

CONSPIRACY ON CATO STREET

On the night of 23 February 1820 twenty-five impoverished craftsmen assembled in an obscure stable in Cato Street, London, with a plan to massacre the whole British cabinet at its monthly dinner. The Cato Street Conspiracy was the most sensational of all plots aimed at the British state since Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot of 1605. It ended in betrayal, arrest, and trial, and with five conspirators publicly hanged and decapitated for treason. Their failure proved the state's physical strength, and ended hopes of revolution for a century. Vic Gatrell explores this dramatic yet neglected event in unprecedented detail through spy reports, trial interrogations, letters, speeches, songs, maps, and images. Attending to the 'real lives' and habitats of the men, women, and children involved, he throws fresh light on the troubled and tragic world of regency Britain, and on one of the most compelling and poignant episodes in British history.

Vic Gatrell is a professorial Life Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, who has taught for most of his career in the Cambridge Faculty of History. His previous books include *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People* (1997), which was awarded the Whitfield Prize of the Royal Historical Society; *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (2009), which was awarded the Wolfson Prize for History and the PEN Hessel-Tiltman Prize; and *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (2013), which was shortlisted for the PEN Hessel-Tiltman Prize.

CONSPIRACY ON CATO STREET

A Tale of Liberty and Revolution in Regency London

Vic Gatrell



Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-83848-1 — Conspiracy on Cato Street
Vic Gatrell
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108838481
DOI: 10.1017/9781108974981

© Vic Gatrell 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2022

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gatrell, Vic, 1941– author.

Title: Conspiracy on Cato Street : a tale of liberty and revolution in Regency London /
Vic Gatrell, University of Cambridge.

Other titles: Tale of liberty and revolution in Regency London

Description: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2022. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021049190 (print) | LCCN 2021049191 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781108838481 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108974981 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Cato Street Conspiracy, 1820. | Revolutionaries – Great Britain –
History – 19th century. | Great Britain – History – George IV, 1820–1830. | Great
Britain – Politics and government – 1789–1820. | Thistlewood, Arthur, 1770–1820. |
Treason – England – London – History – 19th century. | Conspiracies – England –
London – History – 19th century. | BISAC: HISTORY / Europe / Great Britain / General

Classification: LCC DA537 .G38 2022 (print) | LCC DA537 (ebook) |
DDC 941.07/4–dc23/eng/20211102

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021049190>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021049191>

ISBN 978-1-108-83848-1 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

Presently, passing to particular instances, we recalled the already old story of the attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory; a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it was impossible to fathom its origin by any reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought. For perverse unreason has its own logical processes. But that outrage could not be laid hold of mentally in any sort of way, so that one remained faced by the fact of a man blown to bits for nothing even most remotely resembling an idea, anarchistic or other. As to the outer wall of the Observatory it did not show as much as the faintest crack. I pointed all this out to my friend who remained silent.

Joseph Conrad in 1920, on his novel, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale of the Nineteenth Century* (1907)

When any man, or any set of men, place themselves above the laws of their country, there is no other means of bringing them to justice than through the arms [weapons] of a private individual. If the laws are not strong enough to prevent them from murdering the community, it becomes the duty of every member of that community to rid his country of its oppressors. . . .

Insurrection then became a public duty.

Arthur Thistlewood's last speech, 28 April 1820

This, gentlemen, is not the way that kings are destroyed, and governments overthrown.

John Adolphus, defence counsel, 19 April 1820

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations and Maps</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xviii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xx
<i>Timeline</i>	xxi
<i>A Note on the Text</i>	xxiii

PART ONE THE SIMPLE TALE

1 The Cato Street Conspiracy: What Happened	3
2 Arrests and Reactions	27

PART TWO TAKING ITS MEASURE

3 Interpreting the Conspiracy	53
4 What They Were Up Against	66
5 What They Believed	94
6 Fantasy, Myth, and Song	114
7 Rebellion’s Habitats	137

PART THREE THISTLEWOOD: HIS STORY

8 A Terrorist in the Making: 1774–1816	167
9 The Spa Fields Insurrection: 1816–17	186
10 Thistlewood Unhinged: 1818–19	217
11 Peterloo in London: 1819–20	230
12 Edwards the Spy: 1819–20	263

CONTENTS

PART FOUR ORDINARY BRITONS

13 Conspirators and Others 285
14 Wives, Marriages, Children 305
15 Men of Colour: Wedderburn and Davidson 321

PART FIVE THE EXECUTIONS

16 Trials and Verdicts 343
17 May Day at Newgate 365
18 Epilogue: Géricault Goes to Cato Street 379

The People Listed 390
Historiographical Note 396
Trial Reports 399
Notes 403
Bibliography 429
Index 435

