Introduction: The Recording Angel

> Caricaturing has reached its full maturity of perfection in this country; surely a land of freedom in Caricatures, as our Patriots, as well as Ministers and other eminent men, can *feelingly* testify. (J. P. Malcolm)[1]
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> The political reformers have always been the first to appreciate the value of pictorial satire as an offensive weapon. (Thomas Wright)[2]
>
> When it comes to caricature, the English are extremists … (Baudelaire)[3]

The place is London Guildhall, the date is December 1817. In a packed courtroom holding around a thousand spectators, the radical publisher William Hone stands accused of committing criminal libel. His offence: to publish three religious parodies attacking political corruption and injustice. In a series of concurrent trials held over three days, each of these texts – *John Wilkes' Catechism, A Political Litany* and *The Sinecurists' Creed* – is separately prosecuted for blasphemy and in each case Hone is sensationally acquitted by special juries.[4] What begins as a show trial against dissent is turned on its head and celebrated as a major victory for freedom of expression and the reform movement, a victory made all the more remarkable by the fact that an exhausted and sickly Hone mounts his own, laborious defence. What could have caused such a judicial and political upset?

The secret of Hone's success was his demonstration of the distinction between satirical target and method: drawing on all his experience as an autodidactic bibliophile and antiquarian publisher, Hone used many examples from literary history to demonstrate that it was perfectly justified to use the Bible as a satirical tool to ridicule and expose the shortcomings of a deserving target. Indeed, many of England's greatest writers had done exactly this, including Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and the technique was the stock-in-trade of religious and political controversies from Luther onwards. Hone's prosecutors had confused the means with the ends and mistaken the parodic vehicle for the parodic subject – it was politicians, not the scriptures that Hone's pamphlets (rightly) demeaned. Although the trial judges insisted that following 'bad examples' was no defence, and although Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough directed the jury to find Hone guilty, the verdict was a dramatic vindication of freedom of expression.[5] Hone's intensive crash course in literary criticism provided irrefutable evidence of the inconsistency, double standards, obtuseness and political motivation of the government case.

Hone's triple acquittal is justly remembered as a milestone in the history of press freedom. His public display of erudition – backed up by formidable pile of books – was a highly symbolic mobilisation of the power of radical print culture. Yet one aspect of this defence, and possibly its most brilliant tactic, has received almost no serious critical attention. Though most of his sources were textual, Hone also brought into court a substantial cache of recent caricature prints.[6] His stated reason for doing this was to show that caricatures also deployed rather than denigrated biblical and religious imagery, but the courtroom was a brilliant opportunity to showcase caricature's iconoclastic bravura and anti-authoritarian energies, even though none of the prints explicitly attacked the government.

The first exhibit was carefully chosen: *The Spiritual Barometer; or, The Scale and Progress of Sin and Death* is a parody of the evangelical spiritual thermometer or barometer whose title alludes to Milton's famous allegory of 'Satan, Sin and Death' from *Paradise Lost*.[7] As Hone argued, the print's target was the familiar theme of overheated religious enthusiasm, and the fact that it was 'to be seen in every print shop in the Strand' (his own premises were in the adjacent Fleet Street) was the clearest evidence of the satire's public approval and assent.[8] Hone's basic point was that no previous attempt had been made to suppress or prosecute either this print or any other flagrant caricature uses of religious parody, and this gave him the licence to unleash on the courtroom the two undisputed masters of '*graphic* parodies', James Gillray and George Cruikshank.[9] Gillray was the real ace in this visual pack: as Hone revealed with relish and punctilious detail, Gillray produced 'master-pieces' of religious parody such as *Apotheosis of Hoche* while in receipt of a secret government pension.[10] The trial judge's retort – that Gillray's prints were indeed 'profane parodies', 'wicked publications' and 'offences'[11] – could not answer the charge of political bias and double standards: it seemed patently obvious that Gillray had been spared prosecution for being on the 'right side'. Hone probably knew that this was not the whole story and that caricature's unique immunity from prosecution derived from its volatile aesthetic and ideological makeup, its multiple ironies and its sheer embarrassment value (the fear of being laughed out of court seems to have deterred all serious thoughts of prosecution), but he was canny enough to keep the argument simple and exploit the opportunity to publicise the talents of Gillray's successor Cruikshank, a rising star who was also (conveniently) Hone's visual collaborator.[12] Cruikshank's best-known print to date, *Boney's Meditations on the Island of St Helena – or – The Devil Addressing the Sun* (1815), was exhibited as an example of Miltonic parody, though it was also a strongly 'patriotic' image that belied Cruikshank's liberal-radical leanings.[13] Indeed, Cruikshank was so delighted with the publicity that the trial gave his work that he resumed his illustrations for Hone's planned *History of Parody*, a book that unfortunately never saw the light of day. Another collaborative project that failed to materialise was an illustrated account of the trial, a publication that would have reduplicated the occasion's synergies between satire, parody, radical print culture, spectacle and caricature.[14]

