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Reverse Ethnology in *Punch*

The craze for natural history in the Victorian era was accompanied by widespread interest in questions about the status of human beings as a species amongst others. Punch, which began publication in 1841, introduced the species question as an essential component of its comic philosophy and directed its satirical antennae towards intellectual movements and associations that purported to specialise in this question. One of these was the Ethnological Society of London, founded in 1843 with the declared purpose of “inquiring into the distinguishing characteristics, physical and moral, of the varieties of Mankind.” Through the editorial persona of Mr. Punch the showman, early issues of the magazine made a target of English habits, fashions and customs in ways that directly parodied the earnest analytical approach of ethnologists towards supposedly inferior races from remote parts of the globe. In their insistence on the reversibility of ethnological scrutiny, the writers and illustrators of Punch highlighted the ironies of colonial superiority but also explored the implications of racial taxonomy within the social worlds of London. Jane Goodall is the author of Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin (Routledge 2002) and Stage Presence (Routledge 2009). She is currently an Adjunct Professor with the Writing and Society Research Group at The University of Western Sydney.

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When *Punch* arrived on the London scene in July 1841 it was subtitled “the London Charivari,” signalling a direct debt to the Parisian newspaper *Le Charivari* that was founded a decade previously by Charles Philipon. The word *charivari* was an 18th century coinage, to label the custom of making a deafening clatter of pans and tea-trays as a mock serenade for couples whose wedding was regarded as in breach of the social rules. In more general terms a charivari came to mean, rather literally, a wake-up call: a rowdy and anarchic form of moral commentary by the people on anything that breached their codes of practice. In Paris during the years following the July revolution of 1830, the political implications were obvious and Philipon was amongst those who worked to convert the charivari as a traditional element of the pre-Lenten carnival into an explicit form of political protest. The title of his newspaper, he announced, signalled an intention

to be like one of these popular orchestras equally ready to chorus a celebration or beat up a racket.¹ Its work was done through the orchestration of texts and drawings, in campaigns of caricature that proved just as disturbing as a charivari outburst to those who were its targets. Philipon had been involved in various raucous forms of theatre as a student, including a carnival parade, and the spirit of carnival presided over his publications in the guise of a demonic jester in cap and bells, with scourge in hand and a lethally quilled porcupine as his familiar.

The London *Charivari* was a less immediately riotous instrument, tempered for a less wildly turbulent political scene. England in the early 1840s had its share of inflammatory issues – the Corn Laws, the new Poor Law, the People’s Charter – but English radicalism by this time had moved away from the likelihood of breaking out into fully fledged revolution. The editorial persona of Mr. Punch, whilst showing a distinct family likeness to Philipon’s Demon of Caricature, was facetious, middle aged and windy rather than athletically menacing. He was a showman rather than a revolutionary, and a semi-retired showman at that, having just lost his traditional stamping ground as a consequence of the recent ban on performance at Bartholomew Fair. The new journal, though, provided him with an alternative venue. *Punch* was in itself a form of popular theatre, and in this perhaps more than anything it drew on its Parisian model, for *Le Charivari* operated in close relationship with the theatre of the times, providing material for dramatisation as well as drawing on stage imagery for its portrayals.

One of Mr.Punch’s earliest theatrical guises was Jim Crow, the black minstrel persona created by T. D. Rice who sings:

Wheel about and turn about
And do jes’ so;
Ebery time I turn about
I jump Jim Crow.²

As leader of the charivari chorus, Mr.Punch had a black and a white persona, designed to confuse perspectives and require judgements to turn about in disorienting ways. My concern in this essay is with how, during its first decade, the wheel about and turn about energies of *Punch* picked up the themes of racial and cultural polarity: black and white, civilisation and barbarism, the exotic and the domestic, the foreign and the familiar.