Illustrations and Maps

MAPS

1 Cato Street to Grosvenor Square (from William Faden’s 1813
edition of Richard Horwood’s 1792–9 *PLAN of the Cities of LONDON and
WESTMINSTER, the Borough of SOUTHWARK, and PARTS adjoining
Shewing every HOUSE*) (London Topographical Society, 1985) *page* 6

2 The Strand, Fetter Lane, Holborn, Drury Lane (from Horwood’s *PLAN
of the Cities of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, etc.* 1799) (MOTCO Image
Database) 142

ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1 *The Cato Street Stable in 1975* (© City of London Corporation) . . 4

1.2 F. Moser, after W. H. Harriott, *Cato Street Conspiracy (No. 2):
Interior View of the Hay-Loft* (26 February 1820) (© Yale Center for
British Art) 5

1.3 J. Wylde, after B. King, *View of the Building in Cato Street where the
Conspirators were Discovered*, with map and depictions of hand grenade
and pike-head (2 March 1820) (© Yale Center for British Art) 15

1.4 Dr Watson’s recipe for a fire ball (© National Archives) 20

1.5 Dr Watson’s coded address to the soldiers (© National Archives) 21

1.6 F. Moser, after W. H. Harriott, *Cato Street Conspiracy (No. 1):
View of Cato Street* (26 February, 1820) (© Yale Center for British
Art) 24

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

2.1 George Cruikshank, *The Cato Street Conspirators* (Humphrey, 9 March 1820) (Guildhall Library & Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty Images) 29

2.2 *Cold Bath Fields Prison* (Ackermann, 1814) (Guildhall Library & Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty Images) 36

3.1 E. Scriven, after George Richmond, *Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth* (1833) (Hulton Archive/Getty Images) . . 64

5.1 Anon., *Richard Carlile on His Liberation from Six Years Imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol / Novr 18th 1825* (Carlile, 1825) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 96

5.2 Thomas Spence’s copper or alloy tokens (1795–6): ‘WE WILL WALK THUS IF THE LAW REQUIRES IT’; ‘I AM NOT THINE ASS’; ‘MY FREEDOM I AMONG SLAVES ENJOY’ (Spence’s cat); ‘FREE-BORN ENGLISHMAN’; ‘BRITISH LIBERTY DISPLAYED’; ‘TREE OF LIBERTY’ (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 110

6.1 Anon. (Isaac Robert Cruikshank?), *The True Born Englishman!!! & Keeper, Now Every Britons Song shall be Give me Death or Liberty etc. etc.* (Roberts, November 1795?) (© Yale Center for British Art) . . 126

6.2 Anon., *A Freeborn Englishman. The Admiration of the World; the Envy of Surrounding Nations; &c &c.* (1795–6) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 127

6.3 George Cruikshank, *A Free Born Englishman! The Admiration of the World!!! And the Envy of Surrounding Nations!!!!* (Fores, 15 December 1819) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) . 128

6.4 George Cruikshank, *Poor John Bull – The Free Born Englishman – Deprived of his Seven Senses by the Six New Acts* (Fairburn, 15 January 1820 (misdated 1819 on the print)) (Universal History Archive/Getty Images) 129

7.1 Wenceslaus Hollar, *Map showing the Extent of the Damage caused by the Great Fire of London, 1666* (1666) (Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images) 145

7.2 John Emslie, *Greystoke Place, Fetter Lane* (c. 1880) (© London Metropolitan Archives) 150

7.3 Anon. (J. Findlay?), *The Strand Entrance to the Crown and Anchor 1851* (Guildhall Library & Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty Images) 154

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

7.4 John Crowther, *View of White Lion Court, Wych Street* (1880)
(© London Metropolitan Archives) 155

7.5 John Crowther, *Staircase in the White Lion, Wych Street* (1880)
(Guildhall Library & Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty
Images) 157

7.6 A. J. Bool, *Wych Street* (1867) (© The Trustees of the British
Museum) 158

8.1 George Scharf, *Arthur Thistlewood* (1817) (© The Trustees
of the British Museum) 172

8.2 Richard Dighton, *Arthur Thistlewood at the Old Bailey, Monday,
17 April 1820* (photograph: the author) 172

8.3 Abraham Wivell, *Arthur Thistlewood* (Wivell, 15 April 1820)
(© The Trustees of the British Museum) 173

8.4 Abraham Wivell, *Arthur Thistlewood: Engraved by Mr Cooper,
from a drawing taken by Mr Wivell, taken in the Sessions House, on the day
sentence of death was passed* (in second printing of Wilkinson’s *Authentic
History*, May 1820) (Hulton Archive/Getty Images) 173

