

Graphic Satire and the Enlightenment Eye

Abstract:

Eighteenth-century satire's deep immersion in and articulation of the prevailing visual epistemology of the Enlightenment has often been noted. But in the case of graphic satire the question of satire's proximity to the optical metaphors, practices, and technologies of the period is especially complex. Graphic satire is, by definition, visual; its language is that of the image, or, more accurately, of an image-text imbrication. When we look at satirical prints the very matter of looking is always especially present for us.

This essay is concerned with how graphic satire *sees* itself or, more precisely, how it sees itself seeing. Through readings of caricatures by the likes of James Gillray, James Sayers, and George Cruikshank, it asks what it might mean to take seriously the notion of 'satire's eye', not simply as a rhetorical figure but as a more literal description of what satire is and does.

Graphic Satire and the Enlightenment Eye

David Francis Taylor

Satire, arise, thy country calls thy aid,
See hell-born *rebels* all thy rights invade,
Foes to their King, their Country, and the State,
To those my muse awards her fixed hate;
Keen Satire's eye shall pierce their dark abodes
And drag them to the sight of Men and Gods.

- *The Fallen Candidates* (1780)¹

How does satire think of itself? How does it conceive of its own operations? For the anonymous author of this 1780 poem, satire's imperative is first and foremost visual. It enlightens; it exposes; it renders visible. It forces that which would remain concealed or disguised into the open and calls upon us to bear witness to this truth, to *see* things as they really are. If this function is moral and political – *The Fallen Candidates* urges the voters of Bristol to oppose the reelection of Edmund Burke, whom it excoriates for his support of the rebelling American colonies – then it is here also peculiarly theological. The implication of the final line of this apostrophe to satire is that it brings much-needed clear-sightedness not only to humanity but also to the divine. It is Satire, not God, who is all seeing.

Later in this essay I want to return to the displacements suggested by this quite radical understanding of satire as omnivoyant, but for now I wish simply note that this passage allows us to register – as others have done before – eighteenth-century satire's deep immersion in and articulation of an Enlightenment epistemology that adhered to the belief that to see is to know.² John Locke, after all, opens his *Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding by comparing the understanding to the eye.³ Of course, we need only recall Swift's definition of satire as 'a sort of Glass wherein, Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their Own' to recognize that eighteenth-century satire's relationship to this prevailing visual epistemology is as vexed as it is vital.⁴ Recently, Katherine Mannheimer has argued that Pope's and Swift's fixation on the female body at once manifests satire's compulsion to observe and uncover and at the same time expresses discomfort with the ocularcentricism of the period. That is, these Scriblerian satirists felt there to be an urgent need to parse good and bad practices of looking, at the printed page as much as at women (a distinction, Mannheimer suggests, that these satirists intentionally blur).⁵ If we turn to graphic satire, which is my concern here, then this question of satire's visuality and of its proximity to the optical metaphors, practices, and technologies of the Enlightenment becomes still more complex. Graphic satire is, by definition, visual; its language is that of the image, or, more accurately, of an image-text imbrication. When we *look* at satirical prints the very matter of looking, which I follow Peter de Bolla in regarding not only as a sensory act but as a cultural form, is always especially present for us.⁶

Indeed, again and again graphic satire of this period attends to and makes symbolic use of the instruments and agents of various specialized regimes of vision. It delights in staging scenarios of seeing or, just as often, of a failure to see. Spectacles, telescopes, quizzing glasses, mirrors, cameras obscura, magic lanterns, and peep shows feature prominently in its repertoire of motifs. Britain's enemies are diminished by the efficacious scrutiny of the empowered eye, as in James Gillray's *The King of Brobdingnag, and Gulliver* (26 June 1803), where George III regards a tiny Napoleon through a spyglass, while women are not only the objects but even the apparatus of the male gaze, as in Matthew and Mary Darly's *The Optic Curls* (1 April 1777), in which two men in a playhouse box use the oversized ringlets of the high-haired lady sat beside them as convenient spyglasses. And in

Thomas Rowlandson's myriad caricatures of the connoisseur, the gaze of aesthetic appreciation is shown to be grossly fetishistic, a pretext for the voyeurism of prurient old men.⁷ Ultimately, graphic satirist's troping of the look, in its many ideological and erotic guises, lie beyond the purview of my present discussion. Rather, what interests me here, to take up my opening questions once more, is how graphic satire *sees* itself or, more precisely, how it sees itself seeing. What might it mean to take seriously the idea of 'Satire's eye' when we engage with satirical prints, to take this phrase not simply as a rhetorical figure but as a more literal description of what satire is and does? And if graphic satire at moments posits itself as a technology of vision, what exactly are the political implications of such a self-definition?