Cruikshank compensated for this loss with a series of caricature versions of the trial in which the arch-villain is Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, the *bête noire* of

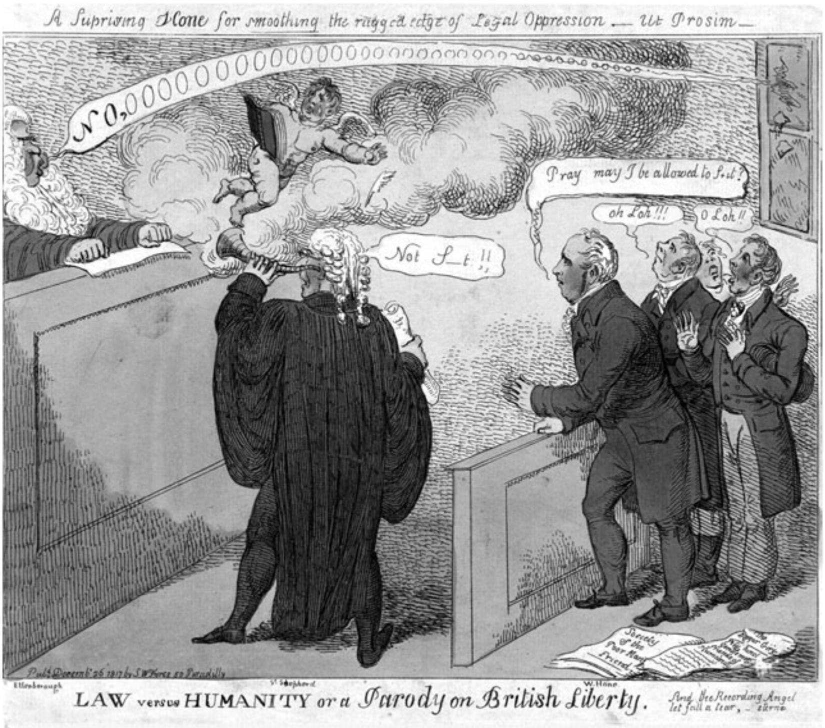

Figure 0.1. George Cruikshank, *Law versus Humanity; or a Parody on British Liberty* (December 1817)

the post-war radical movement.[15] As things turned out, Ellenborough was so devastated by his humiliating defeat at the hands of the plebeian Hone that he declined into ill health and died within the year, but in the immediate wake of the trial he was the principal target of the caricaturist's ire. The most effective and engaging of the Cruikshank trial-prints is *Law versus Humanity; or a Parody on British Liberty*, which may have been intended as a frontispiece to the unrealised illustrated edition of the trials.[16] Here Cruikshank shows a characteristic flair for combining Gillrayan, carnivalesque effects with a cogent use of textual allusion (Figure 0.1). Published within days of Hone's third acquittal (the crudeness of the design suggests that it was composed in a hurry),[17] the print is a prolonged scatological joke that re-imagines the trial through the lens of an incident that allegedly occurred when Hone was first taken into custody in May 1817. As part of his defence, Hone told the court that he was treated extremely badly when he was arrested: despite the fact that he was 'retiring for the purposes of nature' he was bundled into a coach and taken to see Ellenborough at Westminster Hall. When Hone asked if he could sit down to relieve his discomfort, Ellenborough allegedly refused in such a loud voice that he 'might have been heard at the further end of the hall'.[18] Cruikshank magnifies and