9.1 Robert Cruikshank, *A Correct Likeness of James Watson, the Elder
(Taken in Court)* (Fairburn 1817) (photograph: the author) . . 187

9.2 Anon., *Thomas Preston* (from Lewis, *Trials at Large*, 1817)
(photograph: the author) 187

9.3 (a–c) George Scharf, *James Watson, Thomas Preston and John Hooper
(1817)* (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 187

9.4 George Cruikshank, *The Spa Fields orator HUNT-ing for
popularity to Do-good!!* (Sidebotham, 1 March 1817)
(Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty Images) . . . 205

9.5 Anon. (W. Pegg?), *Decapitation of Jeremiah Brandreth* (1817)
(Hulton Archive/Getty Images) 213

10.1 Isaac Robert Cruikshank, *Modern Reformers in Council, – or – Patriots
Regaling – vide the Resolutions of the Spa Fields & Spencean Societies*
(Humphrey, 3 July 1818) (Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via
Getty Images) 223

10.2 *Smithfield Meeting 21 July 1819* (Thompson, Long Lane, 23
July 1819) (Guildhall Library & Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty
Images) 227

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

11.1 George (and Isaac Robert?) Cruikshank, *Massacre at St. Peter’s, or ‘Britons Strike home’!!!* (Tegg, 16 August 1819) (© Library of Congress) 242

11.2 [Richard Carlile,] *To Henry Hunt, Esqr. as Chairman of the meeting assembled on St. Peter’s Field, Manchester on the 16th. of August, 1819 and to the Female Reformers of Manchester and the adjacent Towns who were exposed to and suffered from the Wanton and Furious Attack made on them by that British Armed Force the Manchester and Cheshire Yeomanry Cavalry this plate is dedicated by their fellow labourer Richard Carlile; Published, Oct 1st, 1819, by Rd. Carlile, 55, Fleet Street, London* (Rischgitz/Getty Images) . . 243

11.3 George Cruikshank, *The Radical’s Arms* (Humphrey, November 1819) (© Library of Congress, Washington, DC) . . . 261

13.1 Abraham Wivell, *James Ings, Butcher* (Wivell, 15 April 1820) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 291

13.2 Abraham Wivell, *James Ings and Thomas Brunt* (Kelly, 2 May 1820) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 291

13.3 Abraham Wivell, *Charles Cooper: A Seaman* (Wivell, 15 April 1820) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 291

13.4 Abraham Wivell, *John Monument: Shoe Maker* (Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1820) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) . . . 291

13.5 Abraham Wivell, *William Davidson* (Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1820) (photograph: the author) 292

13.6 Abraham Wivell, *Richard Tidd* (Kelly, 2 May 1820) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 292

14.1 *Old Montague Street, Whitechapel* (1961, before demolition) (© London Metropolitan Archives) 315

15.1 George Cruikshank, *A Peep into the City of London Tavern. on the 21st of August 1817* (Stockdale, October 1817) (© The Trustees of the British Museum) 325

15.2 Detail from George Cruikshank, *The New Union Club* (Humphrey, 19 July 1819) (© Chicago Art Institute) 326

16.1 (a–b) The convicted conspirators’ autographs, 27 April 1820: (a) Thistlewood, Ings, Brunt, Davidson, Ings (hanged); (b) Cooper, Strange, Wilson, Harrison, Bradburn (transported) (© Wellington Papers, University of Southampton Library) 358

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

16.2 Anon., *A May Day Garland for 1820* (Fores, May 1820)
(© The Trustees of the British Museum) 363

17.1 *The Execution of Thistlewood Ings, Brunt, Davidson and Tidd for High
Treason* (Thompson, Long Lane, 16 May 1820) (Guildhall Library &
Art Gallery/Heritage Images/Getty Images) 368

17.2 George and Isaac Robert Cruikshank, *Tom, Jerry and Logic
in the Press Yard at Newgate* (1821) (Ann Ronan Pictures/Print
Collector/Getty Images) 370

18.1 Théodore Géricault, *Scene of a Hanging in London* (1820)
(© Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen) 380