Matters of perspective

A good place to begin formulating answers to these questions is with two caricatures published amid the trial of the former governor-general of the East India Company, Warren Hastings in May 1788: James Sayers's *Galante Show* (fig. 1) and Gillray's *Camera-Obscura* (fig. 2). Responding to Edmund Burke's rhetorical excesses – in particular, his elaboration of Hastings's alleged mistreatment of the Raja of Benares and the Begums, or noblewomen, of Oudh – Sayers's print imagines the orator as the operator of a magic lantern, which projects on to a sheet in the distance four images, each an absurd magnification of what they purport to represent: 'A Benares Flea' appears as an insect-like elephant; 'A Begum Wart' is shown as the combined mountains of Ossa, Pelion, and Olympus; the 'Begums Tears' are depicted as four disembodied eyeballs afloat in an ocean of their own making; while 'An Ouzle', or weasel, is illustrated as a whale. More showman than statesman, Burke captivates his

audience with hyperbole that supplants political reality with spectacular fiction. Published just three days later Gillray's caricature turns Sayers's conceit on its head by showing Hastings using a camera obscura to present his public with miniaturized images of the British Indian landscape. Here, an elephant becomes a flea and a whale is reduced to a weasel, while the suffering begums are seen as 'Skind Mice'. Politics, it seems, is a matter of perspective.

I've begun with this pair of opposing prints because recent critical attention has understandably made much of their sophisticated political marshalling of the issues of optics and visibility. For Finbarr Barry Flood, these caricatures disclose the tensions between the competing imperatives of the aesthetic and the documentary that inhered in late eighteenth-century representations of colonial India; for Daniel O'Quinn they elicit the anxieties about evidential lack and distortion that pervaded the impeachment proceedings; while, perhaps most suggestively, for Joseph Monteyne they are images that insist on their own materiality and which trouble the very notion of truth.⁸ What these various critical responses get at is the way these prints' problematize the representedness of politics. In this regard, it is significant that Sayers and Gillray attend to the dynamics of spectatorship as much as the mechanics of image making. They offer scenes of looking. In *Galante Show*, Sayers depicts two silhouetted spectators from behind along with Lord Derby, who is seen in part profile on the far right. The favourable reactions of this group to the procession of pictures put before them are revealing: the first declares, 'Finely imagined' and the second, 'Poor Ladies they have cried their eyes out', while Derby, quoting *Hamlet's* Polonius, affirms, 'Very like an Ouzle'. That is, as comments that respectively concern the artistry, affective power, and verisimilitude of Burke's scene, these statements encompass the gamut of possible responses to a work of *theatre* and so reveal, as O'Quinn notes, the extent to which Burke undertakes to aestheticize the political. Immersed in their own tears, the disembodied eyes of the begums weep rather than see; Burke conjures them only to be looked *at* as the objects of the colonial metropole's

sympathetic gaze. And in his parody of Sayer's satire, Gillray retains this trope of theatrical spectatorship but employs it specifically to signal the bias of the court, with George III, Queen Charlotte, and Lord Thurlow (the Lord Chancellor) pictured as Hastings's enraptured audience.

Both graphic satirists thus develop allegories of mediation. They not only call on their viewers to be wary of the manifold perils of succumbing to a politics of alluring images but also raise the possibility that there can be no unmediated access to the political arena; or, put differently, that there might be no *a priori* truth, no political reality other than that of representation itself. In neither print does the depicted audience view things as they really are, and in *Camera-Obscura* the King is placed at a further remove because he looks at Hastings's images through the lens of his spyglass, a prosthetic eye that makes big exactly what Hastings has rendered small. Crucially, in posing these questions Sayers and Gillray are reimagining the verbal as the visual; they use a metaphysics of optics to think through an oratorical event. Most obviously, this transposition serves to highlight the suspect theatricality of the Hastings trial, and it once more evinces how far matters of perception, understanding, and representation were almost reflexively couched in scopic terms during the Enlightenment. But this language of the visual also implicates the medium of graphic satire itself in the prints' critique of mediation. *Galante Show* and *Camera-Obscura* are what W. J. T. Mitchell terms 'metapictures' – 'pictures that show themselves in order to know themselves' – and in fostering awareness of the distortions (inevitably) embedded in modes of visual representation they necessarily cast doubt on caricature's own truth-telling function.⁹ This seeming self-problematization is especially evident in Gillray's print, which, in closely parodying Sayers's distinctive aquatint style, asks its viewers to register its own etched surface as yet one more representation, one more image that cannot be trusted.

