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REGENCY RADICALISM AND ANTIQUARIANISM: WILLIAM HONE'S
ANCIENT MYSTERIES DESCRIBED (1823)

By J.W. ROBINSON

An examination of William Hone's *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and of the hectic and stirring circumstances surrounding its preparation and publication, reveals that this book - frequently reprinted in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but much ignored - represents an important development in literary and dramatic historiography; and also that this development is closely tied to the early nineteenth-century radical movement for parliamentary and social reform. Hone's discoveries about the medieval drama were, in fact, dependent on the same impetus that resulted in the age of reform. From successfully conducting his own defence against charges of sedition and blasphemy in 1817, he was led, by way of an abandoned "History of English Parody", to publish the first English edition of the so-called *Apocryphal New Testament* (1820); then his *Ancient Mysteries Described* (1823); and then his *Every-Day Book, Table Book, and Year Book* (1825-1831).

The main section of *Ancient Mysteries Described* consists of copious extracts, with connecting narratives and quotations, from eight plays from the cycle of mystery plays known as the *Ludus Coventriae*, together with parallel passages from two of the apocryphal Infancy gospels. This is followed by eleven sections of "Illustrations and Additions", to which Hone refers disparagingly in his preface as "skimble-skamble stuff", but which mostly are in fact relevant to Hone's approach to the mystery plays. On its publication in May the book was heartily welcomed by a number of the critical reviews, with some exclamations of surprise. Charles Lamb, writing to thank Hone for a copy, said he was "agreeably entertained" by it, and no less an antiquary than Francis Douce found it "rich & amusing".¹

I. Popular Radicalism and Seditious Blasphemy

William Hone (1780-1842), the poorly educated son of a clerk, became at about the age of sixteen a member of the London Corresponding Society, recently founded to further the cause of reform. A few years later he set up as a bookseller and opened a circulating library.² At the close of the Napoleonic wars, bad harvests, peace, and an inequitable system of taxation brought widespread unemployment, hunger, and misery. Popular agitation for reform increased, and the response of the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, and his colleagues was repressive. After the Spa Fields meetings and the pelting of the Prince Regent (1816-17), Habeas Corpus was suspended. This was the "heroic age of popular Radicalism",³ and Hone threw himself into the

struggle by publishing numerous prints (many by George Cruikshank) and pamphlets attacking and ridiculing such evils as borough-mongering, sinecures, "Pensioners and Placemen", the "fleecing and grinding" of the "People", unequal representation in parliament, "conspiracies against the liberty of the people", "pensioned hirelings of the press", and "the bayonets of an hired soldiery"; and drawing attention to the "poor-houses overflowing with paupers", "sudden death from want of food", and the "tears of the orphan". The "blind imbecility of ministers", not to mention the fornications and extravagancies of the Prince Regent, were lampooned mercilessly. Early in 1817 Sidmouth determined to stop the dissemination of "seditious libel", and Hone was arrested on 3rd May.

Some of his pamphlets had taken the form of parodies ("O House of Commons, that votest away the money of the whole nation . . ."), and it was thus plausible to arrest him for blasphemous libel - for publishing in 1817 *The Late John Wilkes's Catechism*, *The Political Litany*, and *The Sinecurist's Creed* (from which the quotations above are taken) - and the arguments for the prosecution concentrated on the question of blasphemy rather than of sedition. The charge at his first trial, for example, was that he had printed and published "a certain impious, profane, and scandalous libel on that part of our church service called the Catechism, with intent to excite impiety and irreligion in the minds of his Majesty's liege subjects, to ridicule and scandalize the Christian religion, and to bring into contempt the Catechism" (p.¹³).⁴ Sidmouth and Sir Samuel Shepherd, the Attorney General, had, as they were soon to discover, picked the wrong man. Hone conducted his own defence, arrived each morning in court at Guildhall with a large pile of books, and insisted on reading aloud to the jury many parodies of religious writings published with impunity by others, and largely taken from his own unsuspected store of "black-letter" learning and knowledge of popular literature. He argued at length and successfully that "parodies were not necessarily disrespectful to the work parodied, and that they had been uniformly allowed" (p.²³⁵). He was tried thrice, 18th - 20th December, 1817; after his third acquittal, he was cheered by a crowd of 20,000 people. This was, it has been claimed, a significant moment in the struggle for the freedom of the press in England; Richard Carlile, for example, the publisher of *The Age of Reason*, was promptly released from prison as a result of Hone's acquittal.⁵

As he was to recall in later life, Hone thought at this period that "all institutions for religious purposes were mere devices of the crafty to enslave the ignorant",⁶ a view shared by a number of his contemporaries. Thomas Paine, whose works were circulated by members of the London Corresponding Society, had written in the first chapter of *The Age of Reason* (1794) that "all national institutions of churches . . . appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit". A related view, with which Hone was also familiar, is found in Dissenting thought. Shortly after his trials, for example, he published the sermons of James Murray, the radical Presbyterian, who preached that "All Europe, yea, the greatest part of the world, have couched down between the two burdens of civil and religious

oppression";⁷ and the aim of *The Independent Whig* (1720-1721, often - and as late as 1816 - reprinted) was to "illustrate the Beauty of Christianity, by exposing the Deformity of *Priestcraft*", a "Creature of the Civil Power".⁸ Hone's encounter at his trials with the defenders of the "Christian establishment of the Church of England" (p.²⁶), who spoke of the Christian religion as forming "the basis of morality, comfort, happiness, and prosperity" (p.³⁴¹) and who yet supported the government's inequitable and repressive social policies, provided him with a clear instance of the same principle.

II. "Parody", "A History of English Parody", and *The Apocryphal New Testament*

In prison and awaiting trial, Hone wrote to his acquaintance, Robert Aspland, the prominent Unitarian, for help:

I take this opportunity of saying that (*in the mean time*) I shall be greatly obliged by suggestions, hints, &c., for my defence. Surely I have seen a Sermon by Bishop Latimer, which he preached, I think before Edward VI., with a pack of cards in the pulpit - have you it, or can you procure it for me? What good History is there of the Common Prayer, shewing how its various portions originated, and what are peculiarly questionable? . . . When did Earl Stanhope move to reform our statutes by repealing enactments against witches feeding the devil with beef, &c.? I want much of this kind of lore, which I dearly love, and think I can make good use of on my trials. Redcross-Street Library perhaps has things of great use to me . . . I am wholly helpless here . . .

unable to "rummage . . . amongst black-letter collectors' stores".⁹ What interested Hone about feeding beef to the devil or preaching with the aid of a pack of cards was that these activities combined the ludicrous and the serious. At his trials he demonstrated, by referring to a huge range of examples, that "the mixing up of profane and sacred subjects" (p.¹³⁵), as he had done in his parodies, was extremely common in popular literature and art. Latimer's sermon, Gillray's caricatures (of, for example, the Duke of Bedford as Leviathan), the singing of hymns to secular tunes at Rowland Hill's Surrey Chapel, the biblical parodies rife at the Westminster election of 1784, and innumerable other examples (many of which produced roars of laughter in court) were all adduced by Hone to show that it is not normally thought (even by "the most pious men") that a "casual association of ludicrous images with matters of the Christian religion tended to weaken the respect due to that faith" (p.²⁵).

