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Tamara L. Hunt

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## Defining John Bull

*Political Caricature and National Identity in  
Late Georgian England*



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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Defining John Bull:  
Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England:

Late Georgian England was a period of great social and political change, yet whether this was for good or for ill was by no means clear to many Britons. In such an era of innovation and revolution, Britons faced the task of deciding which ideals, goals and attitudes most closely fitted their own conception of the nation for which they struggled and fought; the controversies of the era thus forced ordinary people to define an identity that they believed embodied the ideal of 'Britishness' to which they could adhere in this period of uncertainty. Defining John Bull demonstrates that caricature played a vital role in this redefinition of what it meant to be British. During the reign of George III, the public's increasing interest in political controversies meant that satirists turned their attention to the individuals and issues involved. Since this long reign was marked by political crises, both foreign and domestic, caricaturists responded with an outpouring of work that led the era to be called the 'golden age' of caricature. Thus, many and varied prints, produced in response to public demands and sensitive to public attitudes, provide more than simply a record of what interested Britons during the late Georgian era. In the face of domestic and foreign challenges that threatened to shake the very foundations of existing social and political structures, the public struggled to identify those ideals, qualities and characteristics that seemed to form the basis of British society and culture, and that were the bedrock upon which the British polity rested. During the course of this debate, the iconography used to depict it in graphic satire changed to reflect shifts in or the redefinition of existing ideals. Thus, caricature produced during the reign of George III came to visually express new concepts of Britishness.

'Admirers of Dorothy George's *English Political Caricature* (1959) probably believed the work would never be superseded. Tamara Hunt has now accomplished precisely that by considering the development and then the ending of the 'golden age' of caricature, which corresponded to the reign of George III.' Albion  
About the Author  
Tamara L. Hunt is associate professor of history and department chair at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville. She is the co-editor of and a contributor to *Women and the Colonial Gaze* (New York/Basingstoke, 2002), and her articles have appeared in various scholarly publications such as *Albion*, *Victorian Periodicals*, and *The Journal of Women's History*, as well as in essay collections.