Such, in essence, is Monteyne's reading of these prints. But if we are too quick to align self-consciousness of this kind with an aesthetics of postmodern disorientation, we miss the striking confidence of these satires. They *do* claim to uncover political reality. In Sayers's print the magic lantern is positioned in such a way that it seems to sit forward from the pictorial plane; it is placed within the space in front of the print's title, which it partially covers, a space that must be ours – the actual viewers of this caricature. Gillray's print reproduces this compositional configuration: the screen of the camera obscura projects into our space, casting a shadow against the flat area on which the print's title and attendant texts are inscribed. In other words, placed beyond the apparatus of visual presentation, we *see* what the audiences of Burke and Hastings do not. The artifice is exposed. Moreover, and as O'Quinn observes, in *Camera-Obscura* Gillray shows on the horizon the space of colonial India itself: the graphic satirist gives us – but not the royal spectators – not only Hastings's projections but also the landscape of pain that those projections obscure. Here, the reality of the weeping begums is a sword-wielding British officer who brutalizes three Indian women, one of whose children he has decapitated.

How do we reconcile these ostensibly clashing gestures? These prints both trouble the veridical basis of the visual, calling on us not to trust what we see (or hear, for they use sight as an analogue for the aural), and in the same moment affirm their own capacity to disclose the truth by visual means. They problematize technologies of vision – the magic lantern, the camera obscura – only to assert graphic satire's efficacy as exactly such a tool. One route out of this paradox is to read both prints as signalling graphic satire's special claim to the truth because, unlike other political media (the speech, spoken and printed; the newspaper), it actively advertises its own mediatory processes. Both Sayers and Gillray delight in literalizing the very rhetorical figures they employ. As floating eyeballs, the begums *have* 'cried their eyes out'. Reducing India to a pinhole image, Hastings really does 'diminish' his

own culpability. These are caricatures that collapse the distinction between the figurative and the literal, that make no attempt to hide their own representational manoeuvres. They seem to insist of themselves: where other media pass off distortion as truth, we use and stage distortion as the very method – a visual method – by which we arrive at an accurate view of things as they are. What I don't wish to do, however, is somehow explain away the tension between transparency and opacity that inheres in these prints. Ultimately, Sayers and Gillray call on us to *witness* the terminal unreliability of the visual; clear-sightedness is achieved in the iteration of its very impossibility.

This contradiction is still more apparent in Sayers's 1791 caricature *Mr. Burke's Pair of Spectacles for short sighted Politicians* (fig. 3), which attempts a pictorial distillation of Burke's response to the French Revolution and the attendant efflorescence of British radicalism. Here, a hand enters the frame from the left clutching a pair of spectacles, the lenses of which carry bust portraits of Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the Whig colleagues with whom Burke broke as a consequence of their sympathetic response to the Revolution. Beyond these spectacles Sayers presents a counter-revolutionary allegory in which the perils of radicalism and Foxite Whiggism take on a manifestly gothic inflection. Fox, appearing as a pseudo-Cromwell, takes the axe of the 'Rights of Man' to a tree representing the natural political order, while Sheridan cries out 'Ca ira' as he extinguishes the star of the garter that shines at its centre. Above, Joseph Priestly swoops in on a dragon-like creature and tilts his lance at a chalice, bishop's mitre, and bible nested high in the tree, and a winged demon uses a scythe to cut down the escutcheons symbolizing 'Hereditary Nobility' that hang from the branches. At the foot of the tree, meanwhile, the bewigged skeleton of the radical dissenting minister Richard Price, who had died a month earlier, rises from his grave, and a demon sat on volumes of 'Seditious sermons' and Paine's *Rights of Man* holds out a framed picture of a tree that grows from the pot of 'Republicanism'. All of

this is watched by the Whig grandee the Duke of Portland who – sat stride part of the commemorative pillar that the Whig Club intended to erect at Runnymede – gazes on the scene before him with utter horror. This print is conventionally taken as offering an image of the Burkean worldview, the lurid contours of which generate an unquestionable degree of ambiguity, whether intentional or not. On the one hand, Sayers was a steadfast supporter of Pitt the Younger’s ministry and had been rewarded for his loyalty with the sinecure of marshal of the court of exchequer; in contrast to 1788, he and Burke were now on the same side of the political question. On the other hand, as Thomas Pfau notes, the iconographical oversaturation of this print seems rather indicative of a paranoid hallucination than a sober analysis of political crisis.¹⁰