These energies involved a transformation in the role of caricature itself. For Philipon, who started out in the business of silhouette portraiture catering to a largely bourgeois clientele, caricature was a commercial venture. As he branched out to develop a market for satirically distorted sketches of political figures, the common factor was a focus on the physiognomy of the individual, with a concentration on the shape of the head and facial features; the selling points were, at one end of the spectrum, a subtle flattery of the client portrayed, and at the other,

a gratifying mockery of the image of some widely resented personage.³ A shift from the shopfront to the magazine as the focus of the trade led to further exploration of the potential of caricature as a catalyst for social experiment. James Cuno, in a study of Philipon's early career, suggests that he began to communicate "a sense of the city as a social theatre in which and against which one played out various and ever-shifting roles."⁴

In *Charivari*, which was less politically inflammatory than some of Philipon's earlier publishing ventures, the editorial approach departed to some extent from *ad hominem* campaigns against the monarch and his henchmen, to focus on the idiosyncrasies of social custom. This was where *Punch* took its inspiration, setting out to specialise in the "charivarieties" of contemporary fashion, London entertainment, the social calendar, and street life.⁵ In doing so, as Henry J. Miller observes, the magazine marked out its territory against rival periodicals such as *The Age*, *The Town* and *The Satirist*, which continued the 18th century tradition of personalised caricature and vindictive political satire. The turn was towards a mellower, more benign ethos of humour, attuned to the enthusiasms of early Victorian moral improvement.⁶

On its first appearance in July 1841, *Punch* (subsequently to be ever conscious of the seasons) was in a summer mood. An editorial welcomed readers to "our weekly sheet of pleasant instruction," concluding:

As on the stage of PUNCH'S theatre, many characters appear to fill up the interstices of the more important story, so our pages will be interspersed with trifles that have no other object than the moment's approbation – an end which will never be sought for at the expense of others, beyond the evanescent smile of a harmless satire.⁷

Such a declaration was, of course, not a little disingenuous. Mr. Punch signals mischief wherever he goes, and only a few pages into the magazine, he makes an appearance in a short scene entitled "Street Politics," singing the Jim Crow song and announcing that he has just been elected to Parliament as member for Grogswill. His followers may expect carnival inversions – the wheelabout and turnabout principle – to be enacted in his presence at every opportunity, and there is a demonic exuberance in his quest for opportunity. The satire may have been harmless compared to some of the vindictive campaigns of eighteenth century caricaturists, or to Philipon's relentless pursuit of Louis Philippe, but it found an entirely new way of channelling the attack. The punitive impulses of the charivari were taken out on the nation as a whole, as Mr. Punch began to present Englishness itself as a bizarre and endlessly amusing phenomenon.

This was in the context of widespread fascination with racial profiling as an extension of the species profiling undertaken by those who labelled and identified specimens for natural history displays. "The scientific description of nations or

“races of men, their customs, habits, and differences” was being promoted amongst educated general readers from the mid-1830s.⁸ *The Penny Cyclopaedia* offered a detailed lecture on the subject in an extended entry on “Man” in its 1839 edition, referring particularly to the work of James Cowles Prichard, whose pioneering researches on the natural history of the human race inspired the foundation of an Ethnological Society in London three years later. Prichard paid systematic attention to the characteristics differentiating man from the other animals, and those distinguishing racial groups. He saw the human races as a single species divided through a gradual process of divergence into seven major varieties: Iranian, Mongolian, Native American, Hottentot, Negro, Papuan and Australian.⁹ The science of ethnology, he said, was concerned with differences and similarities across the races, and with the causes of the differences, which were interpreted as reflecting levels of civilisation, intelligence and skill.

In its first decade, *Punch* developed a distinctive and perhaps unique view of Englishness, a view that was framed by an interest in satirising foreigners of all kinds, but then reversed the perspective to present a view of domestic types, fashions and customs as exotica, to be studied and described from the same posture of fastidious expertise.

Mobilities



There were many kinds of opportunity for visual fantasy in the notion of species hierarchy, especially as it applied to human taxonomies. The caricaturist and the naturalist had certain techniques in common: an intense focus on physiological characteristics; a tendency to see the individual in terms of the type and to deduce general character from form and feature.

Figure 1. 'The Wonders of a London Water Drop,' *Punch*, May 11, 1850
 "Creatures – who shall name them? Things in human shape – in all appearance London citizens – aldermen, deputies, common councilmen – are seen disporting in the liquid dirt as in their native element."¹⁰

An 1850 cartoon titled “Wonders of a London Water Drop” displays type specimens of London society under the microscope, making a carnival display of festive absurdity. [Figure 1] With their hats, tailcoats and whiskers, and their red noses and goggle eyes, the human types resemble the bizarre forms of micro-organisms. It is the caricaturist’s art of the outline that brings the parallels into focus.

