For instance if he talk'd to you of *Moorhouse*,
 Carile, or any such reforming fellow,
 He'd drag in Cataline or Massaniello.

XXII.

With means like these if Juan did't anceed,

And carry all before him like a charge

Of Yeomanry, it's very hard indeed.

Suppose we then, careering and at large,

Her anchor heaved, and from her moorings freed,

The Vessel, or for Rhyming sake, the Barge

Of all his hopes upon the treacherous sea

Of undisputed popularity.

XXIII.

It was the Time when England's robe was rent,

And famine's curse was blistering on her tongue;

When thro' her every limb strange shiverings went,

And suffering had her every nerve unstrung;

When passion vainly strove to find a vent,

When helplessly her maniac arms were flung

To Heaven, and Heaven allowed unscathed to go,

The monsters who had wrought such utter woe.

XXIV.

This was the hour our old friend Juan hit upon

To prop the pillars of a falling cause;

A cause degraded, hooted at, and spit upon

By all good subjects of our equal laws;

(That is by all who happen to have lit upon

Some good fat garbage for their hungry maws,)

And, tho' he had but little, chose to risk it

Upon a paper called ~~The Debilled Mistuit.~~

XXV.

And Juan called it so, because concocted

Of every hot or savoury Ingredient;

Upholding principles the same as Locke did,

Who built a paper limit for the obedient:

Besides, with *magisterial* news he stocked it,

The measures mercifully deemed expedient,

The cutting, maiming, stabling, slashing, hacking,

—Twas dedicated to their Worships' cracking.

XXVI.

Of old, when victories *the Continental*,

Arrived, and come they did I don't know how,

More regular than landlords get their rental,

The streets were in an uproar with the row

Of horns and roaring boys, and throats that spent all

Their breath to get a bit of bread,—but now

The newsman's voice is hoarse with thundering
forth

Our *glory-covered* Heroes of the North.

XXVII.

But this was vulgar Juan thought, as was

Another scheme of modern innovation,

The sticking papers in the window glass

Of offices, in some conspicuous station,

To catch the eyes of travellers that pass,

Who'd otherwise ne'er think about the nation:

'Tis very well for common Grub Street Ballads,

But he disdained to pamper their rank palates.

XXVIII.

This common editorial trick our Don,

Declining puffularity, avoided:

He ne'er his Daily Journal pasted on

His window, thus no idle man nor boy did

Impede the passengers, who stepping on,

Such *unimpedimentum* much enjoy did:

For He like Cok ridge would with ready club lick

That million headed beast, a READING PUBLIC.

XXIX.

" 'Tis very well," said he, " shut up in study,

By Gas Light to be conning learned lore,

Or reading papers to our dearest Judy,

While she our breakfast from a teapot pour;

But horrible indeed, when streets are muddy,

To queer a mob *that paper* spelling o'er,

With visages no doubt for wise and grave meant,

And have to elbow them, or quit the pavement."

XXX.

At that dread hour, the solemn hour of four,

When forth the beating hearts ' smoke dried
and seared,

And shrivelled up,' from counting houses pour,

And change time comes desired by some, or
feared;

As thronged the countless hundreds past his door,
Leaning against the door-post he appeared;
And thus with light guitar genteely swung,
His *Debilled Biscuit* to the mob he sung.

XXXI.

A second Orpheus—there in mute amaze

Around him Bears, and Bulls, and Asses came,
And Ducks and Geese, to listen, or to gaze

Upon the stranger with a Spanish name.

He made a rare to-do for some few days,

Despite the cries of " bravo," " off," and
" shame,"

From those who came to hiss, and those who
cheered him:

And, thus, he sung the only day *I* heard him.

The Debilled Biscuit.

XXXII.

ON Thursday last our hearts went pit à pat,

Our feet sans pattens as the streets were clean,

We found the west end of the town *quo stat*—

(You know what such old latin phrases mean,)

Altho' the Radicals were met to chat,

And Government's old eye was glancing green

With jealousy, yet gave them leave to talk,

And kept the soldiers in the *Birdcage Walk*.

XXXIII.

Fine feathers make fine birds in any cage,

And Government 'tis said have got a few:

I hope the Coldstream wo'n't be in a rage,

And set the Thames on fire at a review:

I hope the Horse Guards will be cool and sage,

So " darkly, deeply, beautifully blue!"

I quote that line from Mr. Southey's ' Madoc,'

Wherein he writes about a dying haddock.

XXXIV.

So much for soldiers—I indeed ne'er saw them,

And take the Courier's word for matter o'fact,

I swear I never heard the rabble jaw them,

So I suppose they'd no command to act;

I saw no swords, or Yeomen sworn to draw them,

But I confess at window frame compact,

High over-head I saw a noble nob—

They said the owner's name was Irish Bob.

XXXV.

I often wish this Bob, like Bobadil,

(Who struts our stage the very prince of stormers)

Upon *his* plan would just contrive to kill

Some fifty thousand of these vile Reformers;

Or sabre them into a Surgeon's bill,

Your sabre is the best of all deformers:

Mens' *felt* is soft, and so are women's *Dunstables*,

Besides, he'd save the king some cash and constables.