What interests me, though, is the specific valency of the spectacles in this caricature, for they are a motif in which two different and opposing tropological traditions collide. First, and more immediately, late eighteenth-century caricaturists repeatedly used Burke’s spectacles as graphic shorthand for his myopic or eccentrically skewed reading of events. In William Dent’s *Impeachment* (19 March 1786), for instance, beams of light labelled ‘False Optics’ emerge from Burke’s bespectacled eyes as he looks down upon documents relating to Warren Hastings’s conduct, while in *No Abatement* (31 May 1791), also by Dent, a frenzied, demonic Burke presents Hastings with a nightmarish vision of his supposed crimes and commands his ‘Imp of Envy’ to ‘hold my Spectacles to his Eyes, that he may see as I do’.¹¹ In these prints – and the countless others that advance a similar critique – Burke’s eyeglasses are a metonym for his peculiar state of mind. If seeing is knowing, then distorted vision is symptomatic of warped understanding. Yet *Mr. Burke’s Pair of Spectacles* does something rather different with this trope. Here, we are being asked to look through Burke’s eyeglasses, to see (and know) as he does. And, for all its overloaded concatenation of emblems, the scene we behold is surely being presented to us as a version of the truth, albeit one made known by

means of allegory. We, Sayers's audience, are the 'short sighted' of the print's title. It is our vision that is in need of augmentation.

In this respect, Sayers draws on and reinvigorates a much older tradition of the polemic that titularly announces itself to the public as a much-needed pair of spectacles. We find this trope at least as far back as the 1650s, with *A Pair of Spectacles for the Purblind Nation* (1659), an anonymous response to the removal from power of Richard Cromwell, and it was still current during the Regency Crisis, as can be seen in the title of the pro-Foxite pamphlet, *Alfred Unmasked; or, The New Cataline. Intended as a Pair of Spectacles for the Short-Sighted Politicians of 1789* (1789). In taking up this figure, in which spectacles stand for necessary ideological intervention and realignment, Sayers not only recuperates Burke's eyeglasses specifically as a signifier of efficacious sight – or of that which enables efficacious sight – but also, by extension, adopts spectacles as a cogent image of what his own satire is and does.

Sayers was not the only caricaturist of this period to visualize his own art in these optical terms. In the immediate years after his print both Robert Dighton's *A Pair of Spectacles Easily Seen Thro'* (2 March 1795) and Richard Newton's *Spectacles for Republicans* (24 November 1795) use spectacles as a binocular frame for the political scenes or personages they depict. But while all these prints boldly assert graphic satire's status as a technology of vision, Sayers alone does so in a way that draws special attention to the satirist's own agency. The spectacles in his print may be Burke's but – as the hand that enters from the left reminds us – it is Sayers himself who places them before our eyes. As in *Galante Show* and *Camera Obscura*, an optical device interposes between us and the political world (or some version of it), but this instrument is now wielded by the caricaturist not the politician and we are being asked to look *through* and not beyond or around it. On this reading, the print is no longer ambiguous on the terms identified by Pfau. His contention that

Sayers allows us to glimpse Burke's 'uneven mental topography' presumes that allegory is an intrinsically unfit mode for representing the real, whereas for Sayers it is quite the opposite, as is evident in his caricature *Loyalty against Levelling* (15 December 1792), which features a bright sun dispelling the dark clouds of Paineite radicalism, a British lion, and a desiccated 'arbre de la Liberte'. Like *Mr. Burke's Pair of Spectacles*, as Karle Janke has recognized, this later print recalls the arboreal motifs (the oak of Britain, the tree of the constitution) that recur in the politico-satirical iconography of the seventeenth century.¹² Allegory, for Sayers, discloses a truth at which mimesis cannot get; once again, graphic satire uses the unreal to open our eyes to what's actually going on. As Sayers affirms in his Shakespearean epigram to *Burke's Pair of Spectacles* – 'naught shall makes us rue/ If England to itself do rest but true' – he shows us the truth that we, the public, might be true to ourselves.¹³