Since the 1820s, George Cruikshank had been exploring the satirical potential of the bestiary, the menagerist’s catalogue and the showman’s handbill as formats to highlight a sense of strangeness in his portrayals of contemporary fashion and the social celebrities who followed it.¹¹ His *Monstrosities* series depicted extremes of corseting, wig design, tailoring and millinery, all on bodies blown out of their natural forms through excesses of consumption. As James Paradis comments, he “discovered a rich source of humour by applying the forms and quantifications of natural history to human social circumstance.”¹² Cruikshank refused to work for *Punch*, but his influence on its style was unmistakable. During the early period, the principal writers Henry Mayhew, Douglas Jerrold and Albert Smith, and cartoonists John Leech, Kenny Meadows and Richard Doyle all found ways of developing the natural history parody.

The conventional angle of the observer’s lens was swivelled to focus on curiosity hunters themselves in an article strewn with the vocabulary in vogue with the naturalists. Though “the tribe of curiosity hunters is extremely numerous, Nature, by a wise provision, has bestowed on them various appetites, so that, in pursuit of their prey, they are led by different instincts, and what one seizes with avidity, another rejects as altogether unworthy of notice.”¹³ The diversity of interests exhibited in *Punch* was such as to cater to all curiosities, and the most familiar domestic phenomena lured the attention in much the same way as the collection of exotica from the South Sea Islands boasted of by the “Hookham-cum-Snivey Literary, Scientific and Mechanics Institution,” another of the magazine’s parodic inventions.¹⁴

But *Punch* had its darker moods, and these surfaced in its recognition of the harshest consequences of social taxonomy to those who found themselves at the bottom of the species hierarchy. “Substance and Shadow,” John Leech’s sternest satirical work, evokes a scene in the portrait gallery at the Westminster Palace. In the array of paintings, members of the aristocracy pose with their pet animals, but also mirror the features of these domesticated species: the parrot, the cock or the poodle. The visitors to the gallery are borderline species in another way, a group of paupers and cripples, barely clinging to human identity. Yet these are the substance of humanity, staring out at its images, raised high above them. Leech’s title is also a reminder of the relationship between portraiture and shadow through the technique of the silhouette. The outline of the figure accentuates species-defining features and so can betray the substance in ways that defy the vanities of image-making. [Figure 2]¹⁵



Figure 2. John Leech, *Substance and Shadow*, July-December 1843, 23

Leech shared with Mayhew an enduring concern with the conditions of the London poor. His *Portraits of the Children of Mobility* (1841), which preceded Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* by ten years, presented drawings of vagrant children as he saw them on the streets and in their improvised refuges. An accompanying commentary by Percival Leigh, foregrounded the species question in crisp satirical language. "The Mobility are the antipodes of the Nobility: the one race of men being at the top of the world, the other at the bottom of it." As regards defining features, "the property most common to all Mobility is poverty, that is to say no property at all."¹⁶

Punch borrowed from the conceptual frameworks of the natural sciences in its accounts of the social strata, getting good mileage out of a basic vocabulary set – genus, species, variety, specimen, instincts, habitat, distribution – and some obvious metaphors. A "Geology of Society" in two parts develops the image of strata as a satirical trope, whilst also stressing the principle of upward mobility:

We now beg to call the attention of our readers to a most important division in the next great formation – which has been termed the TRANSITION CLASS – have a tendency to mix with the superior strata. By

referring to the scale which we gave in our first section, it will be seen that the lowest layer in this class is formed by people who keep shops and one horse 'shays,' and go to Ramsgate for three weeks in the dog-days. They all exhibit evidence of being thrown up from a low to a high level.¹⁷

There was large potential for comedy in transferring genres of description from botany and zoology to the natural history of man. The *Punch* editors began to employ this as a satirical technique from its first issue, and developed it into a staple element of the house style. A series entitled "Punch's Information for the People" ran through the issues of the first volume and included two entries on Natural History, profiling the types of the Barber and the Opera-dancer according to such sub-headings as "habits," "reproduction," "geographical distribution" and "sustenance."¹⁸ Other social species that came in for this kind of treatment in the early volumes of the magazine included the sailor Poor Jack, "a natural curiosity"; the professional singer, "the genus described in *black and white*"; the lawyers' clerk, "zoologically speaking, one of the lower class of animals"; and the London idler, "Class; *Mammalia*. Order; *Man*. Genus; *Idler*. Species; *Londoner*."¹⁹