coalesces these incidents into a comically grotesque encounter between radical innocence and judicial inhumanity: not only do Ellenborough's words literally shatter the windowpanes at the back of the hall, but his deafening refusal is also witnessed by a recording angel who drops his pen in startled shock or disgust. The visionary clouds surrounding this very mature-looking putto provide the central comic touch to the scene, as they resemble a flatulent accompaniment to the verbal thunderbolt: only the judge has the right to 's[hi]t'. The trial is restaged as an infantile blast of authoritarian ego, reducing 'humanity' to a lavatorial 'parody' of civil liberties: Ellenborough is an almighty old fart, a windbag of bluster and malevolence. This carnivalesque power of caricature carries the force of deep-seated resistance to authority, 'the uninhibited person who shows his behind to the *Political Father*' in Roland Barthes' definition of textual pleasure.[19] With hindsight, the falling pen of the angelic recorder carries an ominous chill, as if Ellenborough is being signed out of official history and handed over to the lethal imagination of the caricaturist.

Once the print is seen in this way, as an inverted Judgement Day rather than a frolicsome rerunning of the familiar trope of radical martyrology, the angelic cloud begins to resemble a theatrical puff of diabolical smoke. What the print finally adds up to is an entertaining revenge fantasy: historical events are dismantled, reassembled and distorted through the lens of visual 'parody' and excess. And although the image functions autonomously as a slapstick encounter between political good and evil, its seemingly primitive satisfactions are deceptively complex. The print's subtitle, 'A Parody on British Liberty', clearly alludes to the main platform of Hone's defence and implies that Cruikshank was intentionally repeating Hone's blasphemous 'offence' in his own comic use of religious iconography. If the viewer has learned the correct lessons from Hone's courtroom lectures, he or she would know that the biblical allusion to the recording angel was a device to ridicule Ellenborough's lack of judicial credibility (habeas corpus being the equivalent of divine testament). Like Gillray, Cruikshank knew his Bible well.[20] Also like Gillray, Cruikshank knew English literature intimately: squashed into the bottom right-hand corner is a quotation from Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: 'And the Recording Angel let fall a tear, – stern[e]'. The literary allusion deepens the print's satirical dynamic as it brings into play an incident in Sterne's novel in which Uncle Toby insists that the wounded Lieutenant Fever 'shall not die by G—' if he is welcomed into the Shandy household. Sterne follows up this profanity with a mock-epic parody of the oath's divine reception:

> The ACCUSING SPIRIT, which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in; – and the RECORDING ANGEL, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.[21]

By re-imagining the trials as a parodic 'heaven's chancery' in which Ellenborough is the misguided 'accusing spirit' who is 'blotting' his professional and legal copy-book, the intertextual allusion acts as a brilliant endorsement of Hone's literary methodology. But there is yet another dimension to this reference, as it is almost certain that

Cruikshank was alluding to Sterne indirectly though a 1791 Gillray print that used the whole of the quotation as its title.[22] The intervisual richness of caricatures is often underestimated by critics, yet it is one of the key ways in which the satirical prints preserved, transmitted and mobilised historical memory. The 1791 print is a satirical attack on the Reverend Matthew William Peters, a minor artist who designed illustrations for major printsellers such as the Boydell brothers. Peters is depicted as the 'accusing spirit' who is handing a piece of paper to a glum-looking recording angel: on the paper is inscribed Uncle Toby's oath 'He shall not dye, by ***'. Seen in relation to *Law Versus Humanity*, the precise details of Peter's biography are less important than the evocation of that tempestuous earlier decade in which the caricature 'record' of passing events became such an important feature of the political imagination and in which Pitt's government conducted the first major offensive to suppress Romantic-era dissent. Moreover, certain details of the earlier print take on a more pronounced significance in the recast version: the insignificant scrap of paper in Gillray's scene could be regarded as the implicit voice of resistance in Cruikshank's reworking (Hone is the putative martyr of a government plot), and the quaint orthography for the word 'dye' is also surely a self-approbatory nod towards the visual medium.

