

SECTION 2: GRAPHIC LIBERTY

2.1 Prints and Method

This study challenges what Katy Layton-Jones rightly bemoans as the 'tendency to employ visual material as mere illustrations to historical arguments'.¹ Despite such methods being 'epistemologically naïve', Jordanova cautions us that 'many historians remain convinced that eighteenth-century prints are privileged, and straightforward sources'.² For too long, I argue, this has been observable in scholarship on so-called 'Golden Age' graphic satire. Print-shop windows, and the prints depicting them, have in particular enjoyed a central role in historical analysis, raised without sufficient critical scrutiny as evidence of an interplay between 'the public' and graphic satire, between the 'mass' or the 'popular' appeal of the medium. In place of such hypotheses, this study contends not only that graphic satires are much more than a visual record of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century life, but that they were not central to contemporary urban rhetoric, they were not dominated by political narratives, they were not egalitarian, they were not steeped in universal language, and, above all, they were not 'popular'. Rather, as this study demonstrates, graphic satires are valuable sources of communication amongst London's commercial orders and are evidence of the notions of liberty both available and acceptable to these Englishmen (and to a lesser extent Englishwomen).

This revisionist approach sees graphic satires as 'exclusive', unlike the 'popular' pictorial ballads and pamphlets pasted on the walls of taverns and living spaces.³ For 'popular' culture/discourses can include only those works that, as Paulson writes:

Were read or seen by almost everybody; were part of the conscious of the learned or educated as well as of the uneducated; read or seen or talked about by so many people that we can say they

1 Katy Layton-Jones, 'The synthesis of town and trade: visualizing provincial urban identity 1800–1858', *Urban History*, 35:1 (May 2008), 73.

2 Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Image Matters', *The Historical Journal*, 51:3 (2008), 784-5.

3 Following the comments of Sheila O'Connell, *The Popular Print in England* (London, 1999), 11-12, 18.

were taken for granted as part of the environment.⁴

For many scholars of metropolitan graphic satire, content with writing narratives of universal visual symbolism, Golden Age satirical prints may sit comfortably within this 'popular' sphere. But this thesis goes further than Paulson by placing his definition of 'popular' in tension with the dynamics of purchasing; the consumption of print culture is interrogated by reading graphic satires as framed by an artist/publisher/consumer nexus driven by sales and the need for commercial success. Unlike James Gillray, whose prodigious talent and intimate relationship with Hannah Humphrey ensured his financial stability, Isaac Cruikshank and his peers (William Dent, Richard Newton, Thomas Rowlandson, Charles Williams, George Woodward) were hired hands. Thus the ideological content of their prints was shaped by the commercial pressures placed upon artist and publisher to attract the widest possible audience from consumers of sufficient financial means; the necessity to sell took priority above personal/political motives. The communicative output of satirists such as Isaac Cruikshank was akin to that of a reporter or social commentator,⁵ manipulated by the dual editorial constraints of publisher and customer.

This study then questions the tendency of existing scholarship on Georgian graphic satire to take solitary views as evidence of prints as a 'popular' medium, and the inclination to assume that prints offer a link between artist and public without consideration of commercial and ideological pressures. In doing so, this thesis, unlike most works of scholarship, seeks to diminish the value historians have attached to this source material. We should not therefore read graphic satires as the product of a personal and somehow consistent stream of consciousness. As O'Connell outlines, print production (at all levels) was an industrial process, requiring not isolation but the collaboration of variously skilled individuals.⁶ And divorcing satirical prints from a culture of isolation reminds us of the pressures of time imposed upon print producers; as Langford perceptively states, 'topicality', the essence of graphic satire, 'militated against excellence'.⁷ Neither should graphic satires be seen as

4 Ronald Paulson, *Popular and Polite Art in the Age of Hogarth and Fielding* (London, 1979), x.

5 Gilbert Ashville Pierce, *The writings of Charles Dickens* (London, 1838), 87, notes George Cruikshank's inclination, apparently from childhood, to take notes of events he witnessed.

6 O'Connell, *Popular Print*, 10.

7 Paul Langford, *Walpole and the Robinocracy* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1986), 32. Although Langford was studying mid-century prints, this lesson remains of value for Cruikshankian satire due to a lack of technological change (see 2.2).

expressing a subset of opinion that can be simplistically extrapolated onto society to form generalised impressions of culture. Georgian print scholarship must take seriously, as other disciplines have, that 'a problem arises', as Biberman states with respect to seventeenth-century anti-Semitism, 'when critics begin with an author's view of this issue and extend it so that it becomes a general impression, one held throughout English society'.⁸

This does not mean, as Porter warns us, that I have switched from a 'stupid' narrative which exaggerates print impact, to the 'equally wrong [...] other extreme' which 'treat[s] them merely as reflectors (or weathercocks) of pre-existing opinion' or as 'radically unreliable windows on to the past'.⁹ Instead this study augments our understanding of graphic satire by pursuing an analytical realism summarised by Eirwen Nicholson:

I would suggest that scepticism regarding the genre's sphere of influence is less a matter of historiographical allegiance than of recognition of the extent to which the eighteenth-century political print has been accorded a status – that of a 'mass' and potentially demotic medium – which the evidence presently available is far from supporting.¹⁰

Isaac Cruikshank's rushed, aesthetically inconsistent and often error strewn style, indicative of contextually immediate material, offers particular benefits to such a study. His work allows us to avoid the art historical condescension of privileging quality of artistry over content; what Mitchell calls the 'parochialism of art history' which insulates itself 'from excessive contact with the broader issues of theory or intellectual history'.¹¹ The majority of graphic satires were after all not like Gillray's grand political vistas, but akin to Isaac's functional, often workmanlike social satires. As an artist who produced swift responses to events for London publishers both sides of her east-west divide, the surviving works of Isaac Cruikshank, estimated at around one thousand, are valuable sources of public opinion(s), which problematise wider historiographical assumptions, notably the traditional

8 Matthew Biberman, *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature: From the Satanic to the Effeminate Jew* (Ashgate, 2004), 102.

9 Porter, 'Seeing', 198, 201.

10 Eirwen E. C. Nicholson, 'Consumers and Spectators: The Public of the Political Print in Eighteenth-Century England', *History* (January, 1990), 21.

11 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, 1986), 12.

view of society in this period as enjoying an 'age of reason'.¹² Not that 'public' opinion is synonymous with 'popular' opinion. Whilst the latter suggests widespread and uniform agreement on a particular issue, event or personality, the former exhibits multiplicity, geographic and class differentiation, ideological conflict and renegotiation. The value to the historian of late Georgian society gained from Isaac's work is then in those aspects of public opinion with which it identifies, when those aspects of public opinion are foregrounded, and to whose customers those aspects of public opinion are presented.

