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978-0-521-10185-1 - Gillray Observed: The Earliest Account of his Caricatures in London und Paris

Edited by Christiane Banerji and Diana Donald

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GILLRAY OBSERVED

The Earliest Account of his Caricatures in *London und Paris*

One of England's most famous caricaturists, James Gillray, was an immensely successful and popular artist, yet there were no accounts of his work published in England during his lifetime. The single contemporary source on Gillray is a series of commentaries published in the German journal *London und Paris* between 1798 and 1806. Christiane Banerji and Diana Donald have now translated and edited selected commentaries, with accompanying illustrations, to reveal how Gillray's art was understood by his contemporaries.

The edition offers a unique insight into the role of satire in British politics during the Napoleonic era, and the subtle artistry of Gillray's designs. The volume also includes an informative introduction which places Gillray and his work in the context of a fascinating episode in Anglo-German relations at the turn of the eighteenth century.

CHRISTIANE BANERJI is a professional writer and translator, with research interests in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German history and culture.

DIANA DONALD is Professor of the History of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. She has written extensively on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art including *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (1996).

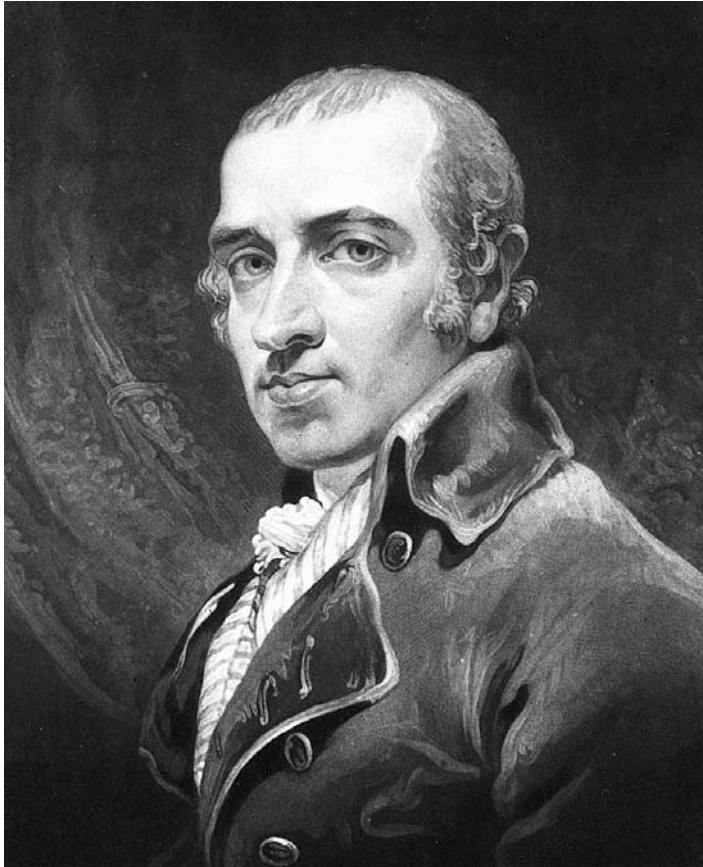
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For Draper Hill

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Preface

In the last few years, research on the graphic satire of the Georgian period has advanced dramatically. It owes much to the work of historians of the 1980s and 1990s who have virtually rewritten the history of eighteenth-century Britain, affording fresh insights into such matters as the widening of the political world; the growth of popular patriotism and of print culture; and developments in the public's patronage and consumption of the arts. Now there is a succession of studies embodying new perspectives on one of that society's most striking and characteristic products: the caricature print. The authors of such studies represent several different disciplinary and political standpoints and come to different conclusions, especially on the related questions of how far satirical prints had a truly popular appeal; the social complexion of those who saw them or bought them; and the extent of their circulation beyond London's elite. This is a stimulating debate, but one that is hampered still by a dearth of primary research into the sparse records of the period. One important contemporary source in particular has until now been largely inaccessible to English readers – the series of commentaries on caricature prints in the German journal *London und Paris*. Although factual information from the journal was used by Mary Dorothy George in her volumes of the *British Museum Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, and by Draper Hill in his excellent biography of James Gillray, there is no previous translation of its extensive articles on particular caricatures, which provide a unique account of how they were received and construed by contemporaries. The present edition of some of the articles on Gillray from *London und Paris* is therefore intended as a timely contribution to the growing body of work on this richly suggestive but problematic category of visual imagery.

The commentaries on French and English caricatures in *London und Paris*, which accompanied reduced copies of the prints, span almost the whole period of the journal's existence, from 1798 to the end of the

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Napoleonic wars, but they are most important and prolific in the years down to 1807. Among the English prints, numbering about 145 in all, examples by several artists are featured – Gillray, Isaac Cruikshank, Williams and some anonymous hands. However, the articles devoted to Gillray's contemporaneous production greatly outweigh, both in length and in significance, those on the works of other caricaturists. We therefore decided at an early stage to restrict our collection to Gillray, and to treat the book as a portrayal of this artist, the key figure in the early history of graphic satire. Even so, it has only been possible to include about a quarter of the commentaries on Gillray's caricatures which appeared in the journal. In making our selection, we were influenced not only by the quality and historical interest of the prints in question, but also by the value of the chosen commentaries in throwing light on attitudes to caricature, both as a political instrument and as an art form. Twenty of the commentaries on Gillray's designs are translated and reprinted in their entirety, together with three articles which dealt in more general terms with the trade in satirical prints. The latter tell us much about Gillray's relationship with other producers, and about both the moral and the commercial contexts within which his works appeared.