XXXVI.

And here I would particularly urge on

The circle grave to whom I sing aloud,

That I observed a solemn looking surgeon,

Studying a book unjostled by the crowd;

'Tis well thought I—I donned my best habergeon,

When Doctors come, of their profession proud,

And study '*Cross's Surgery*'* on the spot!

There's many a Radical will soon be shot.

XXXVII.

I'm not a RADICAL myself, but that

Is neither here nor there; I've no ambition

To have a brace of bullets thro my hat,

Or e'en adopt amphibious condition;

And to avoid the sabre, or brick-bat,

Swim the Thames river as a merry fish in,

That Palace Yard, you know is no bad place

For making *Tritons* of the populace.

XXXVIII.

I've heard that mobs are fickle, false and finical,

But, tho' they be all that and radical

To boot, I do confess a hideous sin I call

The making them become so haddockal;

And should from hall of Westminster's high pinnacle

Be griev'd to hear them on their Daddie call

For mercy, since the King or good, or bad, he

In every nation is the people's daddie.*

XXXIX.

'Twas so at Rome, when Rome was giv'n to flattery,

Whenever any of her bold he-roses

Silenc'd the fire of Carthaginian battery,

Or took an old Numidian by the nose,

They dubb'd the daring villian PATER PATRIS,†

And Livy penn'd a long Gazette in prose:

So Julius Cæsar did arrive to be

His father's and his mother's own *Daddie*.

* " ——— Or as a King
is styled, when most affectionately prais'd.
The father of his people." *Excursion*.

† " The Ranting Dog, the Daddie o' 'n — *Barns*. (Charles 2nd.
or Example.) In the present Stanza I differ with *Barns* as to
the accentuation, but I have as much occasion for the *last* syllable
as he had for the *first*. I cannot lose this opportunity of remarking

XL.

The consequence of such a scheme is plain:

The Daddy, well broke in by million slaughters,

Had not acquired his stoicism in vain,

But freely flogged unruly sons and daughters,

Until the silly urchins roared again;

And, sometimes, he prepared his axe and halters,

Witness *Le Thiéres*' splash of the first Brutus:

We'll call at Bullock's if the Guards wo'n't shoot us.

XLI.

They stopped Lord Essex, tho', the other day;

But whether he was going to see that picture

I can't affirm; it struck me, by the way,

The guard that stopped him looked much like

the Lictor:

On which, I heard some angry people say

" Altho' he'd been at Waterloo the victor,

He was not fully justified to tread all

People down, who did not wear a medal."

that his '*Ranting Dog*' seems to resemble in most particulars the
General Race of our Ranting Dogs *politica*: who after courting
the Republic and getting her most manfully into a *scrape*, resolve
to stand by her to the last through all difficulties: so that by hook
or by crook, the Republic, poor thing, cannot help being much
indebted to their notice or their generosity.

XLII.

I'm but a man, but if I were a woman

I should not be so much afraid of Guards,

But like Eliza Gaunt I dread a Yeoman,

And think him as immaculate as 'pards;

I don't say Leo-pards there's something Roman

Sticks to the Lion expetive which bards,

Or learned naturalists have given the beast

Which Yeoman doth not copy in the least.

XLIII.

Now, that I'm musing on this Betty Gaunt,

I wonder if she's lineally descended

By Father, Mother, Brother, Uncle, Aunt,

From him who Lusitanian Tower defended;

O'er whom the scaling foe could never vaunt,

But toppled down each rascal that ascended?

I feel a thirst for Antiquarian Knowledge,

And mean to call some day at Heralds' College.

XLIV.

You used some *Centuries past* to have a phrase

For neat expression of some trifle petty,

I've often heard it in my younger days,

If I remember right,—“My Eye and Betty!”

Aye, “Betty Martin”—but Wordsworthian Rays

Of Genius now afford us one as pretty,

Foy* for our Martin—“Pshaw, 'tis all my aunt,

’Tis all my uncle’s wife and Betty Gaunt!”

XLV.

O Betty! fare thee well, and if for ever,

I must an Exile part from Hunt and thee.

Let not the Manchester *Occurrence*† sever

The tender bond of our Triumvir^y:

You’ll find that Hunt as shrewd a cove, and clever,—

I must be off to Palace Yard, and see

If they intend to poke the Brighton lances

Thro’ Cartwright, Hobhouse, Walker or Sir Francis.

* All my Eye
And Betty Foy,
And her idiot Boy.

† My friend, the celebrated Courier, furnished me with this
formula for expressing the Manchester Event in the best terms.

XLVI.

Resuming then;—as near as I remember,

It was a day looked forward to by courtsmen,

Morning *but twice* had kissed her dear *September*—

(The day before, they were disturbed by sportsmen)

Upon the hustings, built of seasoned timber,

Were gathered a rare knot of keen reportsmen,

Prepared to note whate'er Sir F. should speak,

In characters, that's all, resembling Greek.

XLVII.

