

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY  
School of Communications

'ONE HUNDRED LAUGHS FOR ONE HALFPENNY':  
Early British Comics and the  
Investigation of Popular Culture, c.1890 - c.1902

A Thesis submitted to Dublin City University  
in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

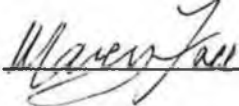
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January 1990

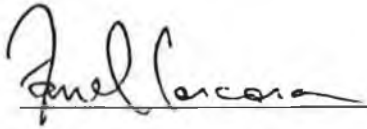
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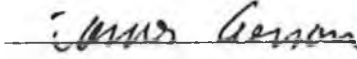
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people, without whose advice, encouragement, patience and practical assistance this work would have been impossible.

My supervisors, Dr. Desmond Bell and Professor Farrel Corcoran.

Fellow postgraduates Niall Meehan, Tanya Kiang, Pat Campion, Raymond Boyle, Jean O' Halloran, Celia Keenaghan, Meldy Pelejo and Enda Scott for a combination of critical feedback, typing, proof-reading, empathy and lunchtime company through the smog-bound winters.

John Fleming for his typing and punctuational corrections.

The staff of the School of Communications and the library staff at Dublin City University, especially Ann Rafter for the inter-library loan service.

Kevin Carpenter and the staff of the library at the University of Oldenburg, at which I conducted most of my primary research.

The Grap family, and in particular Frau Grap, whose generosity and good humour kept me going through the many long weeks in the "ra-ra raum".

Finally, my parents for their endless patience and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

List of Figures

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 ...	
Tradition, History and the Comics	2
- Notes	46
Part One	51
Chapter 2 ...	
Theory and Popular Culture: a Problem of Periodisation	52
- Notes	65
Chapter 3 ...	
Culture and Class in Victorian Britain	67
- Notes	86
Part Two	88
Chapter 4 ...	
The Origins of the Comics: The Victorian Periodical Press	89
- Notes	124
Chapter 5 ...	
Towards a 'Mass' Entertainment: <u>Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday</u>	130
- Notes	145
Chapter 6 ...	
Ally Sloper and the 'New' Democracy	148
- Notes	167

Part Three	169
Chapter Seven ...	
Harmsworth's Arrival: 'Scissors and Paste' and 'Good Taste'	170
- Notes	193
Chapter Eight ...	
Rereading the Comics, Part I: Condescension, Cartoons and Competitions	196
- Notes	243
Chapter Nine ...	
Rereading the Comics, Part II: Fictional and Non-Fictional Narratives	248
- Notes	268
Part Four	270
Chapter Ten...	
The Emergence of the Comic Strip: Chubblock Homes to the 'World Famous Tramps'	271
- Notes	294
Chapter Eleven ...	
The Quixotic Travels of Weary Willy and Tired Tim: the Ideology of the Tramp	296
- Notes	324
Chapter Twelve ...	
Towards the Modern Comic Strip: 'Neglected Jim' and the 'Happy Hooligan'	326
- Notes	359
Conclusions	361
Chapter Thirteen ...	
Comics and Contemporary Culture: Populism and the 'Popular'	362
- Notes	373
Bibliography	374
Section I: Primary Sources Cited	374
Section II: Secondary Sources	380

List of Abbreviations Used in the Text

<u>Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday</u> .....	<u>ASHH</u>
<u>Comic Cuts</u> .....	<u>CC</u>
<u>Illustrated Chips</u> .....	<u>IC</u>
<u>Funny Wonder</u> .....	<u>FW</u>
<u>Big Budget</u> .....	<u>BB</u>

List of Figures

Figure	Page
4.1 'Tom and Jerry "Masquerading it" among the Cadgers in the "Back Slums" in the Holy Land' (from Pierce Egan and George Cruikshank (1821), <u>Life in London</u> - reproduced from Louis James (1976) <u>English Popular Literature 1819-1851</u> , p.147)	111
5.1 'The "Unprofessional Vagabond"' (from <u>Judy</u> , 2 July 1873, p. 112 - reproduced in David Kunzle, 'The First Ally Sloper: The Earliest Popular Cartoon Character as a Satire on the Victorian Work Ethic', <u>Oxford Art Journal</u> Vol. 8, no.1, 1985)	135
5.2 'The First Favourite Everywhere' (from <u>ASHH</u> (date unknown) - reproduced in Peter Bailey, ' <u>Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1880s</u> ', <u>History Workshop</u> 16, 1983)	136
6.1 'Sloper's Christmas Appeal' (from <u>ASHH</u> , No. 294, 1889)	158
6.2 'A. Sloper Tackles the Strikers' (from <u>ASHH</u> No. 284, 1889)	159
7.1 'Portrait of the Editor of "Comic Cuts"' (from <u>CC</u> 57, p.2, 1891)	186
7.2 'Mr. Chips's Little Game' (from <u>IC</u> 27, p.1, 1891)	186
7.3 'Ally Made a Freemason' (from <u>ASHH</u> , No. 207, 1889)	187

7.4	'Mr. Chips's Adventures' (from <u>IC</u> 35, p.1, 1891)	188
8.1	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.1, 1892	204
8.2	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.2, 1892	205
8.3	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.3, 1892	206
8.4	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.4, 1892	207
8.5	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.5, 1892	208
8.6	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.6, 1892	209
8.7	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.7, 1892	210
8.8	<u>Comic Cuts</u> 119, p.8, 1892	211
8.9	'He wanted to make an "impwession"' (from <u>IC</u> 70, p.2, 1892)	212
8.10	'Through the seaside window' (from <u>CC</u> 54, p.2, 1891)	212
8.11	'Hirsute adornments extraordinary,' (from <u>CC</u> 54, p.1, 1891)	212
8.12	'An optical error' (from <u>CC</u> 53, p.4, 1891) 'Behind and before' (from <u>CC</u> 53, p.4, 1891)	213
8.13	'Who they thought they would marry and the specimens they got' (from <u>CC</u> 18, p.8, 1890)	213
8.14	'The "Patent Safety" Burglar Ejector' (from <u>CC</u> 53, p.1, 1891)	214
8.15	'Some puzzles of the seaside' (from <u>CC</u> 16, p.8, 1890)	215
8.16	'A quiet drive by the sea' (from 'Mr. Punch at the seaside' (no date)) - reproduced in John K. Walton (1983), <u>The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914</u> , p.204	215
8.17	'Oof gatherers at Margate' (from <u>ASHH</u> No. 269, 1889)	216
8.18	'After the Regatta' (from <u>CC</u> 23, p.4, 1890)	217
8.19	'Blouses and Bloomers - A case of general utility' (from <u>CC</u> 259, p.1, 1895)	217
8.20	'The spinning wheel' (from <u>FW</u> 187, p.4, 1896)	217

8.21	'Keeping up with the procession' (from <u>IC</u> 49, p.5, 1891)	
	'Profitable athletics' (from <u>IC</u> 49, p.5, 1891)	218
8.22	'Real portrait of the editor of "Comic Cuts" at last' (from <u>CC</u> 16, p.8, 1890)	218
8.23	'Got a bite' (from <u>IC</u> 10, p.4, 1890)	218
9.1	'A Sad Mishap' (from <u>ASHH</u> No. 234, 1898)	260
10.1	'Innocents on the River' (from <u>IC</u> 298, p.1, 1896)	276
10.2	'Adventures of Chubblock Homes and Shirk the Dog Detective' (from <u>FW</u> 219, p.1, 1897)	277
10.3	'Adventures of Chubblock Homes and Shirk on the scent of Babez Jalfour' (from <u>CC</u> 256, p.5, 1895)	278
10.4	'Ephriam Broadbeamer, smuggler, pirate and other things' (from <u>FW</u> 284, p.4, 1898)	278
10.5	'Hiram B. Boss' (from <u>FW</u> 259, p.1898)	279
10.6	'A shock from a telegraph pole' (from <u>CC</u> 256, p.8, 1895)	280
10.7	'Mr. Comic Cuts' new office-desk' (from <u>CC</u> 282, p.1, 1895)	280
11.1	'Weary Willy and Tired Tim have a lively time at Tudor Street' (from <u>IC</u> 396, p.1, 1898)	300
11.2	'A wild night's adventure with Spring-Heeled Jack' (from <u>IC</u> 471, p.1, 1899)	301
11.3	'The adventures of the Wandering Knight Don Quixote de Tintogs and Sancho his pal' (from <u>CC</u> 442, p.8, 1898)	302
11.4	'Remember Majuba' (from <u>FW</u> 35, p.1, 1899)	303
11.5	'The noble army of weary unwashed wanderers spifflicate the Boer Army' (from <u>IC</u> 486, p.1, 1899)	304
11.6	'How Pretoria was captured by Weary Willy and Tired Tim' (from <u>IC</u> 503, p.1, 1900)	305-6
12.1	'Editorial Chat' (from <u>CC</u> 659, p.6, 1902)	332
12.2	'The Mackabeentosh family compete in a great walking contest' (from <u>CC</u> 686, p.1, 1903)	333



12.3	'Jim tries to stop a motor-car and gets a very nasty jar!' (from <u>CC</u> 714, p.1, 1904)	334
12.4	'The private diary of the Mackabeentosh family. - Neglected Jim's great idea' (from <u>CC</u> 702, p.1, 1903)	335
12.5	'Bat-eared Bill and Mooching Mike start a cat's meat round' (from <u>The World's Comic</u> , No. 295, p.1 1898)	336
12.6	'The Adventures in Australia of Happy Ikey Hoogan and his brother Gloomy Gus' (from <u>BB</u> 322, pp. 164-65, 1903)	337
12.7	'Hans und Fritz' ((no date) - from George Perry and Alan Aldridge (1971), <u>The Penguin Book of Comics</u> , pp. 98-99)	338
12.8	'Tommy Tootle and Billy Bootle at it again' (from <u>CC</u> 315, p.5, 1896)	339
12.9	'Happy Ike introduces his nephews to the Bunsey Boys' (from <u>The Jester and Wonder</u> 82, p.1, 1903)	340
12.10	'Neglected Jim tumbles up against the amazing luck of Lucky Lucas' (from <u>CC</u> 728, p.1, 1904)	341
12.11	'Lucky Lucas saves Neglected Jim from being monkeyised' (from <u>CC</u> 737, p.1, 1904)	342
12.12	'Lucky Lucas and Happy Harry are painted and painned this week' (from <u>CC</u> 766, p.8, 1905)	343

## INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER ONE

## TRADITION, HISTORY AND THE COMICS

## I

## Exploring Comicology

'Comics' [1] are becoming an increasingly complicated phenomenon. Though normally associated in Britain with juvenile diversion, in both Britain and the US they appear to be undergoing a significant transformation.

The American comics industry has long straddled the worlds of children's and adult reading. Increasingly now, the industry revolves intentionally around a mature, adult readership, and the product itself is characterised by greater sophistication. One recent development, for example, has involved the resurrection of the superheroes of the '40s and '50s in a critical, questioning way. The latent undercurrents to the caped crusaders, the authoritarian obsessions with eliminating criminality and deviance are made overt in Moore's and Gibbons's Watchmen and Frank Miller's revamped Batman, the Dark Knight. Moreover, the 'fanzines' and reviews like the excellent Comics Journal combine the enthusiasm of the fan with an incisive critical analysis of the current state and historical evolution of the industry. Artists and writers are exalted. First issues and original artwork are valuable commodities. Reprints abound. The

'popular' has been unproblematically elevated to literary and art form combined, and dealt with as a respectable and complex phenomenon worthy of appreciation. In both the product itself and in these related enterprises the American industry feeds off its own history and progenitors with a voracious appetite. But the process is not merely reproductive, it is both creative and critical.

The state and status of the British comic are undergoing similarly radical changes. The industry has for some time been dominated by two publishers, IPC Magazines and D.C. Thomson. Until recently their output was ranged across four categories that were basically established in the 1950s. Titles for youngest readers, up to the age of about six, consisted largely of strips populated by upright, anthropomorphic furry animals with descriptive paragraphs, including dialogue, below each frame. These, it seems, were to be read to the children. For seven to twelve year olds, the titles were dominated by manic figures in relentless pursuit of amusement, gifted with balloon-enclosed speech, and a penchant for outrageous visual and verbal puns. For roughly nine to fourteen year olds, there were specifically boys' or girls' comics. The boys' comics consisted largely of war and sports strips, while the girls' comics showed a predominance of school stories, revolving around the psychological complexities of alliances and rivalries among the girls.

While these categories still exist, there have been several important new additions. IPC's 2000AD (1977-), ostensibly a

boys' science fiction comic, has consistently managed to smuggle in some very sharp satirical potshots at contemporary British society and has long maintained a cult status with a large adult following. 2000AD editor Steve McManus and writer Pat Mills have actually gone on to promote overtly leftist political ideas through the comic strip in IPC's fortnightly Crisis (1988-). Viz, another new arrival, scores from the novelty of a bombardment of male adolescent jokes, conveyed in the visual and narrative styles of the various genres of children's comic and teenage girls' magazines. These are significant developments in an industry formerly characterised by an apparent stagnation in every respect. A recent Channel 4 documentary on new developments in the British and American industries called itself 'The Day Comics Grew Up'. It described the phenomenon as 'a revolution ... by writers and artists themselves. More mature themes have brought more mature readers. Comics, in every sense, are growing up' [2].

In an earlier project [3], I tried to establish the roots of the current developments in the British comic industry, and this led to what I deemed to be a fundamental transformation in the industry in the mid-1970s, manifested by the appearance of three new titles: Battle (1975, now Battle Action Force), Action (1976-1977) and 2000AD (1977-). It appeared to me that there was a certain progression in these titles away from the classic boys' comic formulae. Battle introduced elements of cowardice and sadism to its war stories. Action's heroes included a shark, 'Hookjaw', which unlike Spielberg's ultimately disappointing rubber villain in Jaws, is dedicated to ridding the oceans of

their human, ecological threats; a British secret agent, Dredger, who is the quintessential sadistic bastard; and apprentice footballer Lefty, a cynical, hard-nosed contortion of the classic formula of working-class kid made good by limitless hard grafting. 2000AD developed into the often covert, disguised satirical weekly it is now. The same artists, writers and editors who originated these titles progressed to the current developments in both the British and American comic. Most noticeably, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, former collaborators on 2000AD, were to become the creators of Watchmen.

It seems to me that the essential elements in these new titles in both the US and Britain were the reappraisal of the classic formulaic modes of the comics in ways which question the constancy of their 'ideological' representations or 'stereotypes', and the manipulation of the classic scenarios to generate alternative readings. The outstanding figure in this regard is the cult character Judge Dredd, the star of 2000AD and various reprint versions of his adventures in Britain and the US. A masked, authoritarian bastion of 'justice' who regularly indulges in seemingly arbitrary sentencing to the 'iso-cubes' for minor offences, Dredd can be seen in one sense as an updated Judge Roy Bean cum Dirty Harry with traces of the fascist superhero. But his alienating, futuristic world, mastered by obsessive 'judges' dedicated to the surveillance of the citizens is actually a thinly disguised Britain in the '80s. His cynical observations on the insanity of post-industrial 'Mega City One' and the horrors of the aftermath of nuclear war in 'The Cursed

Earth' double as satirical swipes at a contemporary police state in the making, and at the inanity of much contemporary cultural production in Thatcher's Britain. Who exactly Judge Dredd is supposed to be is a difficult question to answer, because there is little consistency to his character. He is at once a pillar of a rigid social order and the populist enemy of corporate and government corruption. He embodies all sorts of levels of meaning which can facilitate any number of readings, and in these multiple roles he questions the constancy of the generations of comic heroic characters that he draws upon. What these new comic titles were suggesting was that 'stereotypes' are by no means unitary or inviolate entities.

The natural trajectory of that first project was to try to pull outwards from an empirical analysis of what was happening in the comics, to explore how exactly this transformation came about. In order to do this, it was necessary to pose some initial questions. Firstly, there were the problems of establishing how and why the comics developed as rigidly formulaic products; and of how these formulae related to the maintenance of power in a class dominated society. Could these formulae be read as containing inherent, unchanging meanings which to a large extent legitimated existing social relations by perpetuating an outdated imperialist ideology or stereotypical sex roles? For help in this regard, I sought support from existing critical studies. This led inevitably to the single most influential work in critical approaches to British comics, George Orwell's famous 1940 essay, 'Boys' Weeklies' [4]. I found, however, that this article and those works which have been

influenced by it were of little use in solving this problem. A brief review of such works will reveal the difficulties I had with them.

#### History and continuity in the comics: analytical difficulties

'Boys' Weeklies' was a caustic review of the sexual hangups and the class and racial prejudices in cheap public school oriented periodical fiction. The 'boys' weeklies' of the 1930s were not 'comics'. They did not contain pictorial sequences, but consisted mostly of one or more fictional, usually non-serialised narratives with occasional illustrations. Orwell's essay is important, however, for his conclusions and method have significantly affected subsequent work on comics.

Orwell concentrated his analysis on Frank Richards' St. Jim's and Greyfriars stories in the Gem (1907-1940) and the Magnet (1908-1940). He concluded that these stories inculcated a petty bourgeois world view, pitched firmly in support of the imperialist fervour of 1910. It was a public school fantasy-world uneroded by time. He argued that the stories abstracted themselves from any current social and historical reality, and were written in an easily imitated, tiresome and repetitive style - he believed, erroneously in fact, that the 'author' Frank Richards, was a pseudonym for a team of writers working to formula. Recreating the atmosphere of the stories, Orwell begins as he concludes, stressing the complete absence of any temporal reference framework:



'The year is 1910 - or 1940, but it is all the same ...  
Everything will be the same for ever and ever' [5].

As for the ideological contents, racial prejudice is an implicit undercurrent, sex is taboo, and the working classes 'only enter ... as comics or semi-villains (race-course touts etc.)' [6]. The appeal of the stories is put down to a combination of encouragement to wealth and status-fantasy (reflecting the particular association of education with class unique to England), and of reader identification with one or other of the characters: 'there is a model for very nearly everybody' [7].

Orwell argues that the boys' weeklies have a sort of self-contained, self-referential quality through which they have somehow perpetuated the prejudices of the social elite from their inception. Yet how exactly their production relates to the social-structural or institutional perpetuation of disadvantage is uninvestigated. And there is no explanation as to how or why they survived undeveloped, despite their anachronisms, for over thirty years. Orwell ironically reinforces the ahistorical world which he claimed the papers created for themselves by abstracting them from any real historical context, and by ignoring the possibility of alternative readings.

It seems to me that Orwell's principal assumption in 'Boys' Weeklies' is that what makes them so effective is their predominantly juvenile readership. Ultimately, Orwell's revelation of what appears a fairly crude set of messages is legitimated by an insistence on effect. It is evident that he assumes both that the papers themselves worked consistently in

the same way and that their reception was unidimensional, regardless of the spatial and temporal context.

In the latter regard, one aspect of Orwell's essay that is overlooked is the fact that these papers were among the first casualties of the wartime paper shortage and this suggests that their circulations were by then some way below their peak of about 200,000 in the '20s [8]. Orwell does examine those papers which were superceding the Gem and Magnet, but he assumes the enduring popularity of these weeklies at something close to their circulation peak. This abstracts them from the need to investigate changing 'popular taste' and its relation to changing social conditions.

Most existing studies approach their subjects from a non-academic, journalistic angle and either apologise for the quirkiness of the topic or are characterised by an undisguised repugnance to the comics from the outset. Many of them preface their remarks with a reference to Orwell [9]. This establishes both a continuity between his boys' weeklies and the comics and, by extension, the legitimacy of their own analyses by situating them among celebrated company. As for the analyses themselves, they tend to be vulgarisations of the basic tenets of 'Boys' Weeklies'. To cover these works in detail would be a tedious exercise, given their predictability. A brief overview will hopefully capture their flavour.

Working on one or more of the dimensions of representations of violence, class or race such studies generally open with bold assertions or rhetorical questions:

'Can comics join the multi-racial society?' [10]

'Boys' Comics: Violence Rules' [11]

'War-like children's toys and American horror-comics encourage militarism and distort history' [12]

In addition, there are a number of articles on romantic fantasy in teenage magazines for girls. These, too, are generally condemnatory.

'The magazines preach a stultifying message expressed in excruciating style. It is not snobbish or middle class to believe impressionable girls deserve better' [13]

It is not reductive to group these studies, because there is a fundamental tendency to defend the taking of comics seriously on the grounds of their effects. The defence is generally in more overt language than Orwell would use:

'... naturally they are affected by the contents ... The younger the children, the faster they learn. That's what makes comics so important'. [14]

'It is a fact that children, even of primary school age, learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs with disturbing ease' [15].

Bob Dixon, who includes the comics in a survey of children's reading in Britain, uses emotive language for what is essentially an unproven assertion that the effect of the comics is 'drug-like'. He concludes that

'it's a pity that the young people of the country are being imbued with an ideology which will so cripple them in the world in which they will grow up' [16].

It is admitted by such writers that the messages are obvious enough:

'they are ... all about love - love as substantial as a pink marshmallow' [17]

'All our old friends are present, the Nips, the Jerries, the Fuzzy Wuzzies, the Ice Cream Men from Rome ...' [18].

But it does seem that the main reason they are deemed worthy of consideration is that they are received and consequently absorbed by children. This kind of defence is calculated to ward off critical attacks on the legitimacy of such studies. Julie Burchill exemplifies one kind of criticism that might be levelled at these works in her dismissal of Angela McRobbie's and Barbara Hudson's (see below) comparatively sophisticated analyses of girls' magazines and comics:

'the thought of two grown women in receipt of expensive, extensive state educations behaving like two particularly banal pubescent schoolgirls is grotesque, to say the least' [19].

The extravagant claims for the comics' effects are an effective means of countering such blanket dismissals.

In terms of their actual methodology, one could argue that the concentration on isolated questions of representation actually limits the ways in which comics can be seen to operate. That is, they are seen in terms of their negative or positive representation of violence, race, sex etc. This constitutes a rather mechanical version of the basic methodology of 'Boys' Weeklies'. The isolation of factors in representation, and their subjection to content analysis, loosely or rigorously controlled, decontextualise them from the surroundings of the

episode or the entire serial version of the strip.

The potential distortion as a result of this is most clearly evident in John Heeley's Sunday Times article [20], 'Boys' Comics: Violence Rules'. Heeley claims that a comic strip story in 2000AD, which shows an attack on robots by an anti-robot gang, is reflective of the 1980s Thatcherite 'dog eat dog' mentality, in which violence is an automatic solution to any social problem. The Sunday Times letters page the following week had some articulate replies to Heeley's analysis, in which it was argued that this futuristic setting was indeed a disguised version of contemporary reality. However, the depiction of the anti-robot gang, the 'Human League', contextualised in the full narrative, could be read as an indicting commentary on any form of 'mindless violence' [21]. Another of Heeley's examples, in which the inhabitants of 'Shanty Town' sell their own limbs for money is likewise given an alternative interpretation. These people are seen as victims of their own corruption ('a good moral there, Dr. Heeley' [22]). Heeley made the mistake of grouping 2000AD, which makes satirical attacks on aspects of contemporary Britain through the guise of a sci-fi weekly, with the unproblematic regurgitated World War Two heroics of titles like Warlord [23].

The trouble with Heeley's analysis, and it is undercurrent to virtually all of these works is the idea that 'ideological representations' can be judged on the basis of isolated elements from a comic strip, the comic as a whole, or a series of issues of a title. The danger with this sort of abstraction is well illustrated here. It is assumed that within any one generic form, representations are constant, and titles are

interchangeable. Moreover, it is believed that only a single interpretation is possible.

Where the issue of formula in narrative is dealt with, there are similar assertions:

'The themes are perennial in girls' fiction' [24].

'The plots or stock situations ... follow regular patterns' [25].

This insistence that formulae are perpetuated unchanged, and the negative interpretation of these formulae reinforce Orwell's conclusions on the boys' weeklies. And again, as with Orwell, there is an invariable mechanism of effect based on the reader's identification with characters. The danger of 'identification' is heightened by Heeley's claim that 'alternatives to violent behaviour have no place whatsoever in the world of comics'. Dixon similarly claims, in rhetorical and emotive terms, that the comics deliberately exclude alternative ideas and behavioural models:

'Where's working-class history? Where are the strips about the Tolpuddle martyrs or the Luddite movement?' [26]

The logical extension of Orwell's ideas is brought to its most articulate level in Angela McRobbie's analysis of Jackie, an early teenage girls' magazine-cum-comic [27]. This essay was part of a radical feminist reappraisal of popular reading for women at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham in the 1970s. While McRobbie is quick to rule out conspiracy theories as an explanatory model for the endurance of

an 'ideology of adolescent femininity', her basic thesis is that Jackie consists of an internally coherent ideology equivalent to a 'false sisterhood' [28]. McRobbie is, moreover, insistent that alternative concepts of femininity are consistently and deliberately excluded from this world. Jackie constructs a giddy girliness which sets itself apart from the real issues of female adolescence. It claims simultaneously to be ever new, trendy, modern, and trades on its natural, biological universality. Jackie claims to cater for innate, feminine needs, but these are in fact 'false' constructions.

The problem with all of these studies is their insistence that ideological or stereotypical representations are constant and invariable entities with which the reader identifies - because as child or adolescent, he/she is vulnerable to them, no matter how crude they may be. Any alternatives to this formulation are systematically eliminated. By reducing analysis of the comics to their representation of predetermined categories, by insisting on the perpetuation of representation and on the inevitable effects on the reader, these critics reveal their assumptions about the readers. The comics seem to fit a predetermined picture of their operation which does not stem from the initial question: how do the comics work? Rather, that question is: how do children attain prejudiced attitudes? And from this point on, the comics can only be seen to operate in such a unidimensional way.

I argued the case that the common undercurrent to most of these studies is the thesis that effect is determined by the level of the reader's biological development. Ironically, the comics themselves, ostensibly the object of consideration, are

consistently unexplored to any great extent. The consequence is that such works perpetuate the notion that the comics somehow reinforce the status quo through their formulaic modes. Moreover, this notion is a set of assertions, rather than an empirically-based argument. To return to the project to establish where and how such formulae originated, these works suggest some kind of deliberation by their creators without identifying it specifically. They implicitly work from a theory of the exclusion of ideas from the comics' internally coherent ideologies.

In opposition to this picture, I argued that what really provided continuity in the history of the British comic was the creation of a childish world, refracted through various carefully constructed categories of age and sex, and it was through this that these ideologies were unproblematically conveyed. Paradoxically, those studies which predicated their conclusions on the vulnerability of the reader actually reinforced the basis from which the comics operated. This argument drew heavily on Mattelart's and Dorfman's (1973) analysis of Disney comics exported to Chile, How to Read Donald Duck [29].

In attempting to assess the apparent transformation of comic publishing in Britain in the 1970s, I argued that what was shocking to their critics, what marked a revolutionary twist to the development of the comics was their questioning of the limits of childhood reading. By manipulating the classic formulae, they undermined the limited 'suitable for children' ideas which have determined the form and content of the comics. Their heroic



figures are no longer stiff upper lips whose assaults on the 'krauts', 'nips' and varieties of 'native' at the outposts of empire are couched in a boyish enthusiasm which conceals the political inflection of their ideologies. They consistently question the validity of such figures and the innocence of their adventurous narratives.

I attributed the genesis of this reappraisal to a group of artists and writers who, in a period of drastically declining circulations, when the comics were under increasing attack from children's television and the children's book trade, were allowed to emerge as key figures in the revitalisation of IPC's juvenile division. Trained in the IPC and DC Thomson workshops, they essentially worked within the same formulaic modes, but injected a degree of cynicism to the classic figures and scenarios [30]. The issue of how these formulaic modes originated is, however, unanswered. The notion of a construction of childhood in the comics has rather conspiratorial overtones which make it, in retrospect, a simplistic explanatory framework. I had created a picture of an unauthored and self-perpetuating construction of childhood innocence against a vision of a range of creative talents 'subverting' the classic formulae. In effect, I had reinforced the predominant image of the comics as a collection of ahistorical, constant ideological representations which stand above historically moving class relations. A potential solution to this problem is suggested by Martin Barker's (1984 and 1989) approach to the comics [31].

Comics and the art of 'conversation'

Barker's (1984) A Haunt of Fears was a study of the British 'horror comics' campaign in the 1950s. Calling for the censorship of certain imported American titles, or 'horror comics' as they were labelled, this campaign was the forceful impetus behind the Harmful Publications Act of 1955. Claims were made by American critic and psychiatrist Fredric Wertham [32] for direct causal links between the violence depicted in the comics and juvenile delinquency. Wertham and his examples from the comics were cited in campaign literature and exhibitions. Meanwhile, the principal British critic was teacher George Pumphrey. He made a classification of comics available to children as 'inoffensive' and 'harmful'. The British comics were reckoned to have no positive attributes as such, but by comparison with the American imports they were, at least, 'inoffensive' [33].

Barker argues that these criticisms of the comics were more to do with preconceptions about children than with analysing the comics themselves. The notion of 'identification' between the reader and the characters in the text made the comic a convenient explanatory tool for the understanding of delinquency [34]. In support of this theory comic strips were mutilated and single frames exhibited in isolation from their original context as 'evidence' of the comics' content.

Following his exploration of the campaign's ideologies, Barker examines those comics which were cited most by campaigners. His analysis of the strips as integral narratives

suggests that in many cases they were in fact rather clever probings of contemporary issues, overtly or through more disguised means - they dealt with the lunacy of McCarthyism, with racial prejudice, with sexual and adult-child relationships. They did so in ways that could question the 'common sense' view. The most striking example, a strip called 'The Orphan', explores the limits of the concept of 'childhood' itself [35].

A Haunt of Fears rescues the comics from the condemnation of their critics as simply 'harmful'. By contrast, the comics engage the reader in a complex examination of his/ her own social location through the complexity of their narratives. Barker makes a similarly radical reappraisal of Owen Dudley Edwards' accusation against the British comic, the Beano, that it was obsessed with the corporal punishment of children [36]. His own analysis of the same strip used by Edwards (a 'Minnie the Minx' episode) argues that the sympathies of the strip are very much with the child in her efforts to negotiate her father's seemingly arbitrarily meted out punishment [37].

Barker's latest work (1989) is an attempt to work these ideas about formulaic comic strip narratives and the reader's orientation to them into a more rigorous framework for analysis. The book deals with qualitatively different kinds of comic: Action, a boys' comic; Shiver and Shake, Whoopee and Beano, the 'funny' comics; Jackie, an adolescent girls' comic; Bunty and Tracy for younger girls; and the Disney comics analysed by Mattelart and Dorfman. Barker relates the production histories of these comics and their evolving and changing formulae to the historically shifting experiences and needs of their readers.

Action, therefore, emerged as a revolutionary new title through some initial experimentation in the early 1970s, an effort by publishers to improve circulations at a time of serious crisis in the industry. Its cynicism, typical formulae and topical themes were rooted in the needs of young working class readers (male and female) at that time [38].

Barker draws on Vladimir Propp's research on the formulae of folklore and Valentin Volosinov's marxist theory of language to elaborate a theory of the comic's functions [39]. He extends Propp's formalist analysis to the comics, but moves a significant step further to posit that

'there is a symbiotic relationship between formulaic narratives and particular social groups. To the extent that a narrative formula emerges, that signifies the existence of such a group. The formula expresses the typified social life of its symbiotic group, both in the way it is internally organised and in the way it relates symbiotically to it' [40].

From Volosinov he develops the notion of 'a dialogical approach to ideology'. That is to say, ideologies in forms of popular entertainment are not in any way impressed upon the reader. He argues that a comic can adopt the character of a 'speech genre', so that it enters into a form of 'conversation' with the reader. It 'invites imaginative projection. A world is offered whose relation to our own lived world is problematic'. To read a comic, or any story, then, 'is to agree to orient oneself to its imaginative progression. It is to follow its proposal for kinds of sequence, unfolding, and resolution' [41]. Each story contains 'sedimented themes', 'typified social experience[s]'

from the past, with which the typical readership will be familiar. The formula of the story is constrained by the production history of its producer. Therefore there are regularities to its transformations of formulae, as there are to the kind of response it will invite for the reader. In addition, in order to understand both the functioning of the formula and the reader's response, we need to study the specific social characteristics of the readership.

These, then, are the principles on which Barker bases his analyses of various genres of comic. This approach goes beyond any straightforward picture of individual artistic or authorial inspiration 'subverting' 'classic' comic strip formulae. Furthermore, it allows us to transcend the notion of self-perpetuating formulae, and to look for different kinds of 'conversational' relationships between readers and their comics, dependent on geographically and historically specific social conditions. His approach is predicated on an acceptance of the fact that the tendency in comics, as forms of 'popular' cultural production, is inevitably towards their formularisation. Rather than indulge in a condemnation of this fact, coupled with a normative critique of what the comics should include (which he considers a pointless avenue for exploration) he deals with what the comics do include, and how they relate to their readerships. That is, any imbalance in the quantitative representations of sex and race in comics, compared with real proportions in society, is not necessarily pertinent to their understanding. Rather than criticise on this basis, it is more useful to examine the conversational act of reading, to which such representations may

be incidental, but rarely central.

Such an approach is necessarily based on a great deal of wide ranging empirical work. Barker combines questionnaire schedules for former readers (of Action) with other types of information related to readers (Shiver and Shake) and analyses of the strips as integral narratives. That is, they are unmutilated for the purposes of making points about stereotypes, volume of representations and identification between readers and characters, arguments which depend on the isolation of individual elements. In at least one case, the analysis of the girls' comics - Bunty etc. - as negotiations of the particularly marginalised social positions of working class girls [42], the conclusions look somewhat tenuous, but generally, Barker's understanding of the comics is a successful reappraisal of the major critical works. His review of the Disney comics analysed by Dorfman and Mattelart is especially successful, as he convincingly relates the politics in the comics to the real changes in the political role of the US in various parts of the world since the 1940s [43].

The implications of this work stretch beyond the sphere of comics alone, for it suggests the need for a radical reappraisal of other forms of popular entertainment which are characterised similarly by rigid formulae.

## II

A Return to the First 'Comics'

This project was originally intended as a continuation of the earlier work I had done with contemporary British comics. It was planned as an exercise in establishing where and how the formulae in products like comics originate and how they are perpetuated; to go beyond simplistic dismissals to develop a strategy for relating changes in the formulaic modes of the comics to broader social change. Now this plan drew me further and further back into the history of the comic in a search for roots, until I arrived, finally, at the first recognisable 'comics' in the 1890s.

While it was quite clear that these 'first' comics bore little resemblance to the modern comic, that was partly the reason why it was felt important to examine them. As with the contemporary comic, these first comics were based on formulaic patterns, but the nature of those formulae was qualitatively different, and what made them so was the very distinct social context within which they were working. The difference between these and contemporary comics is not simply the difference between different kinds of text separated by history, and consequently at different levels of intra-textual sophistication. We can use Barker's argument to propose that these first comics were involved in a different kind of 'conversation' with their

readers, one in which the readership's characteristics of class, age and sex were far removed from those of any contemporary readership. The readers were part of a different pattern of social relations and this shaped a different kind of conversational relationship. Therefore the comics met, or failed to meet, needs which bore little relation to those of a modern readership. Yet the understanding of these early comics can throw considerable light on the modern comic.

Barker's ultimate aim is to develop 'rules' for analysing comics, rules which are based on the empirical study of what comics do for their readers. From this empirical basis he argues that his 'rules' can eliminate subjectivity in interpretation. This approach is based on the fact that the comics have developed as perhaps the most typical of contemporary forms of popular or mass culture in their strictly regulated formulaic shape.

In their formal aspects the early comics are actually most striking for their lack of very rigidly formulated components. These early comics are not sufficiently well formulated to warrant the identification of rules as such. To begin with, in their early years, these comics contain very few 'comic strips', and where they do have pictorial sequences, there are no regular characters. In fact, they are actually miscellanies of different kinds of textual components and the cartoon element accounts for just fifty per cent of their total contents. Moreover, when the first regular comic strips emerged in these papers, they bore little resemblance to the modern strip. They were awkward in every respect, and actually showed a preponderance of word over image. In this shape it is hard to discern the sort of strictly



regulated formulae we see in the modern comic.

In attempting to reason why this was the case, we can put forward the following proposition. There is a degree of open-endedness to these first comics. They lack coherent narratives. They frequently address the reader directly, through various textual devices, from the editor's address to the principal characters in the strips themselves. The comic strip was actually part of an essentially verbal medium. The most obvious influences on its development were the miscellaneous, largely verbal elements of the comic in its early years. The influences, however, were not merely formal. We can plot these elements on a continuum with various currents in the history of the nineteenth century periodical press as a whole in one important respect.

The history of Victorian periodical publishing shows a fundamental continuity in its orientation to the question of class and class differences. We can perceive this orientation in the textual components of the comic, except that they are mediated by a new kind of 'populist' rhetoric which confuses the issue of class difference. This populism is part of a new development in forms of popular reading, a development towards an avoidance of questions of class relations and a depoliticisation of content. From the editorial address outwards, the comic promises that everybody is equal. Yet embedded within the populism, there are real concerns about the class location of the reader, and this is expressed in the twin formal and thematic obsessions with equality through correct self-presentation and the marginalisation of 'low-lives' or 'semi-criminals' as an

underclass over which the reader can claim superiority. When the regular comic strips emerged in the mid-1890s, they were concerned with essentially the same subjects, and in a shape which shows the influence of the verbal elements, rather than any history of narrative art. Furthermore, their 'popular' appeal can be read as quite specific to the 'lower middle class', for these concerns were a direct function of the precarious social location of this class.