In January 1818 Hone published a slim verbatim account of his trials, *The Three Trials of William Hone*, which consists of reissues of his *The First Trial of William Hone* and *The Second Trial of William Hone* (both 1817), *The Third Trial of William Hone* (1818), and *Proceedings of the Public Meeting, December 29, 1817* (1818 - the meeting was in support of Hone), with the addition of a general title-page and a two-page "Address". He then set to work to prepare an enlarged edition, which was to include the texts of all the

parodies produced at his trials, and, as the idea grew in his mind, of a large number of others; this volume would be the result, he writes in the sketch of a preface which survives among his working papers, of "a persevering research which no other individual could have motives for exercising".¹⁰ He issued a printed prospectus (Plate 1) in February 1819, but the work never appeared. It was to be based, he writes in the prospectus, on "my own Collection of Books, Tracts, Prints, and Memoranda, which, since the Trials, I have diligently, and almost daily, employed myself in forming, without regard either to pains or expense"; however, Hone was imprisoned for debt in 1826, and to raise funds this large collection was sold by auction and dispersed.¹¹

His working papers reveal that his wish to justify his own parodies burgeoned into a wide-ranging plan to compile "A History of English Parody" (Plate 2). At his trials he had been at pains to point out at length that the defenders of privilege and tradition on the side of the government, including Gillray and George Canning (then a colleague of Sidmouth in Liverpool's cabinet) indulge in parody, in *The Anti-Jacobin* for example, when it suits their purpose; and practice title-pages in his notes show him juxtaposing parodies by kings, statesmen, and bishops against "popular parody".¹² His wide definition of parody as a "casual association of ludicrous images" with serious matter blossomed into a kind of *Weltanschauung*, and covered both the language of political oppression ("Mem: Royalty a Parody on Divine Gov. e.g. Y^r Majesty, Sire, Sacred Majesty &c", he jotted down in his notes)¹³ and the "Literature of the Multitude". In the course of his thinking, he decided that the word his prosecutors had been looking for was "travesty" - "Travesty is ridicule of the original";¹⁴ all other combinations, from whatever source, of the serious and silly, dreadful and grotesque, sublime and trivial, and religious and domestic are parodies.

Hone's interest in such popular art and literature as political caricatures, street-ballads, children's books, and puppet shows is apparent not only throughout *Ancient Mysteries Described* and his later miscellanies but in the style of his own very popular radical publications themselves, which are direct, garish, Juvenalian and graphic, and related in style (although not closely) to the sensational street-literature of his contemporary James Catnach. Under the influence of his trials, he came to see the central quality of the popular style as "parody". He found the same quality in pre-Reformation religious art and literature - and, of course, more recent readers have observed that the "mingling of jest and earnest, and indeed of the sacred and the burlesque" was in fact "popular in the Middle Ages".¹⁵ Hone's response to this "mixed"¹⁶ style was one of recognition and delight. He instinctively saw a stylistic relationship between early religious engravings and modern caricature, for example. He noted to himself: "Devils very fine - C to see it",¹⁷ that is (presumably) that he must show the early print or woodcut to George Cruikshank, who was making copies¹⁸ for inclusion in the history of parody; and "Adam & Eve - Serpent with a long tail kissing Eve - an angel dressed like a fireman of the Sun office with a badge on his arm".¹⁹

This quality is manifest also in "Familiars" or "Familiar Scripture Illustrations",²⁰ or prints by the early masters of

SUPERB EDITION OF HONE'S TRIALS.

TO BE PUBLISHED BY SUBSCRIPTION,
IN ROYAL OCTAVO,
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COPPER AND PAPER.

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HISTORY

OF THE
Ex Officio Prosecutions,

INSTITUTED BY
THE KING'S ATTORNEY GENERAL
AGAINST
WILLIAM HONE:

INCLUDING ENLARGED REPORTS OF
Three State Trials
IN THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH,
FOR PUBLISHING
POLITICAL PARODIES,

INTITLED
**THE LATE JOHN WILKES'S CATECHISM, THE POLITICAL
LITANY, AND THE SINECURIST'S CREED.**
TOGETHER WITH
COPIOUS ELUCIDATIONS, ADDITIONAL PARODIES, SINGULAR SPECIMENS
OF THE LITERATURE OF THE MULTITUDE, AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

BY **WILLIAM HONE.**

London:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM HONE, LUDGATE HILL.

ADDRESS.

A short time after my acquittals, I made known my intention of preparing an elegant and copious edition of my Trials, comprehending a more Enlarged Report of the whole proceedings than had hitherto appeared; and that I had it also in contemplation to enrich the work by numerous graphic illustrations, and to publish the particulars as soon as I could collect the materials and as the expense. Having now nearly completed all my arrangements, I respectfully offer the following as the contents of my volume, and the terms upon which I shall be able to afford it to the Public.

Printed by J. McCree,
Black-Horse-Court, London.

"Superb Edition of Hone's Trials". From the printed prospectus, February, 1819. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

~~The~~ History
of
English Parody
~~with an arrangement of~~
~~exemplified by~~
Parodies
of by
Royal, Noble, Ecclesiastical,
Legal, and other ^{writers} ~~authors~~,
from the Reformation;
~~with an account of the~~
~~works~~
Three State Trials
of the author
for the practices
~~M D C C X V I I~~
~~illustrated~~ by
Specimens of the
Literature of the Multitude
Popular Facetiae, Allegory and Antithesis
Foreign Parody &c
By William Hone
With Numerous Engravings
a Preface and Indexes

engraving of scenes from the life of the Virgin and the childhood of Jesus. Hone possessed a number of these, and while they were occupying his attention in 1820, he happened to find at "an old book stall" in Holborn a copy of Jeremiah Jones' *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament* (1726, second edition 1798), which contains English versions of four apocryphal Infancy gospels consisting of accounts of these same subjects. The book was lying "open with some stories in it that I saw at once would throw light upon some of my old prints that I could learn nothing about". He realized that he had hit by chance on some significant information, and promptly prepared to publish an edition of the apocryphal New Testament, for the benefit of "the public, particularly for anti-quarians and print collectors". "I took a pair of scissors (for that is the way I make books) and cut out what I wanted, and gave them to the printer, and out came my *Apocryphal Gospels*", he continues. "All this was most hastily done".²¹ Hone prints eight gospels and epistles from Jones, and also fourteen epistles which he took from William Wake's *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers* (1693, fifth edition 1817). Neither Jones' nor Wake's book looks like a New Testament; but Hone subdivided their chapters into verses, provided summaries at the head of each chapter, and printed two columns to a page, so that the result - *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being All The Gospels, Epistles, And Other Pieces Now Extant, Attributed In The First Four Centuries To Jesus Christ, His Apostles, And Their Companions, And Not Included In The New Testament By Its Compilers. Translated From The Original Tongues, And Now First Collected Into One Volume*. London: Printed For William Hone, 1820 - looks rather aggressively like an edition of the Authorized Version, and a weapon, like his earlier creed, catechism and litany, with their ecclesiastical title-pages, in the battle for the intellectual and political emancipation of the people of England. The book was, in fact, the first edition in English of the so-called apocryphal New Testament. It was republished throughout the nineteenth century, and for readers who (like Hone himself) had no Latin was not superseded until M.R. James' *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924).