But this interpretation only replaces one ambiguity with another, for the spectacles that Sayers puts before his contemporaries in order to rectify their short sightedness are entirely opaque. Their darkened lenses, filled with the portraits of Burke's adversaries, cannot be seen through; Burke is seemingly blinkered by his obsessive concern with the supposed political threat posed by his erstwhile parliamentary colleagues. To be sure, the danger here is that we take literally a print that works in far from literal ways but it's nonetheless important that the eyeglasses, the motif upon which this caricature pivots, are unable to perform their proper function. I'd argue that the print's confused signalling of revelation and obfuscation is symptomatic of Sayers's efforts to overlay the trope of Burke's spectacles with that of satire or polemic as optical correction. The first regards instrument-enabled perception as suspect and even unnatural, while the second posits it as the requisite antidote to the inherent unreliability of unaided vision. Far more than in *Galante Show*, Sayers's *Mr. Burke's Pair of Spectacles* struggles to uphold the notion of satire's 'piercing eye'. Seeing and knowing don't seem to align. But then the same is true of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

(1790), which is at once passionately committed to defending ‘pleasing allusions’ against a ‘new conquering empire of light and reason’ that would dissolve them, and also immersed in the Enlightenment’s visual epistemology, with Burke asking us to ‘turn our eyes’ on the ‘ruins of France’ and claiming that the horrors there have ‘opened’ the eyes of British people to the unsavoury truth of revolutionary promise.¹⁴ If we register a crisis of faith in the visual in *Mr. Burke’s Pair of Spectacles* then this might well be seen to underlie the larger project of Burkean conservatism with which Sayers here allies himself.

Print, power, and the artificial eye

To this point I’ve attended and applied critical pressure to eighteenth-century graphic satire’s self-image as a lens through which we, the public, must look in order to perceive the political clearly and accurately; a lens, moreover, that paradoxically functions by using distortion and allegory to reveal things as they are. It is a self-image, I’ve suggested, that elicits the form’s powerful and highly vexed sense of (its own) visibility, and also one that bespeaks graphic satire’s deep interest in exploring – and staging – the mechanisms of mediation. To this extent, my analysis has tacitly been predicated on the distinction between the human eye itself and the apparatus that aids or adjusts the eye’s operation, but this distinction does not fully hold in the Enlightenment. The period’s theorists of vision in fact habitually posited the eye as an autonomous instrument, and in doing so they effaced the boundaries between the natural and the technological. As Jonathan Crary has shown, the entrenchment of this discourse of the ‘disembodied cyclopean eye’ is most apparent in the commonplace analogy between the eye and the camera obscura rehearsed by the likes of Descartes, in his *La Dioptrique* (1637), and Locke, in his *Essay*.¹⁵ So pervasive is this comparison, Crary notes, that the difference between optical metaphor and optical apparatus often ceased to be

meaningful. Eighteenth-century treatises on the eye written by opticians and apparatus makers thus extol the benefits of spectacles not simply by invoking the camera obscura model of vision but by explicitly emphasizing the interchangeability of real and prosthetic eyes. James Ayscough's *A Short Account of the Eye* (1752), for instance, compares the eye 'as an Optical Instrument' to 'one of human Invention', while George Adams goes further still in his *Essay on Vision* (1789) by offering an extended description of 'an artificial eye' (fig. 4) as mean of elaborating the 'optical effects of vision'. In such accounts, which take for granted the Cartesian separation of mind and body – 'this Instrument performs all these Things of itself, from the Nature of its Formation, without any Direction or Assistance from the Mind', writes Ayscough – the eye is something automatic and mechanical, and its operations are quite independent of the seeing subject, with her capacity for understanding and judgment.¹⁶

As Martin Jay observes, this notion of the disembodied eye is central to 'modern science and Albertian art', and I would add that it's equally important to Enlightenment satire.¹⁷ The prints by Sayers and Gillray we've considered regard themselves as the 'eyes' through which we must look. Graphic satire sees so that we may come to know. At the same time, however, these prints are freighted with anxiety that the images we receive through either the lens of the eye or the manufactured lenses designed to correct or augment vision are not to be trusted. In *Mr. Burke's Pair of Spectacles* the efficacy of graphic satire's 'eye' is heralded and cast into doubt in the same gesture. In a form that inexorably reads the corporeal as an index of the moral and mental it's hardly surprising that the idea and ideal of the eye as an autonomous instrument of vision, one removed from the realities of the body, is undermined in its very articulation. But this isn't always the case. While we might reasonably expect such jostling of avowal and disavowal to become ever more acute as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the collaboration between William Hone and George

Cruikshank at the beginning of the 1820s rather produces the period's most emphatic and untroubled enunciation of graphic satire as an artificial eye.