I saw, you're well aware I never lie,

With my own polypheman, sharp as sickle,

Their papers aspinatè, their pencils fly,

And in the twinkling of a bedposticle,*

Catch words that lightened from the speaker's eye,

Before his teeth began his tongue to tickle:

For, in your English, from the teeth and tongue,

And the embrace of lips, is language sprung.

* Bedposticle, Dim. of Bedpost. See Blackwood's Magazine vol. 5, page 718.

XLVIII.

'Tis fit I tell you tho', all danger scorning,

That I was there reporter for myself,

And walked down with a friend on Thursday morning,

Leaving Haidee with bread and cheese on shelf,

A little milk to stay our children's yawning,

And sixpence halfpenny in copper pelf,

Queen of our baking, boiling, stewing, hashing,

And *shutter-up*, should guards that way be slashing.

XLIX.

We walked to Charing Cross with circumspection,

As well became us, after what had happened

To certain stout Reporters, whom the affection

Of Mother *Fame* had rather overpapped;

We did not wish for fifteen hours reflection

Within a prison, by constables kidnapped,

We thought of *** the Courier's—not so sly as

That Teucer-like-manceuvring Mr. Tyas.*

* Once more bold Teucer in his Country's cause.
ILIAS Book xv.
Teucer betook himself to his shield, Mr. Tyas to a constable; but they both nevertheless waged successive battle with considerable effect.

L.

Arrived, we found the meeting rather small,

But that in such a case is nothing strange;

A mob in town is like a great snow-ball,

Tho' not so clean about the centre range,

And does not in a moment gather all

Its rich ingredients; like a till of change,

Moments elapse ere its dimensions round,

Or ball becomes a heap—or till a pound.

LI.

I stood in Surry, on the bridge of Minster,*

West of St. Paul's, and saw the mob assemble;

Beside me stood an interesting spinster,

Against the balustrade, who leaned to tremble;

Perceiving of her laboring breast the in-stir,

I said "That mob in Palace Yard resemble

Of harmless sheep th' innumerable flocks;"

"Good heaven," said she, "how disappointment
shocks."

* This is also a bridge of *size*, independent of the *sight* which had it not been for my *Παλιότατη* Xαγιά, this tête-à-tête on the bridge might have cost me.

LII.

"Then will it all pass off without a Riot?"

Says I, "Miss, I believe in faith it will;"

"Shall we not have some soldier play to spy at?"

Says I, "the colonel, ma'am, is very ill!"

Says she, "excitement is the soul's high diet!"

Says I, "to day you'll not enjoy your fill;

And so adieu, poor trembler," then I bowed

Of course, and sought the hustings thro' the crowd.

LIII.

My friend, meanwhile, had there procured a place,

And when I had attained his side I threw

My Spanish glance o'er all the populace,

Expanding in a broken square to view,

The greater part genteel in *hat* and face,

(My rule for judging what a mob will do,))

Which having glanced, I did address my friend,

And prophesied to him how all would end.

LIV.

Then came the leader of our sports that day,

OLD ENGLAND'S HOPE, AND WESTMINISTER'S

PRIDE.

Beside him *classic* Hobhouse held his way,

Whose Roman Stylum hath so oft defied

Of armed power the sabre's lightning play:

And then a thousand acclamations vied

To lighten the full heart, that like a flood

Whelmed with its overflow the Great and Good.

LV.

'Tis meet I here should give you timely warning,

That all our newspapers have got a trick,

Their speeches for our public men adorning,

Of patching and of painting two inch thick,

The metaphors that fly at eve or morning,

Until exaggeration makes you sick;

For instance, there's the *New right-liner Times*,

That might as well be all set up in rhymes.

LVI.

Even so that Evening Mail's eventful Ghost,

That's sold by twenties and by thirties; or

The Morning Chronicle or, Morning Post,

Or Morning Herald, or Advertiser,

Or Courier, that adorns, at England's cost,

Miss Constitution, and then dirties her,

By stumbling into some confounded sink,

And covering her with mud and printer's ink.

LVII.

There is no Salt of Lemons will discharge

The iron-mould these cursed splashes leave;

They eat into her petticoats, enlarge,

And find their oily way up waist and sleeve;

The *Blanchisseuse* may work away in barge,

But no Reforming Laundress can relieve

That sullied hue, and there restore the true one,

The Constitution then must buy a new one.

LVIII.

You clearly comprehend my last long sentence,

I'm cautious now of what Cockade I wear,

I just observed an Oliver who went hence

To build *Reforming Castles* in the air;

And, tho' for ever in a dungeon pent hence,

He'd swear he saw me in St. James's Square

With Jumping M'Gregor, or Simon Bolivar,

And pike-armed Radicals—Oh Judas Oliver!

LIX.

I've made a *Mem.* to call as I go by

At Herald's College, and a moment hear

Of Betty Gaunt the glorious ancestry;

I'll fish out there too if this Olivier

Came in a right line from that noble fry,

That fell with 'brave King Charles and every peer,'*

Of Olivers one wishes (barring malice)

The last of them had fall'n at Roncevalles.