The tearful recording angel is an appropriately unstable and ironic emblem of caricature's public role as the people's unofficial 'chancery': the seemingly high-minded, dutiful 'blotting' out of wicked reputations and offences is an impressive feature of the 'Golden Age' of visual satire, but this mission is nearly always realised through forms of character assassination, setting 'low' visual pleasures alongside 'high' cultural reference, and an indulgence in the genre's unprecedented aesthetic freedoms that constantly push modes of representation to the point of 'extraordinary graphic hyperbole'.[23] Caricature is certainly a 'record' of Romantic political history, but it realises this documentation through its own unique talents and pleasures. For Leigh Hunt's radical newspaper the *Examiner*, this 'mixture of notorious matter of fact and emblematical allusion' enabled satirical prints to 'move the heart in the cause of liberty'.[24] But even if the explicit link between caricature and progressive politics is not as secure as some Romantic radicals believed (many prints, after all, attacked the reform movement), there is still a powerful mischief-making appeal in graphic satire's ability to transform political events into grotesque and absurd spectacle. The methodology of caricature is premised on a demotic disrespect for public image and a suspicion of the 'official' version of events. As Marcus Wood puts it, 'in popular political satire anything might be joined with anything else'.[25]

As this book hopes to show, somewhere near the heart of caricature's proliferating layers of intertextual and intervisual meaning is the self-reflexive 'signature' of the caricaturist, a visual imprint of the point at which history passes over into fantasy and phantasia through the transforming agency of the satirical imagination.[26] In *Law versus Humanity* this figure is the recording angel, a comic symbol of divine intervention and sublime authority whose facial features have more than a suggestion of Cruikshank about them. Indeed, by dropping his pen, the angel could be yielding the field of representation and the historical 'record' to the 'pencil' (meaning the

paintbrush, or in this case the engraver's needle). Unlike Hone's fallen books, which symbolise the heroic textual world of persecuted radical print culture, caricature inhabits the airy regions of the mock-sublime: liberated, farcical, transgressive, carnivalesque, spectral, 'spectropolitical'.[27] The fact that the originality of caricature stems from its conspicuous investment in the transformative powers of the imagination evokes a parallel with Romantic aesthetics, though the relationship is characteristically unstable. It is certainly possible to argue the merits of caricature as a Romantic art form, both in its visionary and anti-authoritarian methodology and in its energetic exploitation of the major artistic genres of the period (history painting, the sublime, the portrait, the conversation piece), but these influences are nearly always intermingled with the *frisson* of sensationalist motifs drawn from both traditional and newer cultural sources. To the extent that it showcases a distorting application of the inspirational imagination, we can regard caricature as renegade Romanticism.

I have used the example of Hone's trial to illustrate *Romanticism and Caricature*'s new approach to Romantic-era caricature. Taking up where M. Dorothy George left off several decades ago, studies by Diana Donald, Vic Gatrell, Tamara Hunt and other scholars have done an excellent job of surveying and organising this voluminous field of popular political imagery, but what all this work lacks is the close reading and intensive analysis that is normally accorded to 'serious' works of art.[28] As W. J. T. Mitchell notes, 'a caricature or stereotype offends not because of *who* but *how* it represents'.[29] Some of the contributors to Todd Porterfield's recent collection of essays *The Efflorescence of Caricature* have taken steps in this direction, but such detailed investigations of formal and intervisual qualities of caricature are the exception rather than the rule.[30] Gombrich and Kris's pioneering theoretical work on caricature and fantasy still remains unchallenged, and much of the best criticism on caricature's ideological agency has been undertaken by historians whose main interest is in the extent to which graphic satire records or distorts historical events.[31] George Cruikshank's biographer Robert L. Patten has made some suggestive comments about the 'nervous impulse' of caricature, while Marcus Wood has discussed Hone and Cruikshank's collaborations in the context of radical print culture.[32] Somewhat surprisingly, the recent 'visual turn' in Romantic criticism has kept caricature at arm's length, preferring instead to focus on those new, technological forms of optical entertainment and illusion such as eidophusikon, phantasmagoria and panorama.[33]