Figure 3. *Punch's* sixth wrapper, Richard Doyle, January 1844

This splitting and diversification of types in the middle ranks was Albert Smith's specialisation. He went on to write an extended, separately published *Natural History of the Ballet Girl*, but in the more developed narrative he becomes sentimental and melancholic, losing touch with the essential comedic energies of the variety theme. It was precisely the energetics that made it funny, and what suited it best was the magazine format, where pages were designed for rapid scanning back and forth, up and down, with a change of mood and focus at every turn. Mobility was a distinctive feature in the cover designs of the 1840s, which showed Mr.Punch at the centre of a tumbling array of figures, rising and falling around him. [Figure 3]²⁰

The social vision underlying these images owes much to Henry Mayhew. His serious and enduring concern to document the condition of the London poor is reflected in occasional pieces on "street arabs" – one of the current terms for vagrant children – but is more pervasively evident in *Punch's* unique approach to taxonomy. While serious scholars of natural history and ethnology were preoccupied with the stable patterns of the natural order, Mayhew spent his time on street corners, observing the feral energies running through the micro-communities of costermongers, flower girls, scavengers, dustmen, buskers, whores, pickpockets and tramps. At this level of society, categories of identification constantly proliferated through subdivision, or through newly devised modes of survival. The poor were sharp observers of each other, and agilities of perception that led to identification and counter-identification between groups provided a model for a new way of looking at society as a whole. Those further up the social ladder might have to get used to being looked at in impertinent ways, and to finding their perch a little rocky from all the activity spilling up from echelons they had thought were beneath them.

The mental squint

To study the English as a subspecies of the human, one with its own array of type specimens, was a project inspired by the earnest solemnities of such groups as the Aborigine's Protection Society which, in a certain way, was a rival in the circulation of popular literature. Its declared objective was:

...the collection of authentic information concerning the character, habits, and want of uncivilised tribes, and especially those in or near the British colonies, and to communicate in cheap publications those details which may excite the interest of all classes, and thus insure the extension of correct opinions.²¹

Surely Mr.Punch could not have worded it better himself. And by swivelling the observer's lens to focus on the infinitely more various and colourful tribes of London, he had a brilliantly comedic proposition.



Head of a Botecudo

*Figure 4. 'Head of a Botecudo',
Punch I, July 31, 1841*



*Head of a Botecudo disfigured by chin
and ear pendants.*



*Head of a Botecudo disfigured by
civilisation*

An article entitled "Civilisation" in the third issue of the magazine was explicit about a favourite national self-delusion. "On the subject of civilisation," it pronounced, "two questions naturally present themselves – the one, *what is civilisation?* – the other, have we such a superabundance of that commodity among us, that we should think about exporting it?"²² Closer to the bone was the suggestion that the difference between civilisation and barbarism was entirely a matter of point of view, and that what were generally considered to be the defining symptoms of barbarism in other races had their exact equivalents amongst the English. The article was accompanied by three sketches of the "Head of a Botocudo," the first showing him "previous to disfigurement," the second as disfigured by wooden plates inserted into his ear lobes and lower lip, and the third "disfigured by

civilisation” with a monocle, sideburns, a tight cravat and bouffant hair [Figure 4].²³ Further commentary stressed the point:

That an over-attention to the adornment of the person is a barbarism all must allow; but that the pride which prompts the Esquimaux to stuff bits of stone through a hole in his cheek, is a jot less refined than that which urges the dowager-duchess to thrust coloured crystals through a hole in her ear, certainly requires a peculiar kind of mental squint to perceive.²⁴

This peculiar kind of mental squint was something the new journal explored persistently over the next decade.

One race may appear ridiculous to another in the first instance through its fashions and adornments, which do not translate across cultures, but the mental squint that causes only the absurdities of the other to be perceived is something all races have in common. The point is a simple one and perhaps a little trite when summarised in this way, but Mr.Punch had sly and diverse ways of making it, and in doing so presented an anarchic challenge to the creed of racial superiority that defined what it meant to be English. The *Punch* editors never had qualms about engaging in robust forms of ridicule in their portrayal of foreigners of whatever hue, but neither did they hesitate to turn exactly the same forms of ridicule upon their own compatriots, often, as in this item on the Botocudos, through direct exercises in reversal.