Hone's attention had been drawn to mystery plays by Lord Ellenborough, who presided over Hone's second and third trials, and who, in an attempt to answer Hone's arguments from precedent, had implied that modern literature had now progressed beyond such rudeness. "As to going up to the time of Martin Luther . . . and so on, the habits of those times were totally different; the first scenic performances were mysteries or representations of incidents in Sacred Writ" (p.²⁴⁴). In his preface to *Ancient Mysteries Described*, Hone writes that this remark induced him "to inquire somewhat on this subject". The manuscript of the *Ludus Coventriae* is described briefly in Thomas Smith's catalogue of the Cotton library (1696) and in the British Museum catalogue (1802), and Hone's attention could have been drawn to it by any one of a number of books, or by correspondents eager to provide him with examples of "parodies", including at least one who referred to the performances of mystery plays at Coventry.²² In search of "parodies" Hone began to read in the British Museum on 29th May, 1820, and that summer read the manuscript of the *Ludus Coventriae*, or parts of it.²³ He noticed the connections between

the apocryphal gospels and these plays as well as his prints, and was thus in a position to claim in the preface to *The Apocryphal New Testament* that the apocryphal gospels provide "immediate elucidation" of much pre-Reformation literature and art, and that "several of the papal pageants for the populace, and the monkish mysteries performed as dramas at Chester, Coventry, Newcastle, and in other parts of England, are almost verbatim representations of the stories". When the book was attacked as irreligious, he had, to vindicate the purity of his motives for publishing it, merely to produce the evidence to support this claim - namely, the parallel passages from the *Ludus Coventriae* and the apocryphal gospels. These were printed off to accompany a refutation of a particularly fierce attack on *The Apocryphal New Testament* by the controversialist and high churchman, H.J. Rose, which appeared anonymously in *The Quarterly Review* (XXV, July, 1821); the refutation was, however, abandoned (*Aspersions Answered*, 1824, took its place), and the parallel passages were not published until 1823, when together with the "Illustrations and Additions", which were written from about July 1822 to May 1823, they appeared as *Ancient Mysteries Described*.

The origin of *Ancient Mysteries Described* thus lay in Hone's ambition to clear his name. The book was a vindication of the publication of *The Apocryphal New Testament*, which itself grew directly out of Hone's parody-seeking forays into the field of pre-Reformation art and literature, undertaken for his history of parody. "Parody" had come to describe for Hone a quality of style commonly found in modern popular art and literature, a quality he also recognized in medieval religious art and literature, and which he knew the modern "Christian establishment" (who thus associated themselves willy-nilly with the dark ages) had also readily employed. In Hone's wide sense of the word, his book is about "parody", and with his superior knowledge of this style and its modern and medieval ramifications, the book demonstrates indirectly that the King's judges and law-officers are as ignorant as his ministers are corrupt - ignorant of those very matters of religion and the minds of the "common and ordinary people" (p.²6) for which they expressed such solicitude at Hone's trials. *Ancient Mysteries Described* is thus an oblique expression of Hone's radicalism. In the process, it reverses a long-standing critical tradition; breaks significant new antiquarian ground; and is complicated and coloured by its origin in Hone's personal experiences and in his views of religion and society.

III. The Critics and the "Gaping Spectators"

Discussion of the medieval drama by the Restoration and eighteenth-century critics had been largely theoretical and repetitive and mainly confined to the question of what light the subject could shed on Shakespeare's plays; from Rymer to Percy the medieval drama was seen as a means to explain (or explain away) their faults. Lord Ellenborough had perhaps been reading Thomas Warton's *The History of English Poetry* (1774-1806), in whose preface he would have found the notion that English poetry had progressed "from a rude origin . . . to its perfection in a polished age". In his "An Essay on the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage" (1710), Charles Gildon had conceived of the English drama as arising from

"the very bottom of the People"; and in *A Short View of Tragedy* (1692) Thomas Rymer had accounted for much of the badness of Shakespeare's plays by claiming that Shakespeare followed such low guides as "Carpenters, Cobblers, and illiterate fellows", who performed the ridiculous mystery plays, "the *Ave Mary* mumb'l'd over to a stradling wench (for the blessed Virgin) straw-hatted, blew-apron'd, big-bellied". In his "An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage" (1790), Edmond Malone refers disparagingly to the "gaping spectators".²⁴ Hone, on the other hand, is of course in complete sympathy with carpenters, poor wenches and cobblers; indeed it was an old cobbler who when he was a child lent him some black-letter volume with woodcuts, and thus created in him a lasting "desire to be acquainted with our old authors, and a love for engravings".²⁵ Moreover, he had himself been a "gaping spectator" at one of the minor theatres ("play house-mad", he says).²⁶ Malone had been praised for his "Historical Account" (in a letter prefixed to the edition of 1821) by none other than Edmund Burke, despicable in Hone's eyes not least for referring to the people as the "swinish multitude" in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which was published in the same year (1790) as Malone's essay. Hone, like Hazlitt, was clearly uneasy with a critical tradition whose normal recourse was to blame "the gross taste of the populace".²⁷

Lord Ellenborough could also have read in Thomas Warton's history (I, p.243; II, pp.373-4) that the mystery plays were "disgraced with the grossest improprieties, corrupted with inventions and additions of the most ridiculous kind, sullied with impurities, and expressed in the language and gesticulations of the lowest farce"; they were "monstrous and unnatural mixtures" of levity and religion - a view commonly met with among critics and antiquaries, but one which cannot have rung true for Hone, since it happened to conflict directly with his own vested interest in work showing "a casual association of ludicrous images with matters of the Christian religion".

As a child Hone had loved the "Cherry Tree carol" and, on reading the Nativity play in the manuscript of the *Ludus Coventriae*, he recognized that the subject of the carol (the tree bows down to Mary) is dramatized there. The carol, which he prints in section three of his "Illustrations and Additions", "Christmas Carols", is still sung, he writes, in many parts of England; "ancient usage" (p.229) is preserved by the common people. During his first trial, in response to the fear expressed that his parodies would disturb the faith of "the lower classes of society, which are not fit to cope with the sort of topics which are artfully raised for them" (p.¹⁵), Hone replied, in effect, that the authorities and the Attorney General were out of touch with the people, and ignorant of their minds (pp.¹31-32):

Mr. Justice ABBOTT. - I don't care what the common people have had for centuries. If the publication be profane, it ought not to be tolerated.

Mr. HONE. - . . . The Christmas Carol attached to this publication began in the usual way -

God rest you merry gentlemen,
 Let nothing you dismay;
 Remember Christ our Saviour
 Was born on Christmas day.

It contained verses which, to a person of the least cultivated intellect, were ridiculous; but to the lowest class of the community, who purchased these, the lowest species of literary ware, such compositions, and the ideas they conveyed, were familiar, and were not of ludicrous construction. For instance, there was a verse in this very carol which he remembered to have heard sung in the streets every Christmas since he was a child, which described the pleasure of the Virgin Mary in tending on her infant in these homely words:-

The first good joy our Mary had,
 It was the joy of one;
 To see her own child Jesus
 To suck at her brest bone.

And so it went on. - [*The Attorney-General here manifested great uneasiness.*] - The Attorney-General need not be alarmed. It could have no effect even upon the most ignorant, and millions of copies had been circulated long before he came into office.