Yet, if we can identify a certain class- and historical specificity in these comics, this argument needs to be qualified by the evidence of the role of the early comics and their comic strips as part of a new development in 'popular' entertainment. The emphasis on the 'popular' in these new kinds of entertainment marked a transition to modes of popular leisure consumption where real political or class differences were made secondary or ignored altogether. In their development of pictorial narratives, no matter how awkward to begin with, the early comics were a harbinger of a new kind of 'popular culture' which actually advertised itself as formulaic 'escapism'.

Therefore, these comics stand between the decline of one type of entertainment, which might be characterised broadly as concerned specifically with differences of class, and a new type of entertainment which presents itself as appealing to a 'mass' audience. Their development of an awkward formula reflected their intermediate position between new and old, what we might call 'mass' and 'class' entertainments. They constitute a useful means, therefore, of understanding how formulae in popular culture develop and how a readership or audience is oriented to

them.

Now in forwarding this thesis, we are disputing the general tendency in approaches to comics towards the dismissal of their formulaic shape as some kind of imposition on unsuspecting readers. We can adopt Barker's argument that the function of the comic as a form of popular culture is 'conversational', that it actively fulfils needs for a reader fully participant in the conversation; furthermore, that their different types of conversation are dependent on the class location of the reader. Studying these 'first' comics is a particularly useful exercise, for since their readership is clearly adult and class-specific in these early years, the problems of analysing a medium with a predominantly juvenile readership on the dimension of class are to some extent overcome. By establishing the very differences between these first comics and the modern comic, we can get away from the dismissive approach to the comics and move towards the establishment of evolution and change in their history.

While broadly endorsing Barker's argument for the 'conversational' nature of the comics, the approach here diverges from his in two important respects: the overall theoretical framework and the notion that we can establish 'rules' for the analysis of comic strips and other types of popular narrative. Barker's book is a well argued polemic against the application of 'big concepts' like 'ideology' and 'hegemony' to products like comics in ways which contribute little to a practical understanding of the active process of reading. This is a fair criticism of the ways in which such concepts have been used in

the past. However, the subtitle to his latest work is 'ideology, power and the critics', and while he certainly maps the ways in which comics are inextricably linked to shifting inter-generational conflicts in the twentieth century, his framework, based on Volosinov and Propp, is unequal to the problem of situating the comics within the context of shifting class/ power relations in modern history. It is true, as he points out, that we need to look at the

'determinate production histories [of form in the comics as 'cultural object[s]'; that t]hese histories summarise the interactions of producers (their purposes, institutional structures, external constraints, relations with creators, writers, artists etc.), their audiences (traditions of reading, definitions of the medium, etc.) through which the form is produced and reproduced' [44].

It is also true that we must examine 'the kind of proposal for an answering role (how readers should orient themselves to the form) offered in the cultural object's whole presentational process' [45]. These are the most important of his many innovative contributions to the understanding of the comics. However, in order to understand comics in relation to historically changing class/ power relations, we must develop a different strategy. To pursue this project, we must develop a theoretical framework based on the concept of 'hegemony'. This is one of those 'big' concepts that Barker eschews, but it is possible to develop this concept into a framework which incorporates both an empirical analysis of such hitherto neglected aspects of the comics as 'cultural objects' and the intertwining of their historical development with broader historical changes in class relations.

Chapters Two and Three will explore in much greater detail the logic by which we can arrive at this proposition, but for the purposes of this introduction, we will firstly review briefly some of the problems associated with understanding cultural production in the late nineteenth century and make a brief declaration of how this concept can be integrated with these aspects of Barker's approach.

#### 'COMIC CUTS': the 'first' comic

The term 'first' comic is extremely problematic. If the contemporary comic is, for the most part, a collection of one or more comic strips, with a few minor non-pictorial elements, then by this definition the first comics did not really emerge until the 1950s. However, humorous and non-humorous pictorial narratives had been appearing in various humorous magazine titles from the early nineteenth century (see Chapter Four). Deciding what exactly were the first comics is a fairly arbitrary task.

For our purposes here, we will deem the 'first' comics to be those titles which introduced regular comic strips and characters, and in which those strips were to become the primary component. That function can be judged by the position of these strips on the front and back pages of these titles. By this definition, the first such titles were Alfred Harmsworth's Comic Cuts (1890), Illustrated Chips (1890) and The Funny Wonder (1892). None of them used regular strips and characters from the outset, but by the mid-1890s the comic strip was clearly their dominant element.

These comics are important, not only to the history of the

modern comic, but also in that they were part of a new kind of publishing. Their publisher, Harmsworth, was one of an emerging generation of entrepreneurial figures in the cheap press of the late nineteenth century. The comics marked Harmsworth's first venture into the halfpenny press, the lowest possible price level. For contemporary middle class observers also, it was a move to the lowest common denominator of popular taste. The comics were part of the development of what Matthew Arnold called 'new journalism' [46]. Like many contemporaries Arnold linked the phenomenon to the electoral Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, and to the 1870 Elementary Education Act [47] which, he claimed, had generated a barely literate, uncritical, but enfranchised 'mass' reading public. The 'new' voters and 'new' readers were one and the same, 'not ... reasonable persons who think fairly and seriously', but the potential victims of a correspondingly 'new' journalism, with all its 'feather-brained' assertions [48]. The problem was seen as the presentation of fragments of 'information' rather than 'knowledge', a progressive erosion of whatever critical faculties the reader might possess. The arrival of Harmsworth's Daily Mail in 1896, with its visual style of short paragraphs and its lightweight commentary, seemed to mark the transition to a completely new kind of publishing. With their promise of 'ONE HUNDRED LAUGHS FOR ONE HALFPENNY' displayed across the front cover, the Harmsworth comics seem, in retrospect, a perfectly straightforward reflection of a general pattern.

The notion of something approaching a revolution in

periodical publishing persisted well into the twentieth century [49]. However, what seemed a dramatic new development had, in reality, a much longer history. Williams (1962) has pointed out that the 1870 Act was by no means a decisive moment in the development of 'mass' literacy, that existing literacy rates were far higher before 1870 than is generally thought [50]. Moreover, Williams identifies a more fundamental current of change in periodical publishing through the 1830s and 1840s, a process which could broadly be described as one of depoliticisation and commercialisation [51].

In Williams' analysis, Harmsworth's influence was more to do with changing the economic basis for periodical publishing than with 'creating' the 'popular' press. For example there were, on inspection, more similarities than discontinuities between Harmsworth's Daily Mail and The Times. The principal difference lay in the stricter regulation of format and the formulae of individual features. This was a means of cultivating a regular readership conditioned to the same features in the same place daily or weekly. The project was tied to the strategy of hiring full-time advertising managers and publishing sales figures, to make advertising revenue the basis of the newspaper's or magazine's survival [52].

This innovation has its roots in the removal of the advertisement duty in 1853, a legislative move which had a dramatic impact on the volume and range of periodical advertising. Harmsworth went a step further by gearing the formularisation of existing journalistic and fictional formulae in his newspapers and magazines specifically to the optimisation

of advertising revenue. The comics, along with Harmsworth's other titles, can therefore be seen both as a collective index to a broadening range of commodities, pitched now at a 'mass market'; and a new kind of publishing commodity themselves, aimed at their own constructed ideal of a faceless, equalised 'mass' readership, which they sold to advertisers.

James Curran (1978) supports this thesis. He argues, moreover, that the rising costs of new technology like the printing presses, new rotary machines and the linotype machine for typesetting limited the numbers capable of putting together large amounts of capital investment. This further extended the advantage of the bigger publishers. The falling prices for periodicals raised the level of circulation necessary to break even. The new publishing entrepreneurs of the '80s and '90s were, therefore, a small elite. Through their growing importance, meanwhile, advertisers were able to determine the success or failure of a publication, and there is evidence of active discrimination by advertisers and agencies against radical papers [53]. He argues that these economic factors conditioned a new brand of journalism which developed a fabricated concept of the 'national interest' and a stress on individualism as opposed to a radical class solidarity and internationalism [54]. Far from the contemporary fears of democratisation among the middle class commentators, Curran sees this new form of publishing, freed from direct legislative interference in the late nineteenth century, as an 'agency of social control'.

This notion, however, is extremely contentious. While it is



generally agreed that that period from the 1880s saw a significant change in the nature of forms of popular entertainment [55], it is by no means certain as to whether this can be characterised as a medium of 'social control' at all. Indeed the understanding of the precise nature of the orientation of 'popular' reading in this period to its consumers and to those in power is still the most serious problem facing 'cultural studies' at this time. It is a problem which is partly to do with the inadequate historical dimension to existing approaches to popular culture, and which is embedded in a long-running historiographical debate in approaches to 'social history'.

In proposing a study of these early comics, therefore, we are not only attempting to throw some light on the history of the comic, but we are entering a theoretical debate about the history of popular culture, and this is entirely appropriate. The domination of studies of comics by a dismissive journalistic stance reflects a persistent reluctance in cultural studies in Britain to engage with such forms of popular amusement. The project to examine how formulae in comics develop, how they relate to specific social groups, must necessarily be a case study in how the formulae of popular culture, a much broader phenomenon, are related to specific groups. That is, it can allow us to go beyond the notion of an unchanging 'popular', to see this notion as an historically shifting concept, ever-changing in terms of what it includes and excludes, and in how it is oriented to the maintenance of power. The second, and related function of this thesis, then, is to conduct a case study in the investigation of 'popular culture'.

'Hegemony' and 'Common Sense'

The framework on which this study will be based is a derivation of the writings of Antonio Gramsci. In proposing this Gramscian framework we are drawing on recent developments in cultural historiography. This framework can allow both for the understanding of the 'conversational' role of the comics, its part in a dialogue with the reader, and its orientation to the maintenance of power in class relations in capitalist society.

Essentially, Gramsci was innovatory in two respects: his reworking of the marxist concepts of 'hegemony' and of 'common sense'. 'Hegemony', for Gramsci, is the intellectual and political leadership of the dominant class in society. He argued that this leadership was based on a combination of 'coercion' and 'consent'. 'Common sense' encompasses the means by which the non-'intellectual' classes make sense of the world and of their locations within it. Never a coherently structured 'conception of the world', unlike 'philosophy', 'common sense' is the uneven mix of ideologies drawn from the dominant classes, together with older or oppositional ideologies which cohere to generate an internally contradictory 'folklore of philosophy'. There are, therefore, different inflections of 'common sense' dependent on different class positions.

By proposing that everyone is a 'philosopher', Gramsci tried to establish how 'popular' interpretation of reality stood in relation to the ideologies and to the 'hegemony' of the dominant class, bourgeois ideology in capitalist society. 'Common sense' is no lower level version of bourgeois ideology,

though it contributes, by its contradictory absorption of aspects of that ideology, to the maintenance of hegemony. It can represent, imperfectly, the interests of the working class, and Marxism must therefore begin as a critique of common sense. Gramsci argued, moreover, that the basis for hegemony and the nature of common sense were subject to historical change. Common sense is constantly transformed and reshaped. Hegemony is never completely achieved, it is permanently under threat from oppositional ideologies and from the deeply sedimented contradictory elements in common sense. That is, hegemony is never equivalent to 'social control'.

In this thesis it is argued that the various activities of the Victorian bourgeoisie in staking its claim for economic, political and cultural leadership in Britain were characterised by a progressive coherence. In the spheres of work and leisure, and principally through the medium of political reform, we can perceive a gradual convergence in strategies for social dominance which could be characterised as a project for hegemony. This is not to equate strategies with the exercise of social control, for there is ample evidence (see Chapter Three) that the primarily institutional means by which these strategies were advanced were met with resistance from those social factions which these institutions were designed to control. It was nevertheless a recognisable project refracted through discourses in Parliament, in the review journals, the more popular middle class magazines, and in the rhetoric of the institutional patrons. Now in gauging the position of products like comics in relation to this process, it is simply inappropriate to deem their brand of would-be

populist politics, the cement which holds them together, to be a means of 'social control'. By contrast, it is argued here that they can be read as a form of negotiation of the contemporary bourgeois strategies for political ascendancy in terms of the 'common sense' world-view of their readership. They are a reworking both of the bourgeois ideological formulations of the time, and of 'common sense' understandings of those formulations, a reworking in which the contradictions undercurrent to both are inherent in every element. Moreover, this 'common sense' understanding is class- and historically specific to the 'lower middle class' of the 1890s. This sets the comics apart from the popular Sunday newspapers of the nineteenth century whose readership was predominantly working class. It separates them also from the daily newspapers whose readerships were more diverse. The proposition that this was the case has little empirical evidence from contemporary market research, for there were no such projects in operation. It is based partly on evidence of reader response in correspondence and beyond this, it is based (to use Barker's term) on the 'kind of proposal for an answering role' offered implicitly throughout the text of the comics. It is a class-specific invitation. That the comics are historically specific is argued through an analysis of the ways in which their formal and thematic developments are related to the shifts in the social location of this projected class readership as conditioned by political events in the 1890s. This proposition requires an examination, as far as possible given the lack of available details, of the production history behind the

comics at this time, coupled with a close empirical investigation of the progression of the comics through the '90s.

Essentially, then, this is an argument for the incorporation of the central tenet of Barker's approach, that cultural products maintain a conversational relationship with their readers, with a framework that tries to situate them among relations of class. This is the principal way in which the direction of the thesis diverges from Barker's approach.

The other respect in which we disagree with Barker is in the question of 'rules' for analysing comic strips. Barker argues that there has been a good deal of subjectivity involved in the analysis of comics in the past. This is true. However, whether such subjectivity can ever be eliminated, as he argues, is a contentious issue. It will become evident here that most of the components in the early comics, including the strips, can actually be read as having ambiguous meanings, in some cases they can be legitimately interpreted in diametrically opposed ways. This, it is maintained, is precisely because those ambiguities were there. Identifying a class-specific readership or digging into the production background of the comics cannot eliminate this fact. The reason why they were there is that they encapsulated some of the contradictory aspects of the attitudes of the comics' class-specific readership to authority and to those who might be considered inferiors. Moreover, as is argued here, it is not possible to escape completely the charge of subjectivity in analysis, and it is best to admit this from the outset. The use of a concept like 'hegemony' is a choice based on a political interpretation of history as much as by empirical

evidence. Barker's framework is based to an extent on a partisan interpretation of the development of adult-child relations in the twentieth century. Despite his argument for 'rules' in interpretation, these comics can still be read in more than one way. Using the concept of hegemony, we allow for this kind of subjectivity and can try to contextualise the open-endedness, ambiguous or ambivalent nature of the contemporary comic in a network of class and power relations, in which those relations are negotiated variously by different social fractions.

In summary, then, the aims of this thesis are as follows:

1. to attempt to amend the failings of existing critical approaches to comics through a case study in writing the history of the comic;
2. to develop a theoretical framework for this exercise which can explain historical differences between comics or phases of a single title in terms of catering to the changing class-specific needs of the reader in negotiating his/her social location;
3. to examine a range of products which are an index not only to the tendencies in the history of the comic, but also to what have retrospectively been deemed 'popular cultural' objects, so that
4. we can gain an insight into the ways in which the term 'popular' has been manipulated by the 'culture industry' to sell consumers to advertisers and in politics in the pursuit and attainment of power. By examining how one kind of 'populism' was cultivated, we can begin to understand how

the connotations of this word are dependent on class and historical context. The establishment of historical differences in the uses of these concepts allows us to understand more fully the relationship between cultural objects and the maintenance of bourgeois hegemony over the past century. As the overwhelming success of the Thatcher government in the 1980s is being interpreted as stemming to a large extent from the manipulation of a particular brand of 'populism', it is important to understand the historical roots of the concept, and how it has been variously refracted in cultural products through history.

#### On the Methodology and Structure of the Thesis

At the core of the thesis is an empirical analysis of a sample of the three titles which have retrospectively been deemed the 'first' comics, over the period 1890-1902 - that is, Comic Cuts (1890-1953), Illustrated Chips (1890-1953) and The Funny Wonder (1892-1953). The sample consists of one randomly drawn issue per month from the comic's inception onwards. As has already been pointed out, from around 1893 we can perceive a very clear domination in the comics of the comic strip as their central component. It is necessary, therefore, to concentrate in those chapters which deal with the comics in the latter half of the 1890s on those comic strips on whose popularity, perpetuation and imitation the comics appear to have depended very strongly. Moreover, while each issue is randomly drawn, in cases where the issue contains a serialised narrative, or where a comic strip

story is carried over from one week to the next (an occasional occurrence) the story is traced through subsequent issue(s) in order to gain a real sense of its narrative integrity. Additionally, where there is a good deal of 'plugging' for a particular story or strip in issues immediately preceding its arrival (this is conducted largely through the editorial column), an examination of these elements is deemed essential to a thorough understanding of that story or strip.

This close empirical analysis of the dynamics within the comics is an attempt to analyse a conversational relationship with the reader. The thesis that it was, indeed, to a specifically 'lower middle class' readership that these comics appealed is supported by recourse to debates within social history and urban demographic studies on the increasing complexity of class relations at this time, and the virtual emergence, for the first time, of this 'class' as a recognisable social faction.

To understand fully the nature of the comics requires more than this, however. The miscellaneous contents of these titles focus a number of developments in different types of Victorian periodical publishing, and in order to appreciate these, we need to establish an overall picture of the trajectory of periodical publishing as a whole in this period, and of humorous periodicals in particular. This task will be preliminary to the analysis of the comics per se.

Here, then, is an initial overview of the structure of the



thesis.

Part I (Chapters Two and Three) is a critique of existing theoretical approaches to popular culture and specifically their understandings of the new forms of popular entertainment which appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter Two examines the shortcomings in the dominant and broadly oppositional paradigms in 'cultural studies' over the last thirty years: 'culturalism' and 'structuralism'. Chapter Three looks at the problems in understanding the evolution of 'popular' culture at the end of the nineteenth century and how they have been dealt with by the related but differently inflected approaches of 'social', 'cultural' and 'leisure' historians. Finally the Gramscian framework for historical analysis is elaborated as a solution to the shortcomings in these approaches and as the basis for this thesis.

Parts Two (Chapters Four, Five and Six), Three (Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine) and Four (Chapters Ten, Eleven and Twelve) trace the historical precursors to and evolution of the comic strips through the nineteenth century. To some extent, this evolution has been simplified by identifying three phases of development. However, the empirical evidence of the Victorian periodical press broadly supports this periodisation, and these phases are related to the arguments of social historians in plotting the narrative of change in social relations in Britain through the nineteenth century.

Chapter Four examines the first 'phase' in this development. It is argued that since the first recognisable 'comics' were actually miscellanies of different types of visual and verbal textual

elements, it is appropriate to seek their roots in the origins of the Victorian periodical press as a whole. We identify a period of rapid change and expansion in the late 1830s and 1840s in the publication of those titles which were to be the precursors to these elements. This change can be characterised broadly as a move from overtly politicised types of periodical in the 1830s to a new range of titles which professed no political ideology, and which expressed a distinctly 'family' orientation. This transformation is linked to the beginning of a new period of political reform and attempts at social amelioration in the early 1840s, the inception of a concept of 'moralised capitalism'.

Chapters Five and Six explore the second phase in this development through the emergence of new kinds of humorous periodical from the 1860s onwards as typified by Judy (1867) and Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday (1884). These titles were continuous with the new direction in periodical production in their 'family' orientation and in their treatment of politics in a playful way, if they dealt with the subject at all. They also marked the inception of a new era in periodical production through their common feature of a single cartoon character, Ally Sloper. This character was quite unique in that, unlike occasional figures in other humorous magazines, his appearances were regular, and he was not identifiable with any single social type. Indeed his persona was a mixture of aspects of different social types and his function as such was to offend no-one. Ally Sloper promised limitless improvements in the readers' social status through social reform, and in particular the apparent extensions in the range of organised leisure pursuits available. He acted as an

index to the commoditisation of leisure, and the context of his publication, Judy and especially the Half-Holiday, were among the new leisure commodities.

However, while we argue for the interconnection of these two phases in the development of periodical production with ideologies of social reform, they are not seen as a direct reflection of the political promises of Whigs and Tories. Rather, they are a negotiation of those promises for their readers, in which the inherent contradictions in the promises are sublimated within their texts. Specifically, we can see a continuity in that the promise of democracy - the equalisation and inclusion of the journal's readership - is actually based on the exclusion of those classes who are deemed unworthy of a place in this democracy: the 'low-lives', the 'semi-criminals', the tramps, beggars etc. Moreover, in Judy and the Half-Holiday, which ostensibly introduced a new kind of 'mass appeal' irrespective of class and politics, we can see that their appeal is targetted specifically at those class fractions which benefited most from the social reforms of the late nineteenth century, the 'lower middle' and 'skilled working' classes. The combination of democratic inclusion dependent on the exclusion of the lowest classes expresses the hopes for self-improvement and the fears of being swamped from below which characterised these fractions at that time.

In identifying these phases in the development of Victorian periodical publishing in general, and of humourous weeklies in particular, we are applying the Gramscian framework. These phases

mark a shift in the nature of the negotiation of bourgeois hegemony in Victorian Britain, for the grounds on which that hegemony was based shifted radically from the middle decades of the century onwards. The tensions running through that hegemony were refracted through the various kinds of periodical.

Having thus established the backdrop to the emergence of the 'comics' in the 1890s, in Parts Three and Four we examine the third phase in this development of Victorian humorous publishing, the comics themselves. These sections are the empirically based heart of the thesis.

Part Three looks at the miscellaneous structure of the comics in the early 1890s. These are seen to mark a further development in the move to a populist, 'mass' entertainment, but that even more so than the Half-Holiday they encapsulate the hopes and fears of the 'lower middle class', in the social conditions of the 1890s more than the 1880s. Chapter Seven deals with the terms of their editorial address. Chapters Eight and Nine analyse the miscellaneity of the comic as an integral whole which maintains a 'conversational' relationship with the reader surrounding his/her lower middle class social location. All of the textual elements of the comics in these years show a concern with the reassurance of the reader's status by eliminating the very lowest social fractions from the privilege of normal social participation.

Part Four traces the development of the first regular comic strips. Chapter Ten looks at some initial, failed efforts at pictorial narrative. Chapter Eleven examines those figures which were to become the most successful and long-lived comic strip

characters, a pair of tramps. It is argued that in the adventures of these characters, we can see a continuation in the concerns about the elimination of 'low-lives' from what was being seen increasingly as a social organism. And yet the tramps also hold out the promise of a sort of symbolic escape from the constraints of codified social behaviour within which their lower middle class readership were living and working. The most significant episodes in these adventures were during the Boer War (1899-1901). It was during these years that the combination of apparent security and the undercurrent threat of crisis to a British economy dependent on the empire was exposed by a protracted and difficult war. It was simultaneously refracted in the tramps' efforts to fight the Boers in the comic strips. The argument, therefore, is that the development of formulae in the comic - the strips - is quite specific to the social tensions, and to the particular needs of the lower middle class in negotiating the shifting ground for bourgeois hegemony at the end of the century.

Chapter Twelve looks towards the emergence of a new kind of comic strip (1902-1905), in which the figures are not so easily recognisable as social types and the backdrops do not readily correspond to any social reality. This is the early modern comic strip. It is maintained that in order to understand these strips we need to trace their roots to the continuity in the Victorian humorous and related periodicals in their concern with the questions of democracy, who was to be included and who was to be excluded; and to the progressive move away from the engagement

with specific social issues and types towards the generation of formulae, but formulae in which real social tensions are embedded.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, a more detailed case is made for the relevance of this project to the understanding of the history of the comic in particular and the formulaic nature of forms of popular culture in general.

In addition, I draw attention to the needs to understand the terms 'popular' and 'populism' through history in all their complexity.

## CHAPTER ONE - NOTES

1. To begin with, a fundamental distinction must be made between comic strips and comic books. Comic strips, as occasional or regular features tucked away on the inside pages of newspapers or magazines, are sequences of pictures of up to no more than a page in length. The sequence may lead to a moral resolution, or in serial form, to unresolved weekly climaxes. Newspaper strips are situated among miscellaneous, usually unconnected items, which nevertheless affect the inherent meaning of the strips by determining when, where, and among what material they are read. Comic books are regular periodicals which consist primarily of one or more comic strips, from a few frames to several pages in duration. They may also include editor's address, letters pages, jokes pages, non-pictorial feature articles and stories, puzzles, competitions, free gifts and advertisements. Together they constitute a single, packaged commodity calculated to target specific readerships. The term 'comic', as used here, will always refer to this recognisable, generic periodical form, the comic book. The distinction is simple enough, but an important one nonetheless.
2. 'The Day Comics Grew Up', a Signals documentary for Channel 4, broadcast on 18th January 1989.
3. Marcus Free, 'Ideology and the Boys' Comic' - Dissertation, BA Communication Studies, NIHE Dublin, 1985.
4. George Orwell, 'Boys' Weeklies', (1983) Collected Essays, Vol II.
5. Ibid., p.518.
6. Ibid., p.517.
7. Ibid., p.514.
8. Kevin Carpenter (1983), Penny Dreadfuls and Comics, p.58.
9. For example, A. Roberts, 'What Bunty does at school', Times Educational Supplement, Aug. 22, 1980; N. Johnson, 'What do children learn from war comics?', New Society, July 7, 1966; S. Dunne, 'Biff! Bam!! Phew!!!', The Sunday Press, July 8, 1985.
10. Jean Laishley, 'Can comics join the multi-racial society?' Times Educational Supplement, Nov. 24, 1972.
11. John Heeley, 'Boys Comics: Violence Rules', The Sunday Times, Feb. 27, 1983.
12. Cyril Hughes, 'The war game', Humanist, Vol. 83, May 1968.
13. Polly Toynbee (no title), The Guardian, Oct. 30, 1978.
14. Margarette Driscoll, 'Is YOUR daughter being brainwashed?', Daily Mirror, March 7, 1983.
15. Laishley (1972), op. cit.
16. Bob Dixon, 'Comics. More Eek! than Tee Hee', in his (1977), Catching them Young, Vol. 2, p.46.
17. Campbell, F. and Campbell, M., 'Comic Love', New Society, No. 14, Jan. 3, 1963, p.24.
18. David Shayer, 'Warlord: images for the seventies', Use of English, No. 27, Aut. 1975.

19. Julie Burchill, 'Prole Junkies', New Society, Vol. 70, No. 1147, Dec. 13, 1984, p.415.
20. Heeley (1983), op. cit.
21. George Armstrong, letter to the Sunday Times in reply to Heeley (1983) - The Sunday Times, Mar. 6, 1983.
22. Ibid.
23. Without the original strips it is hard to judge such opposing opinions. However, it is pointed out by another correspondent to the Sunday Times that the depiction of the 'Human League' is uniformly negative, it is presented as an extremist group which the strip's hero, 'Robo-hunter' Sam Slade, is attempting to stop. It seems possible that such a scenario is in fact a way of dealing with the psychology of racism, a subject 2000AD has handled intelligently in the past. Judge Dredd's struggles against futuristic cowboys farming intelligent alien life, for example, was a clever and worthy extension of the television serial Roots in the late 1970s (2000AD, 'Programmes' (Numbers) 69-71, June 17th-July 1st, 1978).
24. Roberts (1980), op. cit.
25. Connie Alderson, 'Love Comics', New Society, Mar. 30, 1967, p.454.
26. Dixon (1977), op. cit., p.52.
27. Angela McRobbie, 'Jackie: an ideology of adolescent femininity', CCCS Occasional Paper, 1975 - reproduced in B. Waites, T. Bennett, G. Martin (1982) Popular Culture: Past and Present.
28. Ibid., p.265.
29. Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman (1973) How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic (see below, Note 43).
30. I owe this information to Martin Barker, who has been researching the developments in the British comics for some years (see below). This picture is born out by interviews with several of these figures in the Signals documentary (Note 2) and in a recent issue of The Comics Journal (Issue no.122).
31. Martin Barker (1984), A Haunt of Fears: the Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign and (1989) Comics: Ideology, Power & the Critics.
32. Fredric Wertham (1954), Seduction of the Innocent.
33. See, for example, his article 'Comics' in School Librarian, 1953.
34. A concept which, as Barker points out in Comics (1989), pp. 92-116, has a long history. See the brief discussion of the 'penny dreadful' campaign in the nineteenth century in Chapter Four, below.

Barker also reveals that some of the campaign's key orchestrators were actually members of the British Communist Party. This is indicative of the inability of the British Left, throughout its history, to come to terms with 'mass' or 'popular' cultural production. It led to the absurd situation whereby leading CP member Sam Aaronovitch could cite great bastions of 'high' culture in a defensive reaction to the 'threats' of American 'mass culture' - see



- (1984), op. cit., p.21 (also below, Chapter Two).
35. 'The Orphan', from A Haunt of Fear No.1, 1954. Reproduced in Barker (1984), op. cit., pp.98-105.
  36. Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Cow pie and all that', in Paul Harris (ed. 1977) in The DC Thomson Bumper Fun Book.
  37. Martin Barker, 'Dennis rules OK! Gnashee!', New Society, 13 November, 1980. Nicholas Tucker ('Comics', in (also ed.) Suitable for Children, p. 83) and Ray Brown ('An Analysis of Comics in Britain and their Possible Contribution to a Visual Culture', in Alphons Silbermann and H.D. Dyroff (1986 eds.) Comics and Visual Culture), also express sympathetic attitudes to the 'thick ear trade' end of the market. Tucker sees the characteristically 'ugly, lazy, badly dressed and greedy' figures as 'a welcome balance to the idealised characters [of] conventional literature for children' (p.84). Brown, like Barker, stresses the frequently honourable but thwarted intentions of the characters: Dirty Dick actually tries to keep clean, etc. (p.92).
  38. Barker (1989), op. cit., Chapters Two and Three.
  39. Vladimir Propp, 'The Structural and Historical Study of the Wondertale', in (1984) Theory and History of Folklore, trans. Ariadna and Richard Martin (ed. Anatoly Liberman); Vladimir Volosinov (1973), Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik.
  40. Barker (1989), op. cit., p.129.
  41. Ibid., p.273.
  42. Ibid., Chapter 10, 'The trouble with Dad: Bunty, Tracy, and fantasy'.
  43. Ibid., Chapter 13, 'Deconstructing Donald'. Mattelart's and Dorfman's approach was a derivation of classic Frankfurt School 'critical theory'. Their opening 'apology for duckology' (1973, op. cit., p.25) echoes Horkheimer's and Adorno's apology for taking the 'culture industry ... more seriously than it would seem to deserve' (M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno (1972), Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Curry, p.xvi). As P.J. Wilson has argued, the academic rhetoric of their introduction, calculated as a pre-emptive strike at anticipated criticism from Chile's right-wing press, lends it an over-assertive tone which unidimensionalises the comics and their reception ('Historietas and Fotonovelas: The Nature and Role of the Mexican Comic', M. Phil. thesis, St. Peter's College, Oxford, 1985, p.35). Cultural imperialism is seen to work in one way only, and their examples, likewise, can have just one interpretation. In addition to Barker's counter-argument, Wilson points out that this book is wrongly accepted as the authoritative work on the imperialism of imported cheap American literature in Latin America, since in Mexico, at any rate, the domestic product consistently outsells U.S. imports (p.26). We could also identify a certain irony in such claims for the effects of the comics, given that Allende's 'Popular Unity' party was democratically elected to government.

Barker's argument for studying the historical and

- geographical specificity of the comic's readerships is paralleled, to an extent, by Jean Franco's comparison of Harlequin Romances and Mexican Popular Narrative', in Tania Modleski (1986 ed.) Studies in Entertainment); and by Thomas Andrae ('From Menace to Messiah: The History and Historicity of Superman', in Donald Lazere (ed. 1987) American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives) who sees the changing roles of Superman through the 1940s as politically mediated by the rise and fall of Roosevelt's 'New Deal' politics.
44. Barker (1989), op. cit., p.275.
  45. Ibid.
  46. Matthew Arnold, 'Up to Easter', Nineteenth Century, XXI, 1887.
  47. The electoral franchise was extended to skilled male urban workers in the 1867 Second Reform Act and to male rural workers in the Third Reform Act of 1884. It meant that about 60% of the male adult population had the vote. Like-minded critics included E. Dicey, 'Journalism New and Old', Fortnightly Review, XXXXII, 1905 and J. Haslam (1906) The Press and the People. Novelist George Gissing captured the essence of intellectual middle class fears of the capital to be made from the reader's childish qualities. In New Grub Street (1887 (1891)) the character Whelpdale proposes and succeeds in transforming the fortunes of the magazine Chat by renaming it Chit-Chat, limiting articles to two inches, and aiming for the 'Board School' generation of the 'quarter-educated ... the young men and women who can just read, but are incapable of sustained attention', p.496. W.L. George creates a similar picture in his (1920), Caliban, a clearly intended fictionalised biography of Harmsworth. George was a bitter ex-employee.
  48. Arnold (1887), op. cit., p.638.
  49. Proponents of the notion of the 1870 Education Act as the key moment in the emergence of 'mass' literacy and a corresponding range of products have included F. Williams (1957), Dangerous Estate and H. Herd (1952), The March of Journalism.
  50. Williams gives the statistic that 'there were enough literate adults in Britain in 1850 to buy more than the total copies of the Daily Mirror now sold each day' - The Long Revolution (1984 (1962)), p.200. Lawrence Stone puts the estimated literacy rate for the male population of England and Wales in 1840 at 66% - 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', Past and Present, No. 42, Feb. 1969, pp.120-121. This is supported by Michael Sanderson, despite qualifications for regional variations - (1983) Education, Economic Change and Society in England 1780-1870, p.13.
  51. Williams (1984), op. cit., pp.177-184.
  52. Ibid., p.224.
  53. James Curran, 'The press as an agency of social control: an historical perspective', in Boyce, G., Curran, J., and Wingate, P. (eds., 1978), Newspaper History from the 17th Century to the Present Day, pp.68-69.
  54. Ibid., p.72.
  55. See Stuart Hall, 'Notes on deconstructing the popular', in

Raphael Samuel (1981 ed.) People's History and Socialist Theory.

## PART I

In Chapters Two and Three I make a case for using a derivation of the Gramscian framework for analysing the class- and historical specificity of the comics in the 1890s.

Chapter Two examines the principal schools of thought in approaches to culture in Britain over the last thirty years - 'culturalism' and 'structuralism' - in terms of their differently founded inadequacies in dealing with the historical dimension to popular culture.

Chapter Three looks at the particular historiographical dilemmas in understanding the development of popular culture in the nineteenth century. I review some recent, innovatory approaches to the history of 'leisure' and argue for the application of the emerging theoretical paradigm to the understanding of the comics as part of the emergent 'leisure industry' at the end of the nineteenth century. Finally I argue for a peculiarly Gramscian formulation of this paradigm.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THEORY AND POPULAR CULTURE: A PROBLEM OF PERIODISATION

Over the past thirty years in Britain two opposed schools of thought have vied to dominate the field of 'popular' cultural theory. These two schools can be characterised as having either a 'structuralist' or a 'culturalist' trajectory.

The principal currents in cultural theory up to the 1950s were generally concerned at the absence of a genuinely 'popular' culture within capitalist social relations. 'Popular' could mean different things, depending on the stance of the commentator. On the one hand, there was an Arnoldist exaltation of 'high' culture combined with horror at the reader's apparent inability to resist new forms of American-inspired cultural trash [1]. Arnold's solution in the 1870s was the cultivation of a 'popular' appreciation of this 'high' culture. In the 1930s and '40s T.S. Eliot's and F.R. Leavis' opposition to the dehumanising homogeneous products of industrialised society generated an alternative vision of 'popular' culture which was actually an idealised and romanticised version of 'pre-industrial' organic rural communities [2].

On the left there was a degree of pessimism at the weakness of working class resistance to the imposition of bourgeois cultural forms, a pessimism which stretched back to Tressell, Masterman and Roberts at the turn of the century, and more

recently to Orwell himself in the 1930s and '40s [3]. British Marxist writing on areas outside of economics per se was dominated from the late 1940s on by the British Communist Party Historians Group, set up by the economist Maurice Dobb. Their interest in culture stemmed, as their name implies, from an investigation of the past rather than with any contemporary analysis [4]. It was concerned with reinforcing a rigid orthodoxy which would have made unfettered analysis of the present fall foul of a need to hold to a rigid political 'line'. As Barker shows in the case of the 'horror comics', the potential distortion through this cultural outlook was made worse by a tendency to construe all contemporary questions in the context of the cold war - particularly in terms of trying to separate Britain from its alliance with the US. However, within the historians group such luminaries as Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and others began to influence others who were starting to write on aspects of specifically contemporary culture.

This movement paralleled a similar development in the sphere of 'cultural' theory per se, a movement led by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. These figures did not self-consciously operate within any coherent framework, but their work has been characterised collectively by retrospective critics as 'the moment of 'culture'' [5] or 'culturalism'[6]. The essence of the project, summed up by Thompson, was the rescue of an active, politicised and consciously embryonic working class, defiant within capitalist society, from 'the enormous condescension of

posterity' [7]. The defiance of the imposition of capitalist work relations was both 'economically' and 'culturally' manifested. Above all, the basis for analysis was the direct records of those classes systematically omitted from official histories, the records of 'experience'. This analysis militated against the notion of the absorption of imposed ideologies by working class readers and audiences. Rather, 'popular' or 'mass' entertainments were mediated by a collective, peculiarly working class and positive identity.