They parodied the British Association for the Advancement of Science with reports on the British Association for the Advancement of Everything in General and Nothing in Particular, and followed up with *Punch*'s own “Grand National Project for Moral and Intellectual Advancement.” Observing that “the exertions of our missionaries in promoting the cause of civilisation” had left the savages and Hottentots much as they were, Mr.Punch devised a mission “for the Propagation of Politeness in Foreign Parts,” through the dispersal of schoolmistresses to the more barbarous regions of the globe:

And what glorious results may we not anticipate from it! The anthropophagous Carib will be converted to mutton; the train oil of the Laplander will be superseded by blanc-mange. The Ojibbeway Indian, renouncing the scarecrow, will exchange feathers and paint for kerseymere and super Saxony, and relinquish his hideous wardance for the graceful quadrille. The piano will resound in the Kraal of the Caffre; the Negro lip will attune the flute. The world, in short, will be one vast drawing room; its citizens one large tea-party.²⁵

The text is illustrated with two cartoons. The first shows a governess preaching etiquette to a pupil who is trying on white kid gloves and is otherwise decorated

with facial tattoos, earplugs and a large nose ring. In the second, it is the governess who has acquired the “savage” make-up.

With its quips about *soi-disant* civilisers *Punch* sought to dissociate itself from the fashionable attitudes of compassionate condescension towards the uncivilised. In Mr.Punch’s Alphabet, “F doth stand for Foreigners, whom I should patronise.”²⁶ The philanthropists’ tendency to infantilise people and nations brought under British rule was targeted in the editorial Preface to the eighth volume:

There is no infant colony throughout the world that does not hold forth to us its little hands, even as babies hold forth theirs to their loving fathers, to be nursed and dandled. And we are proud of this affection.²⁷

But by the mid 1840s, the Aborigine’s Protection Society had itself become more sceptical about the parental role. In July 1842, at the time *Punch* was celebrating its first anniversary, a splinter group from the Aborigine’s Protection Society proposed the formation of an Ethnological Society, and published a prospectus, changing their purpose from the protection of uncivilised peoples to the more theoretical tasks of analysing their characteristics and recording their history.²⁸

At a preliminary meeting held in January the following year, Ernest Dieffenbach read a paper in which he defined the Science of Ethnology as the study of “the Natural History of Man” and suggested that England was above all other countries the place for its pursuit, since “the Englishman has intercourse with man in the most opposite stages of development.” Stages of development were best observed by those situated at the most advanced point, who must assume the responsibility of knowledge and overview:

It must be the object of the Ethnological Society, therefore, to obtain an exact knowledge of any nation or tribe, as they exist at the present moment. Ethnology begins with Ethnography – with an authentic description of the physical condition of each nation.²⁹

At the same time, *Punch* introduced its new year issue by defying the progress craze with a commitment to atavism:

The Ministers of *Punch* are severe, grave men, in horse-hair coats, with beards down to their waists, and ordinarily walking with staffs horn-tipped. They dwell in caves, their common food is the roots of the earth – their ordinary liquor is the best spring water.³⁰

The moral and epistemological questions about human nature that most urgently concerned these ministers were those linked with national political issues such as

Poor Law reform or aristocratic decadence and the most explicit moral force of the charivari remains directed at abuses of human dignity not across the races but across the classes, as in Jerrold's bitter evocation of the English pauper as a plaintiff in a court of law:

What a miserable tatterdemalion is the plaintiff! This, the lord of creation! Look at his shrunk and withered anatomy – behold his pallid aspect! Daily hunger has pinched his bloodless cheeks, and utter weariness of spirit has blighted the very look of freeborn man! He is the serf of penury – the bond-slave of want! The birds of the air find food on every bush, and 'the foxes have holes;' but he, invested by his Creator with the majesty of humanity, is famine-stricken, and lodged, if lodged at all, worse than the beast.³¹