In *Ancient Mysteries Described* Hone lists (pp.97-99) eighty-nine of these popular broadside Christmas carols from his collection, a number of them published by T. Batchelar, a contemporary of James Catnach and publisher of street-literature, from whom Hone purchased the original blocks of some of the woodcuts. He affects to belittle these, but his fondness for this kind of material is apparent, not least in his attempt to guard its authenticity and legitimacy; he deliberately excludes from his list "the numerous compositions printed by religious societies under the denomination of Carols" (such as those by Hannah More, who especially infuriated Hone, and to whom he replied in kind with his *A Political Christmas Carol*, which is based on the carol he quoted at his trial, and which he wrote on Christmas morning, 1819).²⁸ Hone rounds off section eight of his "Illustrations and Additions", on the "English Mysteries", with a description of a popular London entertainment with a magic lantern and transparencies he witnessed in 1818, "The Royal Gallantee Show", which included scenes of the Prodigal Son and Noah's Ark, and which was "provided by Jos. Leverage, 7, Ely Court, Holborn Hill": "the very spot", Hone points out with satisfaction, "whereon the last theatrical representation of a Mystery, the play of *Christ's Passion*, is recorded to have been witnessed in England" (p.231).

Hone is interested in demonstrating that the art and "literature of the multitude" of modern times are related not only indirectly by style but in some instances (Christmas carols and puppet shows, for example) directly by subject-matter, through an unbroken tradition preserved by the common people, to the mystery plays and other long-forgotten forms of pre-Reformation religious art. Both the spirit

of criticism and the notion of "gaping spectators" are largely absent from *Ancient Mysteries Described*; the latter have been replaced with "the industrious servant-maid and the humble labourer" (p.100) and by street-vendors of literature, for whom Hone had an especial feeling, since they particularly suffered under Sidmouth's repressive measures. Hone's sympathy for the popular art and literature of his own day certainly provided him with a better introduction to medieval religious art than did the strictures of the critics.

IV. The Sources of the Mystery Plays

Little attention was paid to the actual texts of the mystery plays by the critics, since the texts were both beneath their notice and not easily available. Robert Dodsley's *A Select Collection of Old Plays* (1744) contains no medieval play, and Thomas Hawkins' *The Origin of the English Drama* (1773) only two. Dodsley writes in his introduction that the loss of "a more particular knowledge of these things . . . is scarce to be regretted". The only plays available in print to Warton and Malone were the first five plays of the *Ludus Coventriae* (from the *Banns to Abraham and Isaac*), the *Newcastle Noah*, and the *Digby Herod*.²⁹ But tastes were changing, and between 1817 and 1822 a further four plays were printed, in limited editions: the *Coventry* (not the *Ludus Coventriae*) *Nativity*, by Sharp (1817); the *Chester Noah* and *Innocents*, by J.H. Markland (1818); and the *Towneley Judicium*, by Douce (1822) - the latter two volumes for the Roxburghe Club.³⁰ These are the first single-volume editions of any of the plays, and are evidence of the revived interest in the Middle Ages also manifested in, for example, the work of the Society of Antiquaries, and in the work of Douce and John Brand (who, in addition, gave Hone some precedent, unlike the critics, for his interest in the recreations of the common people).

However, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century critics and antiquaries did not turn to the apocryphal gospels, whose influence on pre-Reformation religious literature, drama and art was, as is now recognized, pervasive, for explanations of the subject-matter of medieval works. None of the publications of the Society of Antiquaries (including *Archaeologia* to 1827 and *Vetusta Monumenta* to 1835), or other major works (such as John Carter's *Specimens of the Ancient Sculpture and Painting*, 1780-1794), or works by such learned connoisseurs as Horace Walpole and James Dallaway, for example, appears to take any notice of the apocryphal gospels; and neither Richard Gough (1735-1809), Director of the Society of Antiquaries and perhaps the most knowledgeable of the English medievalists, nor Jean Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt, "the Winckelmann of Christian art",³¹ seems to mention them. The library of the Society of Antiquaries contained, according to the catalogue published in 1816, numerous works about medieval Britain, but no copy of Jones on the canon, or of J. Fabricius' *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti* (1703). Hone rightly points out that reference to the apocryphal Infancy gospels usefully supplements Gough's *An Account of a Rich Illuminated Missal Executed for John Duke of Bedford* (1794), which was itself a pioneering advance on the general ignorance of medieval religious art.³² During the 1817-1823 period Hone was unhampered by the Protestant bias which hindered the study of the Middle Ages,³³ and unafraid of the

apocryphal gospels. His happy observation at "an old book stall" constituted a giant leap forward in scholarship, although apocryphal subjects remained unpalatable to such influential Victorian students of Christian art as Anna Jameson.

In the main section of *Ancient Mysteries Described* Hone seeks to demonstrate that the Gospel according to St James (or *Protevangelium*) and the Gospel of the Birth of Mary are the sources of eight plays (from the birth of Mary to the birth of Jesus) in the *Ludus Coventriae*. He goes into considerable detail, printing about fifty-five parallel passages, "quite enough to show", as he writes in his preface, "how largely the monkish playwright adopted the curious incidents, and the very language of the spurious Gospels". The existence of Latin and Middle English intermediaries has, of course, since been demonstrated, and in the case of the plays from the *Ludus Coventriae* the Middle English *Life of St Anne* (first printed in 1928), for example, is perhaps one of the more immediate sources. Hone further devotes section four of his "Illustrations and Additions", "Engravings of Apocryphal New Testament Subjects", to demonstrating that the subjects of his engravings are to be found in the apocryphal gospels. He had in his collection German, Flemish, Italian, and French religious prints of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, including seven by Dürer and twelve by the Wierix brothers. He selects nine episodes, beginning with the meeting of Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem (dramatized in the *Ludus Coventriae Birth of Mary*, and engraved by Dürer³⁴) and concluding with the child Jesus helping his father at his carpentry (engraved by Jerome Wierix and others), and provides for each the matching passage from the *Protevangelium*, the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, together with a description of the engravings before him.

The Gospel of Nicodemus was better known (Wynkyn de Worde and others had published several editions of an English translation) than the Infancy gospels, and the manuscripts of the Chester play of the Harrowing of Hell state (as Warton, II, 208, briefly noticed, referring to Harleian MS 2013) that this play is written according to the Gospel of Nicodemus. Hone, with the text of this gospel at hand (he printed it in *The Apocryphal New Testament* from the English version in Jeremiah Jones' book), expands at length on this point in section five of his "Illustrations and Additions", "The Descent into Hell", and section six, "Hearne's Print of the Descent into Hell". The only part of *The Apocryphal New Testament* not taken from Jones or Wake is the section on the Apostles' Creed, in which Hone follows various authorities in stating that the article "He descended into Hell" is a later addition. Peter King, in his *The History of the Apostles Creed*, 1702 (a book borrowed by Robert Aspland early in 1817 from Dr Williams' Library, and referred to in this section of *Ancient Mysteries Described*) writes that this article has long been subject to various interpretations; Hone is interested in how, in the plays and other medieval works, it was so often given a literal interpretation, producing a combination of the ludicrous and trivial with the sublime. He shows how common in medieval art and literature this subject is, noticing it, for example, in a window in Canterbury Cathedral, and contributing the original suggestion that the window

was probably "put up as a suitable illustration to the Gospel of Nicodemus which Erasmus . . . saw chained to the pillars of that cathedral" (p.123); and pointing out that the description of the descent in *Piers Plowman* is taken from the Gospel of Nicodemus - in indirect response to the recent editor of the poem, who recognized that "a wider acquaintance with the legendary knowledge of the middle ages would also have been useful in elucidating some ridiculous stories of those times, alluded to by the author".³⁵

A second happy coincidence led Hone to a further discovery. The writings in the meditative tradition, especially the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, constitute another formative influence on medieval religious literature, drama and art; the Nativity and Passion plays are normally indebted to them for the imaginative reconstruction of the detailed circumstances of the main events in the life of Christ - exactly those "familiar" details of interest to Hone. He had acquired a manuscript of the fifteenth-century English translation of the *Meditations*,³⁶ and in section one of his "Illustrations and Additions", "Council of the Trinity", is easily able to demonstrate the similarity between the passages he quotes from this work and the fourth of his plays, the play of the four daughters of God and the Salutation and Conception.