In the 1960s, however, this sort of approach came under attack from the self-proclaimed 'new Left'. Perry Anderson [8] made the first assault on Thompson's basic premise of a nascent working class in the early nineteenth century increasingly politicised by the experience of economic conditions. Anderson resurrects the issue of the failure of the Left in Britain as an unanswered historiographical dilemma. Plotting Thompson on a continuum with a 'blanketing English fog' [9] of centuries of empiricism which have eliminated the visibility of historical reality, Anderson rejects the notion that a coherent working class movement ever emerged at all in the nineteenth century. He sees this failure as a function of the failure of the middle classes to establish their own identity as the 'capitalist' class, apart from a residual paternalistic social order. A consequently 'supine bourgeoisie' conditioned a 'subordinate proletariat'.

The ensuing exchanges between Thompson and Anderson evolved into a debate over the elaboration of theory for historical explanation. Posited on the direct record of 'experience' as the

basis for narrativised history, Thompson's anti-theoretical position is attacked by Richard Johnson as a form of 'socialist humanist history' which vehemently denies the application of theory while actually working within the theoretical position of historiographical realism, the ability of the past to speak for itself [10]. Gareth Stedman Jones explains that 'history is an entirely intellectual operation that takes place in the present and in the head' [11]. Thompson's narrative of working class resistance to the onset of capitalism, with climactic highlights and troughs, is set in opposition to a non-evolutionary picture of continuity in the failures of bourgeoisie and proletariat alike to emerge as the oppositional forces under capitalism. Consequently, the trajectory in cultural understanding initiated by Anderson stresses the inability of the working class reader to resist ideologies imposed from above in terms of any collective identity. It was closely related to the 'structuralist' approach to culture which reached a peak of influence in the 1970s. In order to gain a theoretical perspective on the history of the comic, we need to deal, in turn, with the basic tenets of each approach with regard to 'popular' entertainments.

#### 'Culturalism' and 'Popular' Entertainments

The 'culturalist' approach is shot through with the problem of relating forms of 'popular' reading to the evolution of 'class' and 'cultural' identities. Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy (1957), one of the earliest of these works, illustrates the problems well.



Hoggart attempted, with a revelatory and argumentative air, to prove the existence of a vibrant, 'lived' urban working class culture founded on a 'muscular tradition of speech' [12], the communality of neighbourhood [13], a fiercely exclusive self-identity [14], a hedonistic rejection of middle class variants of deferred gratification and a cultivated respectability in the ever-virginal front room and 'Sunday best' clothes. And having established the authenticity of this world, he tried to gradate popular magazines according to their veracity in reflecting the opinions and activities of 'ordinary lives'. In these aims, Hoggart represents a considerable advance on various condemnations of such magazines as alienating impositions on the proletarian victims of a dehumanising industrial society.

However, his distinctions between the 'true-to-life' magazines and those which work through the sensationalist manipulation of the reader by 'endless inflation and distortion of angle' [15] are always somewhat arbitrary.

His reconstruction of 'working class' life is achieved largely through the record of personal olfactory and tactile sensations. It becomes more real by his own recollection of the sound, feel and especially the smells: 'the pervasive aura of urine - dog, cat, and human' [16]. This subjectivity carries through to the analysis of the magazines. When he cites some of the older women's magazines as 'still have[ing] a felt sense of the texture of life in the group they cater for' [17], this status is as much to do with their aged feel and smell as the contents: they

'can often be recognized by their paper, a roughly textured newsprint which tends to have a smell - strongly evocative to me now, because it is also that of the old boys' magazines and comics - of something slightly damp and fungoid' [18].

Certain magazines are woven into its fabric by virtue of age, feel and smell while others are alien, manipulative threats - they are smooth, odourless and 'new'. The generalisation from subjective physical sensation obfuscates historical understanding both of the culture and of its reading matter. This is a reconstructed 'traditional' world where exact origins are obscure.

Furthermore, Hoggart's periodisation is distinctly problematic. Peg's Paper, Secrets and other women's magazines, about twenty years extinct, are grouped with music-hall performer Marie Lloyd from the 1890s, the Sweeney Todd serial (from 1850 in its earliest form), and the Sunday newspaper, News of the World, from the 1840s. These are held in opposition to the 'new', post-war titles, as though they were not subject in any degree to similar commercial influences or pressures, and as though the social conditions or class relations surrounding their various origins were identical. In a defensive reaction to elitist notions of 'culture' and elitist literary criticism, Hoggart ironically homogenises those titles he defends, as he likewise groups the object of his attack as one, without contextualising them in any social-structural or historical pattern. The former are part of a 'way of life', the latter a threat to induce 'a passive visual taking-on'.

Hoggart embodies a different problem to Thompson in the use

of 'experience' as the basis for analysis. Thompson weaves the records of others into an historical narrative. Hoggart expands his subjective observations into an historical continuity of working class 'traditions' and categorises the magazines according to a discontinuity of 'new' and 'old', which have no precise historical time spans and do not correspond to empirical evidence. 'Working class culture' is something unitary and coherent which stands apart from relationships of power and exploitation, and likewise, popular magazines are abstracted from any network of class and therefore power relations. Somewhat like Orwell's analysis of the 'boys' weeklies', certain of these magazines are seen as manipulated and manipulative media for the elite, but it is not clear how these manipulations are effected.

Raymond Williams' early work, by contrast, tackled both the broad issue of the definition of 'culture' and the tasks of analysing the trajectories of forms of 'popular' entertainments in terms of historically shifting social relations. Beginning, as with Hoggart, with the anti-elitist position that 'culture' must include the 'ordinary', Williams' analyses were much less subjective, and were elaborated into an explanatory framework of his 'The Long Revolution'. The press and popular literary forms are contextualised in a complex of political, economic, technological and institutional changes in industry, culture and democracy which together contributed to the 'growth of the society'.

For example, his analysis of the popular publishing boom in the 1840s links the 'commercial exploitation of culture' by speculators who had no direct literary input into their products,

with technological improvements to printing and a new distributive network in the railways. These provided the means for 'mass' production and distribution. A new climate of political reformism manifested in the factory legislation and 'enlightened public provision' of parks, museums etc, made the growing reading public more receptive to non-politicised forms of reading.

This is a history of the 'meanings' and 'ideals' of different classes working in tandem towards democratic progress. The political reforms and the emergence of a consciously apolitical, 'lighter' literature are class-mediated thus: 'the aristocratic ideals tempering the harshness of middle-class ideals at their worst; working-class ideals entering into a fruitful and decisive combination with middle class ideals at their best' [19].

Williams moved the culturalist trajectory in a more precisely historicist direction, but his framework of the 'long revolution' assumes, as with Hoggart, that class identities developed in the late nineteenth century as unitary entities, and that the social democratic process was a progressive negotiation of inter-class differences. This negotiation is, then, refracted through the various forms of popular reading.

All of these early 'culturalist' works are also characterised by an imprecision of analytical category. In Thompson and Williams, 'ideology', 'ideals', 'consciousness' and 'value systems' are variously used to describe the emerging cultural identities of the different classes, but because they

are not woven into a theoretical framework for the explication of class relations in the nineteenth century, their exact meanings are never clearly defined and they are variable in different contexts. Consequently, there is a degree of arbitrariness to the understanding of the 'ideologies' in forms of popular reading, and of how they are grounded in social relations.

What is at issue in the anti-culturalist arguments is the validity of this picture of coherent class identities, for it is predicated on an assumption of conscious class subjects fighting the causes of oppositional class interests, and these are expressed through directly conflicting 'ideologies' or 'values'. For Williams, popular reading was part of a process of the active negotiation of these 'ideologies' or 'values'. The anti-culturalist position attempted to minimise or eliminate human action and volition from class struggle, and in attempting to explain a continuous social stability from the nineteenth century it elaborated a theory of 'ideology' in which the concept ceased to be an expression of the interests of social classes or factions and became a legitimation of existing social relations which encompasses the entire social spectrum. The principal architect in this review of 'ideology' was French marxist Louis Althusser.

#### Structuralism and 'Ideology'

Althusser's reworking of the classic marxist base/superstructure model, like that of the British 'culturalists' in the '50s and '60s, was an effort to avoid variants of a crude economism. He elaborated a theory of knowledge and ideology posited on the

belief that ideology has real effects on the social world, as opposed to constituting a 'mirror world' of social relations. This move away from 'economism', however, works against every principle of the culturalist thesis. He rejects humanism as non-materialist idealism [20]; empiricism as a practical impossibility, by using Lacan's theory of the fragmented self to argue that 'experience' is invariably an artificial reconstruction, and therefore constitutes misrecognition of reality; finally, he dismisses the 'conception of historical time characterised by a homogeneous continuity' central to historicism [21]. 'Knowledge' is separated from 'object' and ideology, in appearance 'a body of ideas which stand in some relationship of adequacy to their objects' [22], in reality stands in a relationship of inadequacy. Terry Lovell summarises the position thus:

'Individuals ... do not make history. Subjects are merely the necessary "supports" for a world they had no hand in making. The social role of ideology is the constitution of subject-supports of the right kind, in the space allotted them in a pre-given structure of social relations' [23].

Althusser's anti-humanist and anti-historicist influence was not confined to the sphere of marxist historiography. His own analysis of mass communications reduces institutions of the mass media to 'ideological state apparatuses' [24]. And the development of his marxism ran in tandem with the emergence of structuralism as the dominant framework for media criticism. Within film theory structuralism identified the narrative form of the film itself as ideological. The 'discursive practices' of

'realist' films inscribe the viewer in a 'closed' text, so that recognition of truth is in fact misrecognition. The remedy, as proposed by critics like Wollen [25], is to draw attention to the film's 'signifying practices', the act of film-making must itself be an exercise in revealing the world behind the camera, and therefore must become an 'open', 'revolutionary' text.

However as Bill Nichols has argued [26], this emphasis on the digital aspect of visually communicative media is at the expense of their analogical functioning, ie. a universal grammatical structure is imposed on media where style is a determining and variable factor. The identification of perfectly coherent, ideologically structured forms is akin to Althusser's insistence on a static 'social structure' with well-oiled parts running in smooth symbiosis. As such it is an extension of a basically anti-marxist functionalism without any possibility of recognition of the contradictions in the social formation. As Terry Lovell argues, Althusserian-related analyses become the 'exclusive preserve of an intellectual and priveleged elite' [27].

While this is a fairly cursory overview of structuralist analyses, it is sufficient to make the following point. Culturalists may well have over-estimated the efficacy of self-conscious working class organisation, the degree to which a separate, positive 'working class culture' could emerge, and consequently confused the position of popular communicative forms with regard to that culture. However, structuralism's inscription of the producer and consumer within the 'text' is

anti-humanist and ahistorical. It climbs the intellectualised spiral of its own language in the search for signifiers in the commodity, but ultimately, as Lillian Robinson (1986) argues, it reveals its own 'consumerist obsession with the cultural artifacts themselves' [28]. Culturalism has a more variable vocabulary and has a more exploratory air than the arrogance of structuralism, but its insistence on the primacy of recorded experience makes for theoretical inadequacy [29].

The basic point is that the explication of historical trajectories for forms of popular reading is frustrated in both approaches. One lacks a framework for contextualising the evolution of popular literary forms in terms of shifting class/power relationships. The other assumes a static structure of class relations which is unproblematically legitimated in such forms. It is important to situate the difficulties in approaches to the comics within these broader theoretical problematics. The status of the comic as children's reading has to a large extent conditioned a range of simplistic studies, both the comics themselves and the inadequacies of these studies are indicative of the problems facing theoretical explanation and the failings of existing theories.

The central problem with these approaches is their inability to explain the transformations which took place in popular culture towards the end of the nineteenth century. Structuralism may eschew historical analysis, but its influence in the 1970s was surely based on Anderson's vision of 'supine bourgeoisie' and 'subordinate proletariat' in the nineteenth century. It has been shown that Hoggart's celebration of a 'traditional' working class



culture in the 1950s was in fact a celebration of features of working class life which only originated in the late nineteenth century. They were, moreover, features of an increasingly conservative working class [30]. Most of the magazines he praises for their 'down-to-earth', 'true-to-life' character have their roots in this period. Neither 'culturalism' nor 'structuralism' can explain the way that such titles relate to changes in class relations at this time, more precisely to the unanswered question of manipulation or 'social control'. For this reason I would see them as unequal to task of explaining the origins of the comics. In order to elaborate some framework for understanding these early comics we need to look more closely at the apparent conservatism of the working class in the late nineteenth century, the inability of the bourgeoisie to escape the residual influence of the aristocracy and how these relate to 'manipulation' in popular entertainments.

## CHAPTER TWO - NOTES

1. Matthew Arnold (1869), Culture and Anarchy - reprinted in P.G. Keating (ed., 1987), Matthew Arnold: Selected Prose, pp. 202-300.
2. F.R. Leavis (1930), Mass Capitalism and Minority Culture; T.S. Eliot (1948; rpt. 1962), Notes Towards a Definition of Culture.
3. Novelist Robert Tressell's (1914) The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists exemplified the pessimism of the left in the early twentieth century. Charles Masterman bemoaned the extensive working class support for the Boer War campaign in (1901), The Heart of the Empire - cited in Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of the Working-Class', Journal of Social History, Vol. 7, Summer 1974, p. 460.  

In the Depression of the 1930s, George Orwell claimed that 'during the past dozen years the English working class have grown servile with a horrifying rapidity' - (1987 (1937)), The Road to Wigan Pier, p. 111. 'Boys' Weeklies' was fairly typical of Orwell's and his predecessors' ambivalent attitudes to the working class subject - an admiration for the rich, long-established culture and an abhorrence of their susceptibility to manipulation. 'Boys' Weeklies' suggests that there is practically no resistance to, or mediation of such manipulation by the 'lived' culture of the reader.
4. See Perry Anderson (1983), In the Tracks of Historical Materialism, pp.24-25.
5. Richard Johnson's phrase, from 'Histories of Culture/Theories of Ideology: Notes on an Impasse', in Ideology and Cultural Production (ed. M. Barrett, P. Corrigan, A. Kulin and J. Wolff 1979), p.51.
6. Tony Bennett, among others, uses the phrase as a generic label for this movement in cultural theory - see Bennett, C. Mercer Woolacott (eds., 1986) Popular Culture and Social Relations.
7. E. P. Thompson (1963; rpt. 1980), The Making of the English Working Class 1890-1932, p.12.
8. Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', New Left Review, No. 23, 1964.
9. Ibid., p.31
10. Richard Johnson, 'Thompson, Genovese and Socialist Humanist History', History Workshop no. 6, (1978), pp.79-100.
11. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History', British Journal of Sociology, 27, 1976, p.296.
12. Richard Hoggart (1957; rpt. 1986) The Uses of Literacy, p. 28.
13. Ibid., pp.33-71
14. Ibid., pp.72-101
15. Ibid., p.203

16. Ibid., p.65
17. Ibid., p.121
18. Ibid., p.122
19. Raymond Williams (1962; rpt. 1984), The Long Revolution, p. 80.
20. See S. Clarke 'Althusserian Marxism', in One Dimensional Marxism (1980, Clark, S., Seidler, V. J. Robins, K., McDonald, K. and Lovell, T.), p.5.
21. Ibid. p.47
22. Ibid.
23. Terry Lovell, 'The Social Relations of Cultural Production: Absent Centre of a New Discourse', in ibid., p.238.
24. Louis Althusser, 'Ideological State Apparatuses' in (1971) Lenin and Philosophy.
25. Peter Wollen (1969), Signs and Meaning in the Cinema.
26. Bill Nichols, 'Style, Grammar, and the Movies', in (ed. 1976) Movies and Methods Vol. 1
27. Terry Lovell (1980), op. cit., p.241.
28. Lillian S. Robinson 'Criticism: Who Needs It?', in her (1986) Sex, Class and Culture
29. As for the latest, 'post-structuralist' approaches, I find these an exaggeration of the most negative aspects of structuralism, grounded even more strongly in Lacan's notion of the 'fragmented self'.
30. This was the thesis elaborated by Jones in his influential (1974) article, 'Working Class Culture ...', op. cit.

## CHAPTER THREE

## CULTURE AND CLASS IN LATE VICTORIAN BRITAIN

Retracing the 'supine bourgeoisie' and 'subordinate proletariat':  
the 'labour aristocracy' thesis

The explanation for the apparent conservatism of the working class in the late nineteenth century has been dominated by the 'labour aristocracy' thesis.

Eric Hobsbawm's (1954) revival of Lenin's concept [1] was, in its original form, an economic explanation for the decline of working class political organisation. He saw the vanguard of the Chartist movement 'bought off' by employers through various privileges on the factory floor. This has since evolved into a heavier stress on the carrot of respectability attached to the persistence of a semi-medieval 'artisanal' status for these higher wage labourers, and their achievement of institutional standing in various types of club or society [2]. Hoggart's working class 'traditions', then, have actually been identified as aspects of a depoliticised working class in the late nineteenth century.

With either an 'economic' or 'cultural' emphasis, the implicit assumption of an active bourgeoisie intent on 'social control' is as such continuous with Thompson's thesis, and it was the essence of this argument that Anderson was attacking.

However, the 'labour aristocracy' thesis has been mooted in various forms which complicate Hobsbawm's and Anderson's arguments.

This is partly a function of the actual variety in experience among skilled labourers, depending on time and place, and this militates against generalisations [3]. There was some complexity in every sphere with respect to the ways that privilege was awarded, or won by bargaining on the factory floor, and this confuses the picture of skilled labourers being 'bought off' by employers.

Robert Gray's review of the literature surrounding the 'labour aristocracy' suggests that it is more at the 'cultural' level that any homogeneity can be perceived. However, although he identifies the same aspects of 'respectability' that Hobsbawm more recently stresses, it is seen to be permeated by contradictions which are bound up with the broader complexity of class relations within the factory.

The concept of 'respectability', broadly equivalent to autonomy and self-control, or the ability to provide comfortably for oneself and family, can be seen in part as a filtering downwards of bourgeois attitudes. To this extent, it was principally manifested in the widespread adoption of the ideals of domesticity by better-waged artisans: the domestication of women and the desire for home ownership. Yet although this was encouraging to middle class reformers, these ideals were seen by those who adopted them as a means to independence from those very reformers. In the working men's clubs, which organised schemes

for home ownership, there was a long-running battle between members and middle-class patrons for control [4]. It was through such institutions, along with friendly societies and co-operatives, that an identity was forged, both self-assertive within legitimate limitations and expressive of a broader idealism rooted in Chartism. The ambivalences and contradictions in these forms of organisation suggest some complexity to the apparent conservatism of the 'labour aristocrats'.

#### 'Rational Recreationism'

If the conservatism and depoliticisation of the working classes is in doubt, likewise the issue of whether the bourgeoisie ever fully established itself as the 'capitalist' class intent on 'social control' is itself problematic.

Patrick Joyce has argued that the persistence of certain crafts in the factories was matched in many cases by the persistence of pre-capitalist work relations, since many gentry Tory families which turned to manufacturing in the mid-nineteenth century transferred an already "legitimate" and "natural" paternalism to their dealings with the workers [5]. Richard Price has directly countered this view with the argument that the workplace was the site of well-orchestrated resistance to the onset of capitalism [6]. However, Joyce's study complicates the issue of who that capitalist class consisted of. Not merely the 'middle class', it had a strong aristocratic element. This could provoke ambivalent attitudes from workers.

The attempted upper class patronage of the working men's clubs was part of a broader programme for 'social' control in the

cultural integration of the classes through the sort of symbolic media of shared institutions. Paradoxically, however, it was grounded in an effort to emulate their aristocratic betters in social cohesion through the paternalistic control of leisure pursuits. From the 1850s onwards there was a series of articles in the quarterly and monthly 'review' journals on the opportunities for social control through organised, 'rational' recreation. Bailey (1978) and Cunningham (1981) [7] see the attempts to replace cultural hangovers from pre-industrial times (like the unofficial 'St. Monday holiday) with managed leisure venues and times (the bank holidays in the 1870s), as part of a new philanthropic emphasis on inter-class participation through the patronage of existing popular activities.

However, as with the patronage of the clubs, these efforts were a series of failures, however. Bailey emphasises that working class resistance to this programme of control was indirectly expressed by the middle-class established Football Association allowing the ultimate concession of professionalism in 1885 [8]. Of equal importance, Cunningham argues that 'rational recreation' actually negates the ideals of capitalism. Its feudal, paternalistic language and the latent 'wish to escape back into a simpler patron-client kind of society' [9] bore no relation to the realities of class relations in the nineteenth century.

### Bourgeoisie and Aristocracy

This observation is significant, for it reinforces Martin Wiener's argument that the English bourgeoisie never established a separate identity as the capitalist class. Rather, its history after 1850 is of a 'decline of the industrial spirit' [10]. Wiener plots the 'consolidation of a "gentrified" bourgeois culture' [11] through the hangover of the social and psychological limits imposed by a flexible aristocracy. Extending Joyce's thesis, Wiener argues the increasing influence, from the 1840s, of landowners investing in mines, canals, railways etc. on the ascendant middle class. The effects were psychological: a dismayed Richard Cobden exclaimed that 'manufacturers and merchants as a rule seem only to desire riches that they be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of feudalism' [12]. These also had practical effects, in the sense of 'persistent economic retardation' [13]. The growing range of middle-class professionalism, especially in the south, retreated from commitment to industrial development. The 'world's workshop' at the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851 became Kipling's vision of a land of 'trees and green fields and mud and the gentry' in 1902 [14]. This was an imaginary picture of course, but a practically restraining one. At both 'economic' and 'cultural' levels, therefore, the middle class was restrained by the residual power of the aristocracy.

Yet, this pseudo-aristocratic self-elevation by the middle class was not merely a negative counterweight to the unbridled logic of capitalism. It had a creative impulse towards social



stability in the wake of the serious revolutionary threat of Chartism in the 1830s and '40s. The factory legislation in the '40s, which began a series of social reforms running to the end of the century, initiated a period of 'moralized capitalism' [15]. It was a peculiarly English combination of residual, paternalistic aristocratic influence and of a middle class acting in the rational interests of preserving capitalism. Ultimately it was to evolve into the more organic political understandings of social relations in the emerging political ideologies of 'new liberalism', 'social imperialism' and 'Fabianism' at the end of the century (see below). 'Rational recreationism' was likewise permeated by a language of class conciliation, reminiscent of a feudal model, which bore no relation to contemporary reality, and was a heavily romanticised version of feudalism. The evidence of resistance to this project suggests that it was ultimately unsuccessful. Yet the demise of Chartism, and the relative political stability of the post-1850 period suggest some sort of compromise in class relations along the lines of Williams' (1962) formulation in The Long Revolution (see above). However, Williams' social democratic model is unequal to a full explanation of these internal, mutual and shifting class tensions at every social level.

#### The struggle for hegemony

The theoretical model employed by Gray (1981) and Cunningham (1981) is a derivation of Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony', and their use of this analytical concept is representative of a broader development in popular cultural

studies [16].

Gramsci's theoretical concept was developed during his imprisonment under Mussolini in Italy in the 1920s as a means of exploring the cultural dimension to social stability in an historical context. It has been revived, not as an all-inclusive explanatory framework, but as a way of resolving the mutual exclusivity and historical confusion engendered by both structuralist and culturalist paradigms. In essence, Gramsci's version of hegemony meant the 'moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership over the whole of society' [17] of a class within an alliance of class fractions. This was, firstly, a more culturally oriented version of the concept as used by Marx and Lenin. Gramsci concentrated on the development of middle class hegemony in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the evolution of the concept of the 'state'. And he advanced further by emphasising the duality of 'coercion' and 'consensus' in this achievement. This duality has been vulgarised by opponents of the Gramscian model as a crude variant of a theory of 'social control', with overtly functionalist underpinnings, and which loses the issue of class struggle en route [18]. Against this position it is argued that this duality actually provides a point of entry to unravelling the complexity of class relations, in which the struggle is partly resolved, and partly sublimated in the tensions undercurrent to bourgeois rule. For Gramsci stresses the fluid, historical shifts in the struggle for hegemony, the permanent threat to equilibrium, which translates periodically into a 'crisis of authority':

'If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer 'leading' but only 'dominant', exercising coercive force alone; this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear' [19].

The 'crisis of authority' is not merely resolved by the use of repressive forces, or through an accomodating adjustment to dissenting voices by the hegemonic elite. The process of readjustment of the current hegemony is achieved through a renegotiation of class relations in every sphere. It is a negotiation that is as much won from below as conceded from above.

This model, as I have outlined it, still suggests a fairly static picture of opposing, conscious classes without internal dynamics of change. It is, however, its flexibility, its versatility in explaining the uneven and fluid power relationships in historical change that is its essential strength. Robert Gray's application of these ideas to explicate the hegemonic shifts in Victorian Britain illustrates this point.

In 'Bourgeois hegemony in Victorian Britain', Gray argues that the development of 'stable class rule [after 1850] depended on the construction of a power bloc of allied, dominant classes and fractions' [20]. The coalition of forces in the power bloc resulted from the 'organic crisis' [21] of existent class relations: failure to integrate the newly emergent and dominating fraction in the bourgeoisie, industrial capital, and failure to contain adequately the Chartist threat of the self-assertive

working class. Within this power bloc, landowners continued to exert a high degree of influence, despite the tensions up to and following the 1832 Reform Bill. But the 'hegemonic fraction', to be distinguished from the 'governing fraction', which includes the intellectual agents of the state apparatus, was the industrial bourgeoisie. Through the superficially opposite, but in reality twin arms of utilitarianism and evangelism (the former reinforcing the neutral appearance of economic laws, while the latter pushed the domestic ideal, religious observance and sexual morality), the industrial bourgeoisie can be seen to have dominated State structures and policy-making. In addition, much state control was delegated to local bodies - Gramsci's 'civil society' - in which industrial capital dominated.

The formation of this power bloc cannot be seen, however, as a rational, deliberate move by classes with perfectly coherent ideologies. Nor was it, as Perry Anderson argues, a 'symbiotic fusion' of bourgeoisie and aristocracy, in which the former conceded ideological supremacy to the latter. It constituted, in part, a resolution of the tensions between and within different currents in developing class ideologies. The continued aristocratic presence in government had the apparent advantages of inducing 'mass deference' and equivalence with the 'dignified part of the constitution'. It also had the contradictory aspect that the opposition it provoked from radical workers and the petty bourgeoisie bolstered support for demagogic bourgeois politicians [22]. This contradiction is made retrospectively more stark by the fact that it coexisted with bourgeois attempts,

through state agencies and through philanthropic efforts, to exercise pseudo-aristocratic patronage of popular activities; and in the domestic sphere, to cultivate a hybrid of landed aristocratic behaviour and bourgeois moral integrity in a process of gentrification.

We can see, then, that the constitution of the power bloc is inevitably contradictory: it is 'constantly reconstituted, modified, strengthened or undermined ...' [23]. The hegemony of the dominant fraction is constantly renegotiated, compromised by the various ideologies of the partners, and also by the subordinate classes.

Gray's work on the institutions of the 'labour aristocracy' and Cunningham's and Bailey's work on the sporting institutions emphasise their ambivalent stance with regard to authorities, and this ambivalence must be seen to be conditioned to some extent by a radical resistance to the imposition of external controls and by the complex ambivalences in those programmes of control.

#### Music hall and the emergence of 'mass' entertainments

This theoretical framework, based around the concept of hegemony, allows us to weave the study of popular entertainments in the nineteenth century into the resolution of these historiographical dilemmas. This is well-illustrated by recent studies of Victorian music hall.

The music hall, which had its origins in the drinking saloons and penny theatres in the 1840s, showed a marked trend towards increasing 'respectability' from the 1860s onwards. This trend paralleled the institutionalisation of popular sports.

Peter Bailey has shown that while middle class attempts at respectable alternatives to the halls generally failed, the impetus for their reform actually came from the proprietors themselves. Seating was rearranged in rows and drinking was prohibited as a means of disciplining for the audience. The 'turn' system disciplined the 'stars'. And the acts show a progression from the bawdy or politically radical in the '40s to the vaguely naughty or pro-imperialist in the '90s. Proprietors even asked the Home Secretary for a form of legal censorship in 1876 [24]. Bailey remarks of this process from a 'class' to a self-proclaimed apolitical 'mass' entertainment that

'the manipulations of the music hall entrepreneur manifested a potential for defining and enforcing socially appropriate behaviour - the rules of good citizenship - which identify the emergent mass entertainment industry as a conscious and effective agency of rational recreation' [25].

Yet, despite the appearance of complete conformity to 'respectable' pressures from above, Bailey emphasises that in both the managerial aspect and at the level of popular perception - the personae adopted by the performers - the dictates of rational recreation are negotiated in terms of a residual, radical culture of working-class self-identity.

In the acts, attitudes to class and work were highly ambivalent. The excesses of the toff, the pretensions of the clerk and the 'innate laziness' of the unemployed were lampooned simultaneously with contradictorily happy-go-lucky attitudes to hierarchical work relations and exaltations of skiving. The heavy sentimentality of songs like 'My Old Dutch', sung in front

of a workhouse backdrop as the couple which had 'been together for forty years' were to be separated by workhouse rules, could induce tears or laughter. Like many music-hall songs, it had the double-edged appeal of striking a real and unpleasant chord in popular memory, and alternatively a ridiculous, manufactured 'popular' memory which could be downright laughable, depending on the mood of the audience. 'Follow the Van' told the (first-person) story of a girl who loses her way by not following the family furniture van after eviction.

Bailey's and Cunningham's understanding of music hall suggest some complexity to this nascent 'mass' entertainment, from management to performance. These songs are a long way from the radical Chartist poetry of the 1840s, but they show an ambivalence to authority which was part of the contradictory 'common sense' understanding of reality. This analysis stands in stark contrast to Senelick's (1974) summation of the imperial songs in the halls as the principal song type. He claims that the songs showed

'... very little evidence of innately popular feeling on social issues ... on the other hand their instrumentality in forming public opinion may have been immense ... The politics absorbed by audiences under the influence of Camaraderie, chorus-singing and spirits, both high and alcoholic, was no doubt superficial, but continued over the course of decades to grow into a creed' [26].

In contrast to the notion of 'absorption' by audiences, Bailey and Cunningham see the music hall as a medium for negotiating the increasingly complicated class locations of the audience. The pro-imperialist songs were sung alongside songs which ridiculed

the dignity of hard work and pretensions to grandeur. It is this aspect of popular entertainment which Senelick misses. If the music hall can be seen as part of a new kind of distinctly 'working class' culture, it must not be read either as part of Hoggart's 'tradition', to be uncritically celebrated, or as a symptom of the subjection of the working class to bourgeois 'social control'. It contributed to the reconstitution of 'common sense', geographically and historically specific to working class Londoners in the late nineteenth century. This reconstitution involved both elements of consent to bourgeois hegemony and dissent from bourgeois efforts at 'social control' through codes of cultural behaviour as a counterpart to codes of work relations.

By eliminating the element of conscious manipulation by an ascendant bourgeoisie as the determining factor in every instance, a more credible picture is formed of a hegemony achieved in part through manipulation and, in varying degrees, through the accomodation of different class interests, though not expressed in monolithic 'working' or 'landowning' class terms. Nor was it ever entirely successful. The project of gentrification by the middle classes, alongside the elevated respectability of trades unions, and the extension of the franchise in the 1867 and 1884 Reform Bills show on the one hand a loss of 'industrial spirit' by those manipulative forces, and on the other, the achievement of significant victories by the working class through pressure from below. The attempted imposition of 'rational recreation' was likewise forced through



the persistence of 'pre-industrial' forms of leisure activity. And the attempted conformity to respectability by music hall management, as representative of commercial forces, does not translate directly into the ultimate product, but must be set in the context of the ambivalent elements in the songs. Therefore, if in broad terms the post-1850 period saw the hegemony of an ascendant bourgeoisie, it was undercut by tensions and threats across the social spectrum and in every sphere of economic, political and cultural activity.

While these studies have gone some distance in relating certain popular cultural activities to broader tensions in class relations, the sphere of popular reading in the nineteenth century remains largely untouched. We have seen how a theory of 'social control' has been forwarded as an explanation for the development of the 'popular' press at the end of the century. I would like now to contest this explanation for the development of the press and other forms of popular reading, based on these new developments in 'leisure studies'. A recent paper by Peter Bailey is particularly useful in this regard.

#### Leisure, Text and Social History

Bailey's (1989) review of the sphere of 'leisure studies' over the past fifteen years [27] takes up Gareth Stedman Jones' (1983) argument that the analysis of 'leisure' either as a form of 'social control' or 'class expression' is a redundant avenue of inquiry [28]. Bailey argues that if, indeed,

'popular leisure in the late [nineteenth] century may have restabilized as a newly customary round of pleasures pursued amid various communities of place and interest ... it can also be represented as a more plastic pattern of experience, subjective as well as social, moving across a more dispersed, discontinuous, and typically more urbanized field of action, with shifting thresholds of inclusion and exclusion, identity and status' [29].

Moreover, if leisure became more 'homogenised', it also became more 'atomized'. This is an extension of his earlier theses on forms of Victorian leisure - sports and music hall. While he stresses the 'atomized' nature of leisure and its part in an increasingly 'pluralist culture', he qualifies this with the argument that 'the material and cultural determinations of class remain inescapable, their outlines still articulated beneath the blanket categories of putative mass or common cultures' [30].

The most important element of Bailey's paper is the recognition that the 'characteristic mode' of popular leisure at the end of the nineteenth century 'became that of performance'. The analysis of the dynamics in 'leisure as text and performance' [31] provides a means of understanding broader changes in social relations, for these modes of leisure consumption can be read as media for the negotiation of class identity for their consumers - readers and audience. Bailey's analysis of music hall songs and performances constitutes one important application of this approach. Embedded within an apparently apolitical, 'mass' entertainment is a complex negotiation of ambivalent working class attitudes to the ascendant bourgeoisie.

Bailey has made an even more successful application of this approach in his analysis of the late nineteenth century humorous

journal, Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday (1884-1923 - henceforth ASHH) [32]. Bailey links the development of a regular cartoon character in this journal (Ally Sloper) with the emergence of distinct types in the music hall. The difference is that Ally Sloper actually incorporates a variety of social types in his persona, so that he can be read in different ways by various readers with different class-locations. Even more so than the music hall, he marks a transition to a self-proclaimed 'mass' entertainment. In the backdrops to his adventures, also, the proliferation of new modes of leisure pursuit, he is a guide to the promised democracy of shared leisure activities. Yet Bailey also shows that inherent in Sloper's populism there were certain class-specific underpinnings. His 'mass' appeal was likely to register most with those classes which benefitted more from the new political reforms: the 'lower middle class', and to a lesser extent, the 'skilled working class' or 'labour aristocracy'. He encapsulated, in his visual realisation, his narrated adventures, and in the ancillary components of the journal, both the feelings of social elevation among these class fractions, and the unease at their nevertheless uncertain status. In this analysis, the meaning of the 'mass' or 'inoffensive' entertainment is complicated by the function of negotiating class identities.

ASHH, as analysed by Bailey, can be seen to negotiate an increasingly coherent bourgeois project for social control. The liberalisation of the press and the new legislation governing leisure must be seen as part of a history of reformist legislation, including the various factory acts and

electoral reform, which evolved through the late nineteenth century into a recognisable political programme of collectivism. It was a programme which was realised in the different political ideologies of 'new liberalism', 'social imperialism' and 'Fabianism', but the essence of these ideologies was the same. They constituted a significant move in middle class political thought away from the tenets of 'laissez-faire' liberalism, which saw social organisation in contractual terms, and towards an understanding of capitalist social relations in organic terms. This ideology of collectivism evolved from the fragmented efforts at reform in a period of political crisis in the early 1840s. It was a coherently devised project for social leadership by the ascendant bourgeoisie as the hegemonic fraction, and it incorporated a degree of aristocratic paternalism. I am not arguing that this ideology is directly reflected in ASHH. Rather, the antics of Ally Sloper both legitimate and question the claims that this ideology was making for social equalisation. He digested them in an ambivalent way for his readers. He is a playful exercise which tends to blunt the questions, but as with music hall the questioning, however innocent, nevertheless indicates that for a 'popular' audience the aspirations to social control of the ascendant bourgeoisie were never received as wholly legitimate. Those classes where the tensions showed most were the 'lower middle' and 'skilled working' classes.

The significance of Bailey's analysis of ASHH to my work here is that ASHH was a direct forerunner to those titles which I have deemed the 'first' comics. There are numerous formal and

thematic continuities. Moreover, I feel that there are continuities in the specificity of their appeal to these class fractions. If, however, the music hall and ASHH did show something of a genuine 'mass' appeal (there were West End halls in London and there is evidence that Ally Sloper was actually a cult figure in upper Bohemia (see Chapter Five)) I would argue that the appeal of the comics was rather narrower in scope. Even more so than ASHH, they appealed to the expanding 'lower middle class' in the negotiation of their social identity and position in the 1890s rather than the '80s.

.....

In conclusion to this section of the thesis, then, it is necessary to outline a brief summary of the logic pursued here. To begin with, I have adapted Barker's thesis on the 'conversational' nature of 'cultural objects'. However, it has been argued that this approach is unequal to the task of mapping the historical evolution of 'popular cultural' forms and their relations to specific classes and to the maintenance of power in society. Overviews of the major theoretical paradigms in British cultural theory have revealed that these suffer from differently founded difficulties in this same regard. Through a return to the roots of the problems, the origins of contemporary 'popular culture' at the end of the nineteenth century, and through an analysis of the approaches of 'social' and 'leisure' historians to the subject, it is now proposed that only the application of a theoretical framework based on the Gramscian formulation of

'hegemony', coupled with the central tenet of Barker's approach, will be adequate to the understanding of the early comics.

To begin this analysis, we must deal firstly with the predecessors to the comics.