One response to this situation was to strip away the pretended majesty of those who reduced the poor to such a condition. Finding barbaric and primitive qualities in those most jealous of their own advancement proved all too easy an exercise. The technique of reverse ethnology enabled the message to be delivered with topical flippancy rather in the Swiftian tradition of savage indignation, though Jerrold's invective is an example of how this still surfaced occasionally. A piece on "Anti-slavery in China" uses the technique to make some angry points about the condition of the working classes from the point of view of a mandarin, reported as an address to an anti-slavery meeting in Peking. "Immeasurably inferior as were the barbarian English in point of intellect and civilisation to his countrymen, the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire, still they were men, and as such entitled to sympathy." His audience, after hearing "a graphic and vivid description of the sufferings of British slaves in mines and factories" and "the horrors of the workhouse," resolve "that his Celestial Majesty the Emperor be forthwith humbly solicited to command the British Legislature to abolish slavery within the English dominions."³²

In its explicit dissociation from the narrative of cultural superiority, *Punch* was swimming against a strong tide. Other general circulation magazines such as *The Athenaeum*, *The Illustrated London News*, *The Gentlemen's Magazine* and the *Chambers Journal* took their educative role very seriously, and with it a sense of responsibility for understanding the cultural and racial hierarchy in which they believed they represented the top rank.

The philosophy of outsides

The *Illustrated London News* was particularly keen to show its ethnological credentials, as in its description of a group of Iowa Indians appearing at the Egyptian Hall in 1844:

Their features, generally speaking, are regular, and do not betray a savage or ferocious disposition; they have fine aquiline noses, and the contour of their faces is anything but repulsive; their chests are broad and manly; their carriage erect, and their general mien and behaviour more resembling the civilised tribes than a rude and savage hoard.³³

But *Punch* already had the genre of ethnological description down to a fine art, choosing rather to display it in a study of the King of Prussia, “making his first appearance before a British audience” to attend the Royal Christening in 1842:

His majesty is a fine man, having an opening at the lower part of the face immediately between the lips, and one of his features projects over the mouth, which has within it two rows of a bony hard substance. His majesty’s tongue, as far as we could judge, appears to be about the ordinary size, coming to a point at the end, and communicating at the other extreme with the Royal gullet.³⁴

“The philosophy of the present age is peculiarly the philosophy of outsiders,” was a pronouncement *Punch* could make with some authority,³⁵ and giving it an ethnological spin provided satirical dimensions that were unique to its own comic philosophy.

An atavistic view of the English worked nicely to skew a certain kind of modish historical consciousness that was epitomised in the Queen’s decision to hold an 18th century *Bal costumé* in the early summer of 1845. The cartoonists set to work. They drew statesmen of the day as stiffly costumed dolls being played with by the royal princesses; Sir Robert Peel as “the new Whig” with an outsized powder puff covering his hair; and Lord Brougham contorting his spindly legs into the steps of the minuet. With one eye on this forthcoming absurdity and the other on Catlin’s Indian Gallery, Mr. Punch came up with a novel idea for his own show, proposing to “get up an exhibition of other savages”:

It is his desire to communicate to his fellow citizens some idea of their uncivilised ancestors. By these, he does not mean the woad-painted aborigines, but their rouged descendents, a kind of later Picts, the somewhat less ancient Britons of a century ago. That *Punch’s* show will equal the Royal *Bal Costumé*, he cannot hope; but he does hope that it will teach the public, who will not be admitted to the former sight, what a degraded race of beings were their said forefathers.

... He will explain to the ladies how a savage notion of ornament can convert the loveliest tresses into a peruke, and will delicately hint at the analogy between pomatum and powder and a peculiarity in the toilet of the Hottentot.³⁶

Whilst there were clearly social and political messages in the ethnological satire, its pantomimic elements were the predominant comic ingredients. The English upper crust might be carnival fools decked out in preposterous regalia, or brutish tyrants calling for the more raucous moods of the charivari, and in either register, *Punch* drew on the popular fascination with exotic foreigners – a fascination its own writers clearly shared – to transpose an especially sensitised air of the ludicrous to its targets.

Visual parallels were a favourite topic for the cartoonists. For example, an 1844 drawing with the caption “A Beautiful Head of Hair” depicts a Chinese mandarin with a long pigtail trailing from his otherwise bald head, staring at an English guard in his busby.³⁷ An item on the Albert Hat, the new regulation helmet for the British dragoons, makes the comment that “it is so exceedingly rich in feathers” that “while shaken with the agitation of a breeze, it will assume the terrible aspect peculiar to the chiefs of New Zealand.” The point is underlined by a small cartoon, showing the head of a New Zealand chieftain and that of a Dragoon officer side by side, each sprouting a thick circular head-dress of upstanding feathers.³⁸

Parallel extremes of fashion were easy to find. The Chinese Exhibition, which first opened in London in 1842 and became a prominent feature of the London scene over the next few years, created a prime opportunity for identifying them. *Punch* announced that a complementary exhibition was in the making:

Little think the sagacious English public who visit Mr. Dunn’s Exhibition, Hyde Park Corner, to marvel at the pigtails and little feet of the Chinese, that a Dunn from Peking – Li Li by name – has sojourned many years in England, for the express purpose of showing to his countrymen the faces and fashions of the barbarian English.