Hone is able to set many details of the plays (especially domestic or grotesque points) within the traditions of early religious art and literature. For example, observing that both the *Meditations* and the play of the Salutation and Conception speak of Jesus as instantly conceived "alle hole man in body & soule, but, never the les, ful lytel in quantite", he also draws attention to Erasmus' statement that "sodeynly, was made the perfighte body of a man, soo smalle as a lytle spyder whiche is but euen now copen forthe from the eg[g]e, but yet with all the membres, fulle fynysshed and perfyght".³⁷ Again, he remarks in section six that the devil in the fourteenth-century drawing (from what is now Bodleian MS Rawlinson D. 939) of the Descent into Hell which Thomas Hearne published in his edition of Joannes de Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, 1722, and which Hone reproduces and would have appreciated as a grotesque caricature, is in fact the porter of Hell (an identification not without importance to students of *Macbeth*).³⁸ In section seven of his "Illustrations and Additions", "Origin of Mysteries . . .", he notices the scene of Hell Mouth in a French mystery play, a woodcut on a modern street-carol, the east window of York Minster, a carving on the west front of Lincoln Cathedral, and in Hearne's print of the Descent into Hell. Furthermore in section two, "The Brethren of the Holy Trinity . . .", he is able (he gathered examples for his history of parody³⁹) to identify the image of the Trinity which consists of a combination of the patriarchal Father, Christ, and a dove.

Hone is also much interested in the social context of the plays. In his mind they are akin to the Feast of Fools, and the other "mock festivals" he describes in section seven with the help of Joseph Strutt, Francis Douce, and others; "to these sports the clergy added the acting of *Mysteries*", he writes, adding that "there is no room for surprise that all writers concur in attributing the performance of these mysteries to that body who were the authors of

the Feast of Fools and the Feast of the Ass" (pp.167-169). From Paine and from John Foster's *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance* (1820) and more respectable works, such as Sharon Turner's *The History of England* (1814-1823) and John Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1813), Hone learnt that what was considered a radical view to take of the oppressive nature of the modern "Christian establishment" was an accepted and plausible view to take of the medieval church. Brand, for example, remarks in his preface (p.xvii) that "childish Rites, Pageants, and Ceremonies, diverted the attention of the people from the consideration of their real state". Hone is thus able to account for the presence of apocryphal material in the English plays by asserting that the friars "craftily engrafting stories from the pseudo-gospels upon narratives in the New Testament, composed and performed the plays called the Coventry Mysteries. These fraudulent productions were calculated to postpone the period of illumination, and to stigmatise, by implication, the labours of Wycliffe" (p.205).

At this period of his life the notion of the Trinity was for Hone part of the profitable craft of superstition, and one in which he had a warm interest, since his most personal exchange with Lord Ellenborough (at his third trial, involving the beliefs of the latter's father) had to do with the heavily Trinitarian creed of St Athanasius, which Hone had parodied in *The Sinecurist's Creed*. Paine writes with scorn of this creed, and Hone in turn is able to demonstrate the actual form both the deceit and the profits could take, since he had in his possession a fifteenth-century "Register Book" of the Guild of the Holy Trinity of St Botolph without Aldergate.⁴⁰ In section two he quotes extensively from this manuscript, printing the word "Trinity" in gothic type whenever it occurs (without authority from his manuscript), and showing the extent of the worldly possessions of the guild. From the inventories in the Register he concludes that "they knew how to get up popular shows and entertainments" to "entice" the "deluded" people (pp.82-84). The guild possessed, for example, a "Rolle of velom', cou'ed with a goldeskyn, contenyng diu'se pagent's paynted and lemenyd with gold, that is to say, of the Holy Trinite"⁴¹ - "of pure devotion towards the Supreme Being"; however, "they appear to have been wholly ignorant", and they possessed no copy of the Scriptures (p.85).

Hone's interest in the style and the details of the subject-matter of the "literature of the multitude" and in the workings of religious repression (with an unspoken allusion to the "Christian establishment of the Church of England") thus led him to discover two of the chief non-biblical sources of the mystery plays - the apocryphal gospels and the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditations* - and to show that the plays shared many ideas and images with other forms of medieval art and literature. He sets the plays for the first time within the context of medieval piety to which they belong.

V. Religion in a Repressive Society

London was a centre for post-war radicalism, and Hone loved its streets and shops, history and pageantry, and its independence from

Westminster. "London is familiar to me", he writes in an auto-biographical sketch; "I know every street & turning in the city, have walked over half of the metropolis when the land, now covered with houses and churches, was green fields".⁴² A satirical poem attributed to Hone and published by him, *The Minister and the Mayor; or, St. Peter versus St. Paul!* (1817) celebrates the Lord Mayor's independence, in the matter of the route of his procession, from the City of Westminster, whose High Steward at the time happened to be Lord Sidmouth. The three concluding sections of "Illustrations and Additions" - "Pageants", "Lord Mayor's Show", and "The Giants in Guildhall" - are presented for those "citizens who unite antiquarian with civic feeling" (p.246). These sections reflect Hone's fondness for London, apparent also earlier in *Ancient Mysteries Described* in his lyrical account of Skinner's Well, once the scene of mystery plays (as noted by Stowe) and now the site of an earthenware shop and "a humble tenement occupied by a bird-seller" (p.207). A plaque marking the site of the well and commemorating the performances of the mystery plays had been erected in 1800, and the inscription is reproduced by Hone.⁴³

The section on pageants is mainly occupied with descriptions of Royal Entries, which provide yet further examples of the sacred and profane "ridiculously jumbled together" (p.234 - a phrase borrowed by Hone from Strutt). The section describing the Lord Mayor's show is based largely on three of the original printed accounts, which Hone explored as he collected material for his history of parody. Thomas Jordan's *London's Glory, or, the Lord Mayor's Show* (1680) contains a "Plotting Papist's Litany", and, with his own *Political Litany* in mind, Hone collected many examples of such litanies, including Jordan's.⁴⁴ He describes this, and remarks in a footnote that "I was necessarily present for three successive days during certain trials in Guildhall, when the celebration of Lord Mayor's day by a Mock *Litany* on the same spot, might have been among the serviceable precedents cited to the juries" (p.256). This section concludes with a plea for "improving the appearance of the present procession" (p.261); Hone had a vested interest in "the civic dignity" - the Lord Mayor in 1823 was none other than Alderman Robert Waithman, who on 29th December, 1817, had taken the chair at the crowded meeting of "the Friends of the Liberty of the Press and Trial by Jury" held "to consider the best means to promote a subscription in aid of Mr. HONE, who had so nobly and successfully struggled against Ministerial persecution" (*Three Trials*, p.⁴³).