## CHAPTER THREE - NOTES

1. Eric Hobsbawn, 'The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain', originally 1954, reprinted in his Labouring Men (1967).
2. Eric Hobsbawn (1984), World of Labour.
3. On engineering, see J. Melling, 'Noncommissioned Officers: British Employers and their Supervisory Workers, 1880-1920', Social History, vol. 5, 1980. On building, see Robert Gray (1976), The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh.
4. Richard Price, 'The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology', Victorian Studies, 15, 1971.
5. Patrick Joyce (1980), Work, Politics and Society: the Culture of the Factory in later Victorian England.
6. Richard Price, 'The Labour Process and Labour History', Social History, 8, p.452, 1983.
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17. Tony Bennett's summary definition of Gramsci's concept, from 'Introduction: popular culture and 'the turn to Gramsci'', Bennett et al. (eds. 1986), p.xix.
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20. Robert Gray, 'Bourgeois hegemony in Victorian Britain', in T. Bennett, G. Martin, C. Mercer, J. Woollacott (1981, eds.), Culture, Ideology and Social Process, p.238.
21. Ibid. For Gramsci's concept of 'organic crisis' see (1971), op. cit., pp.201-11.
22. Ibid., p.243.
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27. Peter Bailey, 'Leisure, culture and the historian: reviewing the first generation of leisure historiography in Britain', Leisure Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1989.
  28. Jones (1977), op. cit.
  29. Bailey (1989), op. cit., p.121.
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  32. Peter Bailey 'Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1980s', History Workshop, 16, 1983.



## PART II

Chapters Four, Five and Six examine some of the forerunners to the early comics.

This examination is based on the thesis that the arrival of the comics constituted a third phase in the development of the Victorian periodical press, the emergence of a self-proclaimed 'mass' entertainment.

Chapter Four looks at the first of these 'phases'. It is argued that the expansion and changes in the periodical press in Britain in the 1830s and '40s, specifically in terms of the 'depoliticisation' of periodical publishing from one decade to the next, can be seen as a negotiation of the emergence of a new kind of political ideology. This ideology was part of a new concept of class conciliation under the hegemonic leadership of the Victorian bourgeoisie.

Chapters Five and Six concentrate on Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday (1884) as an intermediate phase between the above and the development of the comics in the '90s. It is maintained that this development can be read as an advance from the earlier phase of expansion in periodical publishing in its negotiation of the more coherently structured political ideologies of the '80s and '90s as part of the reconstitution of a peculiarly 'lower middle class' sensibility.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE ORIGINS OF THE COMICS: THE VICTORIAN PERIODICAL PRESS

In order to understand the nature of the 'comics', in the form in which they first appeared, we need to examine the evolution of the satirical journal in the nineteenth century. Moreover, we must situate its development within the broader history of the Victorian periodical press. The first comics, as pointed out above, were collections of miscellaneous elements which were drawn from different types of publication, so the emergence of the comic as a type of satirical journal cannot be seen in isolation from other developments in periodical publishing.

To establish the context within which the comics emerged we must return firstly to that period which saw the broadest expansion in popular publishing in the nineteenth century: the 1830s and '40s. We can use the term 'periodical' almost in a generic sense because this period saw an expansion in every sphere of periodical publishing, from the middle class intellectual 'review' journals, through the working class radical newspaper, the miscellaneous 'family' magazine, the Sunday newspaper and the satirical journal. Moreover, we can detect a distinct progression in these years from overtly politicised reading in the '30s to a range of self-professed apolitical journals. As Raymond Williams (1962) has pointed out, this

development can be read, to an extent, as the origination of the modern 'popular' press, in that it led to a new range of titles which pitched themselves at the broadest possible readership irrespective of class or politics [1]. And it is in this development that we can trace the origins of the comics. In order to elaborate this, we must deal, therefore, with issues of political change and the class-mediated nature of the 'popular' periodical in general in this period, before looking more specifically at the satirical journal.

#### The Growth of the Periodical Press, 1830-1850

Louis James' work [2] constitutes the only in-depth body of work on this period. James has always emphasised two factors in the expansion of periodical publishing in the 1830s: the growth of the working class radical movement after the 1832 Reform Act which had drawn many middle class radicals to the as yet limited parliamentary democracy; and the increasing urbanisation of Britain, to the extent that by 1851, over half the population of England and Wales were living in towns and cities.

Among the working class, self-education and literacy were elevated to an equivalence with emancipation, partly through the influence of radicalism in the 1830s. Carlile, editor of the Republican (1819-26), claimed that 'the art of Printing is a multiplication of mind' [3] and such concrete, mechanical metaphors were mixed with the veneration of printing as an almost magical path to liberation [4]. This equation, perfectly focussed in the most famous slogan of the period, 'Knowledge is

Power' [5], had very real political roots which allowed it to work. The roots of the association of literacy and emancipation stretch back to the Seditious Publications Act of December 1819, an unmitigatedly repressive measure designed overtly to destroy the new range of cheap working class weeklies which had been spawned by the social unrest following the Napoleonic Wars. Though it largely succeeded in this aim through the 1820s, the revitalised radicalism of the 1830s was led by a range of new radical 'unstamped' weeklies in direct defiance of the law, which was commonly labelled the 'Tax on Knowledge' [6]. Among the leading journals was Henry Hetherington's The Poor Man's Guardian, selling at 1d. as 'A Weekly Newspaper FOR THE PEOPLE' and advertised as 'CONTRARY TO "LAW"' - the inverted commas signifying a defiance requiring the active enlistment of the reader. The Poor Man's Guardian was based around a polar vision of social relations which it cultivated through the populist inclusivity of its editorial address. It even advertised for sellers, and despite the imprisonment of more than five hundred of Hetherington's illegal network of newsvendors, hawkers and voluntary sellers, including himself, the Guardian actually thrived on this open demonstration of the law's injustice [7]. Thompson (1964) quotes the defence of Joseph Swann (1831) at his trial for selling unstamped newspapers:

'I sell them for the good of my fellow countrymen; to let them see how they are misrepresented in Parliament --- I wish to let them know how they are humbugged ...'  
[8].

There is also some evidence that this radical vision of social

relations as a polar structure of the 'people' and a government of corrupt political figures, including now some middle class defectors from the radical cause, was common to much of the 'popular' theatrical production of the period [9].

If the medium of the 'periodical' was essential to the forging of a new, specifically 'working class' identity, it served a similar function for the middle class which was likewise attempting to develop a separate identity in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act. For its higher echelons, the quarterly and monthly 'review' journals were transformed from their function in book reviewing to a new role as media for upper middle class intellectual debate, a forum for the refinement of the basic tenets of a distinctly bourgeois ideology through the nineteenth century as the middle class graduated to government [10].

At a lower level, the Utilitarian strand of middle class reformism, as represented by the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge' (SDUK) [11], produced the Penny Magazine in 1831. In keeping with the ideology of the SDUK, this miscellaneous magazine was in essence a legitimisation of an existent social structure, with the qualification of the encouragement to self-betterment through self-education in the interests of maximum resource 'utilisation'. It used mechanical analogies akin to those of the working class radicals, and likewise revolved around a directly exhortative editorial address. But instead of a metaphor of the accumulation of knowledge, and hence of power, it used a distributive (and therefore democratising, levelling) metaphor with its self-image as a railway, a carrier of

'"universal convenience and enjoyment to all classes", bringing together town and country, reaching the remotest corners of the land, and by means of "ready and cheap communications greatly reduce[ing] the inequalities of fortune and station".' [12]

And instead of the directly pleading presence of a Cobbett or a Hetherington throughout, the editorial is a faceless element, separate from the rest of the text, which normally consisted of a natural scientific miscellany, well-illustrated by woodcuts, and snatches of elevating poetry. The natural world sits alongside a picture of human self-betterment within a naturalised social order, even if this order was pointed to only indirectly through the extended implication of a scientifically dissected natural world [13].

The 1832 Reform Act was by no means greeted with universal acceptance among the middle class, however, and the middle class brand of radicalism was continued in newspapers like the Morning Chronicle and satirical journals like Figaro in London (1831). The Chronicle carried Dickens' 'Sketches by Boz', the forerunners to his first novels. It seems likely that it was through the context of the 'Sketches', amid the general content and tone of the Chronicle's features and reportage, that Dickens developed the novelistic possibilities of his later work, with his peculiar brand of morality aimed at the repressive institutions of the 1830s.

James (1982) argues that the emergence of the periodical in this period, superceding older forms of reading like the 'chapbooks' [14], was a direct function of the political turmoil

of the '30s. The form of the periodical itself, its regular production and reception, developed a specific mode of address to or 'tone of voice' with the reader. The new periodicals of the 1830s set up a range of dialogues with their variously class-located readers. These dialogues were concerned with the refinement of peculiarly 'class' identities and the identity of the individual class subject. The periodical became a 'way of conditioning [the reader's] response' [15]. The outstanding feature of periodical publishing in the 1830s, then, is its political mediation.

The 1840s, however, saw the emergence of a new range of self-proclaimed "apolitical" journals, and this emergence accompanied the gradual decline of working- and middle class radical journals over the same period. Various theories are forwarded for this phenomenon.

#### The Emergence of 'Popular' Publishing

The 'unstamped' press had thrived on its flouting of the tax, in self-legitimation and by undercutting the prices of other periodicals. In 1836, the stamp duty was reduced to 1d. The more severe enforcement of the tax and prosecutions of the unstamped journals meant that the costs for stamped periodicals were reduced while those for the formerly unstamped increased.

In addition, the advertising duty was reduced in 1833 from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. Combined with the introduction of more productive printing technology this made the maximisation of readership figures an imperative for optimising advertising revenue and covering the large capital outlay on large scale

printing machinery [16]. The Poor Man's Guardian was an immediate casualty.

However, these factors alone could not be seen as the sole influential factors in the development of a new kind of 'apolitical' or 'commercial' publishing in the 1840s. Raymond Williams has described the new figures in popular publishing in the 1840s as a breed of 'pure speculators' [17], and the few historical overviews of these men create a picture of virtually Dickensian figures manipulating formulaic periodical modes with minimal costs and staffing [18]. This is ironic, given that the principal among these publishers, Edward Lloyd, made his fortune in the '40s with serialised plagiarisms of Dickens. The thin disguises of his titles - The Sketch Book by 'Bos', The Post-humorous [sic] Notes of the Pickwickian Club, Memoirs of Nicholas Nickleberry etc. [19] - and the stories surrounding his techniques build up a comical picture of ruthless exploitation of the urban masses by lowest common denominators. Market research consisted of

'place[ing] the manuscript in the hands of an illiterate person - a servant, or machine boy, for instance. If they pronounce favourably upon it, we think it will do' [20].

John Medcraft (1945) uses comical irony to describe Lloyd's fictional output after the Dickens plagiarisms:

'... historical tales of the type popularized by Harrison Ainsworth, Gothic horrors in the style of Ann Radcliffe, and so-called 'domestic' romances. The high proportion of the last was due to an extensive feminine following amongst the readers and in deference to their 'gentler' natures Lloyd eliminated highwaymen and



vampires, added an innocuous title, and confined himself to the milder themes of pirates and smugglers, murder and rape, seduction and abduction' [21].

Beyond the retrospectively amusing aspects of these publishers' activities, and the concentration on their fictional output, it should be pointed out that such publishers were extending processes already well under way in periodical publishing.

Lloyd's Penny Sunday Times and People's Gazette (1840) emulated the Sunday Times' first venture into serialised fiction, but consisted almost entirely of fiction to avoid the stamp duty [22]. Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper was an obvious copy of Herbert Ingram's Illustrated London News (1842), an innovatory newspaper counterpart to the Penny Magazine's strategy of carefully treading an 'apolitical' line. Lloyd's Penny Weekly Miscellany (1843) was a direct imitation of the Penny Magazine. Of mostly fictional content, its editor claims 'to offer to the poor pleasures of reading that were hitherto reserved for the wealthy' [23]. At a time when fiction was eschewed by left and right alike [24], Lloyd's Miscellany was an attempt to couch popular fictional forms in the self-educational, dignified tones common to both utilitarians and radicals. Editor James Rymer established this goal from the outset:

'correct tastes, glowing fancies, and an admirable perception of the poetic and beautiful ... are to be found by the humblest firesides ...' [25].

While such papers did not exactly meet with 'respectable' approval, their heavily fictional content and mildly liberal editorial comment was perfectly acceptable to middle class

commentators. In addition, their sensationalist emphasis on murder and crime (around 70-80% of their contents) marked a departure from the radical emphasis on the evil political deeds of those in power, though conducted in similar language [26]. Virginia Berridge (1978) claims that this miscellaneous combination made them 'the effective means of social control which the establishment had always hoped the popular press might be' [27]. This, I would argue, is not really the case. These processes, conditioned as they were by the new legislation for publishing and by the technological developments in printing can be analysed in terms of how they were politically mediated. But it is not appropriate to characterise this mediation as a form of 'social control'.

Just as we can see the periodical productions of the 1830s in terms of the needs of working- and middle class radicalism, we can also see these new ventures in terms of the changed social conditions of the '40s. From the high point of the working class radical movement in the Charter of 1838, we can plot a steady decline in the movement, leading to the dissolution of Chartism in the late 1840s. Various explanations have been forwarded for this development. The 'labour aristocracy' thesis sees the vanguard of the radical movement lured away from political opposition with special privileges within the factories (see Chapter Three). The movement was divided over the issue of 'physical force' after the rejection of its petitions to Parliament. This certainly resulted in a loss of middle class support [28]. But while all of these are contentious issues, perhaps the most important factor was the new government strategy

of relenting to the mildly reformist wing of the Chartist movement. Hence the withdrawal of military coercion by the government, and the steady introduction of the factory legislation through the 1840s. Stedman Jones (1983) has characterised this development as the evolution of a kind of 'moralized capitalism', the increasingly deliberate move away from the legislation in the '30s which could be read as functions of the 'malignant unpredictability of the state' [29].

While the historical evidence on this subject is contentious it seems to me that we can make connections between this new political direction and the developments in periodical publishing. This is not to say that we can draw direct links between a deliberate programme of reform and the depolitisation of 'popular' publishing. There was never any such programme.

However, we can point to echoes of the prevailing social tensions within popular publishing. Robert Gray (1985) points out that the factory legislation governing employment for women and children was an unevenly worked out resolution of a tension in middle class thought between the sanctity of the 'laissez-faire' ideal and an emergent code of domesticity [30]. These legal limitations reinforced a working-class patriarchal philosophy. They reinforced the notion that, as Anna Clark points out, women were 'passive and weak victims who required protection' [31]. For working class women, they offered a paradoxical combination of freedom from the factory on the one hand, and confinement to the home on the other.

Little work has been done on the subject, but there is some

evidence that these tensions can be seen to be refracted through the new miscellanies despite their apparent exaltation of the nuclear family as a social unit and the imitation of the tone of the SDUK Penny Magazine. For many of the stories in these miscellanies were concerned with rugged heroines negotiating the promises of, and threats to independence in domestication [32].

Stories like these can perhaps be assessed in the light of current feminist thinking on popular entertainments for women. There has been a decided shift in thought in the last decade from the analyses of feminists like Angela McRobbie in the 1970s towards a concentration on the contradictory aspects of such forms as conditioned by the perpetuated positioning of women within capitalist social relations. The shift is neatly summarised by Elaine Showalter:

'The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint' [33].

In essence, the central element is the transcendence of 'happy endings' to uncover the ulterior messages of the gnawing tensions of familial imprisonment [34]. There is perhaps a bourgeois feminist aspect to this which makes application to the contradictory gains and losses for working class women in the 1840s potentially distortive. However, I feel that Martha Vicinus (1981) has made an excellent case for linking the positions of middle- and working class women with respect to the nineteenth century 'domestic' melodrama.

Vicinus argues that while the 'domestic' melodrama paradoxically defends an ideal, familial integrity

'against a vengeful society, in the name of a higher moral order, in actuality this moral order is a reflection of the current values of the very society presumably being attacked' [35].

The approximation of ideals of womanhood in middle- and working-class reformism and in 'women's' fiction from every class ('Ela the Outcast' is a case in point) shows the family to be an opening site for political negotiation in the 1840s. However, the tensions and contradictions of sexual politics were perpetuated.

In these family miscellanies, then, it may be possible to detect a negotiation of the changing political situation in the early 1840s. This is to put these titles on a continuum with the overtly politicised titles of the 1830s and the way in which they negotiated their reader's increasingly complicated perceptions of their class positions. If these developments in periodical publishing in the 1840s mark a transition to a qualitatively new kind of 'popular' literary product, there is a case to be made for reading them as mediated to some extent by a new political mood. In this regard a useful comparison could be made with the evolution of the new sporting institutions, and of the quintessentially 'working class' institution, the music hall, as analysed by Bailey (1978) and Cunningham (1981) (see Chapter Three).

#### The Origins of the 'Boys' Weeklies'

A similar case might be made for the understanding of cheap juvenile periodicals from the 1850s onwards. As with the growth

of 'family' miscellanies in the '40s, a clear expansion can be discerned in the range of new, male juvenile weeklies in this period. The precise reasons for this expansion are not fully established. Louis James sees these weeklies as derivations of the romantic crime (highwaymen) or quasi-Gothic genres (Sweeney Todd, etc.) of Lloyd, Dicks, Purkess and other publishers. The latter were rendered 'out-of-date' by the increasingly sophisticated 'family' miscellanies and the new miscellanies for working men in the '50s [36].

Serialised fictional titles like Tales of Shipwrecks and Adventures at Sea (1846-7, pub. W.M. Clarke) or eighteenth century highwaymen titles like The Life and Adventures of Jack Sheppard (c.1849) and Dick Turpin's Ride to York ((date unknown), both pub. George Purkess) led inevitably to stories with juvenile heroes, with updated but equally impressive criminal pedigrees. These included Charley Wag, the Boy Burglar, The Wild Boys of Paris, The Wild Boys of London, and The Boys of London and New York [37]. Once again a caricatural picture of these titles is created by retrospective studies. Charley Wag is described by Michael Anglo as

'a spicy sauce of sex, scandal, and vulgarity with some weak humour and a little trite preaching, and Charley went down well with the boys' [38].

This juvenile and sensational output was interlinked in a sense with the 'family' magazines for women. The middle class project for its own political-cultural hegemony, as we have seen, was based on an ideology of 'gentility'. If the ideal of domesticity

was one aspect of this, then the other was a new ideology of 'adolescence'.

For the middle classes of the mid-century, the greater supervision and indulgence of children naturally increased dependency on the family structure. Within an emergent rudimentary stage theory of development, the identification of adolescence became pivotal to a vision of a higher social status for the future generations, economically and culturally. It was a status denied to themselves through their own 'vulgar' origins [39]. Thomas Arnold's project as headmaster of Rugby public school (1827-39) to cultivate 'spiritual autonomy' and 'intellectual maturity' among the boys became the focal point for what was perceived among the middle classes as preparation for social leadership [40]. The cocooned existence of the public schools became the basis for new genres of middle class public school and boys' adventure fiction, launched, respectively, by Thomas Hughes's fictionalised Rugby in Tom Brown's Schooldays and R.M. Ballantyne's Coral Island (both 1857). What was evident in this literature, and in the public schools as they developed, was that Arnold's intellectual project was being transformed into an anti-intellectual, militarist project catalysed by the threat of war with France in the 1850s, a project which rewrote England's achievement as that of Protestant physical prowess, and to which the utility of organised games became central. Hence Tom Brown's famous didactic passages on cricket and boxing. It was to develop further, towards the end of the century, into the basis on which imperial maintenance and expansion was predicated.

While the public school developed as a specialised

institution for moulding these volatile, but manipulable adolescents destined for social leadership, and an attendant didactic literature was being cultivated, the penny serialised fiction trade was unsystematically but effectively undermining each of its principles. Most obviously, instead of the symbolic backdrops of public school or desert island, the scenarios were urban slums, and the subjects dealt with juvenile crime in a largely sympathetic way [41]. The term 'penny dreadful' emerged as a collective term of abuse for this cheap male juvenile fiction, and the review journals incorporated a long-running discourse on the rational and socially malignant uses of leisure reading in the 'rational recreation' commentary. While the contours of this debate [42] and the idealised 'classics' of middle class juvenile fiction are unidimensional, the adaptation by the publishers of this cheap fiction to the demands of their betters is a more complex story.

In attempting to unravel this story we are yet again faced with inspirational figures, in this case Edwin J. Brett and his principal rivals, the Emmett Brothers. Brett was a former Chartist sympathiser and later an employee (possibly manager) of The Newsagents' Company, which published the Wild Boys serials in the early '60s. He left in 1866 to produce a weekly miscellany, Boys of England: A Young Gentleman's Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction [43]. This move constituted a rejection of any remaining political principles in return for the political and commercial expedient of winning approval from authority by the patriotic, exhortative tone of its title, and the apeing of



public school and imperial scenarios. Brett's strategy was imitated by the Emmetts, who followed with The Young Englishman in 1867. The strategy was vindicated by the fact that the offices of The Newsagents' Company, which by now had resorted to reprints only, were raided and closed in 1871 [44]. But these new journals did not merely represent the deliberate manipulation of the reader by the cultivation of more 'escapist' scenarios and the pandering to authority by a new, respectable editorial anchor under the guidance of unscrupulous speculators. Nor is this entirely the case with 'women's' or 'family' periodicals in the 1840s.

The periodical miscellany form involves complex dynamics between the various textual elements, between periodical and reader, and between publisher and external pressures from above.

Again, a great deal of research remains to be done on these weeklies, and I cannot deal in detail with them here, but even a cursory overview of the 'dreadfuls' reveals a radical departure from the tenets of 'muscular Christianity', while ironically indicating some of the latent undercurrents to that doctrine more starkly than Tom Browne ever could. For example, Brett's opening editorial address promises to

'enthrall [sic] you by wild and wonderful, but healthy fiction; to amuse and instruct you by interesting papers on History and Science; to inform you on all matters belonging to your manly outdoor sports and games, and your home pastimes; to enter into a hearty, free, and trusty companionship with you through the medium of the Correspondence Page; to afford you a merry laugh by a droll story or jest, to charm you with a pretty verse. In short, our aim is mainly to delight you ...

BOYS OF ENGLAND ... it is your own fault if you do not grow up wise and strong men. Scorn aping

'manishness'; revel in your boyhood and enjoy it while it lasts; but, above all, cultivate true manliness of mind and body, learn to think, speak and write, learn to swim, jump and run, despise skulking laziness, and face hard study and hard hand-labour' [45].

This is a strange mix of exhortations. Its most obvious feature is the skipping back and forth from the promise of unbridled mirth to the qualification of character-building instruction. There are remnants of an older SDUK encouragement to self-help by self-education, but this is wrapped up in a version of 'muscular Christianity', which had by then evolved into an anti-intellectual cultivation of the stiff upper lip, a middle-class ideology which in its Tom Brown setting has nothing to do with the self-education doctrine in the intellectual sense of the Radical or Utilitarian traditions. There is a tension, I think, between this working-class self-betterment creed and the patently middle class obsession with the biological question of age and physical development. Within this latter aspect, the tension between the call to manliness in 'muscular Christianity' and the perpetuation of adolescence (by the very nature of this ideology) is much more apparent than in Tom Brown's Schooldays or Coral Island, where every element of the narrative is a cypher for a didactic lesson. The cultivation of 'true manliness' is incompatible with the command to 'revel in your boyhood' and their origins with the middle-class have little to do with the (supposedly spiritual) benefits hinted to result from 'hard study and hard hand-labour'.

These contradictory exhortations are not far removed from those of the self-betterment periodicals of the 1840s. They

point both to the conflicting strands of thought among the working classes and to the inconsistencies in a middle-class ideology attempting to establish itself, from its journals through the practical level of its institutions, the public schools.

On the inside, the fictional components of these weeklies show a different kind of negotiation. Public school stories dominate in emulation of Tom Brown himself. The Emmetts' Tom Wildrake came first in Sons of Britannia in 1871 [46], then Brett's Jack Harkaway (Boys of England (1871)). But Harkaway's adventures (written by Bracebridge Hemyng) in particular are filled with sadistic acts and counter-acts which go far beyond Tom Brown's roasting at the fire and the ultimately spiritual, moralistic justice. James explains that

'The emotions controlled by [Hughes'] school and society have instead their desired end: the bully Hunsden is shot in the arm by Harkaway, and the arm is amputated; Davis, who tries to get Jack's girl Emily, has his ear nailed to a doorpost, and when the door has slammed, "there, on the post, was the unfortunate man's ear, literally torn from his head".' [47]

This emotional expression, alien to Hughes's gospel of self-restraint, is a direct hangover from The Wild Boys... stories, quietly undermining the lessons of the public school [48].

Furthermore, Louis James' survey of Harkaway's imperial adventures shows a degree of ambivalence in attitudes to race in these stories. The natives may be 'savage', but are no more so than their imperial 'masters' [49]. This could be read as a direct questioning of the boundaries of 'savagery' and 'civilisation', a theme which runs right through the Harkaway

stories.

While I am wary of generalising from a few examples, I think they do suggest a much more complicated interpretation of the middle class ideology of 'muscular Christianity' than a concentration on the classic middle class texts or the 'respectable' weeklies would reveal. It is complicated both by the persistence of melodramatic aspects of The Wild Boys series (though shorn of the sympathies with juvenile crime as a function of urban conditions which showed the lingering influence of the fictions of the 1830s); and also by the revelation of an undercurrent of anti-intellectual, unreasoned barbarism within 'muscular Christianity' itself.

The ideals of domesticity and 'muscular Christianity' as aspects of 'gentility' were efforts at self-legitimation and elevation which were founded on insecurity. The Empire could only be maintained through armed forces disciplined in the belief in the legitimacy of unrelenting brute force to achieve their ends. Minus the elaboration of an ideology of the 'gentleman', and with the heightened expression of its predecessors, Boys of England and similar ventures paint a curiously more realistic picture of the muscular Christian in action than the accepted classics. Given these tensions, it is little wonder that these weeklies were condemned along with those they claimed to attack. All were pejoratively labelled 'penny dreadfuls'.

The Development of the Humourous Journal from the 1820s

We can extend this analysis of popular periodical publishing in political terms to the sphere of satirical journals. Very little work has been done on the cheap satirical journal from the 1820s onwards, despite the fact that there has been a good deal of cataloguing and critical work on graphic satire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The latter, however, has been conducted largely in terms of the biographical details of the artists or on the basis of theme, chronicling the period from the narrative paintings of William Hogarth to the 'golden age' of caricature, as exemplified by Gillray and Rowlandson [50]. This concentration is appropriate, given the mode of distribution of such works - the private commissioning and subsequent display of prints in special shops, or their illegal hawking about the country. It is not, however, appropriate to a system in which pictorial satirical works are included amid the humourous and non-humourous elements and the regular weekly reception of journals like Bell's Life in London in the 1820s, Figaro in London in the 1830s and Punch in the 1840s.

I am not even sure that we can make connections between Hogarth's hugely complex narrative sequences of paintings ('The Harlot's Progress' (1732), 'The Rake's Progress' (1735), etc.), mediated throughout by his own implicit moral framework [51] and the savage but variable attacks on named persons in the 'golden age'. Moreover, Hogarth himself was anxious to distinguish his work absolutely from caricature, which he considered a lesser form of satire [52]. The issues of artistic control and thematic

continuity are, however, indisputable, and to this extent Hogarth and the caricaturists can be linked.

The satirical journal was a different matter, however. To begin with, it encompassed different kinds of publication. The Age (1825) and the Satirist (1831) were high society scandal journals, dealing with the mostly sexual scandals of the rich and famous, and courting a middle or upper middle class readership. Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle (1822) was a Sunday illustrated newspaper aimed at a much lower readership level. Established in a period of relative social stability in the 1820s, it avoided political controversy by championing the rights of man to an abundance of sporting occasions and venues. Figaro in London (1831), as noted above, upheld the remaining strand of middle class radicalism after the 1832 Reform Act, and Cleave's London Satirist and Gazette of Variety (1836) was a working class radical version of journals like Figaro in London, pervaded by more political invective in its outrageous caricatures. What these journals had in common with each other and with other forms of periodical was their regular format, their repeated mode of address to the reader, which made them as much a verbal as a visual medium, and like these other journals, they marked a progressive transition from the engagement with serious political issues to a would-be apolitical orientation to their subjects. David Kunzle (1983) describes the history of graphic satire in the cheap satirical journal from 1815 to 1841 as follows:

'it was transformed from the sharply personal and political to the broadly and decorously social; from the independent, irregular, and often violently scurrilous political broadsheet to magazine and serial

illustration of regular periodicity, often subservient to a text and beholden to an editorial policy and mass taste not of the caricaturist's choosing. In short, it exchanged independence for security, sharpness for breadth, and guffaw for the smile' [53].

This process is certainly evident in the supercession of titles like the Age and Satirist by titles like The Town, which went for more anonymous targets; by the emergence of Punch as the dominant middle class satirical title in the 1840s, with its somewhat milder reformism than Figaro; the disappearance of Cleave's weekly in the '40s; and the change to a more standard newspaper format akin to the new Illustrated London News (1842) by Bell's.

If there is one recurrent factor in the history of graphic satire in the eighteenth century, it is the comparison of 'high' and 'low' life. Hogarth's sympathy for the labouring classes was frequently evident in his direct pictorial comparisons of the violent but lively and honest lower orders and the affected, posing higher echelons, corrupted both in the source of their wealth and in their physical manifestations. Many of the caricaturists lampooned figures like the 'dandy' of the Regency period, fashion-obsessed imitations of Beau Brummell, or chronicled the increasing invasion of once-exclusive arenas like the gardens at Vauxhall by aspiring social climbers. The satirical journals were no exception to the trend.

One of the most influential satirical works of the nineteenth century was Life in London (1821), a humorous chronicle of London 'high' and 'low' life by writer Pierce Egan and illustrators George and Robert Cruikshank. In 1820, Cruikshank had illustrated William Hone's radical pamphlet, 'The



Figure 4.1

'Tom and Jerry "Masquerading it" among the Cadgers in the "Back Slums" in the Holy Land' (from Pierce Egan and George Cruickshank (1821), Life in London - reproduced in Louis James (1976), English Popular Literature, p.147)



Political House that Jack Built'. This was a powerful allegorical piece in the aftermath of the 'Peterloo Massacre' [54] of 1819 and the new press censorship, reflecting the fact that middle and working classes were still closely identified as 'the people'. Cruikshank's progression to Life in London, and later, to book illustration indicates the overall direction of graphic satire in subservience to verbal humour, and there were significant aspects to this subservience.

Firstly, Life in London shows a movement in the satirical journal away from the language and symbols of radicalism, in spite of the attempted resurrection of radicalism by Figaro in London in the 1830s. Secondly, the verbal anchor is specifically tied to the setting in London, for it is an effort to fathom the apparent anomaly that the urban agglomeration of people meant that respectability and poverty were just minutes apart. It claimed that 'EXTREMES, in every point of view are daily to be met with in the Metropolis' [55], but in the absence of any political framework it concentrated on the behavioural aspects of the 'extremes'. London became a world of mutual trickery by the highest and lowest classes. Cruikshank's political sympathy for 'the people' translated into an attempt to show that ''low-life', darkness, fog, lamp-light, tenements and by-ways, provided as much interest as fine architecture and ordered space' [56], that the 'cadging' devices of the lowest showed more ingenuity and panache than the affected, self-inflatory false appearances of the upper classes [57]. The socially neutral guides to this world were the Cruikshanks and Egan themselves in the shape of three cartoon figures, Tom, Jerry and Logic, 'masquerading it' in

the rags and dialect of the cadgers (Figure 4.1). From the indictment of personal vice in caricatural representation, we can see in Life in London a progression to the equation of urban living with a set of typologies identifiable by their appearances and deceptions, and not by their positions on a hierarchy of power relations.

The influence of Life in London cannot be underestimated. It spawned a string of Sunday illustrated newspapers, including Pierce Egan's Life in London and Sporting Guide (1824) and Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle (1822) which bought Egan's title in 1827. Egan's was more of a gossip journal than a humorous piece, and pictorially was most notable for George Cruikshank's leaders for the different features - 'Police', 'Turf', 'Races' etc. Bell's marked the more dominant trend, picking up the basic tendency in the original Life in London towards the depiction of social types who could be laughed at by every social sector. In the late 1820s it commissioned caricatural imitations of Hogarth: 'The Gambler's Progress' (1828) and Robert Seymour's 'The Drunkard's Progress' and 'The Pugilist's Progress' (both 1829). It copied George Cruikshank's 'Illustrations of Time' as the 'Gallery of Comicalities'. Such journals delivered to the reader a pre-digested representation of town life in parallel with what Dickens was developing in his 'Sketches by Boz', and later in his novels. Apart from the absence of Dickens' implicit moral framework, however, these titles are quite distinct from what he was doing. The fundamental difference is the presence of the editorial figure,

as evolved from Tom, Jerry and Logic, and his function is the reassurance of the reader that they are on the same side in negotiating the town as experienced by town-dwellers. This function is brought to a new level by Renton Nicholson's The Town in the early 1840s.

The Town (1837) was an unstamped derivation of the Age and Satirist. Selling at 2d., it reached a broader readership than either of these titles (which sold at 7d. before and 6d. after 1836). The Town went unstamped, not as a defiant political gesture, but as a means of keeping its retail price down. To avoid legal problems, it avoided anything that could be construed as 'news'. By contrast with its upmarket predecessors, which identified a form of systematic corruption among the elite, justified by the fact that 'everybody' did it, including the editor himself, The Town's targets were types and places. Dealing, as Donald Gray (1982) has pointed out, with a new generation of first-time city-dwellers from among the ranks of lowly-runged clerks and the like, The Town adopted the Life in London function of guide to the town as an unfamiliar and potentially dangerous place. Gray describes this version of the town as

'exactly like a district in London where only the dangerous and the shrewd, like Nicholson and his fellow entrepreneurs of pleasure, really live. The others come to disport themselves and to take some not radically damaging risks' [58].

The dangers of the town are screened and rendered relatively innocent. The combination of fascination and fear that a reading of Life in London, or at a different level the Satirist might

have generated is transformed. As Gray remarks on the Satirist, its scandal 'is not an amusing or denigrating addition to the news. It is rather an invitation to a dark reading of the news itself' [59]. Institutionalised cheating in The Town is represented by 'medical quacks, sellers of patent medicines (who advertised heavily in the journal), promoters of stock and insurance companies and loan societies, and the proprietors of dishonest employment agencies' [60]. This kind of cheating is fragmented and unsystematic, likely to affect the reader in some way, but by no means on a par with 'the city of vice and danger that many were beginning to perceive as the great wen, a dark labyrinth of degradation' [61]. It was a world that could be admired as much as condemned for its trickery.

This is by no means an extensive overview of humorous journals at this time and much work remains to be done to establish the exact differences between these journals. We can state generally, however, that the move from the personal and political to the social and typical reflected the fact that the humorous weekly was never a medium for working class radicalism. Together with the dilution of Figaro's middle-class reformism by Punch it is indicative of the increasing political stability in the '40s. The 'Metropolis' becomes a shared social problem and potential delight. It is a world of mutual cheating, populated by types like these in The Town, or like the 'gent' as described by Albert Smith [62]. These are not quite the same as the 'high' and 'low' life of Life in London, for the attacks on the affected manner of the 'dandies' and the celebration of the vitality of

the cadgers are derived to some extent from the polarity of social relations as portrayed in the 'The Political House ...'. It can be seen as continuous with Life in London and with the Satirist and Age in its combination of horror and admiration, though it is by now much less serious than ever before.

We can make important links between satirical journals and the other sectors of periodical publishing in the 1840s to the extent that they reflect the beginnings of a new period of social stability in Britain, though in different ways. The presentation of a social stage populated by different social types unrelated by class or power is clearly distinct from the celebration of domestic bliss, but it is related in its cultivation of a pseudo-intimate bond with the reader which is entirely abstracted from any political backdrop. In this movement, we can sense the origins of a new kind of depoliticised 'popular' publishing.

The problem with this vision of urban life as elaborated by The Town [63] is that London was actually the 'great wen' that social investigators in the '40s were claiming. Much of the appeal of a journal like The Town was its attempt to transcend the paradox of the city's alienation of the individual despite its crowding. But the more serious problem of the city, and specifically of London, for contemporary observers, was the proximity of the classes, of Egan's 'extremes'. No longer seen in colourful, behavioural terms, these were now the extremes of the prosperous and the starving, Disraeli's "two nations", for London was not only the financial and cultural capital of Britain, it was also the "capital of poverty" [64]. Its crowding made its problem of destitution more apparent than anywhere else,

and the 'problem' was translated by observers directly into a danger that the lowest class could swamp those above. Such fears were realised in the cholera epidemic of the late 1840s. Cholera festered in the filth of the slums, but such was the proximity of London's population that it was a universal threat [65]. There was a marked shift in intellectual social commentaries through the 1840s from concern at the conditions of the northern industrial towns to the apparently self-perpetuating poverty of London. The problems of the north were being solved by the factory legislation, but in London the problem seemed to be more 'cultural' than 'economic', its poor were apparently content to remain in that state.

This idea affected both left and right alike. For Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto the very lowest underclass, the lumpenproletariat, was actually a serious threat to their own revolutionary hopes, since it was without any class identity and could be bought by the bourgeoisie. In The Class Struggle in France (1850) they describe it as a 'mass sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds, gens sans feu et sans aveu' [66]. For Chartist fiction writer, G.W.M. Reynolds, who liberally spiced his work with indictments of the exploitation of working people by those in power, there is likewise a combination of sympathy and revulsion at the lowest of his slum-dwelling subjects [67]. The difference between the distinction of 'ragged' and 'dangerous' classes on the one hand and the

'respectable' poor on the other, as elaborated by middle class observers, was not far removed from ideas on the left. These underclasses were equally a threat to both.