The commentaries in *London und Paris* are written in a discursive, scholarly and often witty style. We have endeavoured to render this in an unmarked English which avoids anachronistic modernisms, but which makes no attempt to imitate the English idioms or terminology of the period. *London und Paris's* variable and often erroneous spellings of proper names (including Gillray's) have been corrected. Classics of English literature were often quoted in German translations, and in these cases the original texts have of course been restored; where the works of German poets were quoted in *London und Paris*, the translations are ours, unless otherwise stated. Where *London und Paris* quoted Latin and Greek works in German translation, we have used an existing modern English translation of the passage in question, cited in the relevant footnote, and we are grateful for the copyright permissions involved, notably of Penguin Books Ltd.

The accounts of Gillray's prints in *London und Paris* were extensively footnoted. These footnotes add greatly to the density of meaning elicited from the prints; indeed, many are as important as the main text. They have

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therefore been included almost in their entirety, although in a very few cases (e.g. some digressive allusions to ancient literature, or references to German editions of classical or English authors), minor omissions have been made. *London und Paris's* references to literary sources were generally laconic or inaccurate. We have therefore traced and checked them, and have silently expanded or corrected them as necessary. In those few cases where it proved impossible to identify or find a copy of the work in question, *London und Paris's* citation has been retained as it stands. A similar approach has been adopted in connection with allusions to works of art.

In order to make this collection of translations as useful as possible to the modern English reader, editorial footnotes have also been provided; these are distinguished by the use of brackets. First, we have added details of the medium and publication date of the chosen Gillray prints. Since all were published by Hannah Humphrey at 27, St James's Street, London, this information has not been repeated. However, the variant forms of Gillray's signature are quoted, since they denote the differing degrees of his responsibility for the design of the prints. The numbers of Gillray's prints in the *British Museum Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires* are given next (the *Catalogue* normally includes *London und Paris's* copies of Gillray's originals as an annexe to the entries for the latter), together with references to other important works on the prints. We have also explained points in *London und Paris's* texts and footnotes as necessary, and have provided some references to modern secondary literature.

This book has occupied us both intermittently over a period of several years, and its completion has been reliant on the support of a number of institutions. A Grant-in-Aid from the Swann Foundation for Caricature and Cartoon in 1992 enabled translation to begin. The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art made a generous grant in 1994 towards the cost of research and translations from *London und Paris* used in Diana Donald's *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (Yale University Press, 1996), and this has of course equally benefited the present work. Manchester Metropolitan University has provided substantial assistance through contributions to the salary costs involved. For all these awards we are extremely grateful.

Many individuals have also given vital assistance to the editors. Nicholas

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Penny's early enthusiasm for the *London und Paris* project, and his constructive suggestions as to how the edition should be published, were crucial in bringing it to fruition. Special thanks are due to Justus Fetscher, whose wide knowledge of the period, helpful advice and friendship have proved invaluable in the preparation of the book. Draper Hill provided welcome encouragement, and, in particular, expert comments on the Gillray letters printed in the Appendix. Sarah Richards was kind enough to read a draft of the Introduction, and to make suggestions based on her extensive study of eighteenth-century German journals. The staff of the Handschriftenlesesaal, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (West), and of the Goethe- und Schillerarchiv, Weimar, were also extremely helpful to us. In pursuing the more abstruse allusions of *London und Paris's* writers, we have sought the help of a number of scholars; however bizarre the item of information requested, they have all responded with the greatest generosity and good humour. We are here particularly indebted to the erudition of Christa Grössinger; Peter Humfrey; William Hutchings; Roy Turner; and David Womersley. Most of all, we wish to thank Stephen Parker and Trevor Donald for their constant encouragement and support over the long period of the book's gestation; they must be as pleased as we are to see it finished.

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BM (with catalogue numbers) Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires . . . in the British Museum*, 11 vols. (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1870–1954, reprinted 1978), vol. VII for 1793–1800 (1942) and vol. VIII for 1801–10 (1947)

George (1959) Mary Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinion and Propaganda*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), vol. II, 1793–1832

Hill (1965) Draper Hill, *Mr. Gillray the Caricaturist* (London: Phaidon Press, 1965)

Hill (1966) Draper Hill, *Fashionable Contrasts: Caricatures by James Gillray* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966)

Hill (1976) Draper Hill, *The Satirical Etchings of James Gillray* (New York: Dover Publications, 1976)

LuP *London und Paris* 1–12 (Weimar: Landes-Industrie-Comptoir, 1798–1803); 13–20 (Halle: Neue Societäts Buch- und Kunsthandlung, 1804–7); 21–4 (Rudolstadt: Hof- Buch- und Kunsthandlung, 1808–10). Thereafter issued by the same publisher in Rudolstadt as a new series, continuously numbered but with variant titles, and with a break in 1814: *Paris, Wien und London* 1–2 (1811); *Paris und Wien* 3–5 (1812–13); *London, Paris und Wien* 6 (1815)