The final section of the book also takes Hone back to the scene of his triumph. To earlier antiquarian accounts of Gog and Magog, he adds information taken (characteristically) from a children's book, *The Gigantick History of the Two Famous Giants, and Other Curiosities in Guildhall, London* (1741),⁴⁵ a delightful juvenile guide to Guildhall which views the giants as defenders of the liberties of the City; and also information acquired as a result of a visit he made to Guildhall to examine the giants when they were moved in 1815, two years before he returned with his books and his arguments to protect his own liberty. Such half-spoken memories of his traumatic experience in 1817 and echoes of his radicalism recur throughout *Ancient Mysteries Described*. The names of many of the

writers from whose works he contrives to take information about popular customs and the Middle Ages had a special resonance for him; like Thomas Moore and Lady Sydney Morgan they were identified with the cause of the people, or like Scott, Southey, and Malone with the opponents of reform. In a long footnote Hone manages to link the practice of priestcraft to his old enemy "His present Majesty King George the Fourth" by remarking that a collection of relics of St Anne and others kept at Hanover is his "ancestral property" (p.115). One of Hone's authorities is John Shepherd's *A Critical and Practical Elucidation of the Book of Common Prayer* (1801), a work dedicated, as Hone must have noticed, to William Garrow, who was responsible for his arrest on 3rd May, 1817; in his *The Reformists' Register* (I, no. 16, May 1817) Hone wrote "To The People of England" that "the reign of terror has commenced, and I now write from a prison. I am the first object selected by the Attorney-General, Sir WILLIAM GARROW, as a victim and an example".

Hone could hardly have escaped feeling at times, while writing *Ancient Mysteries Described*, that he was hoisting the "Christian establishment" with its own petard; however, his feelings were becoming mixed and his attitude towards his material was necessarily ambiguous. Insofar as his examples illustrate the popular mind, or have that "ludicrous" or "monstrous" quality embraced by his wide definition of "parody", then he has a sympathetic understanding of them, and a love or an affection for them; but insofar as they illustrate the corruption of the people by priestcraft, then he can express a disgust equal to Warton's at the "gross practices and delusions", as he writes in his preface. Both affection and horror thus help to motivate his antiquarian researches. What he had to do in *Ancient Mysteries Described* was to show the pernicious effects of institutional religion and at the same time the quality of the popular mind which succumbed unharmed to its delusive charms, and adopted them as its own. John Foster's conception was probably helpful; he sees the people "by inveterate habit and ancient authority" content with their half-knowledge of the surfaces of religion, and slow and reluctant to change their beliefs.⁴⁶ They thus accept those jumbled fables for which Hone had such a fondness, and with which they are, as he said at his trial, "familiar". Hone is eager, throughout *Ancient Mysteries Described*, to get at this unofficial piety and poetry of the people, and in general may be said to be working towards a definition, never easy, of popular literature - as opposed to both folk and sophisticated literature.

During the period 1817-1823 and thereafter, as his letters and autobiographical notes show, Hone's religious beliefs were insecure or changing, and his radicalism mellowing before a driving need not to give offence. These changes are reflected in the shifting tone of *Ancient Mysteries Described*, which comes on the ebb tide of Hone's career as a popular radical publisher, and in his other work of this period. During and after his trials he had claimed to be a "Christian", but in later years he said, "I could not rest in Deism; I became an Atheist . . . I was an atheist thirty years".⁴⁷ His enemies thought him irreligious, and his Christian friends urged him to avoid giving further offence. Samuel Parr, the schoolmaster and writer (who was to become chaplain to Queen Caroline, whose cause

Hone espoused in *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, 1820) urged him to confine his history of parody to the examples used at his trials, and "to spare all ludicrous representations of the Trinity". Apparently in response to such appeals, Hone went so far as to have Cruikshank's caricature of "The Clerical Magistrate" in *The Political House That Jack Built* (1819), one of Hone's most successful attacks on the government, altered so as to symbolize the Trinity by a triangle rather than by a "Pigeon".⁴⁸ He hoped to appease the critics (including Samuel Butler, the formidable Archdeacon of Derby) of *The Apocryphal New Testament* with his *Aspersions Answered* (1824); he was desolated and furious when *The Quarterly Review* (XXX, January 1824) remained critical of "this wretched man's follies", and he replied again in *Another Article for The Quarterly Review* (1824). The strain of his arrest and trials, and the assaults of *The Quarterly* left him a nervous hypochondriac, and thoughts of his offended father (who had tried to prevent him from going to the theatre in his youth, and who told him in 1817 that the devil was in his radical parodies) haunted him.

If the manuscripts now in the British Library, and sorted by G.T. Lawley, their previous owner, represent the best state of Hone's history of parody, it is doubtful (even if his collection had not been sold) whether that work could ever have been brought to a successful conclusion. Hone resumed work on it promptly after the publication of *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and was still toying with the idea of preparing it for publication as late as 1828;⁴⁹ however, his *Every-Day Book* (January 1825-December 1826), *Table Book* (January-December 1827), and *Year Book* (January-December 1831), were perhaps the best possible forms for his bee-like fondness for the miscellaneous sublime and trivial to take. These works, to which he devoted his energies after the publication of *Ancient Mysteries Described* in the hope of supporting himself and his large family, are genuinely miscellaneous in character. Here Hone has no axe to grind, although he is still eager to find and show connections between the ceremonies and amusements of the past and those of the present, and to describe further modern continental examples of mystery plays and processions. His fondness for London becomes Elian; his Paine-like view of priestcraft becomes a plain and usually tolerant Protestant view of Roman legends and customs; and his aggressive advocacy of the common people becomes a tender-hearted interest in street-sellers, ballad-singers, eccentrics, chimney-boys, apprentices, and folk customs. His aim is to promote "social and benevolent feelings", as he writes in correspondence and in the preface to *The Every-Day Book*.⁵⁰ In 1834 he was admitted a member of Thomas Binney's Weigh-House Chapel; his reforming zeal had turned into Dissent. When he died in 1842, he still possessed (as the catalogue of the 1843 sale of his collection reveals) many relics and trophies of his career, including copies of parodies introduced as evidence for the defence in 1817, books, Christmas carols, prints by Wierix and Dürer and many others of the kind described in *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and the print of a fool and his bauble (engraved after Hendrik Goltzius) which forms the frontispiece to that book.

"Popular" may mean "of the people" or "for the people", and

although Hone could not always approve of the origins of popular art and literature, he had an affection for the "jumbled" results, and a love for the populace who embraced, produced, and preserved them. When read in this light, and in the context of his personal struggles (eventually successful) to find a place for religion in a repressive society, *Ancient Mysteries Described* reveals itself to be an allusive, complicated, and moving work, rather than confused "skimble-skamble stuff".