As this is a study which touches upon issues regarding society, culture, nation, identity, commerce, and urban geography, various scholars from various fields have proven influential. Peter Burke's *Eyewitnessing* (2001) underpinned my initial enquiries into visual culture, and I share his positivism with respect to the utility of the graphic image to historians.¹³ I am less sure however regarding his scepticism of image theory, his treatment of it as somewhat extraneous to the historian's purposes, and his search for empirical fixity within graphic sources. My thoughts on this subject can be found in the third section of this chapter. E. P. Thompson's work on custom has also proved a valuable influence. In a chapter on 'wife sales' in his 1991 publication *Customs in Common* Thompson questions the utility of statistically analysing data he had collected over three decades of research. Setting out his conclusions Thompson writes:

this is all very well for those who enjoy quantitative gossip, but we must now get to serious work and enquire: what is the significance of the form of behaviour we have been trying to count?¹⁴

This thesis, like Thompson's, places little emphasis onto quantitative analysis, though this does not mean I share Thompson's apparent disdain for numerical work. Instead the nature of this history is simply unsuited to quantitative methodologies.¹⁵ In their place, this history of communication makes

12 The persistence of stereotypes from the early-eighteenth century, for example, questions (though it does not refute entirely due to their continuation into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) such prevailing narratives of improvement and the proliferation of rational thought. See Jan Albers, 'Religious identities in Lancashire', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c. 1689 – c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), 318, 333.

13 Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: the use of images as historical evidence* (London, 2001).

14 E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), 416.

15 For a study of graphic satire underpinned by quantitative analysis see Miles Taylor, 'John Bull and the Iconography of Public Opinion in England c. 1712-1929', *Past & Present*, 134 (February, 1992), 93-128.

its case using qualitative strategies involving public discourses, visualisation and narrative. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this work, separate yet complementary methods have been employed to interrogate the three central research themes, namely the position of the print trade within London's communicative milieu and the use of 'images' (a term whose utility is considered below) as historical evidence, with a view to illuminating notions of liberty.

This chapter will explore the methodological problems associated with each of these three themes. It is hoped the reader will see how they tie together into one coherent methodological strategy; however given the array of historiographical, terminological and methodological ground this interdisciplinary study covers, a concession must be made that this chapter cannot hope to address all relevant agendas or controversies. As this chapter presents a discussion of key representative works on print culture, identity and visual method, a large amount of potentially relevant material has of necessity been omitted. It is expected therefore that as this chapter strives to find answers it will in turn provoke many methodological questions.

Print Culture

First we must locate this history of communication in respect to public notions of libertarian identity (framed by discourses of nation) within the historiography of the print trade. Although influenced and indebted to scholars such as M. Dorothy George, Diana Donald and Vic Gatrell, this thesis, methodologically speaking, stands in near isolation from existing work by arguing not only that graphic satires were not 'popular' but that their overt theme was (to use terms generally accepted in this historiography) 'social' rather than 'political'. This is not observable in print trade historiography, whose insistence of the 'decades 1760-80 as the genre's qualitative and quantitative "take-off point"', has, Nicholson notes, 'encouraged a correlation of this and larger political developments'.¹⁶ Indeed although Gatrell's *City of Laughter* is a valuable work on graphic social satire, he, like his forbearers,

¹⁶ Nicholson, 7.

tends towards political narratives which in turn, through some trick of public political engagement, render the print trade somehow 'popular'.¹⁷ Given the price of prints, shortness of print runs, and location of print shops (see 2.2) this assumption is questionable. Understanding how and why this line of argument has infected and adversely affected both the historiography of the print trade, and works on eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, is this task of this section. So too is detailing why it requires re-evaluation in light of the alternative contribution this thesis provides through exploring Cruikshank and liberty (see above).

Diana Donald's *Age of Caricature* (1996) is a classic text of print scholarship, an exhaustive study sensitive to print variety, symbolic (and multifarious) communicative depth, and satiric engagement beyond newsworthy events.¹⁸ Unlike the Chadwyck-Healey series (published in 1986), the previous (if unambitious) benchmark of eighteenth century print scholarship, Donald overcame the traditional suspicion of graphic sources bemoaned by Roy Porter - 'insert too much visual evidence', he sarcastically writes, 'and we commit the solecism of producing a "coffee-table" book'.¹⁹ Yet although her work in this field is without equal, it contains a sense of forceful positivism regarding the impact of graphic satire on wider discourses. Donald's 'Calumny and caricatura' (1983) raises the claim that graphic satire communicated in 'universal language' and hence the publication of new prints were noted events.²⁰ A lack of sources commenting on graphic satire is thus taken not as a sign of their

17 V. A. C. Gatrell, *City of laughter: sex and satire in eighteenth-century London* (London, 2006).

18 Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven, 1996).

19 Roy Porter, 'Review Article: Seeing the Past', *Past & Present* 118 (February, 1988), 188. A review of the Chadwyck-Healey series, *The English Satirical Print 1600-1832*, 7 vols. (Chadwyck-Healey, 1986): John Brewer, *The Common People and Politics, 1750-1790s*, H. T. Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution, 1760-1832*; Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*; Langford, *Walpole*; John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints, 1600-1832*; J. A. Sharpe, *Crime and the Law in English Satirical Prints, 1600-1832*; P. D. G. Thomas, *The American Revolution*.

20 Diana Donald, 'Calumny and caricatura': eighteenth-century political prints and the case of George Townshend', *Art History* 6 (1983), 56-7. 'Universal language' is used by Donald, and hence in this thesis, to describe the ability of a communicative medium to express itself in a widely comprehensible array of symbolic, iconographic and textual signifiers. Implicit within the use of this term with respect to graphic satire, is the presumption that being a 'visual' medium these signifiers transcended the boundaries of literacy (especially in David Johnson, 'Britannia roused: political caricature and the fall of the Fox-North coalition', *History Today*, 51:6 (June 2001), 23). This argument does not appear to be influenced by or interact directly with Noam Chomsky's nativist theorem of linguistics, commonly termed 'Universal Grammar'. In fact most texts use the term 'universal language' with reference to a letter in the *Public Advertiser* 5 June 1765 complaining of the impact 'caricatura' displayed in print-shop windows had on personal reputations given that 'prints are a universal Language, understood by Persons of all Nations and Degrees'. I suspect that the fearful tone this anonymous writer employs indicates that his statements

modest significance, but of social decorum and/or offence.²¹ This narrative of prints as 'popular' continues into her recently republished study of Gillray,²² and despite perceptive musings on the question *What is a Popular Print?* (2000),²³ Donald retains an underlying fixation on narratives of high impact.

Central to this argument are two assumptions. First, the incontestable visual quality of Gillray is perceived as dominant and an agent transcending financial and class boundaries in the same way his work did the English Channel. Second, and allied to the first, the print shop window is read as a key site of discursive exchange. For Donald, the crowd were active spectators, shaping not only opinions of prints but the print output itself; a hypothesis overtly puffed by the cover to *Age of Caricature* (2.1.2). Thus although more recently she has used the term 'public sub-culture' to describe graphic satire, Donald continues to see the trade as having resonance among a seemingly homogeneous 'public'.²⁴

Having outlined Donald's position, we now need to assess the direct and indirect impact of her support of such long presumed narratives of graphic satires as possessing immediacy and 'popular' appeal.²⁵ First it is worth observing that Donald was not the only print scholar writing in the 1980s and 1990s to divert from M. Dorothy George's position, asserted in her 1967 work *Hogarth to Cruikshank*, that graphic satire was a rambunctious yet hardly centrally significant public medium of metropolitan upper middling and aristocratic interest.²⁶ Jonathan Bate for instance places Shakespearean allusion uncomfortably alongside a universal language of graphic symbolism.²⁷ Marc Baer makes similarly bold claims regarding print dissemination, seemingly without sufficient

regarding print impact and comprehension are exaggerated, though this scaremongering is not noted in modern historiography, see Langford, *Walpole*, 30; Donald, 'Calumny', 56; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford, 1989), 15; Johnson, 'Britannia', 23.