* *Marmion*, Canto 6,

LX.

Then mind, I said, that Mad'm'selle Constitution,

Would find it requisite to buy a garment,

To lace her stays with tape of Resolution,

And veil in muslin fresh her *appas charnantes*:

You may *construe* my sentence to confusion,

But I on oath aver that I no harm meant;

I did not say she should be brought to bed,

And leave us Baby Governments instead.

LXI.

Well then, altho' I scorn to crow at ye,

You'll not find my report so incorrect,

The other papers deal in poetry,

As you in every column may detect:

When I my ~~Bouillabaisse~~ Biscuit throw at ye,

Truth is the only seasoning I affect.—

Sir Francis doffed his hat, the people shouted,

And wide around flew every word he spouted.

LXII.

"Hail, friends and *free-born* Countrymen, all hail!

There'll be no day on earth so dear to me

As this, on which already 'gin to pale

The ineffectual fires of tyranny;

And broad and bright the People's majesty

Upriseth as the sun from Ocean's deep,

To gild the level flood of Liberty;

Or like a giant from his hour of sleep,

Prepared the Race to run, and the Reward to keep.

LXIII.

" Even with a glow so silent, soft, and calm,

May the true Majesty of England rise,

Chasing our island fogs, and shower her balm

Upon our Land's convulsive agonies,

Stillling ripe manhood's groan, and orphan cries,

That startle from their sleep the Burghers' guard,

Where Justice to the stained tribunal flies,

With garments rent, and bosom idly bared,

To supplicate in vain for those the sword hath
spared.

LXIV.

" 'Can such things be?' and have we right
heard

These pigeon rumours winging from the North?

Even by the Region where our Percy spurred

The gallant steed so conscious of his worth,

And o'er his castle drawbridge thundered forth

Into the strife of *men*—was't there they drew—

Our modern Hotspurs, on their mother earth?

But bade the Percy's heart a long adieu,

In woman's gentle blood their falchions to imbrue!

LXV.

" Corruption woke;—there was a cry 'they come

The trampling thousands in their banded might,'

With reedy music and irregular drum,

And banners glancing to the noonday bright;

Fair Freedom's mail—a consciousness of right,

The only armour of defence they wear;

But then, oh! God, it is a dreadful sight

To see the *weapons* of men's despair,—

Petition's fainting knee, and famine's faltering
prayer.

LXVI.

" Alas! my Countrymen, to breathe at length
 That prayer for bread but little time is given;
 Ere yet the rising accents gain their strength
 Adown the throat again complaint is driven,
 And buried in the heart,—where long have striven
 Conflicting hopes, and pride that grapples woe,—
 Until the godlike veil of Man is riven,
 And the immortal spirit, sinking low,
 Kneel at the Tyrant's taunt, and fawn upon his blow?

LXVII.

" Even thus met Englishmen in peaceful guise
 Upon the firm earth of that saintly * field;
 Their council hall o'er-domed by rolling skies,
 That spread, they rashly deemed, an ample shield,
 For those that in the open day-light wield
 Petition's olive branch,—the freeman's tongue,—
 But ne'er to *Speech* did the oppressor yield,—
 Already to their steeds the Yeomen sprung,
 And note of maddening charge their hollow bugle
 rung.

* Like the holy alliance, Bellona seems grown,
 So fond of the Saints that events cannot cheat her,
 She ran off with the French from the field of St. John
 And was recognised last on the field of St. Peter.

LXVIII.

" A moment, and the sword hath done *it's* duty,
 And thro' unarmed thousands hacked a way;
 And changed to pallid corse our mortal beauty,
 And drenched in its own blood our mortal clay:
 Dispersion was a reed that could not stay
 The truster in his flight—again there rushed
 With desperate heel fresh Hotspurs to the fray:
 The sabre's edge hath every murmur hushed,
 And charger's iron hoof the cells of reason crushed.

LXIX.

" Fast fell defenceless manhood in that hour,
 And womanhood and childhood lost their charm,
 Humanity her sceptre,—thought her power;
 And justice was a bruised and broken arm,
 Upon the rampant field of that *alarm*.
 On every side was heard a fiendish cry,
 Where slaughter's sickle reaped her crimson
 farm,
 Wreathing the dead ears round her temples high,
 As the REFORMER fell,—and saddening sunk to

dic.

LXX.

" Sleep on—the stainless banner of Reform
 Shall never more to thy applauses wave;—
 Thou hast been wafted ere the rising storm
 Hath massed its thunders,—to a freeman's grave,
 To the repose that never pillowed slave:
 The pinions of thy children's prayer ascend
 Dabbled in blood—from the absorbing cave
 O'er which, in vengeful adjuration bend,
 Their weapons half-unsheathed,—the groupe that
 called *thee* friend.

LXXI.

" For *Thee*, thy hope—thy cause—thy cause and
 theirs,

This day indignant thousands lift their voice,
 The children of reform and lineal heirs
 Of spirit at which the buried great rejoice,
 And, here confirm the unhesitating choice
 Of Freedom, who hath chosen their peerless bride,
 Unawed and unseduced by counterpoise
 Of heartless gold,—or exofficial pride,
 Even to the edge of doom her fortunes to abide."