In one of Cruikshank's illustrations (fig. 5) to Hone's satirical pamphlet *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* (1820) – which takes George IV to task for his efforts to divorce his estranged consort, Caroline of Brunswick – the king is shown as a dandy-cum-Guy Fawkes who is being led by a decrepit Cupid towards a doorway, beyond which lies the bag of evidence amassed to support the charges of adultery brought against the queen. The implication, of course, is that the king will set this material alight, thereby destroying Caroline, who inhabits the room above and who watches George through a window. But she is not the only one who sees what the monarch is up to, for a large eye – which encloses a printing press – looks down from the night sky, its gaze directing a beam of light upon the king, whose actions are thereby exposed.¹⁸ And less than a year later, Hone and Cruikshank returned to this ocular emblem at the climax of their satire *The Political Showman—At Home!* (fig. 6), where the eponymous narrator signs off by pledging that the political beasts of his menagerie 'are *under my control*, and cannot take a step beyond the reach of MY EYE'.¹⁹ Immediately beneath these final two words, which are typographically enlarged and centred, a wood engraving by Cruikshank shows a giant disembodied eye – once again encompassing a Stanhope press – that looms over a tangled heap of desperate and resentful ministers who have been thrown back by the light radiating from it.

What is remarkable about these two images is the confidence and certitude with which Hone and Cruikshank marshal the eye as a figure for the efficacy of their own satirical enterprise. In contrast to the caricatural responses to the Hastings Trial and French Revolution that we've considered, the gaze here realizes a supreme transparency. Nothing remains concealed or unclear; everything is visible and the protocols of this visibility are to be trusted entirely. This is because Cruikshank appropriates and secularizes the longstanding

motif of the eye of God. As Marcus Wood has noted, the illustration for *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* specifically adapts Samuel Ward's 1621 print *The Double Deliverance*, which depicts the providential eye sending out a ray of light that descends upon and illuminates Guy Fawkes just as he prepares to blow up parliament.²⁰ This scene of divine surveillance recurs in various prints of the Gunpowder Treason throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and in the first decade of the nineteenth it was openly parodied by Gillray and Sayers in caricatures of statesmen known to favour Catholic emancipation.²¹ However, where those earlier satirical appropriations ironize the very motif they take up – substituting for the eye of God the eye of the poor-sighted George III, who still has need of a spyglass in order to see properly – Cruikshank's reworking of it in *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* is marked by a striking sincerity. 'As yon bright orb, that vivifies our ball,/ Sees through our system, and illumines all,' read the verses accompanying the image: 'So, sees and shines, our Moral Sun, The Press,/ Alike to vivify the mind, and bless'. This is a familiar conceit, of course, and it takes us back to the lines from *The Fallen Candidate* with which we began, though where in that poem the eye of satire assists the eye of providence, here there is no all-seeing eye other than that of the press. This conscription of a manifestly Christian symbol in the service of Enlightenment political idealism has obvious precedents (as Hone and Cruikshank must surely have known) in the Great Seal of the United States (1782) and Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier's famous pictorial rendering of the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), both of which give prominent place to the eye of God.²² Yet, even accounting for these recent iconographical accommodations, Hone's and Cruikshank's overwriting of the theological with the technological is unusual.

Nor is this just a question of witnessing. In the closing image of *The Political Showman* the omnivoyant eye of the press not only perceives and exposes corruption and injustice; its gaze actively disciplines those in power. The epigraph from *Othello* – 'I'll watch

them *tame*' – makes this clear: the eye does not behold an action in this line; it performs that action. To watch *is* to tame. Vision is here extamissive. The eye actively exerts control over and modifies the noumenal environment it apprehends. Admittedly, this is a figure for the political efficacy of print rather than satire; it is print that sees, exposes, and repels the government. But such a distinction cannot finally be made in the case of Hone's collaborations with Cruikshank, for the invention of the iron Stanhope Press, which enabled faster and cheaper printing after its introduction around 1800, was a precondition for the specific kind of low-cost multimedial pamphlet satire that they practised together. Cruikshank's eye of the press is thus more specifically the eye of radical print satire, and of radical *graphic* satire, for the absolute emphasis on visuality in these two scenes only makes sense within the discursive and material contexts of Hone's and Cruikshank's intricate enmeshing of text and image. Moreover, in *The Double Deliveraunce* the shaft of light that the eye of providence directs towards Fawkes is inscribed 'Video rideo – *I See and Smile*'. In working upon this symbolism, Hone and Cruikshank recognize that the look of omnivoyance is also a look of satirical laughter, for in exposing corruption it perforce renders risible the naivety of those who believe their vices and crimes to go undetected. In *The Political Showman* the eye of the press 'tames' ministers, placemen, bishops, and kings so far as it ridicules them.