While the humorous journals show a general move towards the presentation of a shared sense of humour as a means of negotiating the pretentious, the morally hypocritical, or the political manoeuvres of the Whigs and Tories, a legitimisation of an apparent new era of social stability, the 'cadgers' of Life in London had grown in stature in serious social commentaries, and if Manchester was the principal cause for concern in the 1840s, London was to become the centre of attention for commentators in the '50s. Much of the credit for this can be attributed to Henry Mayhew.

Mayhew was a humorous journalist with Figaro in London and Punch in the 1830s and '40s. Following his well-received articles on the cholera-affected districts and some of the trades of London in the Morning Chronicle in 1849, he conceived a plan to 'consider the whole of the metropolitan poor under three separate phases, according as they will work, they can't work, and they won't work' [68]. This was originally to be conducted through the Chronicle, but following disagreements, Mayhew resigned and continued his work as a series of weekly pamphlets, selling at 2d. By 1852, there were sixty-three and in 1861-62 these were published as four volumes, entitled London Labour and the London Poor.

The most interesting aspect of Mayhew's work was the way that its focus narrowed from early concerns with poverty as a result of casualised industries to "The London Street-Folk;

comprising Street Sellers, Street Buyers, Street Finders, Street Performers, Street Artisans, Street Labourers" (the subtitle of Volumes 1-3) and "Those That Will Not Work, comprising Prostitutes, Thieves, Swindlers and Beggars" (the subtitle to Volume 4). This reflected the contemporary concerns with what was seen as a counter-culture. Mayhew deemed his subjects a separate "race" or "tribe" with their own characteristic physiognomy, they were the 'wandering' tribe, as opposed to the 'civilised' tribe of normal people. He even deemed the 'costermongers' to be almost a separate race among the 'street-folk', so extreme were their characteristics [69]. From here he proceeds to describe the various trades in detail, offers statistics on numbers, earnings and expenditures, and enlivens each piece with interviews, reproduced in a rough approximation of dialect punctuated by his own observations. The latter frequently refer to the conditions of squalor and employment insecurity which encourage the 'beast' in his subjects, but this conflicts with the stress on innate features in the opening analogy, so that the more respectable and sympathetic plight of the at least productive workers in the early Chronicle articles (largely clothing workers in sweatshop conditions) is obscured.

London Labour represents a convergence of separate but related developments. Mayhew's racial and territorial language had been used by the Royal Commission and Select Committee reports in the 1840s [70]. But his verbatim use of interviews and his fascination with the liveliness of working class speech are more akin to the attempts to reconstruct a



vibrant popular culture by the radicals of the 1830s. This peculiar combination of revulsion and fascination pitched Mayhew somewhere between two modes, to neither of which he actually belonged. Although London Labour represents a new departure, Mayhew seems to have been influenced most by his career to date in humourous periodical journalism.

Mayhew's achievement was to express very clearly the fears running through the social commentaries of the 1840s and undercurrent to humourous weeklies since the 1820s - of a very deliberate form of cheating the social system from its lowest level.

We can sense these fears also in the sensationalism of the Sunday papers. This sensationalism was quite distinct from what was happening in The Town. The readership for such papers was anyway more working class than lower middle class [71], they dealt directly with urban crime, and in a largely sympathetic way. But the current in these papers, and in the boys' weeklies, was towards a superior, less sympathetic orientation to such criminal activities, and this tendency progressed to the end of the century, when notions about the 'criminal mind' became more overt.

We can sense this in Life in London and as an undercurrent to The Town's version of the city as a dangerous place. Writing in the 1850s and writing with a degree of sympathy akin to that of the Sunday papers, Mayhew also expresses the reverse side to the abhorrence of such cheating - a certain admiration, for the figures in London Labour held out the attractive prospect of escape from the notions of exalted domesticity which affected

both the middle and the 'respectable' working classes alike. The 'culture' of the street was both a threat to everybody and, potentially, an avenue of escape. At the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851, a celebration of social progress, science, invention and the promise of social amelioration there persisted, right at the heart of the Empire a primitive, barbaric and violent 'race' apart which completely repudiated all of the Exhibition's claims for 'civilisation'. Mayhew's exposure of this reworked a current running through the humorous weeklies from the 1820s to the '40s, and one which would continue throughout the history of the humorous periodical in the nineteenth century.

While these arguments are founded on limited empirical evidence I have tried to show that the 'popular' periodical from the 1830s to the 1860s constitutes one of the ways in which the hegemonic aspirations of the Victorian bourgeoisie were negotiated. This 'negotiation' encompassed a range of different but related processes. We can perceive an active engagement, in the 1830s, with the nature of class identity, the experience of exploitation, and the propagation of political aims in periodical publishing. It was inextricably linked to the growth of a distinctly working class radical movement. By the 1840s, political conditions were changing. Political reform mollified the strength of radicalism's assault on authority. Correspondingly, the ways in which journals dealt with these issues were bound to change. Such changes were, however, by no means uniform - in the cases of juvenile and family magazines

they were characterised by internal contradictions.

In the humourous journals, the principal change was towards increasing concerns with personal security and survival in the face of threats from below, with decorum and the cultivation of worldly wisdom in the new environment of the metropolis, which held the enticements of economic gain and self-elevation. This change was largely a function of the new approximation of the social classes in an urbanising England, with the attendant problems of unsanitary conditions, disease, crowding, the threat of physical violence; and the alienation of the individual, his/her isolation in an apparently sophisticated world and the problems of negotiating this world in behaviour, language and dress. These journals both reflected and contributed to the sense of an emerging 'urban' culture. At this stage it was a 'culture' whose promise and danger co-existed in the closest proximity. Now these apparently apolitical concerns were in fact highly politically charged. They were far removed from the melodramas of the family or juvenile magazines. They were generally specific to the cities and in particular to London. And in the perceptible move from political melodrama in the 1830s to a continuous discourse on personal security and advancement, there is a negotiation of the fact that, in varying degrees, the political demands of their readerships had been met. Yet in the latent threats running through these journals, in related social investigation (Mayhew) and the almost anachronistic political melodrama of Reynolds, we can see that this nascent democracy, if only at the level of social intercourse, was based on the exclusion, through fear, of an urban underclass.

In these developments we can trace the origins of the comics in the 1890s. If we were to itemise the causal factors, we could list them as, firstly, the urbanisation of England and the expansion of London; secondly, the birth a new era of political reform in the 1840s; thirdly, the cultivation of a 'common', 'urban' culture founded on the exclusion of the lowest underclass. It is on these three dimensions and the changes that were to take place in these respects that we can examine what I have deemed the second and third phases in the evolution of the Victorian humourous journal. It is to that second phase that we must turn our attention now.

## CHAPTER FOUR - NOTES

1. Raymond Williams (1984(1962)), The Long Revolution, pp.70-88.
2. Louis James (1963), Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850; (1976), English Popular Literature 1819-1851; 'The Trouble With Betsy: periodicals and the common reader in mid-nineteenth century England', in Joanne Shattock & Michael Wolff (eds., 1982), The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings.
3. Cited in E. P. Thompson (1980), The Making of the English Working Class, p.805.
4. See also James (1976), op. cit., Chapter One, 'Magic into Print', pp.17-27.
5. From Henry Hetherington's newspaper, the Poor Man's Guardian (1831). See below.
6. Apart from The Poor Man's Guardian, similar titles included the Political Letter, The Reformer, The Radical, The Ballot (all 1831).
7. James (1963), op. cit, p.13.
8. In Thompson (1980), op. cit., p.804; see also Patricia Hollis (1970), The Pauper Press, p.114.
9. See Robin Estill, 'The Factory Lad: Melodrama as Propaganda', Theatre Quarterly, Vol. 1, No.4, Oct.-Dec. 1971; and Anna Clark, 'The Politics of Seduction in English Popular Culture, 1748-1848', in Jean Radford (1984, ed.) The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction. Estill links the attacks in John Walkers's play, The Factory Lad, on the Reform Bill, the new economics of the industrialists (classic laissez-faire liberalism) etc., directly with parallel passages from the Poor Man's Guardian. The language is almost interchangeable. Clark analyses common plot structures in the plays in terms of the elimination of the working man's independence under benevolent paternalism in a ruthless new world of agrarian capitalism. In the persistent theme of the seduction of the farmer's daughter by aristocratic libertines, her virginity becomes the last symbol of respectability and independence. The factory owner and the absentee landlord are as one in undermining the 'traditional' patriarchal family structure' (p.55). In addition, both Thompson (1980), op. cit., pp. 808-9, and Clive Barker ('The Chartists, Theatre, Reform and Research', Theatre Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1971, esp. pp. 5-6) emphasise a parallel between theatrical performance in the penny-gaffs and saloons in the 1830s and the unstamped press in that their illegality conditioned an openly defiant radicalism. The ban, which applied to all theatres apart from Drury Lane and Covent Garden, was only lifted in 1843 by the Theatres Regulation Act (although earlier theatres for the rising middle classes had been unofficially allowed by magistrates to continue).
10. See Walter E. Houghton, 'Periodical literature and the articulate classes', in Shattock and Wolff (eds., 1982), op. cit.

11. The inspiration of its reformist Whig founder, Lord Brougham, the SDUK was set up in 1826 as a means of promoting the supposedly politically neutral concept of 'GENERAL UTILITY'. John Wade's the Gorgon (1818-19) described the concept as
 

'the sole and ultimate object of society; and we shall never consider either sacred or valuable any natural or prescriptive claims that may be opposed to it.'

- The Gorgon, June 20, 1818. Cited in Thompson (1980), op. cit., p.847.
12. David Kunzle quoting The Penny Magazine in 'Between Broadsheet Caricature and "Punch": Cheap Newspaper Cuts for the Lower Classes in the 1830s', Art Journal, Vol. 43, No. 4, p.346, 1983.
13. The Penny Magazine had numerous rivals, including the longer-enduring Chambers Edinburgh Journal, published from 1831 by the Chambers brothers; and direct imitations like The True Halfpenny Magazine of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1832) and The Weekly Visitor, conducted by a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1832).
14. Chapbooks were cheap romantic novelettes in circulation since the 17th century and distributed by hawkers and street-sellers. See Victor Neuburg (1968), The Penny Histories.
15. James (1982) op. cit., p.351.
16. See John Goldby and Bill Purdue (1981), 'The emergence of an urban popular culture', Unit 4, The Historical Development of Popular Culture in Britain, Part 1, Block 2, p.29; Louis James (1963) op. cit., pp.21-22 and (1976) op. cit., p.36.
17. Williams (1984), op. cit., p.73.
18. See James (1963), op. cit., Chapter Three: E.S. Turner (1948), Boys Will Be Boys, Chapters I-III, Michael Anglo (1977), Penny Dreadfuls and Other Victorian Horrors, pp.74-94, and Victor Neuburg (1977), Popular Literature: A History and Guide, pp.170-182.
19. See Neuburg (1977), op. cit., pp.171-172; Louis James (1963) op. cit. pp.25-26.
20. The quote is from one of Lloyd's fiction writers, Thomas Frost, in Forty Years Recollections (1860) - cited in E. S. Turner (1948), op. cit., p.22, and also by Neuburg (1977), op. cit., p.172, Anglo (1977), op. cit., p.76, and Virginia Berridge, 'Popular Sunday Papers and mid-Victorian Society', in G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (1978 eds.), Newspaper History from the 17th Century to the Present, p.253.
21. John Medcraft (1945), A Bibliography of the Penny Bloods of Edward Lloyd - cited in Neuburg (1977), op. cit., p.171. Harrison Ainsworth was most notable for popularising the highwayman genre with his serialised novel Rookwood (1834). This transformed Dick Turpin into the 18th century Robin

- Hood, and parts of it were later republished, unacknowledged, as Turpin's Ride to York (Glover, 1841). Ann Radcliffe's novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho in the late eighteenth century is usually credited as the first great gothic novel, employing all the classic devices of castles, dungeons, imprisoned heroines and relentless villains.
22. James (1963), op. cit., p.33.
  23. Cited in *ibid.*, p.37.
  24. O'Connor's Northern Star stated that 'we think novel-reading, at its best only an indifferent substitute for a worse occupation of time' - 28 January 1843, cited in Louis James (1976), op. cit., p.38; on the other hand, the Penny Magazine itself would not carry fiction.
  25. Preface, Lloyd's Penny Weekly Miscellany, I, p.1 - cited in James (1963), op. cit., p.37. Similar ventures included George Biggs' The Family Herald (1842); Edwin Dipple's Family Journal (1846); The Home Circle (1848); The Family Friend (1849); and Household Words (1850) - see James (1963), op. cit., p.39.
  26. Berridge (1978), op. cit., p.257.
  27. *Ibid.*, p.256.
  28. Anthony Wood (1982 (1960)), Nineteenth Century Britain 1815-1914, p.131.
  29. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism', in (1983) Languages of Class, p.163.
  30. Robert Gray, 'Bourgeois hegemony in Victorian Britain', in T. Bennett, G. Martin, C. Mercer, J. Woollacott (1981 eds.) Culture, Ideology and Social Process, p.242.
  31. Clark (1984), op. cit., p.62.
  32. James ((1982), op. cit., p.356 and (1976), op. cit., p.42, cites Thomas Peckett Prest's adaptation of Hannah Maria Jones' 6d 'number' novel, 'The Gipsy Girl (1836), renamed 'Ela the Outcast'; and 'Ada the Betrayed', the first serial in Lloyd's ... Miscellany and written by the editor himself, James Rymer. James (1963), op. cit., p.87.
  33. Elaine Showalter, 'Review Essay: Literary Criticism', Signs, No. 1, 1975, p.435.
  34. See Helen Waite Papashvily (1956), All the Happy Endings; Nina Baym (1978), Women's Fiction.
  35. Martha Vicinus, '"Helpless and Unfriended": Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama', New Literary History, XlII, no. 1, p.141.  
 This can be said of 'Ada ...' and 'Ela ...' They defend the heroine's rights to acts of her own volition, but the ideal context is marriage, a constraining social construct idealised by the nineteenth century bourgeoisie. To this extent, a story like 'Ada ...' stands both against the legitimization of the social world in the editor's address, and simultaneously complements it. Its melodramatic language is certainly akin to the politically mediated melodramas structured around class opposites. But with a more active heroine, ironically it highlights even more the weakness of radical politics - the residual spectre of sanctified patriarchal relations.
  36. Sunday at Home (1852); The British Workman (1853), etc.

37. Anglo (1977), op. cit., p.84; Turner (1948), op. cit., p.71.
38. Anglo (1977), op. cit., p.85
39. See John R. Gillis (1981), Youth and History, pp.98-103.
40. Ibid., p.110.
41. Turner (1948), op. cit., pp.71-77.
42. For a detailed analysis of the 'penny dreadful' debate, see Patrick A. Dunae (1975), British Juvenile Literature in an Age of Empire, 1880-1914, Ph. D. Dissertation, Manchester University, passim. On the evolving paranoia regarding juvenile delinquency in this period, see Margaret May (1973), 'Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', Victorian Studies, 17; and on the historical continuity of inaccurately grounded fears of juvenile crime, see Geoffrey Pearson (1983), Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears.
43. Louis James (1973), 'Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons', Victorian Studies, vol. 17, p.90.
44. Ibid.
45. 'Editors Address', Boys of England, 1866, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.16.
46. James (1973), op. cit., p.93.
47. Ibid., p.95, citing Boys of England, Vol. X, November 4, 1871.
48. A comparable example, taken at random from a Boys of England (Vol. IV, No. 93, 1868) reinforces the point. Chronicling the adventures of 'POOR RAY, THE DRUMMER BOY' and subtitled 'A STORY FOUNDED ON FACTS', this episode has Ray flogged in the woods by Corporal Slasher for no other reason than the indulgence of a highly sexualised sadism. Ray endures his punishment with 'not a cry' and, in the spirit of Tom Brown, keeps it secret. Later, wrongly accused of killing the sergeant major's cat, Ray agrees not to 'split' on the other drummers, only to be ridiculed later for his code of honour: 'what a fool you were not to split'. The episode climaxes before Ray's impending sentence of lashes (from Slasher) is to be carried out. While there is a hint of secret admiration for Ray's bravery from the Colonel, which may ultimately save him from courtmartial the story (written 'BY A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE "ARMY AND NAVY GAZETTE"') is a record of sadism and nihilism, and as with all such serial stories, we can be sure that Ray's sufferings will be stretched over as many weeks as possible. The indulgence of ferociously sadistic deeds in these stories far outweighs the moral resolution, inevitably postponed until the collective readers' interest showed signs of flagging.
49. In 'Jack Harkaway After Schooldays', for example, Jack finds a coral island, but does not follow in the Robinson Crusoe tradition of Ballantyne's heroes. Rather, there is a blow by blow description of 'savages' eating a victim alive, but following this,



'Hunsden buries Jack up to the neck in hot sand and leaves him to die, while Jack makes the islanders pierce and tattoo Hunsden from head to foot with sharp fish bones.'

- Boys of England, Vol. X, Nov. 4th, 1871. Cited in James (1973), op. cit., p.98.

50. M. Dorothy George (1949-1954), Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum and (1967) Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire. George's emphasis is firmly on the artists and themes rather than on the journals in which satirical work began to appear in the 1820s.
51. Hogarth worked during the first era of imperial conquest in Africa. Blacks at this time were generally portrayed as decorative ornaments in paintings commissioned for the new generation which were benefitting directly from the Empire. David Dabydeen convincingly argues that Hogarth was unique at this time in transforming his black figures into outsiders, akin to his portrayal of the working classes in critically surveying the progressive perversities and hypocrisies of the upper classes which resulted directly from their imperial wealth and from their exploitation of the working classes. Ostensibly, for the most part comedies of mannered respectability combined with the moral collapse and death of the principal protagonist(s) ('The Rake's Progress' (1732), 'The Harlot's Progress' (1735), Marriage a la Mode (1745)), Hogarth's works are filled with important moral-political points, conveyed through his minor figures. See David Dabydeen (1987), Hogarth's Blacks, passim.
52. William Hogarth (1753), The Analysis of Beauty. Cited in David Kunzle (1973), The Early Comic Strip, p.358.
53. Kunzle (1983), op. cit., p.339.
54. The 'Peterloo Massacre' was the description given to the events at Peterloo in 1819 when a mass meeting of 50,000 people was attacked by a troop of Hussars. Eleven were killed and 400 injured.
55. Cited in James (1976), op. cit., p.145.
56. Louis James 'Cruikshank and Early Victorian Caricature', History Workshop, 6, 1978, p.113.
57. 'Cadging' encompassed a variety of forms of begging. This, according to the OED, is the first known use of the term in print.
58. Donald J. Gray, 'Early Victorian Scandalous Journalism: Renton Nicholson's The Town (1837-42)', in Shattock et al. (ed., 1982), op. cit., p.336.
59. Ibid., p.327.
60. Ibid., p.334.
61. Ibid., p.345.
62. Albert Smith (1847), The Natural History of the Gent.
63. In addition to The Town there were numerous imitations, including Sam Sly, or, The Town (1848-9), Paul Pry (1848-50), Fast Life (undated), Cheap John (undated), Peeping Tom

- (undated), Fast Man (1850), and a revised version of the The Town (1849-50).
64. On contemporary observations on the proximity of the "two nations" in London, see Gertrude Himmelfarb's chapter on the 'culture of poverty' in (1984), The Idea of Poverty, pp. 307-370.
  65. Dickens was the first to explore the problem of the universal threat of viral infection through the smallpox epidemic in Bleak House (1851).
  66. Cited in Himmelfarb (1984), op. cit., p.391.
  67. Reynolds was both editor and principal author on his The London Journal (1845) and Reynold's Miscellany of Romance, General Interest, Science and Art.
  68. Cited in Victor Neuburg (1987), 'Introduction' to Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, p.xviii.
  69. Himmelfarb (1984), op. cit., p.325.
  70. The 1842 Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, for example, compares its subjects to 'foreigners', 'savages' and 'animals' - see *ibid.*, p.358.
  71. See Raymond Williams, 'The press and popular culture: an historical perspective', in Boyce et al. (1978), op. cit.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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TOWARDS A 'MASS' ENTERTAINMENT: ALLY SLOPER'S HALF-HOLIDAY  
(1884-1923)

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In order to illustrate the transitional phase from the birth of a new kind of humourous journal to the comics, this chapter, together with Chapter Six, will examine one exemplary title from this period, Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday (1884-1923, henceforth ASHH). In this examination I draw heavily on Peter Bailey's (1983) analysis of ASHH in which, as I have pointed out above (Chapter Three), he investigates the theoretical problems of 'leisure' and 'social history' through textual analysis.

A new mode of dialogue: the figure of Ally Sloper

ASHH emerged as a natural extension of an earlier publication, C.H. Ross' Judy. Commenced in 1867, and along with its nearest rival, Fun (1861), Judy was part of a new wave of cheap, twopenny humourous weeklies in the 1860s. As David Kunzle (1985) argues, these developments extended the elements of the humourous weeklies of the '40s to a broader, decidedly 'petty bourgeois' readership [1]. What distinguished Judy from earlier efforts was its introduction from the early stages, of a regular character, Ally Sloper who, as written by Ross himself and drawn by his wife Marie Duval, appeared in both single cartoons and pictorial narratives. By the 1870s Sloper became the most popular cartoon character since Tom and Jerry in the 1820s and the first to

appear in any one periodical with such regularity. He was, however, quite distinct from the Life in London authors 'masquerading it' among the cadgers, and likewise stood apart from the upper middle class political orientation of Punch or the concentration on sexual or personalised scandal in The Town. Sloper marked a transition to something qualitatively new.

Ostensibly he was a straightforward enough low-life figure, a proletarian loafer whose money-making (or saving) schemes were exemplified by his name: 'alley sloping' was the common practise of 'sloping' down the alley to avoid the rent collector. Unlike the real enough cadgers, however, or the disguised Egan and Cruikshank (Tom and Jerry), Sloper was a fictionalised character. As such he was more a colourfully innocent and lovable rogue rather than a semi-criminal type [2]. By the 1870s, he developed the additional identity of Judy's journalist and editor. In these roles, he advanced beyond the standard formula of editorial guide to social types on the urban landscape. He became the fictional editorial guide to himself as trickster (Figure 5.1).

Such was Sloper's popularity that in the early 1870s, collections of his adventures were assembled in special 6d. and 1s. collections [3]. While Ally Sloper clearly continued the current in the humorous weeklies of the '40s and in Mayhew, a fascination with the licence and liberation of semi-criminality, his realisation in Judy provided an avenue of innocent escape. Kunzle explains that his

'popularity was hyped as wild notoriety, which was all

part of the fun, and Judy attributed to the mob represented as attacking the editorial offices at '73' (Fleet St.) two distinct motivations: to get Sloper, the universal cheat, that is, to recover their money and/ or wring his neck; and to get Ally Sloper, to enjoy the journalistic phenomenon which seemed to justify and render innocent their own dishonest fancies' [4].

In this sense, then, Judy ushered in a new era of publishing in which the overt presence of editor, writer or artist is not directly visible in the product. The sort of dialogue-like interaction with the reader of earlier efforts becomes much more formulaic through the figure of Sloper, and the role of the investigated and investigator are collapsed into one in the medium of the paper itself. Any class tensions are systematically defused by the reduction of criminality to the mutually recognised in-joke of 'cheating'.

#### Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday

Both Kunzle and Bailey distinguish between the early manifestation of Sloper in Judy and his later promotion to ASHH in May 1884.

Judy had been bought by the Dalziel brothers in 1872, and one of their sons, Gilbert, was sent to serve under Ross. It was he who began ASHH as his first independent venture, an effort to break into the even larger penny weekly market [5]. This move conditioned some corresponding changes in the character.

Marie Duval's drawings for Judy were lively but stick-like and crude. However, they were suited to Sloper's two-dimensional character at that time. When W.G. Baxter took on the task of drawing Sloper for the large, single cartoons on the front page

of ASHH he gave him a visual complexity which matched his new guise. For, no longer the proletarian cheat, Sloper became the 'Friend of Man' (occasionally abbreviated to F.O.M. after his name) extending warm greetings and prepared to cheat indiscriminately all his readers, irrespective of class. He became both a 'man of the people' and a 'man about town'. In this new guise he leaves the ranks of the identifiable cheap crooks to adopt aspects of various, well-established types. He is the 'Gent', a figure from the '40s, a lower-runged dandy drawn 'from the very bottom of the respectable class, the scrubby clerks, apprentices and medical students' [6], cursed by a comically misguided sense of high fashion. Yet he is also the champagne-swilling 'Swell' of the music-halls, whose (by contrast) accurate fashion-sense and adherence to etiquette were actually the objects of derision in the music hall song. He is 'Arry', the vulgar 'Cockney Cad', the 'toff', an aristocratic twit, and the 'masher', a sexually promiscuous rake. As Bailey tells us,

'[i]n his new image Sloper ... represented a significant conflation of low and high life conventions within a single figure, where previously they had served to distinguish separate and contrasting characters' [7].

Baxter's superb visual creation (impeccably imitated by his successor, W.F. Thomas, after his early death in 1888) preserves Duval's props - stovepipe hat, ill-fitting tails and tatty umbrella, equally insignia of a socially sliding bourgeois or an ostentatious but out-of-pocket petty bourgeois. His clothes are never ragged, but just crinkled enough to cast doubts on the

degree of respectability they might afford him. His long, bulbous nose suggests excessive drinking habits, and his gangly shape is contorted into postures which reveal an 'unabashed sartorial confidence', but equally perch him precisely on a border with self-humiliation [8] (see Figure 7.3 and discussion below).

In this shape, Ally Sloper not only collapses the roles of social investigator and investigated into a single figure, he also incorporates a number of the figures from the social stage of the earlier humorous weeklies in a way which robs them of their specific social origins and makes them legible in any number of different ways. But in this function he, himself, is historically specific to the 1880s.

#### Sloper and the Leisure Industry

Judy had consistently championed the 1870 Education Act as a democratising gift to its reader. As Kunzle explains, this ran against its generally pro-Tory politics in a fairly obvious ulterior motive to optimise its readership [9].

ASHH went beyond educational opportunities to promise the pleasure-principled democracy of unlimited leisure, temporally and spatially, commencing with the new institution of the Saturday half-holiday itself from the 1870s onwards (hence the title). Coupled with the new bank and company holidays, the half-holiday seemed to set the seal on the absolute division of 'leisure' from the mechanised, or at least routinised world of



Figure 5.]

'The "Unprofessional Vagabond" '

(from Judy, 2 July, 1873, p.112

- reproduced in David Kunzle, 'The First Ally Sloper: The Earliest Popular Cartoon Character as a Satire on the Victorian Work Ethic', Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 8, no.1, 1985)





Figure 5.2

'The First Favourite Everywhere' (Sloper on Derby Day)

- reproduced in Bailey (1983), op. cit., p.25

No reference given.

'work', whether for manual or office labour [10]. It provided the temporal limits within which the new spatial venues of organised sports - football, cricket etc. - could operate. In addition, the continued expansion of the rail network and the innovation, from the 1860s, of cheap excursion rates, made the once exclusive seaside resorts and race meetings more widely accessible and more numerous [11]. Ally Sloper's reflection of those changes meant that he consequently was to change his habits, varying his adventures now from the office till to these new scenarios, and in the new medium of a full front-page cartoon with a paragraph commentary below. But to achieve this extension, Sloper's persona was considerably transformed into a man for all seasons.

As his main vehicle, the front-page cartoon sends him through various, usually topical, adventures and backdrops - the Boat Race, the Derby, or resorts like Margate - where he frequently rubs shoulders with the famous, changing his normal attire to match the occasion, but never quite managing to rub their noses in it (Figure 5.2). His promise of democratised access to the former preserves of the elite reinforces the notion cultivated by 'rational recreationists' that the compartmentalised sphere of 'leisure' could provide venues in which class divisions were eroded by shared patterns of behaviour at play. And yet he consistently spoofs this notion of codified behaviour. This, argues Bailey, can be read as having a dual function. It massages the reader's aspirations to elevation, and it reassures those who have made it of the buffoonery of the aspirant.

In this new role Ally Sloper is also acting as a

guide to the commoditisation of both necessities and luxuries. He celebrates the packaged, commoditised nature of leisure consumption - the isolated seaside 'excursion' etc., the change of clothes and props (and therefore role) for each new occasion, even if he never quite manages to get it right himself. And he becomes a packaged commodity, extended by special Sloper merchandise (pipes, cigarettes etc.), which was given away as competition prizes. He was even extended by 'impersonations' on the stage, for it was widely believed, as with Sherlock Holmes, that he really existed [12]. The commoditisation is further supported by his daughter Tootsie's fashion column inside. Therefore we can draw two conclusions. Sloper's hedonistic tendency may seem to subvert the tenets of rational recreationism, but the fundamental element in the latter was that recreation should be a controlled adjunct to industry without appearing as such. By separating 'leisure' from 'work' and celebrating its democratising possibilities, ASHH actually reinforces the notion of recreation as a frustration vent accessible to every class. And the fascination with clothes and other props in ASHH reinforces the fetish of fashion as something universally accessible and free of any mediation by class.

In the construction of the concepts of equalised 'mass' or 'popular' readership and 'mass' markets, then, we can sense, to some extent, an unproblematic reflection of one aspect of the middle class programme for hegemony through a seemingly self-contained figure who brings to an end the role of maintaining a dialogue in negotiating the reader's class position. By this

stage he appears to embody a formula which offers enough to each reader to cultivate the feeling of participation within an equalised populace, if only symbolic, through the celebration of institutionalised 'leisure'. And for the higher status middle class reader [13], he symbolically defused the threat from below.

Yet, Sloper's populism is not quite so simple. Unlike his journalist predecessors, he is basically a guide to certain aspects of urban and non-urban leisure pursuits, and despite his man-about-townishness, ultimately he returns to his wife and family in suburban Battersea at the end of every adventure. His adventures are actually recounted under each cartoon by his daughter, Tootsie, and the familial anchoring is reinforced by Mrs. Sloper's regular appearances and by Tootsie's fashion column. Although in ASHH he becomes much more the man-about-town philanderer than in Judy, this familial anchoring suggests that we can more precisely identify his appeal. How exactly we can do so is suggested by the fact that despite the evidence of quite a diverse readership, the occupations of competition entrants (requested for all competitions, this was a rudimentary and cheap form of market research, proving the broad social appeal of the magazine in the range of winners' occupations (from none at all to professionals)) gave the impression that the magazine caters predominantly for those in the twilight social zones of 'lower middle' and 'skilled working' classes [14].

#### A suburban home

Historians have shown that it was to these class fractions in particular that suburban development in Britain in the late

nineteenth century catered most [15]. This pattern, it is believed, was conditioned by the needs of these classes to forge separate class identities. The position of London as the commercial centre of the Empire generated a new breed of 'lower middle class' clerks, elevated to the fringes of the middle class without sufficient earning capacity to keep them there comfortably. The members of the 'skilled working class' or 'labour aristocracy', meanwhile, were concerned to establish a cultural distance from their inferiors. 'Journeyman Engineer' Thomas Wright explained in 1873 that

'Between the artisan and the unskilled labourer a gulf is fixed ... The artisan creed with regard to the labourer is, that they are an inferior class, and that they should be made to know and kept in their place' [16].

Hence a shared interest in cultivating the family home as an exclusive preserve apart from the workplace, and the exodus to the new suburban housing estates [17].

For both fractions, also, we can sense a need to develop a code of 'respectable' behaviour.

The 'lower middle class' was a vague category which included occupations like shop assistants, teachers and clerks without defined boundaries. Unlike its German counterpart, this nascent 'class' was never characterised by political organisation. Studies, therefore have concentrated on its general, 'cultural' features - the sense of heightened individualism, the emphasis on self-help and the value and defence of private property, the almost absurd emphasis on propriety, mannered respectability, the

pretensions, the jingoistic politics, etc. [18]. These exaggerated features, in addition to the exaltation of familial integrity, can be seen to stem from a universally felt insecurity among its members, for office workers in the lower ranks were rarely very well paid and vulnerable to dismissal as their peers multiplied [19]. Faced with inevitable insecurities, as Christopher Caudwell has pointed out, there was an obsession with competition, rather than collective organisation to improve conditions: 'it is the peculiar suffering of the petit bourgeoisie that they are called upon to hate each other'. G.L. Anderson has chronicled the failure of organisations like the National Union of Clerks in the face of such 'values', parodies of bourgeois traditions [20]. Yet, despite the individualist emphasis, however, the exaltation of these values can nevertheless be seen to be characterised by a certain homogeneity among its 'lower middle class' exponents. While this matter has yet to be satisfactorily elaborated by historians, there is a wealth of satirical works on the clerks in this period, evidently intentioned for a higher middle class readership. The outstanding work in this regard is Diary of a Nobody (1892), which is still reprinted and was televised by ITV in the 1970s [21]. For the 'skilled working class' there were the 'Sunday best' clothes, the virginal front room, essential elements in a new code of 'respectability' in a period that Richard Hoggart was later to describe as 'traditional' [22].

The expansion of the sphere of 'leisure' would, then, have had important implications for these class fractions in particular because it permitted the more ostentatious flaunting

of newly achieved status in public than the cultivation of the domestic preserve [23]. This is not to homogenise these groups, for their status aspirations were as much to do with mutual exclusion as with elevation from their 'inferiors' [24]. What I am arguing is that Sloper can be seen to embody aspects of these different public codifications of behaviour simultaneously or in different degrees and ways at different times. Sloper's frequent disruptions of the festivities at seaside resorts and elsewhere, for example, reflects one of the most outstanding anomalies in the working class code of 'respectability': that is the persistence of an element of violence in the celebration of festive occasions and venues, which suggests the endurance of a sort of 'pre-industrial' influence. As Bailey has argued elsewhere [25], there is no reason to suppose that 'class' stereotypes can be read as unitary entities, but behaviour and role-playing can be seen as context-specific. This is encapsulated in Sloper.

As for the would-be social climbing clerk, Sloper's delicate treading of a thin dividing line between intentional spoofing and unintentional blunders exposes the nightmare of all those who aspire to 'respectability', the risk of unwitting self-humiliation. There is certainly a hint, in Sloper, of the clerk Pooter as victim of his own pomposity in the Grossmiths' 'Diary of a Nobody'.

This analysis is beginning to approach a sort of functionalism, i.e. the reader is satisfied regardless of his/her class origins. But despite the internally contradictory messages

in Ally Sloper, as the focal point in ASHH, I think that Bailey's identification of class and historically specific underpinnings reveals a complex of tensions normally submerged in the 'Friend of Man' himself. Bailey comments that Ally Sloper is ultimately a sort of 'greenhorn's guide' to life on the town. And in that role his conflation of high and low life firstly defuses, through the notion of cheating, the threat of the cadgers, the street-folk and other variants of 'semi-criminality' exposed by the humourous weeklies and by Mayhew; and it progressively loses the threat altogether. The 'Friend of Man' does not so much cheat his readers as himself. In this way, we can sense a progressive distancing from the investigation of the underworld in the promised democracy of 'leisure', a process which, as we shall see, is extended in the self-proclaimed sequels to ASHH, the Harmsworth comics. There is a certain reflexivity in Sloper which can be seen to act as a harbinger of a qualitatively new era in 'popular' publishing.

However, we can sense an inherent tension in this process, and in order to elaborate this fully, we need to examine the trajectory of the analysis of poverty, casualised labour and semi-criminality in the years after Mayhew's London Labour ..., for we can make important connections between the understandings or misunderstandings of these issues in contemporary theories, the geographical distancing from them by the new suburbanites, and an ideological distancing from them for these classes for whom ASHH appears to have had most appeal. Moreover, these understandings must be seen as an underside to the promise of social amelioration by 'leisure', and together, they must be seen



in the context of the emerging political ideologies. For their promises of political and cultural democracy were predicated on a related ideology of the exclusion of the lowest class fractions.

In Chapter Six, I will explore this complex of interrelationships and attempt to situate ASHH within it.