The reasons for this marginalisation could be pragmatic or principled or merely the result of lack of familiarity. Caricature's topicality could deter some scholars, though very fortunately this initial barrier to understanding is largely overcome by Frederic G. Stephens and M. Dorothy George's wonderful *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum* (BMC), an indispensable source that is now incorporated into the British Museum's excellent digital collection of caricatures.[34] BMC is the starting point for any scholar of British caricature as it provides the political context for each image, identifies the personnel depicted and also cross-lists other prints which deal with the same themes. Invaluable as all these data are, an unintended effect of this wealth of factual information may have been to sideline

or underrate the prints' formal and artistic qualities and to consolidate caricature's secondary or ancillary function as an entertaining and provocative illustration of historical events and textual sources.

A low or at best modest estimation of caricature's visual qualities overlaps with a lingering reputational and generic problem: was caricature really an artistic form at all, or did it hover uneasily somewhere between various forms of ephemeral popular culture and political propaganda? Or was it really an elite genre comprising self-flattering in-jokes on behalf of the political classes? These questions are explored and to a degree answered in the ensuing chapters, but it is worth stating at the outset that I regard caricature's fugitive and enigmatic position in cultural history as both adding to its mystique and posing an enticing challenge for the student of Romanticism. I am also inclined to agree with Jonathan Bate that 'socially and politically, caricature was the most influential art of the 1790s and early 1800s',[35] though such sweeping endorsements of caricature's sway over Romantic public opinion, however attractive they may be to the scholar of popular prints, remain contested, and I am aware that the precise ways in which the viewing public consumed and reacted to the prints is still an open and intriguing question.[36] As the historian James Baker notes, to argue over the popularity of caricature (with the populists citing shop-window displays and rental packages as evidence of a wider social appeal than the relatively low print runs of a few hundreds and high purchase costs of one shilling to one guinea (hand-coloured) would suggest)[37] is in part to miss the point (though Baker is adamant that the prints were not popular): in order to understand both the appeal and (highly variable) visual quality of the prints, we must acknowledge that all caricaturists were 'hired hands' and that the 'ideological content of their prints' was 'manipulated by the dual editorial constraints of publisher and customer'. Though Baker's work makes an important case for grounding our analysis of prints in the 'editorial constraints' of publishers and printsellers (and where such information has been readily available, as in Gillray's appointment as illustrator for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* (see Chapter 3), it has formed a central plank of my approach), it would be wrong to privilege infrastructural influences over aesthetic factors, as this can restrict the imaginative scope and power of the prints and their ability to subvert and transcend their perceived ideological affiliations to either publishers, editors or political factions. Baker's identification of an allegedly irresolvable 'tension' between the claims for caricature's street-credible popularity (as evidenced by the jostling crowds in those over-cited and self-authorising print shop pavement scenes) and the idea that many caricatures are 'complex, intertextual entities requiring deciphering to reach their artistic meaning/motivations' is less critically disabling than intended, as it is precisely this 'tension' that locates caricature's unique cultural position as consistently transgressing social and cultural norms (and it is worth adding that the chronology of Baker's study, which terminates in 1811 with the death of Isaac Cruikshank, also precludes any engagement with the remarkable expansion of caricature's popularity in the woodcut collaboration between George Cruikshank and William Hone, the subject of Chapters 2, 5 and 6 of this study).[38] Such deflationary logic also ignores the fluid,

multi-class composition of so-called 'popular' culture in the Romantic period. As John Mullan and Christopher Reid have argued, eighteenth-century popular culture was in fact a symbolic site of frequent 'collisions' of the 'elegant and the vulgar'.[39] For Vic Gatrell, caricature was one of Romanticism's 'invaluable cultural barometers', showing us that 'polite' and vulgar cultural habits overlapped across a wide spectrum of the middle and upper classes.[40]