But this apotheosis of print-satirical vision comes at a cost. The second of Cruikshank's illustrations celebrates print's inauguration of a public sphere of hyper-visibility in which nothing and no one remains hidden. All is exposed, out in the open, seeable; there is no privacy. It is the very metaphor of Enlightenment carried to an extreme. For all that we might regard this insistence on the power of print, and of printed satire, as no more than a fantasy of the disenchanted, it nonetheless claims to replace one regime – that of a self-interested and oppressive political hierarchy – with another: that of the universal gaze of

press surveillance, which monitors and, so we're told here, *governs* the political system in its entirety. Hone and Cruikshank trade one form of power for another and, not least in their use of an overtly disciplinary grammar, they imagine the press in terms highly resonant of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which was grounded, as Foucault has understood it, on a conception of visibility 'organized completely around a dominating and observing gaze'. Bentham's influence, Foucault contends, lay in his creation of a 'formula, applicable in a wide variety of domains, for a form of "power through transparency," a subjugation through a process of "illumination"'.²³ Cruikshank's caricature applies exactly this formula to print satire. Imagining that everything and everyone is subjected to print's scrutinizing gaze in the name of truth, it proposes the absolutism of the eye.

Hone was fond of Francis Bacon's dictum 'Knowledge is Power', which he quotes early in *The Political Showman* as well as elsewhere. Without question, he and Cruikshank offer the eye of the printing press as a symbol and catalyst of radical democracy; for them, print enables all to know (for, once more, seeing is knowing). But in the figure of the all-seeing eye, this knowingness seems less to be democratically diffused than to be peculiarly displaced; everyone is *no one*. This is not the gaze of a God or a king; nor is it the look of the satirist. The artificial eye has now taken over. The human agency to which Sayers gives such prominence in the hand that intervenes in *Mr. Burke's Pair of Spectacles* – the hand that reminds us of the caricaturist's presence and intentions – is absent here. Indeed, *The Political Showman* is in essence an it-narrative: it opens with Cruikshank's image of an anthropomorphized Stanhope press, and it is the voice of this sentient object that guides us through the 'cabinet of curiosities' that follows. Given the Liverpool government's attempt to prosecute Hone for libel in 1817, we might well regard this transference of agency from the person to the thing as a strategic ploy, a necessary vanishing act on the part of the radical satirist. Yet to acknowledge such legal exigencies is in no way to temper the strident

enthusiasm with which this pamphlet acclaims the paper of its own printed pages as a political hero – and an ultimate authority. Christina Lupton argues that it-narratives offer one manifestation of a broader literary ‘culture of self-consciousness’ in the eighteenth century in which texts reinforced ‘a human willingness to perceive objects, and to perceive media in particular, as being beyond human control’.²⁴ The artificial eye of Hone’s and Cruikshank’s satire offers a further articulation of this Enlightenment technodeterminism. The autonomy of the satirical eye, which is here synonymous with the autonomy of the medium of print, finally comes at the expense of human agency. The eye of the press is all-powerful *because* it is artificial. Hone and Cruikshank fashion a call to see and know that paradoxically attenuates its readers’ sense of their own capacity to see or know.

However, the story does not quite end here, for just a month later the loyalist printseller George Humphrey published a parody of this image, entitled *All My Eye* (fig. 7). In this caricature an eye closely modelled on the one in *The Political Showman* fills the whole frame, but in contrast to the original engraving it is not shown to be looking at anyone; rather it stares directly out of the pictorial field. Certainly, we might read this satiric gesture as enacting a kind of confrontation, as imagining the eye of the loyalist that returns, and reverses, the gaze of the radical – and in doing so proffers the derisive scepticism expressed in the print’s title, which twists Hone’s words into a colloquialism meaning ‘Utter nonsense’. But the caricature is much more coherent if we instead take its eye to be an ironic and, importantly, microscopic rendering of the same eye of the press imagined by Hone and Cruikshank. On this reading, the parody is not about the politics of looking back; rather it asks us to attend more closely to the climatic motif of *The Political Showman*, a wish articulated in the statement: ‘See Hone’s eulogium on the Radical Press’. This is less a citation than a specific injunction to the viewer: *see*, look carefully at the eye before you. Those who do so will note that it encloses not just a printing press but also a laurelled portrait

of Queen Caroline. This image within the eye in fact doubles the parody here for it mimics the transparency, ‘The Triumph of the Press’, that Hone first exhibited at his premises in celebration of the royal divorce bill’s withdrawal in November 1820 and then reproduced across a full page of *The Political Showman*. Only the figure of Liberty, who in Hone’s original transparency stands before the printing press proudly holding the queen’s picture, is now conspicuously missing. To gaze into this eye is to see not a righteously victorious press but merely a biased, even sentimental one; a press defined by its mania for an out-of-favour queen.