LXXII.

Thus far the Baronet, with patriot frown,—
 When, from St. Margaret's railing to the wave,
 Uprose o'er Palace Yard a cry of "down,"
 Then ran the timid, and stood still the brave;
 And those who paid their halfpence, or half crown,
 For good positions, ready opening gave
 To the encresing thousands, whose reproaches
 Fell fast and furious on the *line of Coaches*.

LXXIII.

And scarcely had attention bent to hear
 From every point of reassembling station,
 When music thrilled upon the general ear,
 And wands and banners with self-salutation
 Came waving on, renewing empty fear,
 Of agitation the reundulation:
 (That phrase is like the one your Cicero thunder'd
 On men's impatience)—Hail to the Two Hundred!

LXXIV.

And, thus, a stir of fresh confusion rose,

Just as Sir Francis did his speech retether;

And people for a moment deemed their foes

This *Committee*, who wore presumptuous feather,

But *I'm obliged*, and here abruptly close,

As it may seem, my notice altogether

Of this Harangue—you have the pith already

Of all his speech,—whatever further said he.

LXXV.

The usual Resolutions then were read,

Which Hobhouse seconded with might and
main:

“Is this,” he shouted, “England that we tread,

Or is it but the slavish soil of Spain?

Shall the petition for diurnal bread

Be answered here by sabre or by chain?

Commended to the God of Battles be

Our hope of vengeance and of victory.”

LXXVI.

“Is liberty become a mere *Pretender*,

That Ministers insult her, downright flat?

As bully Falstaff did his worship,—‘*Slender*

I broke your head, I know, well! what of that?

I’ll do’t again because I find it tender!’

(The mob thought this quotation very pat,—

A Frenchman near me whispered, nothing takes

here

So well as low vulgarity from Shakspeare.)

LXXVII.

“And is our English pride beyond all hope,

Fled from her rock, her altar, and her home,

To pawn her honor for a hangman’s rope,

And sign her warrant in Corruption’s tome?

Must we like ministerial hirelings grope

Amid the dusty sepulchres of Rome,

To borrow for our Regent’s hour mysterious

The cast off domino of old Tiberius?

LXXVIII.

" Even at the moment of its wildest flood
The ocean hath its limit, so hath power,
'Tis chartered for the universal good,

And tho' its ravage waste for one brief hour,—
And tho' it ebb in waves of civil blood,—

It is at length dashed back by some stern
tower,

On which our mortal energies uprear

The streaming standard of its *future* fear.

LXXIX.

" Come then! the furious flood hath reached its
height,—

The tower is undermined,—the standard fallen,—
The tenth black wave that may o'erwhelm in
sight,—

The timid by its curling ridge appallen,—
Come then! in harness to the battle dight,

Come ye, who freedom's knighthood have
installen,

The buttress of her crumbling fort repair,

And raise Her banner to the kindred air.

LXXX.

Hereon, a shout arose that soon subsided,

And, as the stentor read each resolution,

A cautious concourse left the crowd, as I did,

Aware in time of breaking up confusion;

Tho' quite as many in the crowd abided,

For there was spouting up to the conclusion:

They said Gale Jones was inking to address them,

But as they would't hear—he did't press them.

LXXXI.

Then as to Mr. Clarke and Mr. Walker,

And Watson, who was there—altho' that day

He did not condescend to be a talker,

I'd heard some fifty times what they could say,

So I preferred at once to be a stalker,

And with my friend marched manfully away,

To get by guess their several speeches up,

Before Haidee and I sat down to sup.

LXXXII.

Oh! it was great and glorious to behold,—

As we beheld it from an eminence,—

That mass of population, as it rolled

In all its density of numbers *thence*;

New vigor braced the sinews of the old,

Warmed by the fire of that day's eloquence.

And hope went dancing onward with the young—

Thus Juan spoke—that is I mean, he sung.

LXXXIII.

And longer had he sung, but with a frown

A City Marshalman impatient rose,

Who flung on either side the rabble down,

And seized our street *Murician* by the nose.

In vain did Juan tip him half a crown,

He took the fee—and kept his prisoner close:

Not suffering him to wash, or comb his hair,

Until he'd carried him before the Mayor.

LXXXIV.

Think not that I intend with pen profane

That civi-classic mansion to defue,

Emerging darkly from Bearbinder Lane,—

Be that reserved for worthier pen than mine:

Tho' scarce my glowing spirit can refrain

From entering on the task, it looks so fine,

And for an annual residence so fit—all

Cased in smoke, half prison, half hospital.—

LXXXV.

They say Stocks Market grew upon its site,—

(Remember that I call no one a blockhead,)

I only say, that wishing to be right,

I always carry Johnson in my pocket,

And think *Stocks* Market it may still be hight,

Considering the way in which they *stock* it,

Considering too, among its other oddities,

'Tis mostly *stocked* with saleable commodities.