21 A strange claim if we consider, as Thompson notes, that newspapers tended to treat extreme public offences as newsworthy. See Thompson, *Customs*, 408-16.

22 Diana Donald and Christine Banerji (eds.), *Gillray Observed: the earliest account of his caricatures in London and Paris* (Cambridge, 1999), 21-2.

23 Diana Donald, *What is a Popular Print?: An essay prompted by the exhibition 'Tabloid Culture: The Popular Print in England, 1500-1850'* (Manchester, 2000).

24 Diana Donald, "'Characters and Caricatures": the Satirical View', in N. Perry (ed.), *Reynolds* (London, 1986), 355, 361.

25 Nicholson, 6.

26 M. Dorothy George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire* (London, 1967).

27 Bate, *Shakespearean*.

evidential proof, whilst attempting to merge the commercial cultures of theatre and print.²⁸

Elsewhere, narratives of prints as 'popular' are stretched into claims that these sources are visual documents of experienced lives.²⁹ Acceptance of these positions has produced scholarly complacency in some otherwise probing and valuable recent work - Gillian Russell equates the virtual power of prints with real social punishment;³⁰ Hannah McPherson argues that satirical prints refracted and defined the 'cultural dynamics of Georgian England';³¹ Tamara Hunt, beset by a desire to show how graphic satire "helped to construct" national identity, offers no consideration to the view that a lack of prosecutions of print publishers could indicate a lack of impact;³² and Ian Haywood fails to resolve the tension between graphic satire being both 'popular visual imagery' and complex, intertextual entities requiring deciphering to reach their artistic meaning/motivations.³³ This position has also fed into wider historical work, narratives of prints as 'popular' reappearing in Simon Mills' excellent study of Joseph Priestley.³⁴ More concerning however, these assumptions of high impact, universal language, and shop windows as free galleries and egalitarian spaces have seeped into popular historical outlets.³⁵

The 'facts' which underpin these positions follow a familiar pattern. Print shop windows, as the likes of Robert Dighton (2.1.1) and Gillray (2.1.2) were only too keen to point out, were sites of colour and

28 Marc Baer, *Theatre and disorder in late Georgian London* (Oxford, 1992). Which is not to say that prints and theatre did not have common agendas, see Edward J. Nygren, 'Playing the House: Cruikshank and the Theatre', in Edward J. Nygren (ed.), *Isaac Cruikshank and the Politics of Parody: Watercolors in the Huntington Collection* (San Marino, 1994), 5-13. I remain unconvinced however that their mutual influence can be seen beyond individual engagement between both circles and mutual performativity. Indeed there was no significant 'call and response' mechanic between graphic satire and theatre; their interaction took place after having first negotiated public discourses/opinions.

29 Kate Arnold-Foster and Nigel Tallis (eds.), *The Bruising Apothecary: images of Pharmacy and Medicine in the caricature prints and drawings in the collection of the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain* (London, 1989).

30 Gillian Russell, "'Faro's daughters": female gamblers, politics, and the discourse of finance in 1790s Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33:4 (2000), 481-504.

31 Heather McPherson, 'Painting, Politics and the Stage in the Age of Caricature', in Robyn Asleson (ed.), *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776-1812* (New Haven & London, 2003), 173.

32 Tamara Hunt, *Defining John Bull: political caricature and national identity in late Georgian England* (Ashgate, 2003), 11-2.

33 Ian Haywood, 'The Transformation of Caricature: A Reading of Gillray's *The Liberty of the Subject*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43:2 (Winter 2010), 223-242; Ian Haywood, 'The Spectropolitics of Romantic Infidelism: Cruikshank, Paine and *The Age of Reason*', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 54 (May 2009), 1-21.

34 Simon Mills, 'Joseph Priestley's connections with Catholics and Jews', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 24:3 (April 2009), 181.

35 Notably in Johnson, 'Britannia', 22-28.

spectacle.³⁶ The content therein, communicated visually rather than textually, allowed graphic satire to cross boundaries of literacy. Their appeal was aided by the public reputations of artists such as Rowlandson,³⁷ who fed the satiric desires of a politically astute populace. This implicit universal comprehension of the communicative devices which framed graphic satire, a development from the emblematic mid-century tradition of Hogarth where prints were published to be deciphered, is evidentially explained by their repetition on lower mediums such as mugs, jugs and coins,³⁸ alongside fashionable items such as screens (2.1.3). Finally printmakers knowingly responded to this 'popular' engagement with graphic satire, satirising the power of their own trade (2.1.4) and observing its centrality to modes of communication (2.1.5).



36 The latter in particular a central socio-political tool of the age, see Haywood, 'Spectropolitics'.

37 [Rudolf Ackermann], *The Microcosm of London: Or London in Miniature* (London, 1809), I, x-xi; Donald and Banerji, *Gillray*, 172.

38 David Bindman, *The Shadow of the Guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989), 120-22, 132-3, 136-7, 140-1, 156, 198-203. See also 2.3.



2.1.3 (left) Isaac Cruikshank after George Woodward, *CARICATURE ORNAMENTS for SCREENS* (24 March 1800) [V&A E.1217-1990]. 446 x 315.

2.1.4 (right) Isaac and George Cruikshank, *FRENCH GENERALS receiving an English CHARGE*. (28 April 1809, S W Fores) [BM 11322]. 236 x 336.

It is worth reminding the reader at this point that this thesis does not deny that satirical prints were part of public discourse; they were without doubt the most vibrant and spectacular representations of daily-life available within public visual culture. Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, Robert Southey's imaginary Spanish traveller, recalls for example a print 'called The Balance of Justice' published to mark the execution of Governor Wall on January 28th 1802;³⁹ a great 'popular' metropolitan occasion. Yet once one scratches the surface, the deficiencies of narratives reading satirical prints as 'popular' become immediately clear. Crucially, to paraphrase Gombrich, it 'take[s] the cartoon for granted', assuming that the symbolism and iconography of graphic satire were part of a universal and easily decipherable language.⁴⁰

One glance at Gillray's majestic *Apotheosis of Hoche* (2.1.6) (a print which came with an explanatory text) undermines such assumptions. Colour and spectacle are no basis for assuming understanding;⁴¹

39 Robert Southey, *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella*, ed. Jack Simmons (London, 1951), 64; A2.1.1.

40 Gombrich, 'Cartoonist', 127. For Nicholson (20) the Chadwyck-Healey series 'failed to revise – and, in the case of Sharpe, Thomas, Brewer and Langford, perpetuated – orthodoxies concerning the market and publics of the genre'.