## CHAPTER FIVE - FOOTNOTES

1. David Kunzle, 'The First Ally Sloper: The Earliest Popular Cartoon Character as a Satire on the Victorian Work Ethic', The Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1985, p.10.
2. Typically outrageous 'tricks' included consigning the wife and kids to the workhouse and collecting for burial expenses from unsuspecting charities, a minor swipe at the pockets of his middle class betters, but played strictly for laughs. Peter Bailey, 'Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1880s', History Workshop 16, 1983, p.11.
3. Kunzle (1985), op. cit., pp. 41-42.
4. Ibid., p.42.
5. Bailey (1983), op. cit., p.8.
6. Ellen Moers' description in (1960), The Dandy - cited in Bailey (1983), op. cit., p.13.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p.20.
9. Kunzle (1985), op. cit., p.41.
10. Peter Bailey (1978), Leisure and Class in Victorian England p.81.
11. Ibid., pp.81-87; James Walvin (1978) Leisure and Society 1830 - 1850, pp.22-24.
12. Bailey (1983), op. cit., p.5.
13. Ibid., p.27. There is even some evidence that Sloper achieved something of a cult status in 'upper Bohemia' - see ibid., p.9.
14. Ibid., p.9.
15. On the growth of suburbia in Victorian London, see H. J. Dyos and D.A. Reeder, 'Slums and Suburbs', in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff (1973) The Victorian City, vol. 2; F.M.L. Thompson (ed. 1982) The Rise of Suburbia; and H.J. Dyos (1986) Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell.
16. Gareth Stedman Jones (1971), Outcast London, p.226.
17. For the 'skilled working' or 'artisan' class, efforts to translate cultural into physical distance were undertaken by the Trades Council and by house purchase schemes initiated by working men's clubs. See Jones (1971), op. cit. p.226.; Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Labour Aristocracy and Its Values: A Study of Mid-Victorian Kentish London', Victorian Studies, Vol. 19, No. 3, p.313; Brian T. Robson (1969) Urban Analysis; James O. Wheeler, 'Residential Location by Occupational Status', Urban Studies, V, 1968, pp. 24-32; Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverley Duncan, 'Residential Distribution and Occupational Stratification', American Journal of Sociology, LX, 1955, pp. 493-503.
18. See Geoffrey Crossick (1977, ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain; Arno J. Mayer, 'The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem', Journal of Modern History, vol. 54, Sept. 1975; also G.D.H. Cole (1955), Studies in Class Structure, pp.95-96. The German 'kleineburger' was likewise a diverse and precariously positioned class, but its insecurities were the fuel for political solidarity and the seeds of Fascism in the 1920s. See Robert Galletely, (1974)

- The Politics of Economic Despair: Shopkeepers and German Politics 1890-1914; Jurgen Kocka (1973) 'The First World War and the "Mittelstand": German Artisans and White-collar Workers', Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 8, pp.101-23.
19. Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain', in (1977 ed.), op. cit., p.30; also Richard N. Price, 'Society, Status and Jingoism: The Social Roots of Lower Middle Class Patriotism, 1870-1900', in *ibid.* Price notes the dilemma for clerks especially, as representative of the 'lower middle class' as a whole in trying 'to balance the obligatory accoutrements of status with the realities of economic marginality ... [In the 1890's] ... over fifty per cent of clerks earned less than thirty-one shillings a week, and their position was worsening', p.97. This figure comes from David Lockwood (1958) The Black Coated Worker, pp.43-44.
  20. Christopher Caudwell (1938), Studies in a Dying Culture, p.97; G.L. Anderson, 'A Study of Clerical Labour in Liverpool and Manchester 1850-1914' (University of Lancaster Ph.D. thesis 1974), pp. 304-313. Cited in Crossick (1977), op. cit., p.47.
  21. A series of humorous diary articles, littered with unintentional jokes at the fictional author Pooter's own expense, these have since been collected in single volume version: George and Weedon Grossmith (1984) Diary of a Nobody.
  22. For a discussion of the standard cultural manifestation of the 'labour aristocracy', see Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the re-making of a Working Class', Journal of Social History, pp.460-500.
  23. See Crossick (1977), op. cit., p.52.
  24. Gareth Stedman Jones describes the contempt expressed in music hall songs and their working class audiences for those who sought self-improvement by entry to the white-collar workforce - (1974), op. cit., p.493. There was likewise some discontent over the entry of clerks to working men's clubs - see Crossick (1977), op. cit., p.52. The feeling, however, appears to have been mutual. Beyond these distinctions, there is even evidence that despite the common suburbanisation of these classes, whole suburbs could be occupied almost exclusively by one class or the other. Crossick (*ibid.*, p.51) cites the case of Leyton ('skilled working class') and the adjacent suburb of Leytonstone ('lower middle class').
  25. Peter Bailey's article, '"Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?" A Role Analysis of Victorian Working Class Respectability' (Journal of Social History, vol. 12, Spring 1979), is a fascinating case study in the variability of behaviour among the 'respectable' working class at play in a single day. Reviewing an account by 'Journeyman Engineer' Thomas Wright in the 1870s of skilled worker Bill Banks' day out with his girlfriend and mates, Bailey shows how Bill passes from 'respectable' behaviour (donning his best

clothes and hiring a cab with his savings) to the disreputable (getting drunk and starting a fight) without any sense of guilt or contradiction.

## CHAPTER SIX

## ALLY SLOPER AND THE 'NEW' DEMOCRACY

The promise of an expanding, democratising world of 'leisure' in ASHH reflected a qualitatively new development in popular politics. The introduction of the bank holidays and Saturday half-holidays in the 1870s was, as I have argued, part of a move away from 'classical' liberalism which included also Disraeli's 1874 Factory Act and 1875 Employers and Workmen Act. From the mid-1880s we can perceive the emergence of a range of coherent political ideologies marking a departure from a laissez-faire understanding of social relations to a more 'organic' vision of capitalist society.

Among the Conservatives, Joseph Chamberlain was the principal figure in developing an ideology of 'social imperialism'. The Empire was to be seen as the basis of a new social prosperity through protected imperial trade, and the maintenance of the Empire in turn required a new ideology of 'citizenship', the integration of each individual as an equal contributor to the organic social whole [1]. Citizenship was

'recast ... in a populist and activist idiom: the new citizen was to be a participant absorbed into the larger organic unities of race, empire and nation' [2].

The Liberal Party, likewise, was moving in a differently 'collectivist', but related direction. The 'new liberalism' of

T.H. Green and L.T. Hobhouse reversed the traditional liberal eschewing of state intervention with the proposition that the optimisation of the classical liberal concepts of 'freedom' and self-realisation could only be achieved through the facility of state institutions. This collectivism had an ethical basis to which the Empire was less important. The democratic principle involved 'not merely the government of a majority ... [but] ... rather the government which best expresses the community as a whole ...' [3].

On the left, the Fabians developed a socialist inflection to this 'collectivism', remoulding socialism in a distinctly authoritarian, bureaucratic mould which, like the Conservatives, saw the Empire as the basis for a general amelioration of social conditions. The would-be apolitical world of 'leisure' promised in ASHH must, therefore, be seen in the general context of changing political ideologies across the spectrum, the promise of mass democracy, of which the 1884 electoral Reform Act was a harbinger.

The basis for these new ideologies, however, was not simply a set of progressive ideals, for they emerged amid what has been called a 'crisis' of liberalism [4], and the symptom of that crisis was the 'Great Depression', an economic recession which lasted from the mid-1870s to the mid-1890s [5]. The principal casualties of the Depression, exacerbated by the reluctance of successive governments to impose tariffs on US and German imports, were the already casualised industries of London, and the casual labour problem reached a crisis during the riots by

starving labourers in February 1886. These new ideologies were a reaction to this problem, and central to their programmes of reform was the rescue of the casual workforce from their social conditions. In this respect they constituted a new departure.

Mayhew's London Labour ... had recognised the problem of casualisation in the '50s but, as Stedman Jones (1971) points out, there was still a tendency to view poverty as a consequence of the 'demoralisation' of the working class. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was set up in 1869 to depersonalise charity and to render it a straightforward means of social control. The London Labour ... passages it cited as justification for its existence

'were not those which examined the causes and structure of poverty, but rather those dealing with the elaborate frauds and deceits employed by beggars and vagrants' [6].

Philanthropy was said to be the cause of decline, the working classes themselves were responsible for festering in this state. The COS indicated the extent to which old laissez-faire ideas persisted with regard to the understanding of poverty. In parallel with its standpoint, there was a proliferation of works which similarly avoided understanding in economic terms in favour of colourful descriptions of urban low-lives as a race apart. These works drew on Mayhew's notion of the wandering tribe, but lacked both his sympathetic leaning and his distinction between the 'street-folk' and casual labour [7].

The emergence of these new political ideologies, therefore, constituted a changing attitude to poverty. The 'casual poor' were to be elevated to the role of citizens participating in an

organic society. The natural corollary to this was that the loafers and semi-criminals, with whom the 'casual poor' were confused, must be eliminated altogether.

This was a significant move away from the combination of horror and respect for these types as exhibited by Mayhew and the horror and fascination of his successors. Their threat, it seemed could now be isolated and surgically removed from the social organism. Such organic and spatial imagery is entirely appropriate, for it was in such terms that contemporary political commentators viewed the situation. The principal influence in this was Charles Booth.

#### Mapping the Classes: From Mayhew to Booth

Charles Booth's mammoth investigation of poverty in London, initiated in 1886 and completed in seventeen volumes in 1902 [8], was the first on its scale since London Labour... in the '50s. It was perhaps most remarkable for the fact that Booth was originally a supporter of the COS approach, and undertook the study in order to vindicate its basic tenets. He was also a committed positivist [9], however, and his search for the 'basic facts' led him to the inescapable conclusion that poverty in London was principally a function of casualised industry. On the basis of this finding he was to elaborate a more normative picture of class relations.

Booth's study was structured in three series, running from "Poverty" through "Industry" to "Religious Influences". The final volume consisted of "Notes on Social Influences and



Conclusions". Each series was worked around two axes: class and time.

The social spectrum was divided into eight distinct classes, from A ('the lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers and semi-criminals') through H (the 'upper middle class') [10]. Using 'social condition' as the basis for assessment, his analysis was largely in quantitative terms, gleaning significance from even the most minor of statistical observations, as the following on the frequency of tea purchases demonstrates:

"... there were in five weeks, 23 journeys to the shop in Class B, 10 in D, and 6 in E" [11].

Beyond his identification of the classes over the seventeen year period, he frequently updated his figures. To illustrate these dynamics, Booth used coloured maps, with each colour corresponding to a different class, so that the movements of the classes could be seen to represent relative distancing or approximation. The dimension of space had both a metaphorical purpose in this sense and a practical one in that the trend towards the domination of any one district by a particular class bound physical with cultural class distinction. His "Poverty Map of 1889" showed a sharp east-west division and "inner" and "outer" rings of residence, with classes A to D being very clearly confined to inner London while the higher classes migrated to the suburbs.

For Booth, geographical distance was to take on a new significance, for he correlated "crowding" directly with poverty, and the isolation of especially poor areas with inevitable

degeneration. The problem was seen to be that the most degenerate, 'lowest' class was reducing those above to its own state by physical approximation. The solution, according to Booth, was the improvement of public transport [12] and the physical movement of the casual workforce from these conditions. In his establishment of the street as the unit of analysis in the "Poverty" series and his equation of class with spatial environment, Booth added a new axis to his study: geographical approximation or distancing. Black, as might be expected, was used to represent 'class A' and it was contained by the concentric rings of progressively lighter colours, the wealthier classes integrated spatially and metaphorically by improving transport networks. The project, then, was the elimination of the black areas by removing those who could be saved, and wiping out the habitual loafers.

Despite Booth's sympathy for his 'class B', however, his scheme for amelioration was authoritarian in the extreme. He suggested removing the 'casual poor' to a type of 'labour colony', 'industrial groups' which would build their own homes with Government supplied materials, and gradually acquire self-motivating habits. The results of the scheme would be that

'Class A, no longer confounded with "the unemployed", could be gradually harried out of existence. The present class B would be cared for, and its children given fair chances ... a part, sharing the improved chances of classes C and D, would be pushed upward into self-supporting habits, and another part, failing to keep itself even when helped by the State, would pass into the ranks of paupers, so that the total numbers to whom the proposed State organization would ultimately apply would be very much less than the present numbers of class B. Class C would then have more work, class D more pay, and both be able to build from the bottom,

instead of floating, as now, on the top of their world'  
[13].

In this, Booth tempers his humanitarianism with the residual element of an individualistic tendency, something he clearly shares with Mayhew, but the important difference is that Booth looks at the problem of the lowest class from the standpoint of an organic social vision to which it is alien. The project at hand is the incorporation of casual labour into the already corporeally integrated productive and managerial classes, and the simultaneous elimination of a peripheral limb, a threat to optimum social efficiency. It is a movement up the social scale and outwards from the city centre. The lowest 'class' barely warrants a label, as opposed to Mayhew's almost noble savages. Just as the social investigators of the 1840s identified these social scavengers with the disease-laden squalor of their surroundings, Booth pictures them as virtually an irretrievable part of their social condition, a perpetual and unchanging threat to the hapless 'class B' above - they were an unsympathetically identified version of Mayhew's 'those who won't work'.

And finally, the great irony identified by Mayhew, that these fractions were a distorted commentary on the essence of bourgeois individualism in their pursuit of self-gain is likewise lost. They become simply black areas on the map to be destroyed.

We can perceive in Booth, therefore, a progressive reworking of the ideology of 'poverty' in which the 'lowest class' is victim to its own fecklessness, no longer a nihilistic, oppositional threat, but a minor one which can be disposed of.

Each strand of the collectivist political ideologies

produced a variant of Booth's proposal for reform. Among the social imperialists, Lord Brabazon noted the 'pale faces, stunted figures, debilitated forms, narrow chests, and all the outward signs of a low vital power' [14] among the inhabitants of London's East End. His proposals were similar to Booth's in the nineties: 'free dinners for school children, the provision of parks and playgrounds to allow air to circulate within the city, gymnastic training for the poor, and a programme of state-aided colonization to clear London of its redundant population' [15].

The major theorist of the 'new Liberals', L.T. Hobhouse, similarly advocated the establishment of labour colonies, in which the individual would be forced to 'prove himself efficient enough in mind and body to stand the stress of individual competition' [16]. Failure would fairly result in 'the penalty of being treated as a pauper or even, in an extreme case, as a criminal' [17].

Fabianism, even more than the other two, used a Darwinian language of evolution in its proposal to eliminate the 'unfit' by labour colonies.

The development of each of these political ideologies, then, involved the renegotiation of class relations, centering on the issue of who could be included at the lower level. For social imperialism and Fabianism, the myth of the 'residuum' was essential: as a threat to the individual's specific social status since it represented the depths to which s/he could fall, it was also a spur to collective commitment to the economic security in the Empire.

Moreover, and this, I feel is quite significant, there is a tendency in writings at this time to marginalise these figures with a pseudo-scientific notion of urban degeneration. This stands in direct parallel to the emerging language of racial scales as part of the 'eugenic' theory of white Anglo-Saxon superiority. It is surely no coincidence that the geographical-cultural poles of the British empire - the metropolitan centre and the colonial periphery - were excluded from the promise of democracy and the rights to citizenship and democratic participation. The 'noble savages' at the periphery of Empire and the 'residuum' at the centre become inferior species. And we can plot a progression in this movement, peaking during the Boer War, when fears for the future of the imperial race were at their most feverish [18].

#### Slum and Suburb: Residuum and Respectability

In ASHH, we can sense a negotiation of class relations which revolves around this tension between broadening horizons and the moral imperative of removing 'class A'. For if, as I have maintained, the principal appeal of ASHH can be seen to be for those readers in the 'skilled working' and 'lower middle' class brackets, then the negotiation of their class positions was as much to do with their orientation to those fractions below as to those above.

The 'Great Depression' had paradoxical effects on the British economy. While it certainly had disastrous effects on certain industries, it also caused wages for those in employment to rise in real terms as far as 1900, and it caused a general

fall in prices, especially of foodstuffs, of over 25% [19]. While rents were in general rising in the same period [20], broadly speaking the standard of living for these classes in particular could be said to be improving, while the casualised labourers were suffering.

We can make an even more stark correlation between the rise and fall of these respective class fractions. The building of railway stations and lines in the cities in one sense forged new connections between work, suburban living and the extending avenues for leisure pursuits for those who had escaped to the suburbs. However, it must also be seen (in tandem with the street clearance programmes for sanitary regulation and the catering to property needs for the financial City expanding into the heart of East London) as the progressive confinement and collapsing of the casual labourers, loafers and semi-criminals into one closely packed mass [21]. And this physical agglomeration can be seen to condition an 'ideological' conflation of those fractions for the new suburbanites commuting back and forth by train. The outstanding evidence for this argument is established by Stedman Jones, who remarks that, after the riots by starving casual labourers in 1886,

'it was scarcely surprising that in the 'grande peur' which followed ... houses were barricaded against the poor not only by capitalist London but also by its skilled working class' [22].

That is to say that the geographical and ideological distancing of slum and suburb was not merely an imperative for political commentators and investigators like Booth. It was part of the

# ally Slopers' Half Holiday

CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. VI.—No. 294.]

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1889.

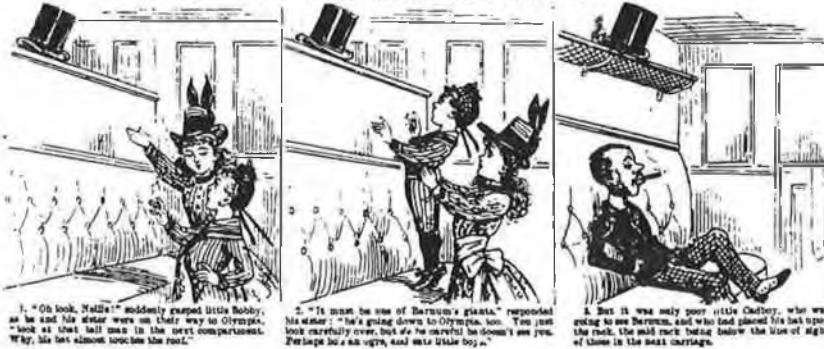
[ONE PENNY.]



## SLOPER'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

"Poor Papa's appeal in his 'CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS,' on behalf of the Destitute London Poor, is bringing in the money, and we hope to do big things by Christmastime. If we could only induce every purchaser of the 'HALF-HOLIDAY' to give a Penny, we should get nearly Fifteen Hundred Pounds! It is not merely the collecting that wants looking after, but the distribution of the monies in a thing Papa pays particular attention to. The other day Mr. McGooseley and Mr. Moore, taking a hint from St. Vincent Mercier, were detected by Papa in an attempt to—well, to deal with public money on a novel plan."—TOUTRIT.

## ON OPTICAL DELUSION.



1. "Oh look, Nellie!" suddenly gasped little Bobby, as he and his sister were on their way to Olympia, "look at that tall man in the next compartment. Why, he has almost touched the roof."

2. "It must be one of Benson's giants," responded his sister: "he's going down to Olympia, too. You just look carefully over, but do be careful he doesn't see you. Perhaps he's an ogre, and eats little boys."

3. But it was only poor little Cobby, who was going to see Benson, and who had placed his hat upon the rack, the said rack being below the line of sight of those in the next carriage.

## HARRY BENSON, PRINCE OF SWINDLERS.

"I AM thirty years old, and my real name is Harry Benson," a Jewish looking gentleman, in convict attire, was kind enough to inform the Bow Street magistrate, "but I have gone by numerous aliases, such as Fono, Cotto, Yung, Young, Count Montague, and the Marquis de Montuorency."

He had, indeed, been, in his time, the most plausible of scoundrels—viz. for instance, when immediately after the Franco-German war he paid a visit to the Lord Mayor of London, bearing a letter which purported to be written by the Mayor of Chateaufort, and, by matchless astuteness, swindled the almoners of the Anglo-French Comptoir d'Industrie Fund out of a thousand pounds. Ultimately arrested, however, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, he tried to commit suicide by setting fire to his clothes, which resulted in his being so lame on his release from prison, that he could scarcely walk.

Seeing an advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph* for someone to write and translate articles into various languages, he applied, and obtained the situation. The advertiser's name was Kurt, and his notion was to start a bogus insurance company against losses on the turf. One solitary number of a shaven paper, called *Sport*, was published, and an article written in it by Benson to the effect that Mr. Montuorency, not being able to get sufficient odds in England for horses that were certain to win, wished to meet with people in

Figure 6.1

'Sloper's Christmas Appeal'

(from ASHH, Vol. VI, No. 294, Dec. 14, 1889)

# ally Sloper's Half Holiday

CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. VI.—No. 284.]

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1889.

[ONE PENNY.]



### A. SLOPER TACKLES THE STRIKERS.

"You will be pleased to hear that Papa's illness has entirely passed away, and beyond a chronic condition of dryness, from which he is suffering, all seems well. His first act on reaching London was to make an appointment with Mr. Burns at the 'Sloper Arms,' and after partaking of one or two throat lubrications at John's expense, he proceeded to Hyde Park to address the Strikers. The main argument Poor Papa brought to bear was, that having got the extra penny they asked for, there was nothing left them to do but to spend it in buying the 'Half-Holiday.' The meeting broke up hurriedly, they say."—TOOTER.

### A PRESENT FROM THE MOORS.



1. Falshok had had a good day among the plover. He picked a peculiar tamper to send to his daughter's old nurse. He also sent up a sampler of Jerry's to his laundry.



2. But, unfortunately, the tamper, which was very much like in appearance, got mixed, and Falshok's was labelled 'Jerry's sampler,' with the result depicted above.



3. But his landlady and her husband spoke in the most glowing terms of his tamper, as they polished off a couple of bottles for their master's dinner. "That's every good man as recognizes his talent as 'tamper,'" said the good lady.

### THE BASTILLE.

ONE merry May morning, in 1748, Monsieur de la Tude, a gay, light-hearted young French gentleman, of three and twenty, found himself suddenly in the custody of a couple of policemen. No accusation was made against him, and no trial took place, but he was at once locked up in the gloomy prison of the Bastille. He had, in fact, by some boyish freak, incurred the displeasure of Madame de Pompadour, the potent favourite of the Court of Louis XV. That was enough, and for thirty-five weary years he remained a prisoner.

For four months he was kept in the Bastille, but then removed to Vincennes, where he was allowed the privilege of walking for a couple of hours in the garden, in which a turnkey accompanied him down a flight of stone steps. De la Tude young first. One day he ran down these steps as quickly as he could, closed the door on the gaoler, put on an air of assurance, and, in a bustling way, insured the various guards he passed for a person who had accidentally just gone out of the prison in advance of him, and in less than five minutes found himself a free man in the Paris streets; but, in a weak moment, he listened to the advice of a friend, who urged him to throw himself on the clemency of the King. He did so, and by the King's clemency he was taken back to the Bastille, and there confined in the most dismal dungeons of the prison.

He remained for eighteen months in this horrid situation.

Figure 6.2

'A. Sloper Tackles the Strikers'

(from ASHH, Vol. VI, No. 284, Oct. 5, 1889)



lived experiences of those who had been transplanted to the suburbs. The negotiation of their own position within society involved their orientation to those above and below. On the one hand they were promised a symbolic integration, through 'leisure', with their superiors. On the other, there was a distinct threat from below, but a degree of confusion over what exactly it constituted, given the conflation of the 'casual poor' and the habitual loafers.

This overview of the changes in class and political relations towards the end of the century is essential to understanding ASHH in all its complexity. In order to illustrate how this understanding can be developed, here are two examples of Sloper's front-page cartoons.

#### Sloper's Christmas Appeal

It would be inaccurate to assume that Ally Sloper's exaltation of the new world of 'leisure' somehow deliberately omits both the low-lives and the casual labourers in Mayhew. As argued in Chapter Five, Sloper's blundering through various festive occasions subsumes some of the oppositional threats of these fractions in his own persona. And beyond this, he can be seen to deal directly with the problem on some occasions, even if in an innocent, fun-poking way.

His patronage of a Christmas appeal for charity donations (for the 'deserving' poor, no doubt) in 1889 (SLOPER'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL' [23] - Figure 6.1) is an interesting case in this respect, particularly as it reintroduces some of his occasional

sidekicks from the old Judy days, McGoosely and Moses, Irish and Jewish variations on the early Sloper as proletarian cheat. It is as though Sloper the 'Friend of Man', the bringer of democracy, is dealing with his own past in the form of an innocuous threat to that democracy, those tricksters unconvincingly 'disguised' as blind and dumb men respectively, in search of a handout. In case we are in any doubt, each carries an explanatory sign, and Moses gazes slyly at the reader. Even more than the subliminal appropriation of low-life to himself, this reflects the change in attitudes to slum life in the humorous weekly. The intrepid explorer, fascinated by the subversive efforts of his subjects, becomes the corporeal embodiment of an organically integrated society (Sloper in an amused, paternal pose), deciding what elements qualify for inclusion within itself. In the resurrection of figures like McGoosely and Moses we can perceive the undercurrent ideology of the equation of poverty with an innate fecklessness, but the tension between what constitutes the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor is smudged by the focussing of this innate fecklessness on particular characters. To this extent we can see, once more, the pictorial treatment of Sloper and the other characters, as a disengagement from dealing directly with the complex issues of poverty. Instead, the Sloper office is filled with forms of self-publicity, therefore further defusing the still contentious issue of charity by channelling it through 'F.O.M.' himself. Indeed the reader's ability to make even the donation of a penny is equivalent to an elevated status.

The representation of McGoosely and Moses in this cartoon is

significant in another respect.

The classic late Victorian representation of the Irish is typified by Tenniel's cartoons in Punch: irrational, violent Micks and Pats with overhanging upper lips, widely spaced eyes and small crania [24]. Such cartoons are seen unproblematically as the products of a new kind of Darwin-inspired 'scientific' racism from the 1860s onwards, in which the Irish are equated with the 'negroid' races of the Empire as a means of 'proving' the superiority of the uniform 'Anglo-Saxon' race. At a time when the Irish threat to imperial stability at the centre of the Empire was at its strongest, the promotion of anti-Irish sentiment consequently ran to fever pitch [25]. Anti-Jewish feeling, in London especially, was also on the increase at this time, as a consequence of the influx of Jewish immigrants, particularly in the clothing trades [26].

These Irish and Jewish figures in ASHH are treated more with a patronising tolerance than with any politicised and insidious racism, however. Irish drunkenness and Jewish stinginess are directed at themselves. Therefore, they are fairly harmless. This kind of representation marks ASHH once again as a transitional phase in the move to a new era of populist publishing which sets itself up in a political vacuum. The tendency towards an almost benevolent, if simultaneously denigrating presentation of such racial types is a continuous strand in ASHH and its successors. It defuses potential political tensions by admitting these types as marginal participants in a 'popular' universe. For all his slobbering

drunkenness, McGoosely nevertheless sits down regularly to a Christmas dinner with Sloper and the occasional representatives of aristocracy, the 'Dook Snook', Lord Bob and Honourable Billy [27].

I would stress again, however, that even if ASHH marks a transition to a new kind of 'popular' publishing, he can still be seen to deal with real figures on a real landscape. If there is one episode which exemplifies this 'transitional' aspect to ASHH and shows how it can be read as negotiating the inter-class tensions of the '80s it is his handling of the 'Great Dock Strike' of 1889.

#### A. Sloper tackles the strikers

The Great Dock Strike was one of the key turning points in understandings of the casualisation of London industry. The strike, which included virtually unprecedented numbers and closed the entire port of London, was favourably received in most social quarters. As such it was an extraordinary achievement.

This can be attributed, firstly, to the fact that it was led by 'respectable' Lib-Lab trade union leaders like John Burns. Secondly, although it was conducted by those workers most hit by casualisation, the dockers, the fact that the marches took place without any violence was an additional factor in drawing the sympathies of the middle classes. It was even 'helped by subscriptions from the City, cheered on by stock-brokers, and won in an atmosphere of carnival' [28]. It reflected the fact that trade unionism was increasingly accepted as a means of ensuring social stability, rather than as a threat to the security of the state, the belief that the elevation of casual labour would

isolate even more the cadgers, loafers, vagrants etc. And coming, as it did, in the wake of the publication of Booth's early findings, it was accompanied by liberal citations of Booth's statistics in support.

This dual aspect to the strike is captured perfectly by Sloper in 'A. SLOPER TACKLES THE STRIKERS' [29] (Figure 6.2). In this episode, Sloper partakes of Burns' generosity at the 'Sloper Arms' before addressing a meeting of the strikers, attended by a variety of social and racial types, including a soldier and a policeman quietly taking notes. Ally is precariously placed on a single plank, from which Charles Stewart Parnell has just fallen off, shouting "STRIKE STRIKE THE LYRE" while holding Sloper's hat for him [30]. Not only the 'Friend of Man' (and indeed humanity is represented in its entirety), Sloper is now 'the strikers [sic] friend'. And characteristically he tries both to cheat them by encouraging them to spend their gains on copies of ASHH and to get them to indulge in some innocent cheating themselves: striking for 'a "Half-Holiday" and 500 for nothing'. Despite the evident legacy of Sloper's low-life trickery, this is the 'Friend of Man' now, inviting the deserving among the casual poor to enter his populist universe, in which they can share the joke about cheating the system because they can afford to do so. The only figures excluded are the loafers of class A and the worst of class B, and these are represented by the figure dozing under a tree in the background while his superiors march up the social scale.

This focusses the argument for the connection

between the trajectories of periodical publishing and populist politics to the extent that their common inclusivity is based on a very clear ideology of exclusion.

And yet we can still sense Sloper's low-life origins, for there is certainly a hint that the strike is being translated from a legitimate withdrawal of labour to a sort of semi-cadging exercise: "Now you've got your tanner ... [ie. for doing nothing - striking - MF] ... Strike for a "Half-Holiday" and 500 for nothing". There is at once an engagement with a serious political issue and an avoidance of its real implications. Striking, now, is all part of a game played among equals, but there are real tensions to this representation which reflect the persistence of the role of dialogue between editor and reader regarding class location through the historical evolution of the Victorian humorous weeklies, even if disguised in a commoditised, packaged product like Ally Sloper.

In this uneasiness, also, we can sense the fact that the casual labour problem was by no means solved, for the Dock Strike was made possible only by a temporary upturn in the fortunes of the economy, and this was to come to a halt in the hard winter of 1890-1. The Dock Strike was actually seen by middle class commentators as a means not only of separating 'respectability' from 'residuum', but also of eliminating much of Booth's 'class B' by removing them from the workforce altogether [31]. These hopes were realised in 1891, when the dock companies took the opportunity to rationalise the workforce and to classify workers according to 'fitness', therefore tying them to the company rather than the union [32]. In the superficial appearance of

class conciliation through the 'Friend of Man', then, we can sense a complex of tensions in operation: the tension between a solidarity between the union and the casual workforce and doubts about the worthiness of such workers for elevation; and between a willingness to avoid prolonged conflict on the part of the middle classes, high and low and a persistent confusion on their part between 'class A' and 'class B'.

ASHH points to a new kind of humourous publishing which progressively loses any overt political orientation, and promises a new 'democracy' in the commoditised generation and consumption of leisure. But we can also root its principal element, Ally Sloper, in the political and class tensions of the '80s and '90s. More specifically, we can perceive a move towards the gearing of the notion of a 'popular' entertainment for limited class fractions.

In order to elaborate this argument, we must look now at the entry of Alfred Harmsworth to the sphere of 'popular' publishing and what I would deem his rationalisation of a process already evident in ASHH.

## CHAPTER SIX - NOTES

1. Chamberlain defected from the Liberals due to his disagreement with Gladstone's Home Rule Bill for Ireland. His cultivation of 'social imperialism' developed from the imperative of maintaining Ireland at the centre of the Empire.
2. Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, 'State and Society, 1880-1930' in Stuart Hall (1988) The Hard Road to Renewal, p.110.
3. L.T. Hobhouse (1972) Democracy and Reaction, p.160. Cited in Robert Pearson and Geraint Williams (1984), Political Thought and Public Policy in the Nineteenth Century: An Introduction, p.156.
4. Hall et al. (1988), op. cit.
5. For a discussion of the historical reviews of the roots and economic effects of the 'Great Depression' see S.B. Saul (1985) The Myth of the Great Depression 1873-1896 (Saul actually argues that the depression was apparent much earlier than 1873 and persisted well beyond 1896 (hence the 'myth'), but these can be read as the worst years for the British economy.
6. Gareth Stedman Jones (1971), Outcast London, p.10.
7. Such works included James Greenwood's (1869) The Seven Curses of London, (1874) The Wilds of London, (1876) Low Life Deeps, and an account of the Strange Fish to be Found There, (1883) Odd People and Places; Or the Great Residuum; G.R. Sim's (1889) How the Poor Live and Horrible London; also the novels of George Gissing - (1884) The Unclassed, (1889) The Nether World and Hesba Stretton's books for children.
8. Published as Life and Labour of the People of London (1902).
9. See Harold W. Pfautz (ed. 1967), Charles Booth on the City : Physical Pattern and Social Structure, p.19.
10. 'Poverty Series', I, p.33. See *ibid.*, p.51.
11. 'Poverty Series', I, p.140. See *ibid.*, p.161.
12. *Ibid.*, p.98.
13. 'Poverty', I, pp.168-169. See Pfautz (1967, ed.), op. cit., pp.31-32 and Jones (1971), op. cit., pp.306-307.
14. Lord Brabazon (1886) Social Arrows, pp.13-14, cited in *ibid.*, p.308.
15. Jones' summary, in *ibid.*, p.309.
16. L.T. Hobhouse (1922), Social Evolution and Political Theory, p.179.
17. L.T. Hobhouse (1977) Liberalism, p. 86. Cited in Pearson and Williams (1984), op. cit., p.159.
18. See Jones (1971), op. cit., pp.331-333. On the theory of 'eugenics', see Daniel J. Kevles (1985), In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity. There are numerous works on Victorian concepts of race. Images of Race (ed. Michael D. Biddiss 1979) is a useful anthology of typical Victorian writings on the subject.
19. W. Hamish Fraser (1981) The Coming of the Mass Market 1850-1914, p.16; C.P. Kindleberger (1956) The Terms of Trade (on prices); E.H., Phelps Brown and P.E. Hart (1952), 'Share of



- Wages in the National Income', Economic Journal, 1952, LXII. This fall in prices, resulting largely from German competition, affected those in the clothing trades most strongly, so that a disproportionate number from this sector sought charity in the last quarter of the century - Jones (1971), op. cit., p.109.
20. Fraser (1981), op. cit., p.44.
  21. On the casualisation of London's industries, see Jones (1971) op. cit, chapters 4, 5 and 6. On the slow acceptance by railway companies of the need for early morning commuter services, especially in London's West End, see Michael John, 'Suburban development in outer West London, 1850-1900', in F.M.L. Thompson (1982, ed.) The Rise of Suburbia, especially pp.132-134.
  22. Ibid., p.346.
  23. ASHH, Vol. VI, No. 294, Dec. 14, 1889.
  24. The influence of Tenniel's cartoons can be seen in some of the cheaper weeklies. During the "land war" in Ireland in the early 1880s, James Henderson's twopenny Funny Folks (1875-1894) ran a series of impeccable imitations of the Tenniel style of front page, heavily political cartoons depicting the threat of gorilla-like Irish farmers to a feminine and vulnerable Hibernia. Parnell was shown as their political representative, unable to impose control.
  25. For the standard exposition of this thesis, see Lewis P. Curtis Jr. (1971), Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature, and Liz Curtis (1985), Nothing but the same old story: the roots of anti-Irish racism, pp. 54-68 for the late Victorian period.
  26. Jones (1971), op. cit., pp.109-110.
  27. Bailey (1983), op. cit., p.15.
  28. Jones (1971), op. cit., p.315.
  29. ASHH. Vol. VI, No. 284, Oct. 5, 1889.
  30. A sympathetic representation of Parnell as an amusing Mick making an appropriate pun on the word 'strike'. This episode appeared at the height of Parnell's short-lived popularity in Britain, following his vindication in the Piggott forgery case and just before his downfall in the O'Shea divorce case.
  31. See, for example, H. Llewellyn Smith and Vaughan Nash (1889) 'The Story of the Dockers' Strike', pp. 164-5, cited in Jones (1971), op. cit., p.318.
  32. Ibid.

## PART III

This section of the thesis examines the birth of the 'comics' as a third and final phase in the development of the Victorian periodical press, concentrating on the early 1890s.

Chapter Seven looks at Harmsworth's early career and principal titles at this time. It analyses the terms of Harmsworth's editorial address to see how the miscellaneous components of the comics were mediated by a new kind of populism which denied class differences. It is argued that this populism is, however, specific to the needs of the newly emergent 'lower middle class'.

Chapters Eight and Nine are a close empirical reading of the comics as holistic entities which maintain a form of dialogue with the reader concerning his/ her class location, despite the fact that they are characterised by a variation of populism of the editorial address.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## HARMSWORTH'S ARRIVAL: 'SCISSORS AND PASTE' AND 'GOOD TASTE'

In attempting to assess the contribution of Alfred Harmsworth's ventures to popular periodical publishing, we can perceive a number of developments on ASHH.

Any cursory overview of the degree of advertising in the Harmsworth comics will reveal that, as Williams (1962) argues, their survival was based on advertising revenue to a far greater extent than papers like ASHH, and this was true of all of his publications. In this sense, therefore, they show an advance on ASHH in that they themselves increasingly function as objects of exchange and in their role as guide to the commoditising of leisure consumption.

In their central thematic orientations also, we can see that their populist address was mediated by class-specific ideologies. The comics, women's and family magazines clearly exalt the joys of suburban domestic life. The newspapers and boys' weeklies fanatically support the imperial project. In each of these sectors, Harmsworth's publications seem to reflect very strongly the variously inflected new political project of the middle classes through the offer of the seemingly socially neutral ideals of domesticity and imperialism. In these, even more than in ASHH, we can sense the gearing of the product specifically as

a form of reassurance, a promise of symbolic democracy through shared reading matter. It appears as a world, moreover, from which the latent, threatening elements in ASHH are systematically excluded. A review of the career of Harmsworth himself and his input to his products, and of the terms in which the comics, or any of the other titles, addressed their readers, will reveal a strong orientation to the new bourgeois mores, pitched at a decidedly 'lower middle class' level. It is extremely difficult, in fact, to trace any tensions at all in the inherent ideologies of these products. They appear to constitute a far more coherent, populist mode of address which inscribes the reader in a would-be classless world paradoxically couched in a petty bourgeois version of bourgeois 'respectability'.

In this chapter, I want to explore how exactly this discourse emerged. In terms of the dialogue between editor and reader concerning class location, which we can see evolving throughout the history of Victorian humorous weeklies, the Harmsworth comics appear to have progressed to a new level of generality - the construction of an entirely spurious notion of the 'mass' or 'popular' reader based in class-specific ideologies.