18.2 Francisco Goya, *The Third of May 1808* (1814) (Prisma/ UIG
via Getty Images) 388

Preface

Well over a century ago Joseph Conrad gave the most modest of subtitles to *The Secret Agent*, his novel about London's late-Victorian anarchists. *A Simple Tale of the Nineteenth Century*, he called it. On the face of it, the story told in this book about an earlier, non-fictional group of terrorists in regency London is a simple tale too. It takes us up close and personal to the conspirators who on the night of 23 February 1820 assembled in an obscure stable in Cato Street on the western edge of London in order to massacre the whole British government as it sat down to dinner in a Grosvenor Square mansion. This was the most sensational of all plots aimed at the state between the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the Irish Republican Army's Brighton bomb attack on Thatcher and her party in 1984. Had it succeeded, it would have changed our world utterly.

The conspiracy's exposure shook Britain profoundly. Optimists believed that it woke the nation from its long neglect and moved it towards reform. But the first parliamentary Reform Act lay a dozen years ahead, so it was truer to say that the conspirators' entrapment by government spies and their punishment afterwards marked the moments when the state's power was unchallengeably displayed and when hopes for revolution of the French kind were decisively flattened. Very few even of the Chartists in the 1840s envisaged root-and-branch revolution. Why Britain avoided a revolution in the following century is in good part explained by the Cato Street drama.

The men's elaborate trials in April aimed to dramatise the conspirators' violence in order to justify repressive laws and to expunge the stain of the Peterloo massacre the year before. The punishments that followed settled the question. Along with three weavers independently executed as

PREFACE

traitors in Scotland for leading the so-called Scottish insurrection, five Cato Street men were the last in Britain to have their heads taken off for treason. They were also the last to be killed for treason until after the Irish Easter Rising in 1916, when fifteen men were executed by firing squad in Dublin and Roger Casement was hanged in Pentonville Prison.

What follows is the first book to explore this great moment by engaging with the conspirators' experiences, habitats, and mental world as intimately as is now possible. Innumerable spy reports, verbatim trial interrogations, and a vast range of newspapers, letters, speeches, songs, and images allow a rare degree of 'thick description'. When necessary, the humblest of these sources are quoted at length, since the misspelled and ill-punctuated writings of the half-literate in past times are seldom so accessible to their descendants. Probably no other episode in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British history can be so fully accessed from the dialogues of the common people as this one.

Part I of the book tells the 'simple tale' first. It offers a straightforward narrative of the conspirators' entrapment and arrests, for, as every novelist knows, the devils lie in the details. Yet, like historians, novelists also know that simple tales can carry broad implications. The rest of the book broadens out therefore, to offer the forensic study that linear narratives can't deliver.

Part II discusses how past writers have interpreted the story and how we might today interpret it more sensitively. It notes the interests and powers of the rich men and aristocrats who kept the disfranchised in their place in regency Britain, and the equalising ideas that induced some of the disfranchised to inform the rich about their corruption and to demand redress, with violence if need be. It attends to the post-war conditions that poor craftsmen were up against: their impoverishment and declining craft status, the battered courtyards and lodgings they occupied, the taverns they frequented, and their own understandings of the cruel times they lived in: what and how did they think? One chapter addresses their habitats – and London itself – to provide the story with the topographical frame which historians so often bypass.

Part III provides a contextual narrative of radical protest in regency London by tracing the Cato Street leader Arthur Thistlewood's movement towards terrorist fantasy and violence. It notes the impact of the

PREFACE

ultra-radicals' abortive insurrection after the Spa Fields meeting in 1816, and of the Peterloo massacre in Manchester in 1819, and it discusses the government spy and *agent provocateur* George Edwards's betrayal of the conspiracy's every detail to the Bow Street police and Lord Sidmouth's home office.

Part IV attends to the 'ordinary Britons' who got caught up in or who supported the conspiracy – their marriages, hardships, literacy or lack of it, and the racial and other prejudices that determined their life-chances. Most of the activists were under-employed shoemakers with wives and children to support. Two were black Jamaicans who had been born into slavery. One of them, Davidson, lost his head.

The book ends in Part V with the conspirators' trials and convictions and five of the leaders' hangings and decapitations. It notes the differing reactions to this horror on the part of the plebeian and the polite crowd respectively, and it finishes with an extraordinary drawing of the executions by the visiting French artist Théodore Géricault. His unfinished sketch hints at a shift in attitudes to the suffering of others that in these years began to reshape the contours of western sensibility.