41 An argument rehearsed in Charles Press, 'The Georgian Political Print and Democratic Institutions',

and although Gillray's vista may be an extreme example, its multi-layered complexity requiring the ability, at some level at least, to decipher the print's meaning, such traits are observable in the majority of prints detailed in this thesis. As Porter states 'it was never words for the literate and pictures for the unlettered', and thus:

To see pictures as a sort of baby-food mode of communication, pap for those whose minds could not digest real words, would be to misread the function of the visual image in emergent commercial culture.⁴²

More fundamentally with respect to 'commercial culture', the decent catalogues, regular advertising and reviews a German print correspondent expected to find in 1790s London, continue to elude modern historians.⁴³ And what few sources of the high master print trade which rigorous scholarly study has uncovered, are virtually absent in respect to the satirical print trade. In their place prints within prints (2.1.1 - 2.1.5) are used, uncritically, as barometers of the 'popular' dissemination of satirical prints into cultural discourse.⁴⁴

2.1.5 Isaac Cruikshank after George Woodward, *Twelfth Night* (10 January 1807, Thomas Tegg) [K1244; BMund]. 261 x 345.



Comparative Studies in Society and History, 19:2 (April, 1974), 218.

42 Porter, 'Seeing', 189. A claim visible in Langford, *Walpole*, 30.

43 Timothy Clayton, 'Reviews of English Prints in German Journals', *Print Quarterly*, 10:2 (1993), 123.

44 Gillray's *VERY SLIPPY-WEATHER* (2.1.2) has in particular suffered from uncritical analysis; the fact that it is one in a series of eight prints making light of humanity's powerlessness over nature is rarely mentioned, let alone given sufficient attention; A2.1.2 – A2.1.7.



2.1.6 James Gillray, *The Apotheosis of HOCHÉ* (11 January 1798) [BM9156]. 500 x 387.

Thus for all that street crowds around print shops are valuable and an example of Thompson's 'uncurtained' windows into social space (due to a lack of alternative evidential avenues of enquiry),⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Customs*, 407.

the tendency to treat shop-fronts as 'egalitarian commercial venue[s]' central to the print process is unfounded; and to make the leap, as Baer does, from stating 'many more individuals saw and "read" the prints than the number who purchased them' (which is irrefutable) to counting these spectators in term of 'circulation', is misguided.⁴⁶ As Barrell perceptively states, historians should avoid arguments which assume 'that any particular work, or the works of any particular author, were read by those who could not afford to buy them'.⁴⁷ Indeed 'few accounts', as Nicholson notes, 'fail to refer to the 'free window display' from which, she continues, 'it is a short step to viewing the print as a subset of Georgian street theatre'.⁴⁸ Thus Baer's further claim that 'the viewers [in prints of print shop windows] can be analysed by looking at dress', appears, if we recall that such prints were artistic compositions rather than representations of reality, equally futile.⁴⁹

Such attempts to highlight consumption and impact beyond financially likely social groups has forced scholars into awkward paradoxes. Bate, for example, places stress on the influential pressure on popular opinion which graphic satire exerted in the 1760s, states shortly afterwards that these prints were not a mass art but the preserve of the political 'cognoscenti' and metropolitan middle classes, before returning some time later, through the gaze of Shakespearean symbolism, to a notion of universal language.⁵⁰ Tensions between discourses, consumerism and communication are insufficiently interrogated to fit a narrative of numerically high 'popular' impact; a distinction between 'consumers' and 'spectators' is made, yet, as Nicholson notes so often occurs, 'the tenor of an account may offset this conclusion'.⁵¹ Rather than interrogating the print collections we have in relation to their wealthy and landed owners,⁵² scholars have keenly and without sufficient caution

46 Baer, 258-9.

47 John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006), 138.

48 Nicholson, 16-17.

49 Baer, 259.

50 Bate, *Shakespearean*, 15, 18, 106.

51 Nicholson, 13. Such argumentative inconsistency is a notable feature of the Chadwyck-Healey series, despite Porter's ('Seeing', 192) contentions to the contrary. Further, Bate (see *Shakespearean*, 6) imposes a framework of decreasing cost as a result of technological change onto the period 1730 to 1830, which although palpable between 1820 and 1830, uncomfortably (and implicitly) aligns his discussions of 'Golden Age' prints with 'popular' and 'mass' availability.

52 Figures such as Richard Bull, MP for Newport 1756-80, who was noted as a 'foremost collector of prints', William D. Rubinstein, *Who were the Rich?: A Biographical Directory of British Wealth-Holders* (London, 2009), 25-6. Significant holdings (outside of museum collections) can also be found at Calke Abbey (Ticknall,

attempted to read, through scant anecdotal evidence, graphic satires as having 'trickled down' the social ranks.⁵³ They have, in assuming dissemination beyond the broad and multifarious metropolitan gentleman orders,⁵⁴ attempted to fill evidential gaps with the evidence they *want* to find, to fall into an art historical trap - a Whiggish reading of the past in terms of linear symbolic, communicative and consumer progress.⁵⁵

Indeed historians have been largely unmoved by Nicholson's appeal in 1990 for a rational historical approach to graphic satire which challenges 'the perception of the printed image as a 'mass medium'' by accepting the limitations of source material and the difference between 'consumers' and 'spectators'.⁵⁶ A thought provoking and wide-ranging recent methodological piece from Jordanova does tackle such issues, critiquing those theses which use 'caricature because it provides, allegedly, direct access to phenomena such as public opinion'.⁵⁷ Like this thesis, Jordanova appeals for a consideration in historical work of artists, publishers, audiences and their 'distinctive types of agency' as a means of 'mediating' narratives of prints as popular. Yet Alexandra Franklin's short essay is the only work of recent print scholarship (though pre-dating Jordanova) to offer a genuine critique of this prevailing 'perception' rather than cover such ground as a mere courtesy to a seemingly willing historiographical amnesia.⁵⁸ This study seeks to redress this imbalance and in doing so to provide a nuanced and suitably 'mediated' analysis of print culture.

Derbyshire), Wimpole Hall (Arrington, Hertfordshire), and Chartwell House (Westerham, Kent).

53 As Jan Albers notes with respect to religious stereotypes, 'social attitudes are not confined by the forces of gravity, so that stereotypes could also 'trickle up' from popular attitudes'; Albers, 326.

54 For urban 'gentleman' as a social group see William Stafford, 'Representations of Social Order in *The Gentleman's Magazine, 1785-1815*', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33:2 (Spring, 2009), 64-91; further discussion in 3.1. Straying beyond this category into narratives of 'popular' consumption has in turn the effect of submerging linguistically (Nicholson's 'tenor of an account') the urban/rural (and growing suburban) dynamics at play in this period.

55 For Porter ('Seeing', 188) 'absorbed in internal analysis' art historians 'have commonly forgotten to ask who actually saw these sketches and sculptures, and what impact they had upon their consumers'.

56 Nicholson, 6.

57 Jordanova, 'Image', 785.

58 Alexandra Franklin, 'John Bull in a Dream: fear and fantasy in the visual satires of 1803', in Mark Philip (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006), 125-139.