However, undercurrent to this apparent process, we can, indeed, plot a continuity in the tensions around which ASHH revolved and these can be perceived throughout the miscellaneous elements of the comics. The central tension is still in the situation of the reader with respect to those classes above, and especially to those below. In Chapters Eight and Nine I will

examine how this can be shown, and how in spite of the superficially simple editorial populism, the comics can be read as holistic entities negotiating the complex issue of the reader's class identity within the 'mass'. In this respect, as with ASHH, I feel that we can perceive a complication rather than a simplification of the dialogue between editor and reader.

Firstly, however, we need to gain some grasp of the overall nature of Harmsworth's contribution to 'popular' periodical publishing. Having done this, we must examine the nature of the editorial address in the comics as both contiguous with and divergent from ASHH in the way it extends a populist appeal to the reader.

Part of the attraction of Judy and ASHH to 'art historian' David Kunzle and 'social historian' Peter Bailey is the subliminal presence in Ally Sloper of its creators - publisher Dalziel, and originator Ross. These figures were part of the 'sub-culture of Bohemian London' [1] which included the contributors to Punch. As such they were on a continuum with Mayhew, Jerrold and the earlier generation of humorous periodical writers and artists. They were 'merry fellows' who claimed to stand apart from class allegiances, and particularly from bourgeois respectable mores. Where they differed was in the fact that by this time failure in such ventures as these was a more serious risk, since capitalisation had become a more expensive proposition. 'Merry fellows' could become bitter fellows, so that ASHH also reflects the 'compound of aspiration and insecurity that marks the careers of the paper's progenitors' [2]. The mercurial quality assigned to such figures is also akin

to that of publishers Lloyd and Purkess and writers Rymer and Frost in the '40s. They are somehow romantic figures, self-conscious hack journalists parodying their profession in Ally himself as editor/writer.

The outstanding impression from Harmsworth's biographers [3] is that he was at the forefront of a new breed of journalists and publishers. Standing quite apart from the Bohemian set, Harmsworth's uncritical zeal, limited intellectual scope, sense of propriety and pretensions to grandeur are the products of his own lower middle class background, and are seen to colour his publications. His outstanding success, moreover, becomes the quintessential realisation of his typical readers' collective aspirations. In this sense he is far removed from figures like Ross and Dalziel.

Born in 1865 to a modestly incomeed family (he was the son of an unsuccessful barrister [4]), Harmsworth is said to have entered the journalistic 'profession ... at a peculiarly favourable moment' in 1882 as a new demand for popular reading opened up [5].

His first freelance work was with Iliffe & Sons' The Cyclist magazine, and in 1885 he became editor of their Bicycling News [6]. This, it is believed, not only allowed him indulge his favourite hobby, and to encourage another, photography, as part of the reader's cycling trip, but also to exploit the possibilities of the bicycle as a 'social portent' [7] in the liberation of the lower classes, and especially of women. It gave Harmsworth an insight into popular reading as a form of

symbolic democratisation, and it also gave him the opportunity to experiment with the cultivation of readership segments within the 'mass' readership by hiring female writers [8]. This 'democratisation' must, however, be seen to be mediated by certain class factors. That is, we can very clearly identify the appeal of the bicycle as primarily among the 'skilled working' and 'lower middle' classes [9].

In 1888, Harmsworth went into partnership with his brother Harold. Their first independent venture in the publishing world was an imitation of George Newnes' magazine Tit-Bits, on which Alfred had earlier served as a collaborator [10]. It was to be called Answers to Correspondents'. Tit-Bits was, as the name signified, a magazine of tiny snippets of 'information', 'facts', figures, and miscellaneous articles, many of them culled, uncredited, from other sources. Answers was an elevation of the correspondence column to the central component of the magazine: the reader requested 'information' and it was duly delivered. Pound and Harmsworth describe it as 'a kind of Notes & Queries for the unscholarly average man thirsting for information rather than for knowledge' [11]. It could be seen as a self-proclaimed equalisation of the social spectrum in the search for, and delivery of information as a universally accessible commodity. It described itself as

'a sort of Universal Information provider. Anybody who reads our paper for a year will be able to converse on many subjects on which he was entirely ignorant. He will have a good stock of anecdotes and jokes and will indeed be a pleasant companion' [12].

Harmsworth filled it with trivial pursuits - 'Narrow Escapes from

'Burial Alive' and 'What the Queen Eats' appeared in the first issue [13] - but the real seller, and the factor which saved Answers from its flagging fortunes in competition with Tit-Bits, was an early competition with the prize of 'a pound a week for life', in October 1889. We can sense from the description above that the 'average' man in mind was more likely in this same 'lower middle' or 'skilled working' bracket anxious for self-improvement through the embellishment of his conversational ability with bits of 'information'. The competition suggests an obsession with security in an age of economic uncertainty [14].

This success led to his new humorous weeklies, the halfpenny Comic Cuts and Illustrated Chips in 1890, and The Wonder in 1892. Like Tit-Bits and Answers, these were originally 'scissors-and-paste' efforts, consisting mostly of fragments culled from other magazines and assembled with no great attention to logical structure. The new halfpenny price, it is reckoned, principally marked a sacrifice in the quality of paper [15]. He succeeded these with a concerted effort to win the young male and female markets with the penny Forget-Me-Not (1891) and Home Chat (1895) for women, and the halfpenny Marvel (1893), Union Jack (1894), Pluck (1894) and The Boys' Friend (1895) for boys. In these efforts, Harmsworth launched the strategy of trying to dominate his chosen market through similar magazines with mutual advertising and dubbed it with a typically brash and pretentious flourish, 'Schemo Magnifico' [16].

Harmsworth thus laid the foundation for his first venture into newspapers with his purchase and transformation of the



Evening News in 1894, and his Daily Mail in 1896.

His principal competitor was to be Arthur Pearson, whose humble origins and early career were similar [17]. Pearson's equivalent to Tit-Bits, Pearson's Weekly, appeared in 1900. Of his comics, Big Budget (1898-1909) was the most successful (though it became a boys' adventure weekly in 1905). Newnes launched his Daily Gazette just before the Mail in 1896, but did not go into comic publishing. Other competitors in the comics field included Trapps, Holmes & Co. (Funny Cuts (1890-1920), The Coloured Comic (1898-1906)) and James Henderson (Comic Life (1898-1928)).

Harmsworth appears to have elaborated his early lessons in the publishing world into a strategy for cultivating the reader's individual identity within a constructed concept of an equalised 'mass'. By common agreement, the principal basis of success for his boys' weeklies, and also the Daily Mail, was the promotion of the Empire as the common property of 'the people', combined with the exhortation to share in its maintenance [18]. Once again this ground-breaking innovation which reflects fairly directly the increasing influence of Tory social imperialism, is seen by his biographers in personal terms, as illustrated by Pound and Harmsworth (1959). The language of 'national efficiency' is assimilated to a personal quest: 'the imperial idea meant an extension of the efficiency for which his soul had always craved, perhaps in recoil from the chaos of his early circumstances' [19].

As with Harmsworth's ventures in bicycle magazines, the exaltation of the Empire can be seen to have appealed most

directly to the 'lower middle classes', and indeed Richard Price's (1977) study of 'jingoism' at this time bears out the proposition that it was among this loosely defined 'class' that imperialist rhetoric was most effective [20].

As for Answers, the 'comics' and women's magazines, they are seen to be couched in an exaltation of domesticity which likewise stems from Harmsworth's personal interpretation of 'good taste'. The punnish jokes are reminiscent of Pooter's love of punning in Diary of a Nobody: 'the police magistrate may not enjoy himself even when he is having a fine time' [21]. His sense of the offensive and 'vulgar' meant 'vulgarity affecting women and sex ... a genuine dislike, which presently he exaggerated and used as a bludgeon against competitors' [22]. This eschewing of 'vulgarity' was part of a heightened sense of propriety and decorum, an exaggerated version of middle class gentility passed on now to the lower levels.

Above all, Harmsworth is young, and as such he represents the new generation of Board School goers, aspirant social climbers unhindered by thoughts of class barriers. An interviewer in 1896 described him as 'a boy concerned with boyish pleasures and boyish hobbies, of one to whom the busy world outside is unknown' [23]. Pound's and Harmsworth's story recounting his search for his first office furniture concludes that he 'went bounding on up the stairs towards his remarkable future' [24].

Finally, his self-image as a publishing Napoleon [25] establishes him as the embodiment of his readers' ultimate

fantasies.

In contrast to the creators of ASHH and their predecessors, then, Alfred Harmsworth appears as a sort of straight man of limited ability remoulding the shape of popular periodical publishing in a flat and unimaginative way which corresponds to the limited cultural level of the suburban lower middle class. And he appears, moreover, to have eliminated the problem of a threatening world of semi-criminals and low-lives at the heart of the urban centres by simply denying their existence through the twin avenues of imperialism and celebrated domesticity.

If we are to look at the comics, as representative of his output as a whole, this is certainly the impression we get. The only guaranteed original element, the editor's address, written by Harmsworth himself in the early stages is, as we shall see, written in the most uninspired prose. Its unashamedly crude populist creation of an all-inclusive 'mass' readership is mediated by some unconvincing familial terminology. As for the various other elements, they can be read as a choice designed to support the apolitical picture conjured up by the editor and publisher himself. However, there is a latent discourse running through these comics in the '90s concerning the precise designation and understanding of the lowest, 'semi-criminal' classes beyond the legitimate social spectrum included by the editorial address. In the tensions between these ideologies of inclusion and exclusion we sense the negotiation of the new political ideologies of social reform. And ironically in the most formulaic elements of the comics - the comic strips - these tensions are most apparent. To this extent, the comics are on a

continuum with ASHH and its predecessors. And yet they are qualitatively different, more specific to the historical conditions of the '90s than the '80s, so that these tensions are inflected in a different way. In order to plot a narrative leading to the arrival of the first comic strips, I will explore firstly the terms in which the editorial address established the orientation of the comics to the reader.

#### The 'COMIC CUTS Family'

Comic Cuts, when it first appeared on May 17th 1890, was an evenly distributed eight-page miscellany of small cartoons on pages 1, 4, 5 and 8, and fictional contributions, factual articles, advertisements and editorial address spread through pages 2, 3, 6 and 7. The title was a printer's term for humorous woodcuts, and this initial lack of titular invention was equalled by the contents, whose cartoons were swiped wholesale from old editions of James Henderson's Scraps and various American humorous magazines [26]. Its first serial, 'The Confessions of a Ticket-of-Leave Man', was actually taken from earlier editions of Answers [27].

Amid this 'scissors and paste' effort, the editorial address is the only guaranteed original contribution [28]. Its language is immediately notable for its approximation of ASHH's pomposity, greeting 'excellent friends, Scraps and Sloper [29]. It proceeds to trumpet a new democratic era, but in a way which is quite different to the ASHH techniques, and which suggests that we have indeed moved a step further towards the 'mass' product for the

'mass' audience, a rationalisation of the process already underway in Sloper.

Harmsworth ironically declares that

'There exists no feeling of distant stiffness between those who make COMIC CUTS and those who read it. It is not an invisible audience, as is the case with the readers of so many papers'.

Referring to the 'COMIC CUTS family', he promises that

'the closer our readers will allow us to come to them, the more they will privilege us to enter into their daily joys and sorrows, the nearer we shall come to the fulfilment of our uppermost desires' [30].

This is reminiscent of the editorials of the family miscellanies in the 1840s - issue 61 claimed that 'we aspire to make this paper a respectable family paper' [31] - coupled with the pseudo-intimacy of those of the humorous weeklies. The populist inclusivity of Judy and ASHH is here also, but the jokey, double-edged quality of Sloper is lost. The populist appeal is much more direct, working through the analogy of the family for the readership, a move which immediately pits the reader in a context of fun-filled domesticity. The faceless editor is not a variant of Sloper the man-about-town or man-of-the-people. He assumes a literate, sincere, but innocently humoured stance. The reader is addressed on an intimate basis, invited to join the elite of Comic Cuts fandom, but at the same time, there is a generality to the address which makes the distance between editor and reader more pronounced than in any of the older humorous weeklies, or ASHH with its fictional editor.

There is a sort of populist defence of the 'rights of man'

here - to equal access to unbridled pleasure, irrespective of class origins. This is similar to Sloper's demand for the right of every man to his '... Half-Holiday', except that the mass readership is now faceless, as opposed to Sloper's visible inclusion of each point on the social spectrum.

Looking back on the battle with newsagents reluctant to stock halfpenny magazines, a reluctance finally overcome by ever-progressive announcements of success, Harmsworth remembers that 'I appealed to the working men of the country to support me, and they rallied round COMIC CUTS loyally ... [and] ... following the example of our loyal friends the working classes, the upper classes have begun to think that, after all, there is nothing wrong about a paper because it is only a halfpenny' [32]. This continual account, in the early issues, of a battle with newsagents is an unintentional parody of the unstamped press' exhortative devices in the 1830s.

The cold generality of this language makes Harmsworth's statement somewhat unconvincing. An attempt is made to bridge the gap by the fabrication of a persona for this anonymous editorial figure. He is constructed as a paternal, patient and hardworking man. After his week's work at the helm of 'the most popular of halfpenny laughter-inducers', he 'takes out his short black clay and fumbles round in his pocket for a pinch or two of the restful weed'. This fatherly, rock-like, pipe-smoking figure is contrasted with his speculative competitors. In an obvious reference to the middle or lower Bohemian journalistic sect, including Ross and Dalziel, he writes that

'Curiously enough, some Editors ... appear to think that papers will succeed when only a very moderate amount of diligence is applied to their production ... Hard work and perseverance are as much needed in journalism as in commerce, and only when this fact is generally recognised shall we witness a cessation of the disappointments and financial losses among the floaters of literary enterprises' [33].

This is an ironic statement given his lack of original input, in the early stages at any rate. But there is more here than the irony of Harmsworth berating his 'scissors-and-paste' competitors from some of whom he himself was stealing, or who at least hired original contributors.

As with Ally Sloper, 'Mr. Comic Cuts' both stands on a continuum with the history of nineteenth century humourous editorial figures, and ushers in a new era. The classic role of the editor as the knowing guide to the underworld, developed by Mayhew's social investigation into an exploration of the savage beneath the civilised, is partly transformed by Sloper's convergence of types in one figure, and by his avoidance of the underworld for brighter backdrops. 'Mr. Comic Cuts' denies that the underworld actually exists. He moves away from Bohemian ambivalence to transcendent trickery and respectable mores in the assumption of a respectable code rooted in an idealised familial situation. He is now the guide to the 'good taste' and merry chuckles of the assorted contents, as opposed to the belly laughs edged with bitterness of his predecessors.

The combination of paternal and populist address is perfectly encapsulated in a long article published in February 1892. Entitled 'HOW THE GREATEST COMIC PAPER IN THE WORLD IS PRODUCED:

A CHAT WITH OUR 2,500,000 READERS' [34], it is typical of such efforts in that, apart from illustrations of the 'etching-room', 'machine-room' etc., it has very little to do with the actual process of production. The anchor of familial integrity and the 'inoffensive', all-inclusive populism of the editorial address is played up as the old newsagents problem is viewed again from the retrospective perch of outstanding success: 'I have supplied a wholesome, funny, interesting paper that may be taken into any family circle without fear of offence - a paper that may be seen upon the table of both peer and peasant, and yet not be out of place'. This again is an unintentional, po-faced parody of the democratic promises of the unstamped press (along with the pseudo-intimate title - a 'chat' with 2,500,000 readers), pitched now at the abstracted level of idealised familial integrity and a nascent concept of the 'wholesome' and inoffensive. Sloper returns to his bed in Battersea, but only after a tour of high and low society. Comic Cuts avoids the fact that 'high' and 'low' exist in this sense. They are equalised at the breakfast table and by an encouraged sense of propriety.

Comic Cuts is also very careful to avoid any racial offence, though this care is limited to readers from the 'home countries'. In issue 19, he chides those editors who use the word "English" instead of "British", to explain that

'the Scotch are one of the most intellectual races in existence ... and from the manner in which they have welcomed COMIC CUTS and Illustrated Chips there is no doubt that the silly old superstition that the Scotchman cannot see a joke is nonsense' [35].

He goes on to explain that the Joke Editor himself is Scottish.



In issue 61, the editor prints two anecdotes to illustrate the point that the 'Irish are the most witty of all people' [36]. He is now promoting both a common and a truly national culture founded on equality, but in which difference is appreciated. What holds people together is the ability to see and take a joke.

Despite all the talk of wholesome and inoffensive entertainment, however, its parameters or basis are never spelt out. It is negatively defined by what it is not, i.e. by Harmsworth's attack, here and elsewhere, on the 'penny dreadfuls' and other forms of 'pernicious' reading [37]. If this represents the lower cut-off point, then the upper cut-off point is established by the role of the 'Fighting Editor', who appears occasionally to throw long-haired poets down the stairs [38]. Pretensions to cultural elevation, it seems, can be taken too far, even for Comic Cuts. In between these points, it is assumed that there is a socially neutral code of propriety and decency rooted in the family, but all the indications are that it is of a vaguely petty bourgeois origin.

Finally, the 1892 article renders Comic Cuts itself an object of trivial fascination. The following could have appeared in Answers or Tit-Bits: 'If all the copies of COMIC CUTS as they are handed to the public in one week were placed one upon the other, they would make a tower as high as the great Eiffel Tower in Paris'.

In these developments we can see the personification of a man-of-the-people editorial figure in a much more limited sense than Sloper. From issue 55 the column is actually illustrated by

a portrait of a stout gent in a humourously admonitory posture with one finger raised, spectacles on his forehead, a feathered quill on one ear, a goatee beard, and surrounded by thick volumes and a judge's or auctioneer's hammer (Figure 7.1).

#### The Adventures of Cornelius Chips

Harmsworth's companion paper to Comic Cuts, Illustrated Chips (from 26th July 1890), was originally more akin to Answers in content, carrying fewer cartoons than Comic Cuts, and at half the size but with sixteen pages. It lasted six issues before Harmsworth revamped it in the Comic Cuts mould (from 6th September). The main difference was the introduction of a fictional editorial figure whose adventures were later to occupy a full front-page cartoon in imitation of Ally Sloper. The character, Mr. Chips, was drawn by a W. Dodds, and the cartoon was supported by an explanatory column, MR. CHIPS'S CHAT, on page 7. 'Chips', like Sloper, had the additions of his wife and an office-boy, 'Bottles'.

Dodds's drawings are feeble in comparison with Baxter's and Thomas' Sloper cartoons. The figures are stiff and lifeless. Chips, like Sloper, is an ungainly figure, but lacks the caricatural features - the extended limbs with contorted muscles, the enlarged head, hands and feet. His attire is of a loudly dressed middle-aged gent - checked trousers, black waistcoat, tails and shoes, polkadot tie, a fashionable high collar, monocle and topper. There is a suspicion of baldness, and thin, wiry hairs stream from the back of his head. The check and polkadots



PORTRAIT OF THE EDITOR OF "COMIC CUTS."

### WHAT THE EDITOR SAYS.

In the fifty-third number of this paper I referred to the fact that although we had obtained a widespread popularity and a tremendous circulation, yet I was desirous of obtaining a still wider popularity and a still greater circulation, so that COMIC CUTS might be the funniest, cheapest, and best comic paper ever printed; and I now wish to ask my readers, whom I regard in the aggregate as personal friends, to assist me in achieving that object.

Figure 7.1

'Portrait of the Editor of  
"Comic Cuts"'

(from CC 57, p.2, 1891)

### MR. CHIPS'S LITTLE GAME.

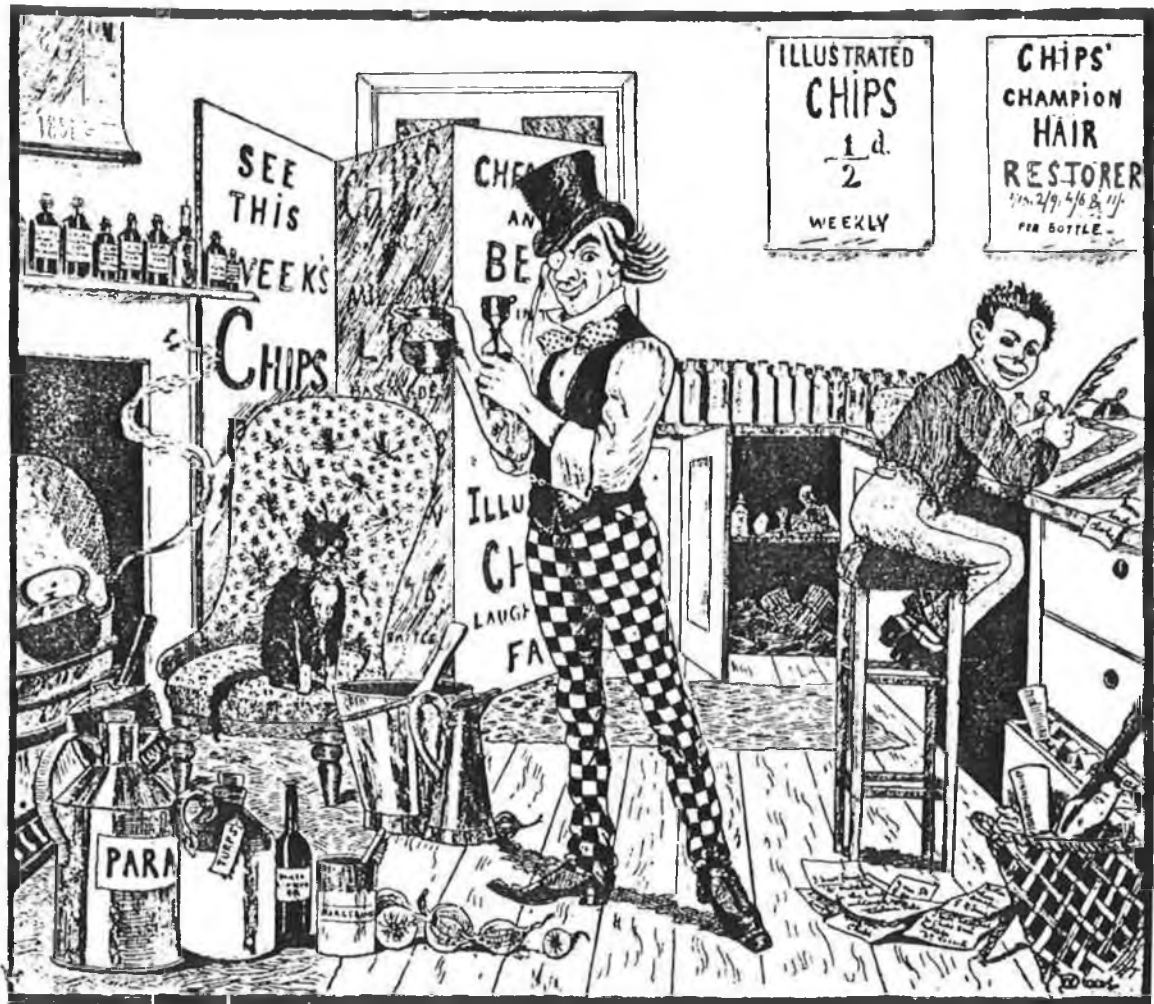


Figure 7.2

LOOK AT PAGE 7 FOR FULL ACCOUNT OF THIS PICTURE.

'Mr. Chips's Little Game'

(from IC 27, p.1, 1891)

# ally sloper's Half Holiday

CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. V.—No. 207.]

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1888.

[ONE PENNY.]



## ALLY MADE A FREEMASON.

"Poor Papa has at last joined the ancient and secret fraternity. The Prince of Wales, Grand Master, Earl Carnarvon, Acting G. M., and Lord Lathom, Deputy G. M., have been at Papa over and over again, and he has at length given way. Gus Harris, who is also a Mason, tells me the object of Masonry is to bring persons together for social enjoyment, and for their mutual assistance. Papa is more than fond of the former, and he is chronically in want of the latter, so I suppose it's all right. Papa has been made Extra Grand Master to the A. S. Lodge, and his installation was, I understand, a big event."—TORTUR.

## FROM SUNSHINE TO SHOWER.



1. Ernest Marmaduke and Lady Trotter happen to be in the same cigar shop together. They both have umbrellas which are very similar in outward appearance. "Ha, ha!" murmured Trotter.

2. "Here's a shame. He can't be worse than me." Ernest unexpectedly resumes his journey, and meets his lady-love by appointment.

3. "You surely don't expect me to take shelter under that thing," remarked the gentle girl. "Farewell, Mr. Marmaduke! I'm in the habit of only walking with gentlemen!"

## "MULLED SACK."

THE "muck" that Shakespeare speaks of, and of which Falstaff drinks as "Intemperance's Omelette," is supposed, Dr. Johnson tells me, to have been what we now call sherry, whilst others speak of it as a sweet light wine, "brought off" from the Canaries, which Swift alluding to, said, "The bottle hath great advantage to allure the maids with a glass of sack."

One day in April, 1858, they hanged "Mulled Sack," otherwise John Collington, a notorious highwayman, who had acquired this nick name "from his steady drinking sack mulled, morning, noon, and night."

This during racial not only was caught in the act of picking the pocket of Oliver Crosswell, but robbed Charles H. then in exile at Cologne, of plate of the value of £1,000. His father was a haberdashier in Chesapeake, who squandered his money at taverns, and was eventually buried by the parish, having bailed him fifteen daughters and four sons as provided for. The youngster "Mulled Sack" was apprenticed to a chimney-sweep, and afterwards started on his own account, and made a lot of money. This, however, he squandered as his father had done, and then took to pocket-picking.

Among his many adventures he robbed Lady Fairfax, as thus described:—"This lady used to go to a house on a week day, at Lodge's Church, where one Mr. Jacomb preached. 'Mulled Sack' observing this and that she

Figure 7.3

'Ally Made a Freemason'

(from ASHH, Vol. V, No. 207, 1888)

"EMPLOYMENT BRINGS ENJOYMENT." SO READ "CHIPS."

1d ILLUSTRATED CHIPS 1d  
2 2

No. 35. VOL. II. (NEW SERIES). [REPRODUCED BY STATUEEN'S HALL] PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. [TRANSMISSION ARRANGED AT BOOK MATHS.] MAY 2, 1891.

MR. CHIPS'S ADVENTURES.—No. 7.



MR. CHIPS'S CHAT.

"NOTHING is in the heaven or the earth, nor in the sky the' is above, nor in the sea that is around the ear:—like unto that man who is smitten on the ear by a carnal and lusty fist!" So saith the judicious Hooker, and we cordially

agree with him. We can speak from experience upon this subject—from painful experience.   
 \*\*\*   
 After all the preparations we wrote about

last week, you will not be surprised to hear that we gave an exhibition of scientific boxing on Tuesday. The affair came off at a suburban hall. Never mind where; it's another colour now. Many friends and admirers had a much-

desired opportunity of gazing their fill upon our expressive features. Our reception by the vast audience was most gratifying. Bottles was not at first recognised, for he had, in true "pog" fashion, shaved his hair to a Portlandie

Figure 7.4

'Mr. Chips's Adventures. - No.7'

(from IC 35, p.1, 1891)

suggest an element of the cheap salesman and this is part of the persona cultivated for him. All of Dodds' cartoons are lacking in perspectival depth, a function of poor shading and cross-hatching, and unerringly straight lines that stay in absolute parallel or converge at bad angles. Consequently the liveliness and bustle of Thomas' sets, capped by Sloper's figure throwing his weight in every direction, are completely absent.

Equally feeble ideas are inadvisedly carried over a number of weeks. Whereas Sloper is topical, or at least cavorts in a recognisable location, Chips plods through adventures which work through an entirely fictional relationship with imaginary readers in the joke correspondence. His first adventure has Chips making patent medicine (Figure 7.2), a spoof on the proliferation of suspect patent medicines as evidenced by most of the paper's ads themselves - in this case the dodge is hair restorer. But the way this would-be humorous scenario is constructed smacks of a directness, a straightness in which any irony is lost. Chips informs us that

'we have unchained an artist to sketch us in all our joy. The picture duly appears on the front page. It is the picture of our process. But, O miserable shuffler that we are, we did not see that the rascal had exposed our secrets until the thing was in proof. Well, well, we may as fitly tell you the whole business, for we know that you will treasure our secret' [39].

Bottles the office-boy proceeds to hatch the plot in phonetically spelt Cockney: 'I ken make a 'air restorer as ull bring 'air on a garding wall or a peg-top. You let me get the drugses, and you dictate the testermoniuls, and blarm me, we'll go halves'. This

is followed by false testimonials from dead doctors etc. The function of this piece is to act as a demystifying device for a mode of institutionalised deception. The guide is the very proper and innocent figure of Mr. Chips, assisted by the manipulative and unscrupulous Bottles. Sloper, by contrast, is more specific in his targets, and the humour more complex.

Figure 7.3 [40], for example, shows Sloper's initiation to the Freemasons. Tootsie's commentary runs ironically against the picture, for the eminent personages (none other than the Dook Snook, Honourable Billy, Lord Bob and McGoosely themselves) have indeed 'been at Papa' to join the Masons, but only so they can get at him, as all the readers would wish to do, as they please. Ally is blindfolded and unwittingly rolled over a barrel into what looks to be a vat of flour. The room is full of skulls-and-crossbones, the comical ceremonial dogs wear the same garb as the humans who look on in amusement, and there is a visual gag in that the dividers on Ally's sleeve is wrapped around a snake-like Sloper S, while the other sleeve carries the Sloper umbrella and gloves. In this very economically constructed piece, the obvious joke is on Sloper, whose pretensions have misled him into participation in his own humiliation, and this is innocently revealed by Tootsie's straight commentary. But at the same time, the clutter of absurd insignia and the manic, prankish grins of the noble participants constitute a humourous swipe at the secret but inherently juvenile doings of the Masons, which brings them down to an accessible level. They can at once mock the ambitions of a Sloper, but are not themselves above a few demystifying pot-shots.

Chips lacks this economy in technique, and his character simply lacks the rich ambiguity of Sloper. The trickery comes from the office-boy, a fairly obvious Cockney coster-monger in the making, and the laughs are supposedly generated by the cheap device of the dialectal spelling.

In the following episode, Chips is duly accosted by unsatisfied customers. Subsequent episodes see the appearance of a constipated looking daughter, Dollie [41], and Chips taking up boxing [42] to give a 'scientific boxing' exhibition at a suburban hall [43] (Figure 7.4). After this episode, the experimental front-page cartoons disappear, although Chips continues 'MR. CHIPS'S CHAT' on page 2 with a weekly catalogue of usually domestic (house burglars etc.), and occasionally office mishaps. Chips unconvincingly explains that

'We have often sat and wondered if we could possibly be the bald-headed, toothless, and effeminate being that our artist delineated, and we unhesitatingly decide that WE ARE NOT ... and so, dear readers, we have decided to drop these cartoons' [44].

Harmsworth's third humorous paper (July 30th 1892, The Wonder (later The Funny Wonder) was, like the original Illustrated Chips, an experimental prototype, this time at twice the Comic Cuts size, with only four pages. It was equally a failure, and Harmsworth returned after 27 issues to the Comic Cuts format. 'Mr. Comic Cuts' was to edit this new venture as well, though with the generally narrower role of boasting circulation figures and advertising the other two papers.

These editorial figures, in contrast to Sloper and his



related predecessors - the real and self-identifying editors of the previous generations of humorous weeklies - represent the complete retirement in Harmsworth's papers from the political, or even roughly topical matters, from the unravelling of the tension between savage and civilised, to an idealised domesticity with very clear, largely demographic roots - the distancing of slum and suburb.

This retirement to domestic exaltation set the terms within which the various other elements were to operate. Therefore, although these components were, in the early stages at any rate, drawn from different sources, they are given a new meaning by their selection, juxtaposition, and their mediation by the editorial address. Therefore, they must be seen in terms of this constructed notion of 'mass' appeal. In this regard, despite the seeming cohesiveness of the populist address, we can perceive certain tensions running through them which make them continuous with ASHH and legible as negotiating media for those same political and class tensions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN - NOTES

1. Peter Bailey, 'Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1880s', History Workshop 16, 1983, p.8.
2. Ibid., pp.8-9.
3. See Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth (1959) Northcliffe; Paul Ferris (1971) The House of Northcliffe: The Harmsworths of Fleet Street; also the entry in the Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) 1912-1921 (1922).
4. On Harmsworth's family roots, see Pound et al. (1959), op. cit., chapters 1 and 2.
5. DNB (1912-1921), p.398.
6. Pound et al. (1959), op. cit., p.55.
7. Ibid., p.61.
8. Ibid.
9. The accessibility of the bicycle, invented in its most primitive form in the 1820s, was originally confined to the upper middle classes by virtue of its expense. This resulted from the proliferation of designs which necessitated small-scale production. It was only with the invention and standardisation of the chain-wheel drive, pneumatic tubes and the diamond frame that the bicycle went into a form of 'mass' production, and was beginning to become more commonly accessible in the 1880s. But even then its accessibility was relatively limited by price. The bicycle was therefore a valuable status symbol, equivalent, in a sense to the piano in the home. For suburbanites it had the appeal of offering a further escape from the workplace by making the countryside more accessible.  
 Harmsworth's indulgence of the female readership is likewise quite complex, for the bicycle was to become a liberating symbol for the early feminist/ suffragette movement, mostly since it necessitated the wearing of more comfortable clothing, especially bloomers. His capitalising on the emancipatory aspect of the bicycle for women points to an interesting contradiction in the women's magazines he was to pioneer. That was his promise of practical liberation for women ironically through the cultivation of the 'home' as a woman's exclusive preserve. The bicycle, for Harmsworth, was an extension of the 'freedom' afforded by domestication. In this, also, we can see that he was courting those class fractions for whom the cultivation of domesticity was equivalent to social standing.  
 On the issue of the variously class-inflected emancipatory appeal of the bicycle in the late nineteenth century see David Rubinstein, 'Cycling in the 1890's', Victorian Studies, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1977.
10. From 1882 - 1883. See Pound et al. (1959), op. cit., p.53.
11. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
12. Answers to Correspondents, Feb. 16, 1889. Cited in ibid., p.82.
13. Ibid. The first issue was actually numbered 3.
14. The proposition that it was, indeed, among these sectors that Answers and Tit-Bits achieved their greatest circulation

- is supported by the observations of C.F.G. Masterman (1911) The Condition of England, pp.82-84; Helen Corke (1975), In Our Infancy. An Autobiography, Part 1: 1882-1912, p.59; Richard Church (1956) Over the Bridge: An Essay in Autobiography, p.90; Robert Roberts (1973) The Classic Slum. Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century, p.163.
15. Paul Ferris (1971), op. cit., p.45, explains that 'Harold prided himself on paying skeleton prices for raw materials. The quality of paper was appalling.' A memo from Harold to Alfred warns that 'Our bad paper and cheap printing will not stand much in the way of small type. To railway travellers also the small type will of course be unreadable.' The latter observation reinforces the impression that the fragmented, small paragraphed form of such papers was designed for quick consumption by the commuting lower middle class.
  16. Ibid., p.44.
  17. Pearson won a clerkship to Newnes' company as a prize in a Tit-Bits competition (DNB 1912-1921, p.428).
  18. John M. MacKenzie (1984), Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960, p.204. Mackenzie neatly encapsulates the success of his boys' weeklies in avoiding critical condemnation and in supplanting the 'penny dreadfuls' (as discussed in Chapter Four) of earlier years: 'whereas the dreadfuls had largely internalised crime and conflict in terms of domestic society, the new journals externalised them' with their imperialist fiction. These were a counterpart to the pro-imperialist leader columns of the Daily Mail.
  19. Pound and Harmsworth (1959), op. cit., p.231.
  20. Richard N. Price (1977), 'Society, Status and Jingoism: The Social Roots of Lower Middle Class Patriotism, 1870-1900', in Geoffrey Crossick (1977, ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain.
  21. Ferris (1971), op. cit., p.44.
  22. Ibid., p.50.
  23. The English Illustrated Magazine, cited in Pound et al. (1959), op. cit., p.189.
  24. Ibid., p.80.
  25. Ferris (1971), op. cit., pp.65-66.
  26. See Denis Gifford (1984), The International Book of Comics, p.18 and Kevin Carpenter (1983), Penny Dreadfuls and Comics, p.73.
  27. Ferris (1971) op. cit., p.44.
  28. Originally written by Harmsworth himself. A letter from Harold to Alfred on June 4th. 1891 suggests offering the editorship 'again' to a younger brother, Cecil - see Pound and Harmsworth (1959), op. cit., p.125; and G.H. Cantle is usually referenced as the principal editor in the '90's - see Gifford (1984), op. cit., p.20 and Brian Doyle (1964), Who's Who of Boys' Writers and Illustrators, p.18 - though I suspect that Cantle did not take over until the mid '90's.
  29. Comic Cuts, May 17 1890, No.1 p.2 (henceforth abbreviated

- to CC, with number, page, and year).
30. CC 18, p.2, 1890.
  31. CC 61, p.2, 1891.
  32. CC 27, p.2, 1890.
  33. CC 30, p.2, 1890.
  34. CC 91, p.2, 1892. How exactly this figure is arrived at is uncertain. It seems likely that Harmsworth multiplied his actual sales figures by an estimate of the average number of readers per household. Kevin Carpenter (1983) op. cit., p.76, estimates the readership at this time to be c. 400,000, rising to a peak of about 1,000,000, before World War I.
  35. CC 19, p.2, 1890.
  36. CC 61, p.2, 1891. In the second one, Patrick, an applicant for the Police Force, is given a literacy test - to write the superintendent's name. Pat avoids the trap thus: 'Me commit forgery and I agoin' on the pollis! I can't do it, yer honour'.
  37. See, for example, CC 24, p.2, 1890.
  38. For example, CC 93, p.2, 1892.
  39. Illustrated Chips, March 7, No.27, p.7, 1891 (henceforth abbreviated to IC with number, page and year).
  40. ASHH, April 14, 1888, Vol. V, No.207, p.1.
  41. IC 33, pp.1-2, 1891.
  42. IC 34, pp.1-2, 1891.
  43. IC 35, pp.1-2, 1891.
  44. IC 37, p.2, 1891.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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REREADING THE COMICS, PART I:  
CONDESCENSION, CARTOONS AND COMPETITIONS

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This chapter, together with Chapter Nine, will engage in a close empirical reading of the three Harmsworth comic papers from 1890 to c.1895, thus drawing outwards from the analysis of their editorial populism in Chapter Seven. The purpose of these chapters is to show that in spite of the miscellaneous nature of the comics, they can still be read as contiguous with the process of negotiation of the class location of the reader throughout the history of Victorian humorous publishing. In this regard, we need to make a few initial propositions.