Despite the modest print runs of caricature prints, therefore, their *implied* audience was unquestionably 'popular' in this more nuanced definition of 'colliding' social and political constituencies lying outside the charmed circle of political power.[41] As my case studies show, a variety of visual pleasures were available for viewing audiences, from the more immediate ridiculing of authority figures to the complex reinvention and interweaving of cultural myths and symbolic narratives. The effect resembles William Hazlitt's analysis of the pleasures of political satire: the power 'to expose to instantaneous contempt that which is condemned by public opinion' is delivered through 'monstrous and abortive fictions' resembling 'disjointed dreams, dictated by a preternatural dread of arbitrary and despotic power'.[42] The extent to which such a set of responses can be mapped onto precise social groups (as a narrow application of Bourdieu's socio-cultural 'discriminations' might promise) remains an open but by no means debilitating question.[43]

With these qualifications in place, the aim of this book is in one sense quite simple: by treating a range of single prints in the same detailed manner in which we look at paintings or literary texts, I hope to throw new light on caricature's aesthetic and ideological complexity, and by doing so raise its status within Romantic studies. This does not mean shifting caricature's centre of gravity away from print culture: on the contrary, a fuller understanding and appreciation of caricature's visual techniques and effects can only be achieved by digging deep into the discourses that constructed the relevant political controversies and debates. In Foucauldian terms, each print is a 'node within a network' of complex discourses.[44] Yet this textual emphasis needs to be complemented by a close analysis of caricature's distinctive intervisual qualities. This aspect of the satirical visual imagination covers both its simultaneous parodying of and borrowing from mainstream classical and Romantic art and its constant recycling and modification of its own tropes and traditions. As shown above, Cruikshank's reworking of Gillray gave the mock martyrdom of Hone both an additional cultural authority and a sense that the tragic farce of history was being repeated. An awareness of the textual and visual allusiveness of caricature helps us to understand its power as fantasy, its ability to spectralise and to de- and re-mythologise regimes of political and religious rule that are themselves sustained by illusion, hyperbole and demonisation. At this theoretical level, the precise ideological affiliations of either the caricaturist or the graphic print are almost irrelevant, as the thrust of the image-making is to empower the viewer by 'translating' political processes into a compelling, comprehensible and critical visual language. In practice this may mean that no person or object depicted is immune from the satirical gaze, and if this absence of a clear ideological standpoint may strike some critics as the result of

either cynicism or opportunism, it could also be seen as permitting the full pleasures of spectatorship for a diverse audience, rather like providing a venue for a sporting event whose outcome is unknown.

To reduce caricature prints to a simple question of being either pro- or anti-reform or pro- or anti-liberty (assuming one can pin down those equally slippery and complex terms) is an understandable temptation, as this methodology would seem to accord with the expectations and (assumed) cultural behaviour of contemporary consumers. But the highly conspicuous, overdetermined political themes of the prints are only the starting point for an exploration of the multilayered and polymorphous richness of the caricature universe. Even the most naïve viewer can appreciate the degree of imaginative excess in a caricature print. The most striking departure of graphic satire from its anchor point in print-cultural 'reality' is the sense that the initial 'trigger' points of newsworthy or topical events are re-imagined and re-examined through a mode of hyperbolic re-enactment. This mode in turn transforms political discourses into what Brian Maidment calls 'disconcertingly unstable' dramatic narratives.[45] These can yield a range of interpretations, from the more straightforwardly ironic (where the print contradicts its apparent overt purpose as declared in its title and other ideological markers, a process that we can assume to be within the control of both the artist and the perceptive viewer) to the wider cultural contradictions that reveal what Fredric Jameson has memorably named the 'political unconscious'.[46] The critical pathway followed in this book is to regard the carnivalesque openness of Romantic visual satire as simultaneously absorbing and recreating the prevailing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses that are already, in this period of fierce ideological warfare, 'hyperactive'.[47]

Put more simply, one of the scholarly joys of working with caricatures is to enter into a world of signification in which the endpoint of a line of investigation is not always predictable and the results are often surprising. In the following chapters I have offered a range of strong interpretations of various prints that I regard as intriguing and compelling, but it is as much the methodology as the conclusions that I am interested in displaying. If this book is persuasive, it will encourage other students of Romanticism to mine this vast treasure trove of political fantasy and fantastical politics.