Identity

Identity was and is multifaceted; which facet is in the sunlight depends to a considerable degree on the circumstances of the moment.

Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (OUP, 2000),
168.

Over and above such historiographical revision, the central concern of this study is to interrogate notions of British liberty through the lens of Cruikshankian graphic satire. Instrumental in this regard has been the work of E. P. Thompson who rather than discussing liberty in overarching political and intellectual terms,⁵⁹ did so with respect to identity. Thompson was of course not the first scholar to wrestle with how best to understand past identities; and neither is such work the exclusive preserve of the historian. Social scientists, anthropologists and political scientists, among others, all engage with questions of collective identity. From the latter group, Walter Lippmann's seminal *Public Opinion* (1922) has proved highly influential to this study, as it has guided scholars (explicitly and implicitly) of as wide ranging topics as cognitive psychology, early American literature, world propaganda and religious identities in eighteenth century Lancashire.⁶⁰ Though discussions of 'types' and 'stock images' punctuate this thesis, a thorough treatment of stereotyping, following those arguments set out by Lippmann, can be found in chapter 3.2.

Indeed as with Lippmann the register of identity under discussion here is liberty, broadly speaking the overt topic of much graphic satire before, during and since the period 1783 to 1811. This liberty, as chapter 2.3 will outline in greater detail, is also read here in terms of custom. Although I concede that portraiture and hence political personalities were essential to the success of the print trade in this period,⁶¹ I reject outright (on both quantitative and qualitative grounds) the associated assumption

59 See chapter 2.3 for my analysis of these broader themes through the work of H. T. Dickinson.

60 For recent examples see Matthew S. Hirshberg, 'The Self-Perpetuating National Self-Image: Cognitive Biases in Perceptions of International Interventions', *Political Psychology*, 14:1 (1993), 77-98; Russ Castronovo, 'Propaganda, Prenatal Critique, and Early American Literature', *American Literary History*, 21.2 (Summer, 2009), 183-210; Nicholas John Cull, David Holbrook Culbert and David Welch, *Propaganda and mass persuasion: a historical encyclopedia, 1500 to the present* (Oxford, 2003); Albers.

61 Hannah Pointon, *Hanging the head: portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England* (New

that political themes dominated the satire of the age. Indeed if we divide 'political' and 'social' satire not on the polarised terms dictated by M. Dorothy George, but instead distinguish between, on one hand, 'high' political (ephemeral) satire concentrating on parliamentarians and establishment personalities and, on the other, anonymous droll satire, a large corpus of prints emerges which demand attention both from historians of Georgian parliamentary politics and those of Georgian society, identity and custom. Thus although, as observable in the prints this thesis explores, the 'social' is not entirely separable from the 'political', in order to concentrate on questions regarding liberty and customary behavioural standards we must foreground social satire to avoid the political focus found in existing historiography.

Any discussion of liberty through the lens of past customary freedoms and constraints must however return to Thompson. Despite forcing custom into a Marxist teleology,⁶² seeing it as a defence against 'the constraints and controls of patrician rulers',⁶³ his core definition of custom as 'the rhetoric of legitimisation for almost any usage, practice, or demanded right' which was beset by 'continual flux' is extremely useful.⁶⁴ The difference here is that what was rural and experiential in Thompson's sources,⁶⁵ is urban and virtual in graphic satire. With this Thompsonian logic of custom as its backdrop, this section will now turn to two scholarly paradigms from which methodological cues have been taken - first cultural history and second intellectual history.

Few cultural histories have surpassed the startling bravura of Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984). Although this present study claims to be no work of *mentalités*, like that of Darnton it 'do[es] not pretend to completeness',⁶⁶ is structured by pursuing 'what seemed the richest run of documents',⁶⁷ and, without forcing narratives of continuity or progress (or equally discontinuity or regression), operates with the understanding that 'if one stands at a safe enough distance from the

Haven, 1993), 81-2.

62 As a result of which I avoid the term 'Moral Economy' due to its proximity to Thompsonian Marxist thought.

63 Thompson, *Customs*, 6-7.

64 *ibid*, 6.

65 Thompson, *Customs*, 102.

66 Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), 5.

67 *ibid*, 6.

details, a general picture begins to emerge'.⁶⁸ Unlike Darnton's sources however (especially his peasant tales), graphic satire does act as a form of social comment. Their targets, like those of Stevens' *Lecture on Heads*, were Hogarthian 'venial sins rather than deadly ones: hypocrisy, extravagance, flattery, folly, ostentation, and pomposity'.⁶⁹ And although in Hogarth, as in Cruikshank, the 'venial' doubled for the 'deadly', death was not visited literally upon individuals but society. Thus whilst Darnton's tales were oral commodities, graphic satire was purchased in a lively and competitive marketplace (2.2), suggesting perhaps, as contemporaries saw in plebeian consumption of radical literary 'poison' during the 1790s,⁷⁰ that to purchase was to identify with a work's moral message.

This 'History of Communication' then is also a work of cultural history, an approach used in spite of Thompson's caution regarding the tendency of cultural paradigms to produce 'clumpish' history which disguises and confuses.⁷¹ Indeed graphic satire was fundamentally part of two overlapping cultures - that of commerce and that of public discourse. Graphic satire's contribution (political or otherwise) to these networks regularly lacked nuance,⁷² relying on stereotype,⁷³ myth,⁷⁴ hyperbole and fantasy;⁷⁵ all broadly speaking staples of cultural discourses. These sources were part of opinion, which in the age of print was, McKeon notes, 'a virtual but intricately realised network of speech acts'.⁷⁶

Liberty then, strictly 'national' or otherwise, had a tendency to be constructed by contemporaries in broad strokes, as Paul Langford has shown in his exemplary *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850* (Oxford, 2000). But whilst Langford's is a study from without, a study from within such as this one presents a different set of challenges. This thesis will conceive British

68 Ibid, 23. Not that Darnton is clear how close that 'safe distance' might be.

69 Gerald Kahan, *George Alexander Stevens and The Lecture on Heads* (Athens, Georgia, 1984), 59.

70 Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics, and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge, 2004), 59-60.

71 Thompson, *Customs*, 13.

72 Bate, *Shakespearean*, 76.

73 See chapter 3.2.

74 Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), 233.

75 Ian Haywood, "'The dark sketches of a revolution: Gillray, *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, and the aesthetics of conspiracy', *European Romantic Review* (forthcoming 2011). Also 'Transformation' and 'Spectropolitics'

76 Michael McKeon, *The secret history of domesticity: public, private, and the division of knowledge* (Baltimore, 2005), 68.

conceptions of customary liberty through terms such as behaviour, appearance and identity, yet the latter in particular is surely requiring the use of internal critique. Straying into discussions of identities through the gaze of Britishness and liberty brings us squarely into the realm of intellectual history, and specifically the challenges made against cultural historians of identity by the foremost historian of Englishness - Peter Mandler. Thus to conclude this section on methodology with respect to liberty, I shall briefly summarise the three central criticisms of cultural historians in Mandler's recent 'What is "National Identity"? Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography' (2006), and, in responding to each in turn, will show how this 'History of Communication' avoids the pitfalls of cultural history Mandler identifies whilst simultaneously adopting the rigour of intellectual history.