VI. "A Persevering Research"

Hone's letters show him, during the period 1817-1823, to be working in a flurry and under pressure. He is not a careful scholar. His quotations tend to be more or less accurate rather than precise, and his paraphrases to be series of unacknowledged quotations. His transcriptions from the *Ludus Coventriae* and other medieval manuscripts are poor, as he indirectly acknowledges,⁵¹ and his book is extremely digressive. He does not pursue his discoveries very far - particularly in the case of the *Meditations*. Since he has fresh notions and theories to pursue, he ranges beyond the usual scope of the critics and antiquaries, from whom much of his information is nevertheless inevitably taken - among many others, Thomas Warton; John Brand, in later editions of whose work Henry Ellis incorporated some of Hone's material; Joseph Strutt, whose *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* Hone subsequently republished in a popular edition; Thomas Sharp, who in turn, in his *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry* (1825), depends somewhat on Hone; and Francis Douce, on whom Hone was probably more dependent than is immediately apparent - for example, his realization that some modern broadside Christmas carols contain medieval texts, and his knowledge of Caxton's *Pilgrimage of the Soul* are probably due to hints from Douce, who also possibly told Hone that the latter work was a "parody" and who may have encouraged the development of Hone's notion of parody to cover medieval religious literature.⁵² Hone turned, in addition, to art historians (to find his taste for Dürer confirmed by John Landseer), and to the Romantic historians, notably Sharon Turner, who helped to form his general view of the Middle Ages. He takes information from modern Roman Catholic tracts and devotional manuals, and from seventeenth-century scoffing Protestants, such as John Patrick. He takes descriptions of survivals of religious plays and processions from the writings of modern travellers, and he also himself embarked on fieldwork, both urban and rural (combining, it seems, the collection of material in Warwickshire with helping to defend a Birmingham printer charged with seditious libel).⁵³ He turns to the texts of the plays themselves and to other medieval texts for sources and analogues. Hone's independence and perseverance, so apparent at his trials and in his prompt determination to compile a history of parody as a result of his trials, are apparent also in *Ancient Mysteries Described*, which is in many ways a continuation of his arguments in his own defence, and a vindication of his earlier work; in the preface he acknowledges those few persons who assisted him, and continues, not churlishly, "I should with equal readiness acknowledge other assistance, had I received it".

Hone's initiative was not immediately followed up. For more

than a century literary and dramatic historians took a different path. Although both Richard Gough and Hone knew of the liturgical drama,⁵⁴ neither thought to connect it to the vernacular mystery plays; but in 1838, Charles Magnin wrote in the preface to his *Les Origines du Théâtre* that one finds "la source la plus vive, la plus abondante et la plus poétique du théâtre moderne dans les couvents, aux ix^e et x^e siècles, et dans les antiphonaires des xi^e et xii^e siècles", and that "ainsi le drame chrétien sortit peu à peu de l'église, et bientôt après des mains du clergé", and the theory that the mystery plays "evolved" from the liturgical drama came to dominate scholarship. By contrast, Hone's strength is in his sense of the importance of the historical, social, literary, artistic, and religious contexts of the vernacular plays, a sense attributable in the first place to his advocacy of the common people against their priests and kings, and to his understanding of the nature and origins of their "ludicrous" art, both medieval and modern. By pursuing this instinct, Hone broke away radically from the critics; and by following his comparative iconological and iconographical approach, he pointed for the first time to two of the major non-biblical sources of the medieval mystery plays - the apocryphal gospels and the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditations* - and began to place the plays (however amateurishly) in the context of medieval religious art and literature necessary for their understanding. *Ancient Mysteries Described* is, when interpreted, a pioneering, adventurous, awkward, and moving work, both as the effort of a man whose part in society, he said, "has been similar to that of the verb in grammar - to be, to do, & to suffer",⁵⁵ and as a contribution to the understanding of medieval religious drama.

NOTES

I would like to thank Hugh J. Luke for lending me (for several years) some books by William Hone, and also the Research Council of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Parts of an earlier version of this paper were read at the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association, Denver, Colorado (1974).

- 1 Letter from Douce to Hone, 13th May, 1823 (British Library Additional MS 40120, f.195). Add. MS 40120 (497ff.) is a collection of Hone's correspondence.
- 2 An account of Hone's life is provided by Frederick W. Hackwood, *William Hone* (London, 1912); Hackwood had access to Hone's papers, from which I quote. Other accounts, interested in Hone more as a radical than as an antiquary, and interested only in passing, if at all, in *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and based on printed material alone, are: A. Plummer, "William Hone: A Centenary Memoir", *Journal of the South-West Essex Technical College and School of Art* 1 (1941), 28-35; T. Peterson, "The Fight of William Hone for British Press Freedom", *Journalism Quarterly* 25 (1948), 132-138; H.M. Sikes, "William Hone: Regency Patriot, Parodist, and Pamphleteer", *The Newberry Library Bulletin* V (1961), 281-294; H.J. Luke, "Drams for the Vulgar: A Study of Some Radical Publishers and Publications of Early Nineteenth-Century London" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1963); and Edgell Rickword, ed., *Radical Squibs and Loyal Ripostes* (Bath, 1971). There is no good bibliography of Hone's work; the fullest are by William Lowndes, in his *Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature* (London, 1864), III, 1103-1105, and by Leslie Shepard, in his introduction to a modern reprint of *The Year Book* (Detroit, 1967).
- 3 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968 [first published 1963]), p.660.
- 4 Quotations here and below are from Hone's account of his trials, *The Three Trials of William Hone* (London, William Hone, 1818), pp. iv + ¹48 + ²45 + ³44 + "28, originally published in four separate parts; this collected edition retains the separate sets of page numbers, which I identify by the use of superscript numbers.
- 5 William Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press 1819-1832* (London, 1928), pp. 59ff.; Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform* (Oxford, second edition, 1962), p.31.
- 6 "A Statement upon which W Hone humbly presumes [to] claim fellowship with the Church of Christ" (Add. MS 40121, f. 53). Add. MS 40121 (92 ff.) consists of autograph autobiographical notes and other biographical material.
- 7 James Murray, *Sermons to Asses* (London, William Hone, 1819), p.4.
- 8 *The Independent Whig*, I, 1 and II, 13. See n.9, below.
- 9 Letter from Hone to Aspland, 28th June, 1817, from the King's Bench Prison, printed in Robert B. Aspland, *Memoir of the Life, Works and Correspondence, of the Rev. Robert Aspland, of Hackney* (London, 1850), p.619. The library in Redcross Street is Dr Williams' Library. Aspland's reply to Hone, 3rd July, 1817, is in Add. MS 40120: "Mr. A. is making a Collection of Notes for Mr H's use & hopes to be able to transmit them in a few days" (f.63). A few days later Aspland borrowed *The Independent Whig* from the library (see n.8, above). Aspland's borrowings (they are few) are recorded in the unfoliated and unpaginated ledger stamped on the upper cover "Account of

- Books Borrow'd Out of the Library" and headed "1792 Borrowed", in Dr Williams' Library, which is now in Gordon Square, W.C.1. Hone praises the library in *Ancient Mysteries Described* (pp.153-154).
- 10 Add. MS 40108, f.35. Add. MS 40108 (349 ff.) consists of Hone's working papers for a history of parody: miscellaneous rough notes and jottings (ideas, definitions, references), correspondence, draft prefaces and trial dedications and title-pages, plans for the arrangement of the work, a list of possible indices, notices of prints, and manuscript copies of parodies, including many "creeds", "litanies", "catechisms", and biblical parodies. Add. MSS 40109-40118 consist mainly of manuscript copies (many in Hone's autograph) of parodies (including some of those referred to at Hone's trials) intended for the history of parody, some material which appears in *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and notes. Most of this material is not dated; much of it must belong to the years 1818-1823, although some of it is later.
- 11 *Catalogue of Books, Books of Prints, &c. Collected for a History of Parody, by Mr. William Hone* (Southgate, 22nd and 23rd February, 1827). Items in this collection were labelled on their title-pages by Hone before the sale, "W. Hone Par: Coll: N^o --".
- 12 Add. MS 40108, f.73.
- 13 *Ibid.*, f.38; also f.317v.
- 14 *Ibid.*, f.61v.
- 15 Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1963 [first published in 1948]), p.152.
- 16 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1953 [first published in 1946]), pp.41 ff., 72 ff., 147-173, 247-248.
- 17 Add. MS 40117, f.54.
- 18 Mary D. George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London, 1942), VII, nos. 8655A, 9184A, 9240A, 9261B, 9345A, and VIII (1947), nos. 10072A, 10283C, 10992, 11384A.
- 19 Add. MS 40117, f.47.
- 20 Add. MSS 40108, ff.57, 109, 122, 122v; 40117, ff.53-56, 60-65.
- 21 [F. Rolleston?], *Some Account of the Conversion of the late William Hone* (London, 1853), pp.10-11; William Hone, *Aspersions Answered* (London, William Hone, fourth edition, 1824), pp.54-59.
- 22 Unsigned and undated letter to Hone, postmarked from Hendon (Add. MS 40108, f.22).
- 23 Note by Hone (Add. MS 40113, f.43), and letter from Hone to J.C. Hobhouse, 24th December, 1821 (Add. MS 36459, f.189). Add. MS 36459 is a volume in the British Library collection of the correspondence and papers of John Cam Hobhouse.