Amongst the eleven English types featured was “A Lady of Fashion” illustrated in a flounced crinoline and peacock feathered cap. The commentary explains that the English have no notion of elegancies of foot binding, but have their own “horrible custom” of binding, from whose ghastly effects thousands die every year:

The female child is taken at a very early age, and has its stomach compressed by a machine called Sta Iz, which is ribbed with steel and whale-bone... and is corded tightly up the back. The Sta Iz is never, up to the time of woman hood, taken off; as is plain from the specimen here presented. The barbarians have a laughable notion of the use of this custom: they think that, by making the waist no thicker than the arm, it gives beauty to the female – a melancholy bigotry. They also believe that it keeps the blood in the face, and thereby improves the complexion.³⁹

Chinamen with bald heads and pigtails, curled shoes and brocade tunics appeared regularly in the pages of the magazine over several months, and returned along with the exhibition in subsequent years. They were juxtaposed with guardsmen in busbies (to whom Chinese hairdressing wax was being recommended), portly top-hatted English gents, white wigged lawyers and ceremoniously dressed footmen. A full-page cartoon depicting the presentation of the Chinese Ambassador at Court foregrounds the figures of the Ambassador and the footman, polarised as physical types, yet both sporting pigtails, frills and ornamental buttons. Behind them are formally dressed ladies from both nations, ranked in a semi-circle, the ornamented top-knots of one side counter-pointing the feathered headbands of the other.⁴⁰

Footmen were a favourite target for Mr. Punch, who felt a certain affinity with them as figures who always appeared in carnival costume. On a stroll through Belgrave Square, he is stopped in his tracks by “the extraordinary appearance” of one of them:

The hair, frizzled, pomatumed and powdered; the green, blue or red coat with the collar of it of one colour and the rest of another; and the gamboge or crimson breeches, presenting so striking a spectacle, that he could not refrain from gazing at it.

He is reminded, then, of a recent incident outside Buckingham Palace, when the Chief of a visiting party of Ojibbeway Indians caught sight of the Porter, “and because Mr. Sykes was stout and well fed, and withal wore a scarlet uniform and gold-laced hat, he mistook him for some great nobleman, and made obeisance to him accordingly.” Such mistakes, says *Punch*, “are awkward” and as a remedy he proposes that his own costume be adopted as a model for all front-men of the servant classes. But the image of the Ojibbeway “much struck with the red coat and gold lace of Sykes, the Porter” remains indelible, and inspires a full page cartoon in which the Indians, in their own full-feathered ceremonial dress surround the Porter as if he were a stage spectacle, their faces alight with excitement and curiosity. Since they themselves are on a holiday from their work as performers in Catlin’s Indian Show at the Egyptian Hall, the role reversal is nicely complete.

The social ritual of the charivari belonged to the carnival tradition, as an attack on social order, hierarchy and decorum; *Punch* extended the attack to the ordering discourses of the natural sciences and their social implications. In its ironic juxtapositions of palace footmen with Indian braves, the exhibition platform with the ballroom floor, the language of geology with that of social reportage, the magazine was making mockery of conceptual systems that kept these things wide apart. James Paradis sees Mr. *Punch*’s theatre of ideas as a means of bringing irreconcilable perspectives in to ironic relationship. The effect, he suggests, is to create “an external, more comprehending viewpoint” from which such apparent polarities as primordial life forms and promenading gentry may be logically associated.⁴¹ Paradis argues that this ultimately worked in support of scientific

perspectives, but in the early years of publication, when the satire was raw and the spirit of *Punch* was closer to that of its reckless Parisian model, the attitude was more anarchic. The ironic games at this stage worked to debunk notions of cultural superiority on the part of the English. Though there was no attempt to contest the stereotyping of racial others, the practise of stereotyping became self-reflexive as Chinese, Indians, Turks and Kaffirs were made into pantomime caricatures along with English peers, politicians, lawyers and ballerinas. All of these joined the throng of miniature pantomime icons flying around Mr.Punch's head. As show people with a flair for visual and behavioural extravagance, they were his special adoption, figures of his own kind.