First, Mandler argues that the historian is better equipped than the social scientist to explain past symbols, sources valuable to explorations of identity, but that his or her analyses are undermined by a tendency to force them into hypotheses which "help to construct" (national) identity.⁷⁷ Tamara Hunt's print history *Defining John Bull* (2003), which uses discourses on freedom and liberty to draw conclusions with respect to British identity, is (as noted earlier) raised by Mandler an example of this.

⁷⁸ Second, in an extended passage, Mandler outlines the traits of what he calls 'pastiche' cultural historians, whose 'folk wisdom' Mandler summarises as follows.⁷⁹ Identities equal self, both defined against a knowable or unknowable Other, which in turn creates collective selves. These collective selves are primordial yet are foregrounded in records by the advent of printing, which in turn allowed the state, beginning in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, to mobilise this collective consciousness into a durable national identity. 'Therefore', he continues, 'when we write about almost any kind of human cognition, behaviour or activity [within this pastiche mentality], we are (or should be) writing in part about "national identity" - and vice versa; that is, almost any kind of human cognition, behaviour or activity also acts to construct our national identity'.⁸⁰ Third, both these

⁷⁷ Peter Mandler, 'What is "National Identity"? Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History* 3:2 (2006), 290.

⁷⁸ Hunt, *John Bull*.

⁷⁹ Mandler, 'National Identity', 272.

⁸⁰ *ibid*, 273.

endeavours, which read all sources as potentially constructive of “national identity”, proceed without clear definitions of what “national identity” is. 'Historians', Mandler writes, 'harp on endlessly on “national identity” without querying much what that category means'.⁸¹

Logically grounded as these statements are, Mandler's paper is not without weaknesses - his implicit assumption that “national identity” is the sole preserve of intellectual historians is regressive; and the absence of literary studies from his critique requires explanation. Nonetheless, his argument is relevant to all scholars of past societies and cultures, especially those studying liberty. How then does this study seek to avoid the pitfalls he identifies?

First, unlike studies such as Hunt's *Defining John Bull*, this is not a study of “national identity” but of liberty, a facet of that “national identity”. Indeed, despite questioning 'notions of *British Liberty*', this study makes no claims to (re)construct “national identity”, rather that the trade and sources under discussion explored liberty in light of communicative discourses of citizenship, nation and (urban) character, inescapable contexts during a period of sustained continental war. In this sense this work follows recent trends towards 'identity talk',⁸² does not claim to offer strict conclusions about collective identity, and thus accepts Mandler's challenge that 'we need more microhistorical study of the specific contexts and situations in which identity talk takes place'.⁸³ Studying liberty through thematic case-studies of the work produced by a single satirical engraver makes this study one such microhistory. Second, this study rejects the drive for fixity (more on which later) implicit within Mandler's caricature of pastiche cultural historians, and, following Darnton, defines the contestedness and the collectivity of identity only with respect to their multiplicities, has no desire to locate dominant discourses, and simply follows those which seem most prominent within the chosen source material. Third, implicit within Mandler's statement that historians 'harp on' uncritically about “national identity”, is a sense of neglect towards developments in sociological theory. This is evident in such excellent intellectual histories as the recent *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland, 1600-1850* (Manchester, 2003), whose introductory essay penned by Julian Hoppit devotes

81 *ibid*, 278.

82 *ibid*, 274.

83 *ibid*, 297.

scant attention, despite the collection's title, to the meaning of "national identity".⁸⁴ Hoppit does make the valid point however that "identities", which in a study focused on figures of authority functions synonymously with "interests", could only carry weight if they were 'plausible'.⁸⁵ Thus he locates the volume firmly within "public" rather than "private" discourses of "national identity", a distinction Mandler implies historians take little notice of (and the potential "symbolic reverse" of the two) when they 'harp on' about "national identity".⁸⁶ This thesis avoids these dual problems of definition not by querying too closely the theoretical problems associated with "identity" (scarcely possible in a study of this size), but by instead accepting the discord between inward and outward identities, inward and outward notions of liberty. This is a study of what Mandler perceives as the historians' inevitable focus - 'the "public faces" of people's identities'.⁸⁷ Graphic satire was not only part of public culture but also clearly a public-facing medium, constructed by the commercial discourses of the artist/publisher/consumer nexus rather than any purely internalised, self-indulgent artistic process (see 2.2). Indeed as noted when discussing print trade historiography, the purchasing process inevitably brought these sources from public discourse into private realms, and opened them up to private reflection in respect to their discourses on liberty and identity, but without sufficient evidence we are unable to interrogate these private responses. As Gombrich states 'the cartoonist [...] merely secures what language has prepared. The abstraction takes hold of the mind'.⁸⁸ With the cartoonist and language acting in public arenas, the private consumer 'abstraction' or, in other words, personal response lies beyond the historian's grasp; satirical prints may have enraptured Georgian eyes, but although, as Leonardo da Vinci wrote, eyes act as 'the windows to the soul', the historian of graphic satire has few insights into what individual 'souls' made of such prints.

84 Julian Hoppit, 'Introduction', in Julian Hoppit (ed.), *Parliaments, nations and identities in Britain and Ireland, 1600-1850* (Manchester, 2003), 1-14.

85 *ibid*, 10.

86 For a thesis that does explicitly divide public and private identity, see Albers, 318-9.

87 Mandler, 'National Identity', 281.

88 Ernst Gombrich, 'The Cartoonist's Armoury' (1962) in Ernst Gombrich, *Meditations on a hobby horse: and other essays on the theory of art* (London, 1971), 128.

Visual Culture

In order to explore public expressions of liberty through graphic satire the historian must develop a clear methodological strategy for analysing pictorial sources. Indeed even if we reject art historical inclinations towards historical evidence of artistic merit (see the above discussion on Gillray), historians cannot hope to produce valuable work without engaging with image theory. Ultimately, to read 'identity talk' in prints alongside the commercial realities of the trade requires historians to explore images - verbal or graphic - as pure products of social context. We must read what is not on the page, or to put it another way, what is only visible if we accept that the image, the image making process and the reality within which they are situated, as Mitchell states in his 1986 text *Iconology*, are 'clothed in our systems of representation'.⁸⁹ In order to clarify why graphic sources must be studied in this way, and indeed why graphic satire has been analysed as such in this thesis, the final section of this chapter will be divided into three parts covering terminology, graphic power, and image theory.

First, we must define, terminologically speaking, Cruikshank's output. His works are described here as 'graphic satires'. They are not 'cartoons', a term not only anachronistic but also containing unhelpful associations with 'mass' media. Equally the utility of the contemporary term 'caricature' is questionable given its threefold meaning as a physiognomic (usually facial) graphic exaggeration, a generic stereotype, and a print medium. Thus 'caricature' can as readily apply to language, form and genre.⁹⁰ I also eschew the terms 'satirical images'⁹¹ and 'visual satire' as useful for describing print genres, because, as Mitchell states, 'visual imagery' includes:

Pictures, statues, optical illusions, maps, diagrams, dreams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas.

