

Radical satire

Charles Grant

fl.1830-1852

The caricatures of Charles Grant gave a bitterly humorous edge to some of the great political causes of the day.

His favourite targets included politicians, bishops, magistrates, sabbatarians, the monarchy, and the Metropolitan Police force.

All were depicted as self-interested hypocrites and abusers of power, in a world of folly.

Much of Charles' work appeared in pro-Chartist publications and works of fiction aimed at the radicalised working classes.

The Chartists were feared by many for demanding votes for all men, secret ballots, and the end to rules meaning only property owners could be MPs.

His work was condemned by novelist William Thackeray, who wrote that: "Rude woodcuts adorn all these publications, and seem to be almost all from the hand of the same artist - Grant by name.

"They are outrageous caricatures; squinting eyes, wooden legs, and pimpled noses forming the chief points of fun."

Despite this infamy, and his inventive comic imagination, Grant sank into obscurity towards the end of his life and was little remembered afterward.

This began to change towards the end of the 20th century, when he was the subject of an exhibition at University College, London.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/66121.html>.