The following case studies can be read in any order and, as already stated, I hope that the method of analysis will show that almost any political caricature can be approached as a valuable and illuminating historical and aesthetic document.[48] I have not attempted to compete with the numerous excellent surveys of the 'golden age' of caricature, and it would be a brave scholar who attempted to impose coherence on such a vast repository of images (the British Museum alone has over 12,000 prints). I have, however, taken a more conventional approach to the organisation of the chapters by arranging them in chronological order. Apart from making the book more readable and logical, there are a further two reasons for using this structure: the first is to show the ways in which the caricature tradition is highly self-referential and richly intervisual, constantly borrowing from and

innovating upon earlier prints; the second is to use graphic sources to illuminate some of the important political and cultural controversies of the Romantic period. I have tried to give the two 'phases' of Romanticism roughly equal treatment: different aspects of the 'revolution debate' of the 1790s are covered in Chapters 1–3 while Chapters 5–7 cover 'England in 1819' and the Reform Bill. The intermediary Chapter 4 looks at the Napoleonic bridging period between these intensive moments of political and cultural activity. An underlying theme of all the chapters is to consider the ways in which caricature provided an alternative, transformed political history of the Romantic period. As J. P. Malcolm stated in *An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (1813), graphic satires had established themselves as 'a kind of allegorical history of public events'.[49]

Chapter 1 takes us to the heart of the iconoclastic, 'spectropolitical' power of caricature by considering Gillray's startlingly offensive rendition of Milton's allegory of 'Satan, Sin and Death' as a meta-allegory of the caricature gaze. Chapter 2 uses Gillray's wonderfully ebullient *Midas* and Cruikshank and Hone's macabre *Bank Restriction Note* to shed new light on the explosion of financial forgery (and subsequent executions) that followed the Romantic credit crisis and the suspension of cash payments. Chapter 3 studies Gillray's intriguingly entitled *Exhibition of a Democratic Transparency* to make the argument that even when he was in the pay of the government, Gillray managed to sabotage the prevailing loyalist discourse of conspiracy and disloyalty by turning its tropes against his paymasters from deep within counter-revolutionary print culture. Chapter 4 uses Thomas Rowlandson's eye-catching satire of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig – *The Two Kings of Terror* – as the basis for a discussion of the 'English Dance of Death', a revival and modernisation of the popular medieval allegory that tells us much about the Romantic fascination with spectral imagery and what Cruikshank called 'skeletonic' humour. Chapter 5 takes this theme one step further by looking at the ways in which Thomas Paine's most radical work *The Age of Reason* haunted Romantic culture: Cruikshank's print of that name was designed to secure the prosecution of the radical publisher Richard Carlile for reprinting Paine's book, but the caricature can also be interpreted as reawakening both Paine's spectral presence and his critique of the phantasmal basis of religious power. Chapter 6 continues the religious theme by considering the 'British Inquisition', a term that refers not only to the state's clampdown on civil liberties in the wake of Peterloo but to an event that has been undervalued in both Romanticism and studies of the radical movement: the revolution in Spain. The way in which the peninsular conflict acted as a fantasy displacement of domestic politics is investigated through a detailed reading of one of Hone and Cruikshank's most violent images, *Damnable Association*. Finally, Chapter 7 takes us deep inside the Reform Bill crisis of 1831–2 by looking closely at *Matchless Eloquence*, a satirical depiction of Henry Hunt's first major parliamentary speech. Through its imagining of supposedly uncontrollable and undisciplined radical discourse, this print actually exposes the Reform Bill's illusory claims to resolve and complete the divisive political narrative of the Romantic period.