That we call 'all these things by the name of "image"' does not mean that they all have something in

⁸⁹ Mitchell, *Iconology*, 38

⁹⁰ Mary-Celine Newbould, 'Character or caricature? Depicting sentimentalism and Richard Newton's illustrations of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*', *Word & Image* 25:2 (June 2009), 122.

⁹¹ 'Image' also has a particular eighteenth century linguistic association with critiques of Catholic 'idolatry'.

common' (or indeed are available/readable to all people), thus, he continues, 'it might be better to begin by thinking of images as a far-flung family' including five categories - graphic, optical, perceptual, mental, and verbal.⁹² Thus as the 'visual' is not just those non-textual signs the eye can see (and indeed this is not one distinct category), but in fact a conflation of ocular, linguistic and imaginative registers, this study uses 'print' to describe the Cruikshankian medium and 'graphic satire' to describe its genre. When the term 'visual' is used, it is so with reference to the 'family of images' Mitchell describes.

Yet, as Mitchell hints, the 'graphic' does have some aspects in common with other 'images' or 'visual' registers. In particular the graphic is one facet of McKeon's 'high-public secrets' of aesthetic form alongside narrative, myth and gesture.⁹³ We have already identified the first two of these as important in relation to 'custom', and the latter is of particular significance to our second aspect of our visual method: graphic power.

Body and gesture are key tools in communication,⁹⁴ their influence extending beyond Mitchell's 'perceptual imagery'. In Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1791) for example, Clara is admonished by her aunt who complains rhetorically 'shall I never persuade you to give up that romantic notion of judging people by their faces'.⁹⁵ Radcliffe here makes a backhanded critique of physiognomy, the pseudo-science of reading character in facial expression, either experiential or graphically replicated, made famous by Johann Caspar Lavater's *Essay on Physiognomy* (which first appeared in English, from a French translation of the 1778-9 German original, in 1789).⁹⁶ Earlier in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) Sterne's heroic narrator Yorick meditated on the link between (caricatured) appearance and imagined personality:

As I carried my idea out of the *opera comique* with me, I measured every body I saw walking in

92 Mitchell, *Iconology*, 9-10.

93 McKeon, xxii.

94 Judith Pascoe, 'Emotional Display and National Identity', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33:1 (Winter 2009).

95 Ann Radcliffe, *Romance of the Forest* (1791), ed. Chloe Chard (Oxford University Press 1986), 257.

96 For a detailed discussion of Lavater's influence on European thought see David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century* (London, 2002), 92-123.

the streets by it – Melancholy application! especially where the size was little – the face extremely dark – the eyes quick – the nose long – the teeth white – the jaw prominent – to see so many miserales, by force of accidents driven out of their own proper class into the very verge of another, which it gives me pain to write down – every third man a pigmy! - some by rickety heads and hump backs – others by bandy legs – a third set arrested by the hand of Nature in the sixth and seventh years of their growth – a fourth, in their perfect and natural state, like dwarf apple-trees, from the rudiments and stamina of their existence, never meant to grow higher.⁹⁷

Graphic satire, specifically as caricature (graphic exaggeration), tapped into and disseminated such (theatric) physiognomic 'imagery'. There is a sense then that graphic satire could provide 'universe language', but we must be cautious first in ascribing fixity to physiognomic/caricature meaning,⁹⁸ and second in assuming that if the 'graphic' bled into the 'perceptual' and 'mental' that graphic satires were thus 'popular' and capable of 'mass' comprehension, *ergo* communication. Graphic satires after all were not, as Bate unconvincingly and unhelpfully suggests, the nearest eighteenth century equivalent to modern television.⁹⁹

However via these 'perceptual' and 'mental' forms of body, gesture and physiognomy, graphic satire did replicate the sorts of 'high-public secrets' seen in Sterne; the 'common language' of cuckold horns and 'stages of life' diagrams identified by O'Connell in popular graphic enterprises.¹⁰⁰ Graphic satire hence functioned within the linguistic confines of what we might call basic communicative truths - as Gombrich notes we 'do not expect any people to call their sweethearts 'bitter' or to sing of the cold and dark smile of a mother fondling her baby'.¹⁰¹ This allows the historian to reject the notion that infinite indeterminate readings of graphic satires were (and are) possible, and posit instead that the pressure of the artist/publisher/consumer nexus, fully aware of the available 'high-public secrets',

97 Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy and Continuation of the Bramine's Journal: The Text and Notes*, eds. Melvyn New and W. G. Day (Gainsville, 2002), 49. For further commentary see Newbould, 'Character or caricature?'

98 Gombrich, 'On Physiognomic Perception' (1960) in Gombrich, *Meditations*, 45-55.

99 Bate, *Shakespearean*, 2.

100 O'Connell, *Popular Print*, 14, 68. We might tentatively extend these basic truths and secrets to satiric themes such as world inversion and the unmasking of authority figures due to the similarities between their exploration in separate communicative cultures. Compare for example the thematic concerns of Goya's etchings with the contemporary British graphic satire to which he had little or no access; Timothy Clifford (ed.), *Francisco de Goya. Prints in the collection of Manchester City Galleries* (Manchester, 2009), 11, 12, 18, *passim*.

101 Gombrich, 'Physiognomic', 48.

restricted the communicative and interpretive possibilities available to these actors. Graphic power in sum enabled graphic satire to interact with other 'images' whilst at the same time disabling all readings between these 'visual' registers becoming available.

Recognising the position of power within the 'visual' that graphic satire held allows us to clarify what aspects of image theory seem most appropriate to this study. Therefore five general points can now be made with respect to how prints have been read and are interpreted methodologically:

- First. 'Any text', as Schellenberg notes, 'is composed primarily of images',¹⁰² which suggests that graphic satire is both a product and communicator of those experiential, imaginative and linguistic images contained in textual discourse. They are thus seen as a facet no more important than text of a wider 'visual culture', peculiar only as they offer the consumer 'an interface with visual technology',¹⁰³ with 'interface culture'.¹⁰⁴
- Second. As part of this 'visual culture', satirical prints employ devices akin to McKeon's 'high-public secrets' (and therefore beyond mere appended text) to order and control what we see. 'Perspective' is one such device, which allows *multiple* plausible readings of a symbol or sign to be made, for example the colour white as classicist, homoerotic and terrifying, but (returning to Gombrich) not *infinite* readings.¹⁰⁵
- Third. Using white to portray terror, for example, is more than a simple logical metaphor, it relies upon readers having awareness a stock of 'common' knowledge or language. What this 'common' knowledge contained differs dependant on socio-cultural groupings, but what we can say is that satiric artists did (and still do) use a number of strategies to tap into this 'common' knowledge. These are, according to Gombrich, figures of speech (personifications

102 Renata Schellenberg, 'Conclusion', in Christina Ionescu and Renata Schellenberg (eds.), *Word and Image in the long Eighteenth Century: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Newcastle, 2008), 358.

103 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London, 1999), 3. Although 'visual culture' has been used as a descriptive tool for the study of our postmodern intervisual world, its exploration of the visual through anti-hierarchical networks of discourse is useful to this study. Despite graphic satire being part of a clear hierarchy of artistic culture in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century society, it respected few hierarchies when deploying symbolic and iconographic material from other visual media.