A book of this kind can hardly help speaking to the present. Despite obvious changes, the inequalities and deprivations that moved the conspirators, and the privileged interests and powers that contained them, still operate. As William Faulkner once wrote, the past is not only never dead; it is not even past.

Acknowledgements

This book was conceived long ago in the 1980s when I was working in the National Archives on a quite different subject. One day curiosity moved me to order from the Treasury Solicitor's Papers a box intriguingly labelled 'pike-heads as exhibits'. Its contents had been used in evidence against a group of London radicals who were twice tried for treason – unsuccessfully in 1817 and successfully in 1820. Out of the box fell three heavy hand-tooled iron batons. Each measured some twelve inches in length and an inch or so across the middle, each had been beaten flat into the shape of a file, and each tapered to a point at both ends. One point was burred so that it could be securely jammed into a wooden staff; the other was smoothed so that it could be 'run into a fellow's guts', as the book's chief protagonist eloquently put it. Both in 1817 and in 1820 thousands of these things had been secretly manufactured and hidden about London. In 1820 two or three of them were meant to be inserted up the dripping necks of the most hated of the government ministers. Their heads were to be carried through London's streets to signal the advent of a long hoped-for British revolution.

My opening of that box and my encounter with the jaw-dropping materiality of its contents jolted me into several weeks' archival note-taking. The notes were put aside as other books and projects got in the way, but that encounter stayed with me. It alerted me to the truth, now more obvious than it was then, that our understandings of past times might be advanced not only through the study of surviving texts, but also through the study of localities, objects, and episodes which historians tend to ignore because of their apparent triviality and obviousness. In what follows I chart a story of considerable consequence not only

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

through mountains of spy reports and semi-literate letters, but also through the accumulation of material, topographical, and incidental detail.

My immediate debts are to Jeremy Krikler, who first encouraged me to write about Cato Street; to Vivian Bickford Smith, Vyvyen Brendon, and Jerry White, who cheered me up in my more pessimistic moments; to Piers Brendon, a constant fount of advice who read through an early draft with a sharp eye for repetitions, misphrasings, and other failings; and to Mark Damazer, who read both an early and a late draft with a critical eye on the work's accessibility and potential. At the Press, Liz Friend-Smith, Natasha Whelan, and Hilary Hammond have been understanding and helpful. To all these people my warmest thanks.

My greatest debt is to Pam. As ever, she has been the *sine qua non* without whose warm support and readerly eye this would never have been written. I dedicate what follows to her, and also (again) to Freya, Harry, and Jack, and now also to Joe, who hadn't been born for the last one.

Abbreviations

<i>BDMBR</i>	<i>Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals</i> (3 vols, 1979)
BM	British Museum
HC Deb	House of Commons Debates
HO	Home Office Papers, National Archives
LCS	London Corresponding Society
<i>OBSP</i>	<i>Old Bailey Sessions Papers</i> (www.oldbaileyonline.org)
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
TS	Treasury Solicitor’s Papers, National Archives

Timeline

1792	Jan.	London Corresponding Society (LCS) established
	Dec.	Tom Paine convicted of seditious libel <i>in absentia</i>
1794		Habeas corpus suspended (to June 1795); treason trials of Hardy, Horne Tooke, and Thelwall result in acquittals in November
1795		Treason Act and Seditious Meetings Act passed after George III stoned on way to open parliament
1798		Habeas corpus suspended (to Feb. 1799; extended to May and again to Mar. 1800)
1798–9	July–Feb.	LCS and United Irishmen arrests (including Evans, Spence, Despard)
1803	21 Feb.	Thistlewood an ensign in West Yorkshire militia
		<i>Marcus Despard and six co-conspirators hanged and decapitated for treason</i>
	July–Sept.	Thistlewood in Lincolnshire militia
1804		Thistlewood marries heiress Jane Worsley in Lincoln; she dies in 1805
1806	3 Oct.	Julian Thistlewood, Arthur's son by Ann Thom[el]ley, born in Horncastle
1808		Thistlewood marries Susan Wilkinson, daughter of Horncastle butcher
1811		Arthur, Susan, and Julian Thistlewood come to Edgware Road, London
	Mar.	Thistlewood on committee for United Irishman Peter Finnerty
		<i>Prince of Wales becomes regent during George III's madness</i>
1813	Feb.	Thistlewood offers to subsidise Margarot's visit to Bonaparte
		Thistlewood gambles away his brother's £900
1814	Apr.	<i>Napoleon abdicates</i>
		Thistlewood takes Thomas Evans's son to Paris
	Sept.	Death of Thomas Spence, agrarian socialist
		Thomas Evans establishes Society of Spencean Philanthropists
1815	20 Mar.	<i>Napoleon returns to Paris after escaping from Elba – start of Hundred Days</i>
	18 June	<i>Battle of Waterloo: Napoleon exiled on St Helena</i>
	20 Nov.	<i>Second Treaty of Paris ends French wars</i>
		Thistlewood's second visit to Paris
1816	2 Dec.	Spa Fields meeting addressed by Orator Hunt; 'Spa Fields insurrection'
		Thistlewood and 'young' Watson in hiding; 'young' Watson escapes to America
1817	Feb.	John Castle recruited as government spy
	9 Feb.	Thomas Evans and son imprisoned for a year
	4 Mar.	Habeas corpus suspended for a year to 1 March 1818
	10 Mar.	<i>March of the Lancashire 'Blanketeers'</i>