LXXXIV.

Be that however as it may, therein

A silence all portentous reigned that day ;

The clatter of the cooks had seized its din,

And every heart was trembling with dismay ;

For it was prophecied that men of sin

In some old worsted stocking Plot would lay,

Which o'er the city, ere *to-morrow* broke,

Would burst abroad in kindling fire and smoke.

LXXXVII.

And there was whispering low and swearing hard

Of special constables, thro'out the long

And weary day, until the civic guard

Amounted to at least six thousand strong ;

From Candlewick they came, and Cornhill ward,

A very worthy, tho' a motley throng,

Prepared to stand a siege, or make a sally

Up Lombard Street, and back thro' Pope's

Head Alley.

LXXXVIII.

By these our presents be it amply known

To England's ministers, and all whom most

It may concern,—that there almost alone

The pink of Magistrates was at his post ;

Like eastern despot on his *worshipped* throne,

His eye glanced wildly joyous o'er the host

Of loyalty, that round his musnud pressed

Desirous to fulfil his high behest.

LXXXIX.

'Twas not yet dusk, but hark, what means that
shout,

As tho' to crack our very eardrums sent ?

“ To arms !—to arms ! the foe's already out,

Man every gallery and battlement,

Some trusty spy go join the rabble rout,

And if they're gone, observe which way they
went,

What damage they've already done the Town,

And if the Tower's blown *up*, St. Michael's *down*.”

XC.

Thus spake the Magistrate, and as he spake,

I only *sing* what those who saw him *said*,

Like one afflicted with the belly ache,

He shrugged his shoulders, and he shook his
head,

Then forward leaned, as tho' he wished to take

The earliest glimpse of what he seemed to dread,

When lo! no other popped before him, than

Our old friend Juan and the marshalman.

XCI.

I've given of Juan no description yet,

Except the *Greek* one in my second Canto,

So reader mind I'm something in your debt

For that's too distant to refer a man to;

Besides, since then, his thewes are much more set,

And matrimony some time since began to

Affix her claws upon his cheeks, and twist him

With strange derangements of his nervous system.

XCII.

I shall *postpone* my picture of him that

In case you happened to be in the court,

You may not think my long description flat,

But enter freely into all the sport;

How gravely there Bashaw Majore sat,

And, like the Syracusan in his fort,

Thought he could move whate'er he lay his hand
upon

Could he obtain a borough but to *stand upon*.

XCIII.

And then how self-possessed the Spanish Callant,

(Whom I have just described so accurately,)

Exhibited that most annoying talent,

Evinced by most *placarding* statesmen lately,

Of treating with indifference *nonchalant*

The queries put by magistrate so stately,

And then—(excuse me if I don't say why, Sir,)

Turning the tables on his catechiser.

XCIV.

The warrant, like most warrants, was directed
 To all good subjects and to any true one,
 That he do bring—no matter how detected,—
 Before the Mayor a Spaniard called Don Juan,
 Of crimes and treasonous practices suspected,
 Securing thus the presence of the *buon*
Cavaliero, and the marshalman:—
 When thus the city Solomon began.

XCV.

"Your name?" "Don Juan"—"Well! your
 country?" "Spain,"—

"A Spaniard, are you!—well you must be
 taught here,

What never seems to have disturbed your brain,
 How folks like you are treated when they're
 caught here;

Why came you here Sir?"—quoth the Mayor again,
 Quoth Juan coolly, "wherefore was I brought
 here?"

And kept *his countenance*—a sin so flagrant,
 'Twas thought he'd been committed for a vagrant.

XCVI.

"We've heard enough already of your pranks,
 There's not a town in Europe does not scout
 you;

Expatriated first, the very Franks

Have branded you, you bear the marks about
 you;

To pour your venom thro' our lower ranks

You've now come here,—but they can do with-
 out you;

Altho' you think in London here to winter

What's your profession?—tell me Sir?" "a
 Printer!"—

XCVII.

"Know you of any plot to burn the City?"

"I've heard it said your Lordships' self has
 heard of it."

"You've heard it said,—and that you mean for
 witty,

There's treason and reform in full the third* of it,
 And such as you are traitors," "more's the pity!"

Said Juan, "but I don't believe a word of it."

"But, I believe it sir,—and mean to save it †.

The information is on affidavit."

* I fear the Manchester 'Occurrences' has tended to reduce our
 Reforming fractions into whole numbers—that word 'Occurrences'
 strikes me as being very apposite. Thus we may say the flights of
 Bonaparte were 'Occurrences'—the Russian Campaign an 'Acci-
 dent'—or the Battle of the Crutches a 'Transposition.'

† O, bone Custos, salve! Ter.

XCVIII.

"My Lord, you'll name th' informer if on oath,"

"Sir I shall not,"—"my Lord that's rank oppression;

You I defy and your informer both;"

"Sir," quoth the mayor, "I ask for no confession,

But I'm by duty bound, tho' very loth;

To bind you over to the Quarter Session,

With two good honest bail that must be bound

With you in sureties for Five Hundred Pound."