104 Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Intervisuality', in Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager (eds), *Exploding Aesthetics* (Atlanta, 2001), 129.

105 Gombrich, 'Physiognomic', 40, 58-61.

of abstract ideas), condensation and comparison, portrait caricature, the bestiary, natural metaphors, and finally contrast.¹⁰⁶ The boundaries between these categories are considered however more open and fluid than Gombrich allows, and thus this thesis does not employ his rigid structuralist reading of humour. It is also worth noting that the use of these processes should not be confused with narratives of graphic satire as steeped in 'universal language'; for whilst the processes themselves tapped into basic communicative understandings, graphic satire was *only* readable with access (via membership of the appropriate geographical and/or socio-cultural groups) to 'common' stocks of knowledge/context.

- Fourth. Saying that graphic communication repeats and reuses certain basic strategies, does not mean that graphic satires, be they satirical prints, caricatures or cartoons, follow a simple supplementary teleology. This thesis does not see graphic satire and/or visual culture as a strictly cumulative process. Rather, I regard the sources employed here as part of a wide cultural nexus of understanding and production, and in doing so I reject those Whiggish narratives of art history which seek to trace symbolic meanings to and from their ideological sources.¹⁰⁷
- Fifth. Neither are graphic satires part of simple dialogues between each other or further registers of visual culture. Graphic satires were undoubtedly intertextual, but drew significant material from wider contextual networks. Instead they form part of multifaceted exchanges which are not only plural but 'polysemic' (Porter) and 'fractal' (Mirzoeff), and hence are resistant to overarching narratives.¹⁰⁸

Thus in order to limit this plurality and make sense of Georgian graphic satire in respect to notions of liberty, this study has chosen not to attempt to synthesise all of visual culture, nor all of graphic satire, but the work of one family of artists. The fact that Isaac and his sons worked for a number of

106 Gombrich, 'Cartoonist'.

107 For further critique see Schellenberg, 360. This thesis does not seek to deny however that gradual and overarching change, based on broad experience of generic rather than specific visual phenomenon, is inevitable within the history of 'visual culture'. See John Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (Yale, 2008). I remain nonetheless sceptical of diachronic narratives which seek to trace specific artistic phenomena backwards in time through rigid chains of meaning between specific works of art.

108 Porter, 'Seeing', 196; Mirzoeff, *Visual Culture*, 25.

publishers between 1783 and 1811 allows us more effectively to explore the impact of the consumer (through the lens of liberty) on the print trade (and vice-versa) than a macro study of visual culture or graphic satire could achieve; Cruikshankian commercial exchange gives us a thread to hang on to whilst negotiating the multifarious networks of visual culture.

Conclusion

This thesis uses graphic sources in a historical manner to answer questions of concern peculiar to the historian regarding notions of British liberty and the 'public' who purchased, consumed and hence interacted ideologically (by holding broad if unstable collective beliefs on the boundaries of custom and behaviour) with the market sensitive makers and publishers of graphic satire. In order to do this, this history of communication reads Cruikshankian graphic satire *en masse*,¹⁰⁹ whilst employing three main methodological strategies - a realist reappraisal of print culture through the notion of a powerful and commercially driven artist/publisher/consumer nexus of understanding; a placement of social graphic satire on the topic of liberty within public discourses of 'identity talk'; and an identification of the graphic as part of a wider 'family of images' readable only by contemporaries in possession of the required stocks of 'common' symbolic, iconographic and contextual knowledge. Fundamentally I reject narratives of Cruikshankian satire as 'popular', and concur with Langford's underdeveloped statement that graphic satire performed an 'auxiliary role' in cultural exchange, following drifts of opinion and teasing their boundaries.¹¹⁰

Moreover I present here a narrative of late-Georgian communication based on a narrative medium, the exploration of which requires interpretive linguistic descriptions, what Thierry Groensteen calls 'a

109 An approach contrasting starkly with recent valuable analysis of satirical prints using close individual textual readings in Haywood 'Transformation' and 'Spectropolitics'. Haywood's novel and fertile methodology (not dissimilar to that proposed of comics by the theorist Thierry Groensteen in *The System of Comics* (Mississippi, 2007)) brilliantly reconstructs the intertextuality of satirical prints and their fundamental attachment to specific socio-political contexts. Where it is weakest, as noted above, is in not resolving the tension between seeing graphic satire as 'popular' whilst simultaneously loading those satires (through close analysis) with Hogarthian layers of deception and subtlety.

110 Langford, *Walpole*, 29.

change in the modalities of reading'.¹¹¹ Hence this thesis does not claim, as the accepted mistranslation of Leopold von Ranke goes, 'to show what actually happened [*wie es eigentlich gewesen*]',¹¹² but simply to follow 'the richest run' of prints, those representative by thematic volume, to create a narrative that seems to me the most logical exploration of contemporary notions of liberty and print production/consumption based on the only useful source we have to conduct such a study simultaneously - graphic satire. As these satires are a visual medium created in a less intervisual world than our own, historians must be cautious (as noted earlier) of privileging this form over other aspects of visual culture and members of the 'family of images'. By accepting my own intervisuality I hope to have reined in any desire to overestimate the socio-cultural power of this visual medium.¹¹³ However as an intellectual and cultural historian I also accept that this intervisuality can only impact upon the narrative I create.¹¹⁴ Such are the inescapable realities and challenges of modern scholarship.

111 Thierry Groensteen, 'A Few Words about "The System of Comics" and More...', *European Comic Art*, 1:1 (Spring, 2008), 90.

112 Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Peoples from 1794 to 1514* (1824), vii.

113 For intervisuality see Mirzoeff, 'Intervisuality', 124-133.

114 The neuroarthistorical approach recently developed by John Onians is of some use here. His thesis, in sum, argues that human deployment of visual images is neurologically changed by their exposure to them (a process described as 'neuroplasticity'). It follows therefore that humans are constantly ordering visual phenomenon into loose categories (which proceed in only one direction) loosely termed as 'novel', 'normal' and 'obsolete' (this also raises implications regarding encounters with phenomena and lifespan, though the material analysed in the present thesis has no scope to interrogate such questions). To the human living in our intervisual age and society therefore, the single sheet (colour) printed image lingers somewhere between 'normal' and 'obsolete', whilst the multimedia 2D (or 3D) image is closer to 'novel'. As a result, the modern scholar of Georgian graphic satire must remember that for the majority of Georgian actors graphic satire (technologically and stylistically speaking) was 'novel', it was not part of the daily experiences of all Georgian Britons. And although this 'novelty' may have made such prints exciting and desirable; it also exposed them to scepticism and rejection. Neuroscience therefore tells us, with respect to the gulf in visual experience between the two periods, that *our* response to such prints must consider the different reaction of past actors to the same prints, in order to explore a plausible narrative of print impact; Onians, *Neuroarthistory*. For criticism from the scientific community of the term 'neuroplasticity', upon which Onians' thesis rests, as 'empty' and 'virtually meaningless' see Dr Vaughan Bell, 'Neuroplasticity is a dirty word', *Mind Hacks* (7 June 2010, www.mindhacks.com).