



LOOKING AT THE CASE AGAINST HER

INTERTEXTUALITY IN QUEEN CAROLINE PRINTS

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WHEN THE SECOND ROUND OF DEBATE on the Bill of Pains and Penalties began in October 1820, Henry Brougham's opening speech emphasized the public nature of the proceedings. Brougham, the Queen's Attorney-General, continued the practice of characterizing the debate as a trial in which the Queen was the defendant,¹ pointing out that by permitting the testimony to be printed in the daily newspapers the Lords had effectively tried Caroline in the court of public opinion, and "the country" had returned a "unanimous verdict . . . in her favor, by looking at the Case against her."² Brougham's phrase is telling: the notion of looking at the case against the Queen is a crucial feature of the prints by Lane, Cruikshank, and others that were collected in *The Attorney-General's Charges against the Late Queen* (1821). Lane's

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¹ Among the many references to a trial is Solicitor-General Sir John Singleton Copley's declaration in his summing up of the first round of debate that "Her majesty is here upon her trial" (Sir John Singleton Copley, Summing Up, in *Parliamentary History* vol. 2 [London: Longman, 1821], 1346).

² Henry Brougham, Defence of Her Majesty, in *Parliamentary History* vol. 3 [London: Longman, 1821], 139.



Figure 1

engravings, in representing episodes from the testimony, worked as a pictorial reenactment of that testimony, affording the public the opportunity of looking at the case against the Queen, visualizing, through a decidedly loyalist lens, such scandalous scenes as Caroline bathing in private with her Italian lover Pergami or groping him during a carriage ride. Print-makers, however, framed this visuality through allusive text that shifted scenes from the trial itself into the popular history that preceded it.

In *The Politics of Parody*, David Francis Taylor analyzes the work of allusion – “portions of texts . . . embedded within and oriented in relation to a given print’s iconography” – in the graphic satires of the later Georgian period.³ While such insertions could “augment the gravity of an occasion,” more often they complicated and extended understanding by introducing into an engraving “the ambivalences and ambiguities that inhere in a source text.”⁴ Probably published in August 1820, amid widespread public pro-Caroline sentiment, J. Lewis Marks’ *King Henry VIII* (fig. 1) is an instance of allusion

³ David Francis Taylor, *The Politics of Parody* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2018), 7-8.

⁴ Taylor, 10, 20-21.

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Figure 2

used to fix and reinforce a single reading. Marks' print depicts not an episode from the testimony alleging the Queen's adultery but an imagined courtroom scene, in which Caroline, as Catherine of Aragon, addresses her husband in a speech from Shakespeare's play. George, as Henry VIII, looks uncomfortably away from his wife, while two cardinals gape at her. Parallels between the current crisis and Henry's attempt to divorce his first wife were common throughout 1820-21. Brougham had referenced the case against Catherine as a prior instance of suborned testimony,⁵ and Cruikshank's February 1821 *A Scene in the New Farce – as Performed at the Royalty Theatre!* (fig. 2) depicts George as Henry VIII, rejecting calls to dismiss his ministers in the wake of the hearings. Unlike Cruikshank's print, however, in which no one is spared – neither the bloated King nor his rapacious ministers, nor the swinish beefeaters, nor the ox-like petitioners – Marks' print is unequivocally partisan. His Caroline/Catherine's speech elides particulars in the original – such as Catherine's assurance that she has been "a true and humble wife" who has been "blessed with many children" by

⁵ Brougham, 134.

the King⁶ – that would complicate the recognition he wishes to press. The point of allusion in this print is to connect Caroline's plight with a familiar event and text, and any parts of that text that do not offer a clear correspondence are discarded.