TIMELINE

(continued)

	12 Mar.	John Cashman the sailor hanged for looting gun shops after Spa Fields
	17 Mar.	Treason Act renews 1795 Act against 'compassing, imagining, inventing, [etc.] death or destruction . . . of the heirs and successors of George III'
	25 Mar.	Seditious Meetings Act ('Gagging Act'); applied until July 1818 but renewed under Six Acts 1819; repealed 1824
	28 Apr.	Thistlewood arrested; held with 'old' Watson, Preston, and Hooper in Tower
	9–16 June	Watson, Thistlewood, Preston, and Hooper arraigned for treason; 'old' Watson acquitted when spy's role exposed; others' prosecutions collapse
	Sept.	Bartholomew Fair 'insurrection'
	7 Nov.	<i>Hanging and decapitation of Derbyshire luddites</i>
	Dec.	William Hone acquitted for blasphemous libels
1818	Jan.	Edwards starts reporting to Stafford, chief clerk at Bow Street police office
	3 Feb.	Thistlewood challenges home secretary Sidmouth to a duel
	1 May	Thistlewood imprisoned for a year in Horsham gaol as result (for 'breach of peace')
1819	Jan.	Richard Carlile opens radical bookshop at 55½ Fleet Street; Edwards the spy trades next door
	May	Thistlewood released from Horsham gaol Watson introduces Edwards to Thistlewood
	21 July	Smithfield reform meeting, addressed by Hunt and Watson
	16 Aug.	<i>Peterloo massacre, Manchester</i>
	13 Sept.	Hunt's triumphal entry into London; radicals quarrel at Crown and Anchor dinner
	Oct.	Richard Carlile sentenced to six years for blasphemous libel
	1 Nov.	Finsbury Market meeting a failure
	2 Nov.	Castlereagh introduces Sidmouth's Six Acts (passed 30 Dec.): against seditious meetings, blasphemous and seditious libels, unlawful drilling, unstamped newspapers, and restricting private possession of arms and bail conditions
	Nov.	Robert Wedderburn arrested for blasphemous libel
1820	29 Jan.	<i>Death of George III; prince regent becomes George IV</i>
	1 Feb.	Cabinet dinner cancelled in mourning
	16 Feb.	<i>George III's funeral in Windsor</i>
	23 Feb.	Conspirators arrested in Cato Street stable
	3 Mar.	Conspirators examined by privy council
	16 Mar.	Hunt (and others) tried for 'sedition' (at Peterloo); imprisoned for thirty months
	10 Apr.	Géricault visits London; returns to Paris in June (second visit Nov./Dec. 1820, for a year)
	15–28 Apr.	The Cato Street trials (Thistlewood's 17, 18, 19 April)
	28 Apr.	Friday: death sentences
	1 May	Monday: executions
	2, 9 May	Alderman Wood exposes the spy Edwards in the Commons; motion for committee to investigate rejected
	5 June	<i>Queen Caroline lands at Dover; George IV moves to divorce her</i>
1821	19 July	<i>George IV's coronation; Abbey doors locked against Queen Caroline</i>
	7 Aug.	<i>Caroline dies from 'constriction of the bowel'</i>

A Note on the Text

In citing the writings of the semi-literate, I retain misspellings and absent punctuations but omit '*sic*' for simplicity; I remove redundant capitals and insert extra spaces where stops are missing.

In the notes, trial reports are referenced by short title or abbreviation, and sometimes by column and sometimes by page (see 'The Trial Reports' for details).

All books listed in the Bibliography are published in London unless otherwise stated.