¹ David S.Kerr, *Caricature and French Political Culture 1830-1848: Charles Philipon and the Illustrated Press* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195.

² "Street Politics," *Punch*, Vol. I (January-December 1841), 6.

³ James Cuno, "Charles Philipon, La Maison Aubert, and the Business of Caricature in Paris, 1829-41," *Art Journal*, Vol. 43, No.4 (Winter 1983): 349.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The term 'Charivarieties' was coined by Arthur Sykes, a third generation contributor to the magazine. Marion H. Spielmann includes a section on this in *The History of Punch* (London: Cassell and Company, 1895), 122-130.

⁶ Henry J. Miller, "John Leech and the Shaping of the Victorian Cartoon: the Context of Respectability," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Fall 2009): 269.

⁷ Editorial, "The Moral of Punch," *Punch*, I, 1.

⁸ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. The first usage is given as 1834.

⁹ "Man," *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, Vol XIV (London: Charles Knight, 1839), 356.

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/images/victorian/health/large103126.html> (accessed December 12, 2010).

¹¹ For more detail on this, see Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790-1822* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), Ch.4.

¹² James G. Paradis, "Satire and Science in Victorian Culture," in Bernard Lightman, ed., *Victorian Science in Context* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), 152.

¹³ "Curiosity Hunters," *Punch*, I, p.137.

¹⁴ "Transactions and Yearly Report of the Hookham-Cum-Snivey Literary, Scientific and Mechanics Institution," *Punch*, I, 118.

¹⁵ Source: <http://punchproject.blogspot.com/search/label/John%20Leech>

¹⁶ Percival Leigh, "Of the Mobility in General," introduction to John Leech, *Portraits of Children of the Mobility* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), 2-3.

¹⁷ "Geology of Society, Section II," *Punch*, I, 178.

¹⁸ "Punch's Information for the People No.4," and "Punch's Information for the People No.5," *Punch*, I, 119 and 179.

¹⁹ *Punch* I, 158, 4; Vol. III (July- December 1842) 20, 13.

²⁰ Source: Spielmann, 89: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23881/23881-h/images/img047.jpg>

²¹ The Aborigines Protection Society, Report for 1837, quoted in Ronald Raigner, "Philanthropy and Science in the 1830s: the British and Foreign Aborigines Protection Society," *Man*, 15: 4 (December 1980): 709.

²² *Punch*, I, 27.

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- ²³ Source: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/serial?name=Punch> (accessed December 12 2010).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ "The Schoolmistress Abroad," *Punch*, VI (January-June 1844), 153.
- ²⁶ "Mr. Punch's Alphabet," *Punch*, I, 62.
- ²⁷ Preface, *Punch*, VIII (January-June 1845), iii.
- ²⁸ Aborigines Protection Society documents, quoted in George W. Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: the Free Press, 1987), 242, 244.
- ²⁹ Ernest Dieffenbach, "The Study of Ethnology," Address to a Meeting Preliminary to the Formation of the Ethnological Society, held at Grosvenor Square, January 31, 1843, reprinted in *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London*, 1 (1848): 18.
- ³⁰ Preface, *Punch*, IV (January- June 1843), ii.
- ³¹ "Man versus Machine," *Punch*, II, 26.
- ³² "Anti-slavery in China," *Punch* VI, 103.
- ³³ "Iowa Indians," *Illustrated London News*, August 10, 1844, 244.
- ³⁴ "The King of Prussia," *Punch*, II (January-June 1842), 45.
- ³⁵ "The Schoolmistress Abroad," *Punch*, VI, 153.
- ³⁶ "An Interesting Addition to Punch's Show," *Punch*, VIII, 258.
- ³⁷ "A Chinese Card," *Punch*, VI, 34.
- ³⁸ "The New Regulation Helmet," *Punch*, XIII (July-Dec.1847), 177.
- ³⁹ "Exhibition of the English in China," *Punch*, VI, 219.
- ⁴⁰ "Presentation of the Chinese Ambassador," *Punch*, III, 118.
- ⁴¹ Paradis, 148.