If image and text are mutually reinforcing in Marks' print, Lane's engravings, the majority of which were published in 1821 when public sentiment had turned against Caroline, push more nuanced readings. His prints require the viewer not only to identify a source text but to unpack the meanings it brings into its new context. In the verse caption to *A Parting Hug at St. Omer* (June 1821), for example, Lane appends the first line of Byron's 1816 "Fare Thee Well" to the end of a passage, slightly misquoted, from Dibdin's 1790 ballad, "The Soldier's Adieu."⁷ Each of the three lines in this caption is actually two lines strung together, with Dibdin's partial ballad stanza placed atop of Byron's trochaic tetrameters. The formatting and meter suggest that all three are part of a single source, but the scandalous familiarity of Byron's line calls attention to its ironic gloss on Dibdin's lesser-known sentimental farewell. The allusiveness in this print "demands," in Taylor's words, "comprehensive recognition of the text[s] it ironically inhabits and distorts."⁸ Marks' print truncates but does not otherwise distort his source because he wants recognition to stop at the wronged Queen – the single connection that illuminates his image. Viewers of Lane's print must recognize that one line is Byron's while the others are not and must also be able to identify its original snarkiness, a parting shot at the wife who left him. The more layered the allusiveness, the more *au fait* the consumer must be.

In *A Pas de Deux or Love at First Sight* (fig. 3), published one month earlier, the caption from *The Beggar's Opera*, itself an allusive text, highlights Pergami's duplicity and Caroline's easily manipulable sexuality, while also hinting at a national desire to be rid of this troublesome Queen and get on with the Coronation. *A Pas de Deux* depicts Caroline, dressed in the same ruffled trousers she wears in *A Parting Hug* (with the addition of an absurdly short beribboned overskirt), dancing a jig with Pergami. The verse caption

⁶ Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII* 2.4.21, 34-35.

⁷ For a fuller discussion of this print, see Kristin Samuelian, *Royal Romances* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 138, 147-148.

⁸ Taylor, 133.

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Figure 3

quotes from the ballad “Over the Hills and Far Away,” sung by Macheath and Polly Peachum in Gay’s opera:

How I’d love you all the day
Every Night we’d Kiss and Play
If with me you’d fondly stray
Over the Hills and far away.

The original ballad, titled “Jockey’s Lamentation” or “The Wind has blow’d my Plaid away,” dates from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The final, presumably bawdy, line replaced “that Jenny stole my Heart away” in the first stanzas: “’Tis o’re the Hills, and far away, / The Wind has blow’d my Plaid away.”⁹ The song appeared in Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) as a recruiting song.¹⁰ The lines quoted in the print are John Gay’s own,

⁹ Henry Playford, *Wit and Mirth* vol. 4 (London: W. Pearson, 1706), 101.

¹⁰ George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1706), 2.3.

slightly emended, and are sung alternately by Macheath and Polly at the end of their duet.

As a ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera* was self-consciously intertextual. Gay used popular song and, as John Brewer has noted, “deliberately drew attention” to his source material in a way similar to the ironic allusiveness of graphic satires.¹¹ Part of the pleasure for the audience depended upon their ability to overlay his lyrics with the originals he had altered, understanding one through recognition of the other. As with viewers comprehending Caroline’s messy return to her marriage through text referencing Byron’s messy departure from his, parody emerges in the gloss this act of recognition provides. Thus, by the time it appears in Lane’s engraving, “Over the Hills and Far Away” carries a number of meanings, all of which contribute to its many-pronged attack on Caroline. The original ballad of a lover betrayed blends with the bad faith of a recruiting song, and both emerge in the bad faith of the rakish anti-hero. As a caption it is both warning and wish-fulfillment. Marks’ print, which would have been current when Brougham asserted the public’s unanimous verdict, asks viewers to look not at the case against the Queen but at the Queen herself, and to feel sympathy for a woman required to sue for what should be hers by right. Lane’s Queen, fleshy and foolish, at once over- and under-dressed, is a visualization not of her wrongs but of her crimes, refracted through what was perhaps the most popular text of criminality of the previous century.

The prints of 1820 and 1821 allowed viewers to look at the case against Caroline through popular Shakespearean history, through recent scandal, and through familiar texts like Gay’s, the “parts” of which, Brewer points out, had become “as important as the whole.”¹² Appearing in captions rather than speech bubbles, which made attribution murkier, Lane’s allusions intimate, for the discerning viewer and now that it had been dismissed, how damning was the case against the Queen. Despite their loyalist bent, they indicate monarchy’s permeability to counter-representation, a vulnerability against which George’s over-the-top Coronation was intended as a bulwark. The prints collected in *The Attorney General’s Charges*, published after the Coronation, simultaneously reinforced and destabilized that bulwark.

¹¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1997, 2013), 342.

¹² Brewer, 358.