In other words, this caricature returns the autonomous eye of printed political satire to the realm of subjectivity, to what it regards as the inescapable reality of human obsessions, resentments, and prejudices. It plucks the eye from the heavens and returns it to the body, with the colouring around this eye unmistakably mimicking the tones of skin. And it’s significant, too, that the print in some manner name checks both Hone and Cruikshank: it exhorts us to ‘See *Hone’s* eulogium’, and, more remarkably, it tells us, in its signature line in the bottom left corner, that it is etched by none other than George Cruikshank’s older brother, Isaac Robert. The anonymity enacted in *The Political Showman’s* ceding of cultural agency to the technological is overturned. Vision is here personal, particular, and – most crucially – unreliable; to suggest that it can be otherwise is, *All My Eye’s* caustic title suggests, a mere fantasy. Restoring the self-critique of satiric visuality that we traced in prints of the 1780s and ’90s, this loyalist parody argues visually for the limits of the visual. It responds to the claim that the press might be all seeing and satire all enlightening by insisting that sight is an all-too human sense and, at best, an unstable metaphor on which to depend.

¹ *The Fallen Candidates, A Poem. Address’d to the Citizens to the Bristol* (Bristol, 1780), 15.

² See especially Elizabeth C. Mansfield and Kelly Malone (ed.), *Seeing Satire in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013).

³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 43.

⁴ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub: To which is added The Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operations of the Spirit*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and David Nichol Smith, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 215.

⁵ Katherine Mannheimer, *Print, Visuality, and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Satire: "The Scope of Ev'ry Page"* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011).

⁶ Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2.

⁷ On Rowlandson's satires of connoisseurship see Joseph Monteyne, *From Still Life to the Screen: Print Culture, Display, and the Materiality of the Image in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 79-85.

⁸ Finbarr Barry Flood, 'Correct Delineations and Promiscuous Outlines: Envisioning India at the Trial of Warren Hastings', *Art History*, 29:1 (2006), 47-78; Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2005), 194-9; and Monteyne, *From Still Life to the Screen*, 193-6.

⁹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 48.

¹⁰ Thomas Pfau, 'Paranoia Historicized: Legal Fantasy, Social Change, and Satiric Meta-Commentary in the 1794 Treason Trials', in *Romanticism, Radicalism, and the Press*, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 30-64 (50).

¹¹ For more on caricaturist's use of Burke's spectacles as a motif see Nicholas K. Robinson, *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 8, 32, 63, 83, 111, 152.

¹² Karle Janke, "Counter Image, Anathema, Vision of Terror: Republic and Popular Rule in English Caricature of the Eighteenth Century," in *Loyal Subversion: Caricatures from the Personal Union between England and Hanover (1714-1837)*, ed. Anorthe Kremers and Elisabeth Reich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 92-121 (108).

¹³ William Shakespeare, *King John*, 5.7.117-8, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 40, 109, 79.

¹⁵ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 42, 47.

¹⁶ James Ayscough, *A Short Account of the Eye, and Nature of Vision. Chiefly designed to Illustrate the Use and Advantage of Spectacles* (London: E. Say, 1752), 2, 5; George Adams, *An Essay on Vision, Briefly Explaining the Fabric of the Eye, and the Nature of Vision* (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1789), 50.

¹⁷ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993), 81.

¹⁸ William Hone and George Cruikshank, *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, 21st edn (London: William Hone, 1820), n. p.

¹⁹ William Hone and George Cruikshank, *The Political Showman—At Home!* (London: William Hone, 1821), n. p.

²⁰ Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790-1832* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 253-4.

²¹ James Gillray, *The Pillar of the Constitution* and James Sayers, *A New Leaf for an old Book of Common Prayer*, both published on 4 June 1708.

²² See Hanneke Grootenboer, *Treasuring the Gaze: Intimate Vision in Late Eighteenth-Century Eye Miniatures* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 63-70.

²³ Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', trans. Mark S. Seem, in *The Impossible Prison: A Foucault Reader* (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2008), 13.

²⁴ Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 16-17.