- ²⁴ Gildon, "An Essay" in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. George Sewell (London, 1728), X, 50; *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. C.A. Zimansky (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 145, 170; Malone, "An Historical Account" in *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, ed. E. Malone and J. Boswell (London, 1821), III, 36.
- ²⁵ *The Every-Day Book* (London, 1825), I, p.859.
- ²⁶ Add. MS 40121, f.43; Hackwood (n.2, above), p.49.
- ²⁷ The tradition is surveyed by M.E. Prior, "The Elizabethan Audience and the Plays of Shakespeare", *MP* XLIX (1951), 101-123.
- ²⁸ *Ancient Mysteries Described*, p.97; Hone's *The Reformists' Register*, I, 13 (April, 1817); letter from Hone to John Childs, 25th December, 1819 (Add. MS 41071, f.2). Add. MS 41071 contains a collection of Hone's correspondence (53 ff.).
- ²⁹ In John Stevens, *The History of the Antient Abbeys, Monasteries, Hospitals, Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches* (London, 1722), I; Henry Bourne, *The History of Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1736); Hawkins, *Origin of the English Drama* (Oxford, 1773), I.
- ³⁰ *The Pageant of the Company of Sheremen and Taylors, in Coventry* (Coventry, 1817); *Chester Mysteries. De Deluvis Noe. De Occisione Innocentium* (London, 1818); *Judicium, a Pageant* (London, 1822).
- ³¹ Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien* (Paris, 1955), I, p.13.
- ³² A.N.L. Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1972), p.7.
- ³³ Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford, 1956), p.235.
- ³⁴ Karl-Adolf Knappe, *Dürer* (New York, 1965), no.229. Hone's next two examples are Knappe, nos. 230-1.
- ³⁵ Thomas Dunham Whitaker, *Peirs Plouhman* (London, 1813), p.xxxix. The MS of the *Pèlerinage de l'Âme* which Hone possessed and refers to in this section (it contains miniatures of the "subterranean hell") is now Bodleian Library MS Douce 305; it is marked "W. Hone Par: Coll: N^o 743".
- ³⁶ L.F. Powell, ed. *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ. A Translation . . . by Nicholas Love* (Oxford, 1908). K.S. Block (*Ludus Coventriae*, EETS, ES 102, 1922, p.xli) is mistaken in asserting that Hone's quotations (some seventy-five lines, from chapters 1 and 3) are not from Love's translation. Hone's MS was sold as lot 640 at the 1827 sale of his collection to George Offor the collector, as is noted in the marked copy of the sale-catalogue in the British Library. The MS reappears as lot 1383 in the *Catalogue of the Important and Valuable Library of the Late George Offor*, (Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 27th June, 1865), and thus was presumably destroyed in the fire in the auction rooms which consumed (according to a note in a marked copy of the catalogue of the 1865 sale in the British Library) all after lot 665.
- ³⁷ *Ancient Mysteries Described*, p.76 (from *A playne and godly expositon*, London, 1533, ff.82v-83) and Powell (n.36, above), p.31; *Ancient Mysteries Described*, pp.44-45, and Block (n.36, above), p.107.

- 38 G. Wickham, "Hell-Castle and its Door-Keeper", *Shakespeare Survey* 19 (1966), 68-74.
- 39 Add. MSS 40108, ff.104, 129, 311; 40117, f.65.
- 40 This MS was acquired by Sir Thomas Phillipps in 1829, and is now Add. MS 37664. The pencilled marginalia ("Trinity", passim) and underlinings are in Hone's hand.
- 41 *Ancient Mysteries Described*, p.81; Add. MS 37664, f.74v. John Payne Collier's one reference to *Ancient Mysteries Described* is to this section; he reaches a conclusion avoided by Hone - that "the Pageant of the Holy Trinity" was a play (*The History of English Dramatic Poetry*, London, 1831, I, p.27, and 1879, I, p.35).
- 42 Add. MS 40121, f.68.
- 43 An engraving of the plaque, pump, and birdcages had been published in May, 1822, by Robert Wilkinson (*Theatrum Illustrata*, London, 1825, pl.164). The site is now 14-16 Farringdon Road, Finsbury, maintained by Islington Public Library.
- 44 Add. MS 40108, ff.171ff. Hone's other two early Lord Mayor's shows are by Matthew Taubman, 1687 and 1689. The British Library copy of the 1687 show has Hone's signature on the title-page.
- 45 "Third Edition, corrected. Printed for Tho. Boreman, Bookseller, near the two giants in Guildhall, London. 1741." Two volumes, each measuring nearly 2" x 2½" x ½" (copy in the Guildhall Library).
- 46 *An Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance* (London, 1820), pp.63-88. The quotation attributed simply to "Foster" in Hone's preface is from this book, p.298. Foster was a Baptist republican.
- 47 Rolleston (n.21, above), p.10.
- 48 Letter from Parr to Hone, 13th April, 1819 (Add. MS 40108, f.9); letter from Hone to his printer, 9th Nov., 1819 (University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, MS L/H772/1819).
- 49 Estimates of the cost of printing a history of parody, 27th Feb., 1828 (Add. MS 40108, f.58).
- 50 Hone thought of himself as the "editor" of *Ancient Mysteries Described*, and included in that book a few contributions (most notably Sharp's account - the first - of *The Castle of Perseverance*) from others. For his later works he developed this practice further and built up a corps of correspondents; this has been described as a significant innovation in the history of the study of folklore. See Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists* (London, 1968), p.36.
- 51 *The Table Book* (London, 1827), I, p.13.
- 52 Letter from Douce to Sharp, 6th Jan., 1812 ("Some of the Carols you have been so good as to send are still regularly printed every Xmas at London"), Add. MS 43645, f.254; a jotting by Hone ("Mr Douce 20 Berners Street . . . Pilgrimage of the Sowle - a parody"), Add. MS 40108, f.224. Douce also appreciated Hone's radical publications, and invited him to call (Add. MS

40120, ff.158, 160). Add. MS 43645 (384ff.) is a collection of papers and correspondence of Thomas Sharp.

- ⁵³ Letter from Hone to Parr from Warwick, 31st March, 1819 (Add. MS 40108, f.7); *Ancient Mysteries Described*, pp.93, 95.
- ⁵⁴ *Vetusta Monumenta* (London, 1796), III, p.3, following pl.xxxii; *The Everyday Book* (London, 1825), I, p.45.
- ⁵⁵ Add. MS 40121, f.7.