XCIX.

So Juan looked about, and there were two

Stepped from the crowd who happened to be there,

Two men of wealth whom every body knew,

Except unluckily the worthy Mayor,

A pair of sturdy men of business, who

Resolved to see the *stranger treated* fair,

But, they were not admitted bail, altho' 'tis

Usual without the twenty four hours notice.

C.

"My Lord," said Juan, seemingly astonished,

"Is then all justice from your Lordship fled?

If you persist, illegally I'm punished,

The peril then be on your Lordship's head!

But not much liking so to be admonished,

Thus of his speech the Mayor snapped off the thread;

"Guards seize the traitor! to the Compter *
bear him,

There let him learn obedience, we'll not spare him!"

CI.

And so the Don was marching off to prison,

(First having penned a note to dear Haidee;)

When like the great *Lord Keeper's* Scottish bison

Dabbled in blood and horrible to see,

A six-foot *Butcher* with his steel uprisen,

Rushed into court—familiar, frank and free,

With loud vociferation of expression

Startling the *Dio* of that supernal session.

* The Gillespie Street I mean and not the late one
Where's now a Chapel built by Mr. Clayton—
How times are mended since his fame hath risen
Upon the ruins of a city prison!

CII.

And 'ere the Mayor, recovering from the pop,

Of such an apparition asked the reason,

The *Butcher* cried, "deserving *Newgate* drop,

Is every fool that circulates such *treason*!

Here have I been, your *Worship*, in my shop,

Arguing these three hours, in this melting
season,

With half a dozen butchers who declare

There is a fool that fills a civic chair."

CIII.

" 'A fool, a fool, we met a fool,' said they,

(With senseless clamour to the charge returning)

'A motly foo'; that swore the other day

He smelt the brimstone some *Guy Fawkes* was
burning;

Beneath the street gunpowder puncheons lay,

That would to heaven *Bow steeple* soon be
spurning.

Besides a *million* pikes, with double edges,

Hid up for *Radicals* in *Shoreditch* hedges.

CIV.

"At which, your *Worship*, with a *Belcher* stride,

I just stept up to one, and on my block

Pummelled his *ORGANS*,* telling him he lied;

That I would answer for your noble stock,

That in a drove of such would be my pride;

But then because I fib, my hearty *Cock*,

Don't think of cooler argument I shy am,—

I say the *Mayor's* no more a fool than I am.

CV.

"And so I said, as loud as I could bellow,

And tell your *Worship*, to your *Lordship's* face,

I think you are by far the cleverest fellow

That ever occupied your *Worship's* place.

I told them so, the *Raffs*! with faces yellow,

Like their own tallow, a degenerate race!

They blustered about *Russel*, *Hampden*, *Sydney*.

Say what you like, says I, the *Mayor's* a *Lad* of
Kidney."

* This must have rather galled the *Radical*.

CVI.

Uprose the Mayor with gratulating phiz,

"Butcher! we thank thee for thy kind defence;

We thank thee that thou didst exhibit Wis-

-Dom and disinterested Eloquence;

But prithee, as *our advocate*, dismiss

The force of English blows for English sense:

In one word, (misinterpretation barring)

Be bold *my* friend,—but, mitigate your sparring?"

CVII.

Thereat, the noble Butcher's eyes struck fire,

Flashing like powder-pan both right and left,

And rose his leg of mutton fist in ire,

As if he would the Mayor in twain have cleft.

"Fought I for you!" quoth he, "and called a
liar,

The scoundrels who your character bereft?

I s'pose from *Gratitude* as much you'd winced,

Had I the Radicals by *wholesale* minced!"

CVIII.

Then forth *the Champion* rushed—the Mayor
uprose,

And for the day his myrmidons dismissed;

And went to seek the Mayoress I suppose,

The while a few disloyal varlets hissed;

I longed to see, I must confess it, *those*

With each a trusty handcuff on his wrist,

Awaiting quiz from that theatric jester

And pattern of humanity Sylvester

CIX.

Daggerwood as played by Mr. Kean,

Who had it for his benefit at Drury,

And hacked and slashed away thro' every scene

Upon our muscles risible like fury;

These hissing ragamuffins had they been,

As I was, in the pit that night I'm sure he

Would not have left one hissing symptom visible,—

I saved my life by being anti-risible.—

CX.

Meanwhile what happened in the night, and what

Became of all the bustle and the stirrage,

To counteract the mischief of the plot,

That had aroused such lots of zeal and courage,

And whether ever brought to light, or not,

I only know 'twas cause of much demurrage,

When gravely wiser men, and baldermen

Discussed it in the learned Court of Aldermen.

CXI.

But Juan soundly slept within his cell,

Whereto the despot's mandate had consigned
him ;

I only hope his Lordship slept as well,

Who in the teeth of usage had confined him,

But being married, 'tis not fit I tell

What harrowing regrets he left behind him,—

And whether much he took the day in dudgeon—

I rather thought he did—but there's no judging.—

CXII.

However, there he lay. And now suppose,

While Juan tranquilly his nap is taking,

We gently draw this Canto to a close—

(I think we need not dread his early waking)

I feel besides that I begin to prose,

My eyes being tired and my fingers aching

Which (be we Cantabrigians, or Oxonians,)

Is very fatal to us Heliconians.

CXIII.

But should not our ' Lieutenant of Police,'

With hand irreverent disturb my leisure,

And send the instruments of his caprice,

On Canto Three to make illegal seizure,

'Tis possible that I may still increase

With Canto Four your literary treasure ;

That is, if Juan shouldn't *die* in jail

Whilst the Lord Mayor's *considering* his bail.

CXIV.

Now, should the reader ask me in what age

This Juan lived, when all these things befel
him,

And who were those I brought upon the stage,

If he can't find it out I won't compel him;

But, pondering deeply over every page,

I think he'll find—at least I that can tell him—

'Twas when Alphonso filled the Spanish throne,

And in the Mayoralty of Whittington.

END OF CANTO III.



Appendix C: The Testimony of William Simmons

he will assist the Reformers and if the liberty of the Country is not obtained, he will die on the gallows at last; and that he still hopes that there are more Thistlewoods left and that he will assist them but in a more sly way than he did before;—he has great confidence in me and intimates that he will employ me to do it, and says he will introduce me to many respectable people at his end of the Town friends to Liberty some of whom, will surprise me, that he has lived in Sir Benjamin Hothouses family & knows the
Name

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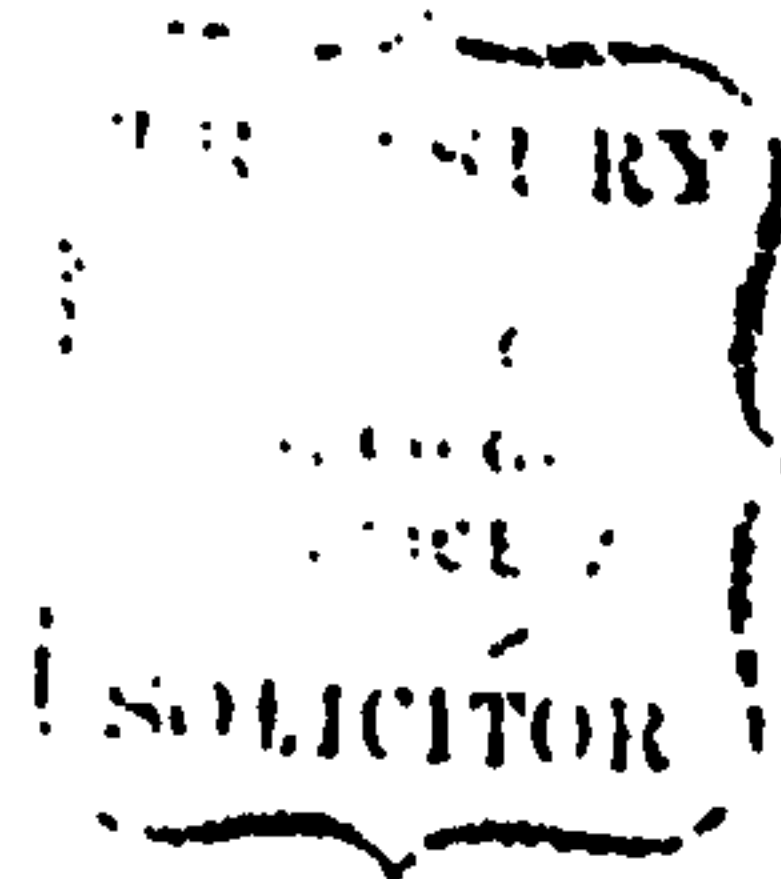
200
Young one the Member for Westminster,
and has often conversed with him
and that he is a perfect Republican
and that he. Simmons thinks that
Mr. Hobhouse will be the man who
will gain this Country its Liberty
and that he means to have an interview
with him as soon as he can possibly
get one the result of which I shall
know & that he will see what
can be done among the higher
orders of people and that he means
to bring his Case before the House
of Commons by means of Mr.
Hobhouse and that he will tease
expose & punish the Borough
Mongers

Appendix D: The Testimony of Abel Hall

27

on Tuesday night to 11 on Wednesday morning a few days after Mr. Stobhouse was sent to Newgate. Shuttlewood at his own house told me that he had waited on Mr. Stobhouse at a house in Spring Gardens & that he Shuttlewood told him Mr. Stobhouse that there was a plan to destroy the Ministers and that he wished Mr. Stobhouse to give him an answer, whether he Mr. Stobhouse would take the Reins of Government after they were destroyed or not, and Shuttlewood said that Mr. Stobhouse said that he would Shuttlewood further

Newgate to see Mr. Hobhouse the day
on which on the day after he was
apprehended and that the Keepers of
Newgate told him that they were
making arrangements to make Mr.
Hobhouse comfortable and until that was
done no one was permitted to see
him. Shustekwood said if he had
seen him that he intended to have
asked if he wished to be brought
out of Newgate and if so that he
would have offered to get it done.



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