Opening the comics: reassembling the 'cuts'

Firstly, to take up Louis James' (1982) argument once again, in spite of the variety of components within the comics, and the fact that in their early stages they were drawn from a number of sources, we can posit that the regularity of these elements within an unchanging structure would contribute to their experience as a coherent and meaningful whole for the regular reader. There are, therefore, grounds for reading the comics as achieving a certain holism which amounts to more than the sum of the parts.

This proposition requires substantiation. For the moment we

can draw some provisional implications. On these grounds it is inappropriate either to attempt a quasi-'scientific' methodological approach to the comics, like a form of quantitative 'content analysis' or a qualitative 'structuralist' analysis which reduces the product to a 'text', assigns labels to their various parts and sees the intra-textual relations of the parts as a single pattern closed to alternative interpretations. This question has already been discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

As an alternative, let us propose a mode of interpretation which accounts for the holistic nature of the comics. The key to this is to place them within a narrative of the development of Victorian humorous periodicals as a dynamic medium of dialogue concerning the class location of the reader.

In ASHH we can detect a complex of ambivalences in the negotiation of class identity within a self-professed 'mass' or 'popular' culture. The comics, by contrast, appear to indulge in an exaltation of the familial 'culture' of suburban domesticity through their editorial address, so that their populist appeal can be seen to be quite specifically class-mediated. Moreover, the various textual elements can be read as extensions outwards from this.

Essentially, the argument here is that the pictorial elements of the comics - the cartoons and occasional sequences - revolve around a very limited, decidedly 'petty bourgeois' world view in their characters and backdrops. Whereas ASHH and the earlier humorous weeklies included a complex array of class-

specific types in variable, often inner urban scenarios, the most frequently encountered type in Harmsworth's titles is the 'masher', and the classic backdrop, especially in the summer months, is the seaside. The masher is presented as a 'classless' target for ridicule on the basis of his solely romantic orientation. The seaside is presented as a universally accessible avenue of pleasurable pursuits.

In both, we can sense an emphasis on corporeal grooming and adornment with fashionable costumes for different scenarios as socially neutral means of elevation by codified decorum and behaviour. If anything is questioned, it is the individual's inability to master the code.

It also represents a further development away from the trajectory of Victorian humorous weeklies to the extent that the 'town' is virtually non-existent, and in its absence, there are practically no cadgers, street-folk, costers etc. Indeed there are very few identifiably 'working class' people at all.

And finally, it is a male world where women are marginalised, and a world in which racial types (as in ASHH, and in the editorial address) make appearances which show a combination of non-politicised denigration and patronising tolerance. In this way, we can see the cartoons as an extension of the limited populism of the editorial columns, which caters, even more so than ASHH, to the needs of the increasingly suburbanised 'lower middle class'. Moreover, we can establish a continuity between the cartoons, the advertising copy and the jokes and funny stories. That this is, indeed, a highly selective picture of social interaction is evidenced by the fact

that the masher and the seaside were pervaded by some complexity in inter-class tensions.

In Chapter Nine we examine the fictional elements and non-fictional articles in the comics as mutually continuous items. Their principal feature can be read as the consistent marginalisation of 'criminality' from the society of 'decent' people, and there are connections to be made here with the emergence of detective fiction as the dominant fictional genre in the '90s. This tendency reveals the destination in the comics of Mayhew's self-expressive low-lives, reduced now to a race apart, but characterised by a combination of fecklessness and downright danger to the social order, of a kind which can be unambivalently indicted. All of these textual elements are continuous in their common vision of an organically integrated society free of class tensions and from which the lowest elements can be marginalised. This is not to say that there is a process of deliberate exclusion going on. The comics can be read collectively as a form of negotiation of the reader's class location with regard to those above and below. The upper limit is confused by a commonly accessible code of presentation to the world. The lower limit is delineated through the notion of criminality. These designations offer at least a part solution to the identification of certain fractions.

Moreover, we can posit this integral whole as a form of negotiation of the new political ideologies in terms of a distinctly 'lower middle class' world view or, to use the Gramscian term, 'common sense'. This is argued in spite of the vehemently apolitical stance of the comics themselves, and in



support of this argument we cite an unusual but nonetheless significant instance of a serial story which uses overt political ideas and focusses all of the undercurrent strands in the various textual elements through its political mediation.

Beyond ASHH, the Harmsworth comics indicate the class-mediated nature of a nascent 'mass' entertainment in a very specific way. There is another sense, also, in which we can see a certain holistic character to the comics. This is in the overwhelming evidence that they were primarily a verbal rather than a visual medium in these early years, in spite of their pictorial elements. That is, we can see the populism of the editorial address anchoring the cartoons through the captions which in many cases were added by the editorial staff [1]. Therefore, in analysing these pictorial components, artistic creativity is really a secondary consideration.

Similarly, in judging the non-pictorial elements - the stories, jokes and advertising copy - the issue of authorial creativity is also a secondary consideration, since these, likewise, can be read in terms of their dialogue-like interaction with the reader as mediated by the terms of the editorial address. Now this is not to posit a quasi-structuralist picture of a perfectly coherent 'text' which somehow 'inscribes' the reader within itself. Rather, there is a degree of open-endedness to the relationship of editor and reader, but that open-endedness is much narrower in scope than in ASHH or its predecessors. It is pitched at the level of questioning the reader's self-perception within the social reality, rather than the validity of that

reality as presented to the reader.

At this point, it is important to make another qualification. The reading of any form of popular literature in magazine format is a subjective exercise, since the reader reworks the miscellaneous components into a pattern of reading unlikely to correspond exactly to the sequence of items as given. There is inevitably a hierarchy of favoured elements, with some ignored altogether. This must undermine, to some extent at least, the notion that we can read any unchanging, inherent meanings within the comics, and it also questions the establishment of any foolproof methodology for their interpretation. That includes the notion of generating rules for the interpretation of the comics, for at this stage in their early development, there is no formulaic narrative structure akin to the modern comic strip.

In choosing a specific route through the comics, and consequently ranking components in order of importance we are inevitably narrativising the subjective process of reading, and it is important to admit this from the outset. This is not, however, to argue that the reader is somehow 'inscribed' within the text. Rather, there are certain tensions and dynamics current in the comics, which may in part be concealed by a superficial coherence. And these tensions certainly extend into the evolution of the comic strip in the comics from the mid-'90s, as examined in Part Four (Chapter Ten, Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen).

### An Empirical Dilemma

Having stressed the holistic nature of the comics there is a dilemma in terms of empirical method: that is, how to maintain a sense of the overall integrity of the comics while gaining a sense of the general currents in each component.

There is no easy solution to this. As a tentative but workable solution to the problem it is proposed to examine, as the basis for this study, a single issue of Comic Cuts from 1892 (Issue no. 119, August 20 - Figures 8.1-8.8) which can be deemed fairly typical of Harmsworth's comic titles in the early '90s. It has been chosen for three basic illustrative qualities. Firstly, it contains the opening episode of one of the longest-running serials from any of the comics in the '90s, 'MISSING - 10,000 REWARD'. Therefore it provides a good example of the way these stories were announced from the outset, and points to the emergence of the detective 'genre' as the dominant fictional current in the comics in the 1890s. Secondly, it illustrates the pivotal role of the editorial address as the focal point in the comics in drawing the other components together. Lastly, this issue appeared shortly after Harmsworth's third paper, The Wonder, was launched, so it is a useful example of the mutual advertising between the three papers and reflects Harmsworth's corporate strategy which involved dominating any one sector of publishing with a number of similar titles. In order both to maintain a feeling for the integrity of the comic as a whole and to establish the thematic and formal trends in the comics over the first three or four years, we will attempt firstly to plot a

route through the pictorial elements in this issue and to contextualise these within the prevailing movements in the comics over this period. This contextualising will be conducted mostly through the footnotes. We will proceed similarly with the advertising copy and non-pictorial fictional components. This strategy, it is hoped, will circumvent the dilemma of gaining an overall picture of general trends and the holism of an individual issue.

In purely structural terms, also, this issue can be deemed typical of all three Harmsworth titles, for unlike his competitors, Harmsworth structured his papers identically from week to week. This was part of his strategy of regularising features in each title as a means of maintaining a minimum readership level and safeguarding against fluctuations [2]. Certain pages, therefore, will only ever contain particular features. Pages 1, 4, 5 and 8 were taken up with purely pictorial elements: cartoons of from one to eight pictorial components, only occasionally in narrative form in the early '90s. These pages rarely carried advertisements. The editorial address was always on page 2 or 6. Pages 2, 3, 6 and 7 always carried at least one self-contained, non-pictorial narrative and a serialised narrative on one or other. Two of them would carry one whole column of advertisements apiece. Less frequent items included joke or story competitions and the occasional cartoon.

The logical path chosen to take through the comic is, therefore, applicable to any of the three Harmsworth titles in this period. And, as has been explained, in order to make sense of it it has, to an extent, been narrativised. In this regard it

# 1/2d. Comic Cuts. 1/2d.

ONE HUNDRED LAUGHS FOR ONE HALFPENNY.

FOUNDED BY ALFRED O. HARMSWORTH.

No. 118. Vol. V.] Registered. ONE HALFPENNY WEEKLY. [August 10, 1892.]

**CLEVER ARTISTS SHOULD SUBMIT WORK TO THE EDITOR OF "THE WONDER"**  
*Enclosing large stamped directed envelope for return, in case of rejection. (IMMEDIATE PAYMENT.)*

**ADDING INSULT TO INJURY.**



1. "Hullo! another dreadful calamity."



2. "Great boots! What's happened?"



3. "Here, this is a nice fellow! See what you've been and done: knocked my garden wall down, that's all."



4. "Take him away, constable; it's a clear case of wilful damage to property. I'll prosecute the villain!"

**NOT A FIT.**



1. "What's the matter with this masquer! He looks all right, doesn't he?" So thought the bobby.



2. But suddenly he was seen to leap wildly into the air, and seemed bent on tying himself into knots. An epileptic fit, of course.



3. "Do you often have those fits, young man," said the doctor; "they are very violent. I don't think I ever saw one so terrible." "Fits!" said the masquer; "fits! That was no fit, mister. I dropped me cigarette down me collar, that's all." (Policeman drops him, and exits in a hurry.)

**QUERY, WHY?**



1. Why will a man with a face like this—



2. Give his hair like that!



3. And a man with a face like this—



4. Give his hair like this!

**THE INDIARUBBER BALL GAME.**



1. 2. 3. 4.

**FAT MAMMA.**



"Ma, go down on your hands and knees & scavenge, please."  
 "What on earth shall I do that for, pet!"  
 "Dunno I want to draw an elephant."

**TWO TOGETHER.**



PUTTING two together from one point of view: two of Irish and two of Scotch.

**A TAIL OF WOE.**



The expression of the Marx kitten when it first saw it hadn't a tail.

**BROWN DIDN'T SEE IT.**



1. "Oh, you demon, as the moon got hold of my eye, and I'll squish 'em out of you!"  
 2. "Oh, ho! now I've got you."  
 3. "Confound it! It's all again. It's making for Brown this time."  
 4. "For goodness' sake, Brown, keep still just half a second."  
 5. "Wallop!! Thanks, awfully, old chap. I've got it this time!"

**STAR-GAZING.**



HAROLD: "I mean to be an astronomer when I grow up."  
 ELSA: "Whatever will you do with yourself during the day-time?"

Figure 8.1  
 Comic Cuts No.118, p.1, 1892

# HURRY UP THERE, FUNNY PEOPLE!

THREE MONEY PRIZES EVERY WEEK FOR THE BEST FUNNY STORIES.

In this page we place the result of our weekly contest for the best story. We award three prizes. The first prize is ten shillings and sixpence. This amount is given to the reader who sends us the best story. The second prize is five shillings, and the third prize ten shillings and sixpence. These also will be given to those who send us the following prize story.

The first thing you have to do is to send a very good story, which will win you a prize. It must be a story of at least five years old. Making fun of your own country is not a good thing. It is not a good thing to make fun of your own country. It is not a good thing to make fun of your own country. It is not a good thing to make fun of your own country.

**FIRST PRIZE, 10s. 6d.**  
W. G. LAWRENCE, 108 FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

**SECOND PRIZE, 5s.**  
H. R. DAVIES, 8 FLEET STREET, GERRARD, SOUTH WALES.

**THIRD PRIZE, 10s. 6d.**  
GEORGE LAMBERT, 108 FLEET STREET, GERRARD.

**SEEN WOULD'NT HAVE HIM**  
Sixty years ago an elderly couple who had spent the greater portion of their lives in a small village, and had had very little experience of the world, were on their way to London by one of the cheap summer excursion trains.

On the morning of the trip the good wife departed with her husband, always with the party and members of her neighborhood to the various towns of London.

When about half their journey had been accomplished and the train had stopped at Reading Station, the old man, learning that they had five minutes to wait, and out to purchase some refreshments.

He was, however, the long in doing so, for when he came to look for his train, he found it had gone, and he was left behind.

The station-master, however, agreed to send him on by a train which came up half an hour later.

By this arrangement (as the new train was an express) he arrived in London twenty minutes before the excursion train was due.

When the latter arrived, and the old man saw his wife on the platform, he rushed up, delighted at having appeared before her, exclaiming:

"Well, honey, my love, I'm glad to see this again. I was very near thinking that I'd lost this altogether."

She looked at him indignantly, and in the old fashion retorted, sternly, saying:

"Away! Get away of you. Don't be coming! Your husband thinks here. I left my husband at the station, and he's not here. I'll not call a policeman and let you look for him."

**NOT TO BE KICKED OUT.**  
A newspaper proprietor advertised for an advertisement on his paper, and this was the first of the kind that he applied for to all those who had the name of the paper but instead of his name in it.

Several good people turned him up and left him with great delight, but the man who had the name of the paper but instead of his name in it.

"All!" said the proprietor, "you'll do, I can see. I don't want to be kicked out of my office."

**RECIPE FOR BORN EYES.**  
A LOVELY husband once visited on a physician to request him to prescribe for his wife's eyes, which were very sore.

"Let her wash them," said the doctor, "every morning with a small glass of brandy."

A few weeks after the doctor returned to meet the husband.

"Well, my friend, has your wife followed my advice?"

"She has done everything in her power to do it, doctor, and she's better, but she could never get the glass any higher than her nose."

**VERY NATURAL.**  
Two artists were discussing what they had done in the way of painting. One of them said he had done a very good picture of a man who had been a soldier in the wars.

"Well," said the other, "my own successful work was a caricature of a man who had been a soldier in the wars."

"I got some time ago from the artist a portrait of a man who had been a soldier in the wars, and I was very much interested in it."

**DISAPPOINTED.**  
An English lord who visited America was at a dinner given in his honor. A lady, who was one of the guests, who was very well-bred to start with, but who eyed him covertly at the occasion presented itself, finally ventured to remark:

"Are you really and truly an English lord?"

"Yes," he answered proudly, "really and truly."

"I have known thought I would like to see an English lord," she went on, "and now you are seated at last?" he put her laughing.

"No," replied the truthful little girl, "I'm not seated. I'm a good deal disappointed."

**WHERE IT SETTLED.**  
A ONE-LOOKED political orator, named Jones, who was greatly respected by his constituents in Lincoln, was asked by the latter how he came to lose his leg.

"Well," said Jones, "on assuming my political and looking on my constituents, I found that I had some British blood in me, and becoming convinced that I had all settled in that leg, I had it cut off at once."

"For the general," said Pat, "it 'ud 'er been a good thing if I had only settled in yer head."

**ONE FOR THE DOCTOR.**  
DR. BARKLEY was the leading doctor of Queen Anne's period—a tall, grey man, who took his Royal patent by sending back word one day to his patients that he was not at home.

As he was, however, the long in doing so, for when he came to look for his train, he found it had gone, and he was left behind.

The station-master, however, agreed to send him on by a train which came up half an hour later.

By this arrangement (as the new train was an express) he arrived in London twenty minutes before the excursion train was due.

When the latter arrived, and the old man saw his wife on the platform, he rushed up, delighted at having appeared before her, exclaiming:

"Well, honey, my love, I'm glad to see this again. I was very near thinking that I'd lost this altogether."

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"Away! Get away of you. Don't be coming! Your husband thinks here. I left my husband at the station, and he's not here. I'll not call a policeman and let you look for him."

**HE EXPECTED ONE.**  
Two gentlemen, named respectively Stevens and Johnson, were another one day on the banks of a stream, when the following incident took place: They happened, Stevens going some few hundred yards down the stream. After half an hour's absence, a small boat came to the river. Johnson observed a grotesque-looking fellow coming towards him, with the evident intention of attacking him.

Stevens, who was surrounded by some bushes, and observing his friend's predicament, shouted out at the critical moment:

"I say, Johnson, have you got a bit?"

To which Johnson, who was sitting on the ground, replied: "No, but I am expecting one."

**A POUND OF BITTS.**  
An honest old man, rather ignorant of the improved method of abbreviation, on looking over his pocket book, occasionally found changes like the following: "Ten shillings to 1 lb. bitts."

"Well," said he, "this looks a pretty business, and I don't know what you have done with so much of this 'ry bitts'."

"Ditto, ditto," replied the old lady. "Never had a pound of bitts in the house in my life."

He had meant the honest old man to acquire a high degree of that he should have been charged for things he had never touched.

"Mr. B," said he, "I shall stand this," will say she has a pound of this 'tarnal bitts in the house in her life."

The merchant then upon explained the meaning of the term, and the square was home satisfied. His wife inquired if he had looked out the meaning of the bitts.

"Yes," said he, "it means that I am an old fool, and you're a bitts."

**HIS DUTY.**  
A FEW years ago a man named Mr. Blane was an agent of the California Stage Company. There was a formidable and well-organized opposition to the stage company at that time, and Mr. Blane rendered them much a signal service in his capacity of agent that they were very sorry when he transferred his resignation.

You are some sixteen hundred pounds behind in your account, Mr. Blane," said the president, "but in view of your faithful and efficient services we shall throw off eight hundred of that account."

Mr. Blane seemed touched by this generosity. A tear stood in his eye.

"You will throw off eight hundred, will you?"

"I will," returned the president.

"Well, sir," said Blane, "I'm a gentleman, and I won't allow my stage company to stipulate me in millions. If there's all the other eight hundred pounds, and we'll call it square. So goodbye, sir, he thanks—is to my duty."

**BOOKING THE NIGGER.**  
WITH a boy of fourteen was fishing for trout in a deep brook, a stout fisherman named (leaving the lad by throwing mud at him. The boy, although little, was very smart, and, regarding the bait of his fishing-rod stout, Coffee found himself struggling in deep water, in which the little boy left him, and ran home. His duty apprehension attended the attention of his mother, who was highly indignant at her son being so treated by a blacky, and demanded: "Did you book the nigger?"

"No, mother," he replied; "but I booked the nigger."

**THE POINTS OF THE COMPASS.**  
"CAN you steer?" asked the captain of a vessel, to one of Bly who he had engaged.

"Sure, there's not a better hand at the tiller in all Kinabalu," said Pat braggingly.

"Well, so be so good," said the captain, "and you know the points of the compass, I suppose?"

"A compass! By my soul, it's not a compass at all, but a pair of compasses! I have that for my business, the compasses lay me for a 'happo' when he's in a hurry, but for the points of the compass I'm not a man, for the fisher spells them naturally, and he's 'happo' in the 'happo'."

**HE KNOWS IT.**  
"It's a wet day," said a stout gentleman to a stranger in a tramway, yesterday.

"It is?" said the other.

"Well, sir," said the first, somewhat loudly.

"Strove you, I'm sure, what did and hardly opened your umbrella, what did you say?"

"I say, sir, it's a wet day," he said, looking at his neighbor, and getting red in the face and ears, as everybody in the car looked at him.

"Ah, yes, yes; how much must you say?"

"I say, sir, it's a wet day," he said, looking at his neighbor, and getting red in the face and ears, as everybody in the car looked at him.

"What's the matter with you? You're something under his breath and get off the car."

"Yes," said the stout man stoutly, "that's the way it is, but I don't know it, and I'm a wet day. If you think I don't know it, and he's called it wet."

**A DISTANT RELATION.**  
STANGER: "I notice your title is De Millian. Are you related to the wealthy De Millian of Kensington?"

Poor but Respectable De Millian: "I am a—"

"Indeed! How distant?"

"Distant, as distant as they can keep me, sir."

**THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE!**  
ENGLISH is written as Karlish by a "taller" in this way: "Honourable Sir, I take the liberty to make you attentive on my Relations on them I like you, to favour me by some man of letters, with your visit and always keep a large share of one's, friend, and because materials and clothes that way to measure on the best and several times: I am like ready to fill your pocket with them."

**HUSBANDS WANTED.**  
THE manager of a matrimonial agency is responsible for the statement that when he proposes a candidate for the hands of his lady patrons the young girls invariably ask:

"What's he like?"

"What's his business prospects?"

"While the old man breathlessly ejaculates: "O not concerned! Quick! Where to be?"

**A GENEROUS BOOTBLACK.**  
As a bootblack was passing a tobacco shop he picked up a stumpy of a cigar from the gutter, and went into the shop and asked for a match. He was met with the reply:

"We don't keep matches in give away."

The boy started out, but stopped at the door, turned back, and asked the proprietor: "Do you call 'em'?"

He asked for a box, put his halfpenny, and lighted the stumpy, after which he closed the door and told the proprietor he was on the shelf, and said: "Next time a gentleman asks you for a match, give him one out of my box."

# EASY AS A B O.

ARTISTS' VOTING COMPETITION.

There is a contest for the title of the best picture painted with a pencil in this paper. The picture which the most votes will be judged the winner. The artist with the most votes will be awarded a prize. The prize of a second picture of a pencil will be given to the artist who has the next best picture.

The artist who has the next best picture will be awarded a prize. The prize of a second picture of a pencil will be given to the artist who has the next best picture.

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"Who Poisoned Mr. Bly?" The New Story in the Marvellous 3d. Paper, "THE WONDER!"

Figure 8.2  
Comic Cuts No.119, p.2, 1892



THOSE HOLIDAY ENGAGEMENTS.



He (happily): "Now that we are engaged, I— I presume I may—may—kiss you as much as I please!"  
She (encouragingly): "Yes, indeed; make the most of your time, dear. There's no talking how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know."

A RANK OUTRAGE.



A shocking outrage was committed by some wicked boys the other day on a poor dumb animal. Up to going to press the authorities have got no clue to the perpetrators.

ADVICE THROWN AWAY.



Old Gentleman: "My boy, let me persuade you to throw that injurious weed away."  
Imp (who is evidently designed for the gallows): "No blooming law. Do you think I'm such a blushing fool as to chuck it away for you to pick up! Go on with yer, or I'll tell yer father on yer, wanting to smoke at your age."

NEARLY A CALAMITY.



Horrid Boy: "Hi! stop, for goodness' sake stop, mister!"  
Gent: "Why, what's the matter?"  
H. B.: "Don't you see this is the gasworks, and people with red hair is requested not to get too near the gasometers!"

THE LATEST SELL.



1. There was great excitement at Slopion-on-Sea. The Coast-guard had observed what appeared to be a piece of wreckage, with a man clinging to it, out at sea.  
2. A great crowd collected on the beach, and a boat put off to investigate, the excitement meanwhile becoming intense.  
3. But it was rather a dull when they arrived at the cause of all the alarm. It was only the latest advertising dodge, after all.

THE AQUARIUM.



Old Bluff had been spending a week they marched out to some house again, his aquarium at home in his kitchen was coming round, the whole blessed lot of it in the rear rank.

VALUABLE INFORMATION.



COCKNEY YOUTH (who has been chattering to his companion like an ape for the last half hour): "Tell me something I don't know."  
Old Gent: "Well, sir, I will tell you something you don't know. You are a jackass, sir!"  
The Cockney youth got out at the next station.

A SAFE CURE.



Dr. Squibs: "Ah! so it's a more throat you have got! Have you ever had one before?"  
Lady: "Oh, yes, often."  
"And what did you do for it, now?"  
"Well, sometimes one thing and sometimes another."  
"And did you get rid of it in that way?"  
"Oh, yes."  
"Then I'd advise you to do what you've always done, and maybe you'll get rid of it again; then I'll call and see how you're going on to-morrow."

AS SHE LIKED.



MASHER (accosting strange young lady in the park): "Evening, my dear. How do you do?"  
Young Lady (rather rudely): "I do as I like, thank you (Masher collapses)."

LAYING THE GHOSTS.



1. "Look here, Charley, let's give Uncle Jim a fright to-night. We'll dress up as ghosts, and go into his bedroom and frighten his life out of him! What a lark!" 2. But Uncle wasn't asleep, and overheard the conspiracy. That night he prepared a little surprise for his two promising nephews in the shape of tin-tacks.



3. "Now then, Charley, let's go to. Oh! ain't it fun!" 4. "Ma—ow—ow—words—police—fire!" (Above all of which could be heard Uncle Jim laughing.)

TOO INQUISITIVE.



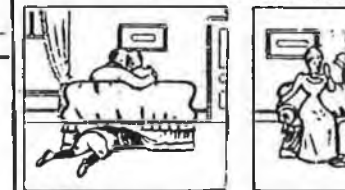
1. "I'll have a look in here; there may be something that'll do me good," said the monkey. 2. Search!!! 3. Yes, no doubt it did him good. He'll not do that again—not if he knows it.

A FACT.



A MAN was one day going up a Mill with a donkey, the animal dropped down dead.  
"Well, I've had that donkey for twenty years," the man exclaimed, "and this is the first time it has ever served this trick."

A TIE THAT...



1. THE little boy crawled under the sofa; and when his big sister and her young man were sitting as close together as possible, adjusted a slip-knot round their feet.  
2. And when O came, suddenly in the fat M's wig, the world's curiosity ceased.

Figure 8.4

Comic Cuts No.119, p.4, 1892





1. The assails, and before several specimens for an inspecting officer, and they had a rare



1. "Gave 'em bloodin' well kicked my little dog!" 2. "I did, in course. What yer a-goin' t' do, sonny?" 3. "Nest if I don't shake yer flipper, old man. It were nearly dead, it was. Let's see 'ow yer did it."



1. COUNTERCLAIMS.



1. HE WOODEN(T) LET GO. (A 'ARMLESS JOKE, THIS.)



2. Two minutes later—still shaking. 4. Fifteen minutes later. New Acquaintance (as he loosens the fastenings of his wooden arm): "Oh, bother this! Here, take a bit. I must be off. Send it down to the office when you've done with it. Ta-ta!"



AT THE CONCERT.

YOUNG CANDID: "Did you ever hear such horridly discordant, ear-splitting—"

Old Fiddlefoot: "Bst-t-t! That's my eldest daughter, and—"

Young Candid: "I repeat, sir, such ear-splitting diabolism as the idiots behind us are making. Why, I can't hear a word of the song."



2. Condemnation.



THE DIFFERENCE.

At the Marriage: "Yes, because, we will fight to the death in the cause of free love." (Wild theories.)

At Home: "No, Maria, I won't come out till you apologise for your unwelcome conduct." (Wild theories.)



A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

SENIOR PARTNER: "I passed Miss going out very hurriedly as I came in just now. Have you given him a holiday, Mr. Smith?"

Junior Partner: "Yes. He said he had something very important to attend to—a matter of life and death, in fact."

Senior Partner (gritting): "I see. He meant that he was going to attend a bicycle race."



3. Condemnation.



SET TWO FOND LOVERS.

3. The trunk was starting. The young man fell over the table, and Mary sat down upon the floor with a two-hundred-to-the-square-foot cushion that shook the whole house.

4. The old gent thought that Adolphus was drunk, and hit him with the fireiron several times before he could escape and fall out of the window. The wedding is postponed on account of the weather.



ART AND COMMERCE.

ARTIST: "I suppose you're joking to offer me a picture for a picture like this! What the canvas cost a shilling."

Picture Dealer: "Very likin', my good sir. But when you bought it, it was clean."



DISCRETION.

TOMMY and Johnny have been disobedient to their mother; they are sent to bed pending their father's arrival. Johnny (who hears his mother upstairs): "I say, Tommy, here comes dad—I shall pretend to be asleep." Tommy: "I shan't—I shall get up and put something on."

Figure 9.5

Comic Cuts No.119, p.5, 1892



LITTLE LAUGHS.

COVERTING the dogmas in, it takes three to make a pile.

THE wings of the house were surprised when the chimney fell.

WHEREVER a girl slopes it is safe to set her feet on a high.

PERFUMPTION is said to avert illness. But it is a pure remedy.

If riches be... might we wish they would occasionally fly out.

It is a pretty foolish man who thinks that the great virtue is piety.

CHARIBELLA found that a low mental position led to a high mental one.

...AND... the easiest way to make the wind is simply to catch a draft.

A TRUDDENT man is like a pin—his head prevents him going too far.

HEBERTY is doubtless the best policy, but it seems to have expired long ago.

It takes great deal quite friendless when he cannot get anybody to take his part.

M. GIFFORDS daughter is to be married. Of course she will go to a wedding feast.

HEBERTY's tendency is to restore the balance; as a man gets "short" his face gets long.

DON'T allow yourself to be carried away by enthusiasm—you may have to walk back.

A WIFE may not be proud of a cold in the head, but he is very apt to make a noise about it.

IF a man who raised his constitution by drinking champagne be hit by a lightning bolt?

WATERBURY men are a good deal like hens. The cock lays a plot and then the hen sits on it.

INDIANS never like one another, and anyone who has been as Indian can't blame them much.

ONE of the quickest ways to get wisdom is to watch a fat man trying to learn to ride the bicycle.

AN Irish editor says he sees no reason why women should not be allowed to become medical.

THE washerwoman, like the poet, spends a good deal of time over a line, and finds life full of hard rain.

THE theory that stimulants weaken the voice gets a contradiction when one meets a man howling drunk.

A WOMAN is never so badly in love that she does not try to find out the rank of her engagement ring.

LEVIN is very short, but it doesn't seem to when a fellow is waiting for an overcast train at a country railway station.

THE Clair of Hamlin has now, they say, become an expert performer on the violin. His troubles have evidently made him a composer.

BOYS old customs still prevail. The Romanes used to reside in their mansions, and the habit of living at public dinners is common still.

It is the man who occupies the smallest room at the top of the hotel who takes up the most room in reading his name in the directory book.

"Yes, do," said a man with a grudge against the electric bells at the corner of an hotel in Manchester. "From the rank of you want the water five times."

"GIVEN of our unobjectionable Parliamentary arrangements should find out how much it costs annually to provide seats for the Standing Committee of the House."

Miss P.: "There's my friend, Mrs. Hilder. She serves in the best society."  
Mrs. T.: "Yes, I suppose she finds it cheaper for more than to pay rent."

MARY a young lady who objects to being kissed under the mistletoe does not object to being kissed under the nose. A nervous partner made an error in this so that it read "under the nose."

How many men each day you'll see—  
Of such there is no dearth—  
When my wife's went to be  
To take a nap on earth.

WHY?



OLD GERTY: "What do you wear green shoes for, boy?"  
Boothboy: "Cos I put such a shiny thing on gentlemen's boots it hurts my eyes."

VERY BADLY WORDED.



GUEST: "You're not taking any dinner, Lady?"  
Hostess: "Thanks; I've had some of every dish."  
Guest: "Well, that's not much."

TOO FAT TO SINK!



Her: "Be careful; don't sink the boat."  
She: "Oh, you need not be alarmed; you wouldn't sink."

NEARLY LOST TO SOCIETY.



"CARRY a cold here you dear boy?"  
"Yes, slight touch of the measles. Left all one of me right, and taught cold in my finger."

A TRIFLE ABSENT-MINDED.



PROFESSOR (a little distracted): "I'm very glad to see you. How's your wife?"  
"Traggy N. Professor, but I'm not married."  
"Ah, yes; that, of course, your wife is still single."

CARROTS.



"Now, boys," said the master, "why was William II. called 'Giles'?"  
No answer.  
"Well, I'll help you a bit. Why do you call that boy 'Carrots'?" indicating a curly-headed youngster.  
"Cos he can't catch us," immediately answered the bottom boy.

SLIPPED HIS MEMORY.



"Good gracious, John!" said a fond mother to her son, "that's twice you've come home and forgotten that card."  
"So it is," said the boy. "It was so greasy that it slipped my memory."

"THE WONDER!"

ed. "THE WONDER!" The fifth of the Harmsworth Journals. Every Saturday,

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LUXURIANT HAIR, WHISKERS; & MUSTACHIOS  
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A TRIAL BOTTLE FOR 3/6. We had ourselves to send to our readers of COMIC CUTS a TRIAL BOTTLE of EDWARDS' HARLENE, with a Full Order for 1/6, and 4/6. We have never before, from CHARLES and FREDERICK EDWARDS, HARLENE, provided in order within one month of the date of publication. We make this offer only for the purpose of enabling our readers more widely known, and to enable them to have a TRIAL BOTTLE of EDWARDS' HARLENE, with a Full Order for 1/6, and 4/6. P.O. preferred. Testimonials and a Valuable Treatise on the Cultivation of the Hair post-free on application.

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Figure 8.7  
Comic Cuts No. 119, p. 7, 1892

**A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE.**



POTTER: "I'll take those photos of mine if they're done."  
 Assistant: "Yes, sir. You understand, of course, that we do not deliver pictures until they are paid for."  
 Potter: "What? Why, when I sat for them the photographer told me I might pay whenever I chose."  
 Assistant: "Yes, but that was merely to make you look pleasant."

**NOT TO BE DONE.**



PARK-KEEPER: "Get off that grass."  
 Small Boy (on bare patch): "Ain't no grass 'ere."  
 Park-keeper: "Will, this, get off where the grass was, ye young spalpeen, and don't give no back talk, nayther."

**A LIGHT ANSWER.**



CAPTAIN (to sailor who has been snore-headed): "Ain't there I do see a light?"  
 Sailor (aloft): "Yes, sir."  
 Captain: "What light?"  
 Sailor: "Daylight, sir."

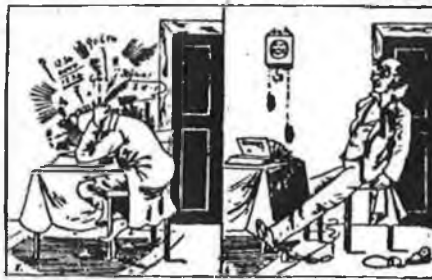
**HIS GLORIOUS BALANCE.**



1. "I FIND, Mrs. Crumplit, that my clerks have been robbing me, so I have taken to making my books up myself. This year I find I have an unusually good balance. Therefore permit me, dear madam, to present you a five-pound note as some little recognition for your looking after me while I have been lodging under your roof." (Exit landlady, jubilant.)  
 2. "Well, I never had such a glorious balance before. Let me look at it again."



3. "Hallo! what's this!" 4. "I must really go into this thoroughly."



5. "!!! !!!" 6. "Hoast and fry my double-headed yule! If I haven't gone and added in the year along with the pounds! (N.B.—And he had parted with that five-pound note, too! After this he thought his clerks might be trusted.)

**TOOK THE SHINE OUT OF HIM.**



1. "Stick, shine 'em, an' patronise the old firm." "Pohah, gov'nor! This is the old firm; an' competition wotsoever with the establishment over the way."  
 2. Jones says that competition is really, doncherknow, carried a little too far nowadays. He is seriously thinking of going without boots altogether in dry weather.

**SHE SUPPOSED SO.**



TEACHER: "So I suppose this is the dummy school!"  
 Scholar (after a long pause): "Yes, I suppose the other teacher always sits there."

**CALLED HER NAMES.**



LADY: "Why did you leave your last place?"  
 Servant: "Because the missus called me names."  
 Lady: "What did she call you?"  
 Servant: "She said I were a domestic, and me an hard-working a woman as ever lived!"

**AN IRISH REMEDY.**



MIKE: "Bad ome to it, there's a big hole in the heel av me sock. Phwat'll I do wid it?"  
 PAT: "Tare yer sock outside in av course, ye fool!"

**A RUDE AWAKENING.**



1. Brown had fallen asleep on the top of a heap of dry seaweed, when two mischievous boys discovered him and covered him completely up. 2. Shortly afterwards two men arrived to take away a portion of seaweed. "Here's a fine fine job!" said one of them; "we'll start here." 3. And then he seized his fork and drove it straight into the middle of the heap. 4. !!!

Published by the Proprietors, the LONDON & WESTMINSTER CONTRACT, Limited, 100 Fleet Street, London, E.C.

Figure 8.8

Comic Cuts 119, p.8, 1892

HE WANTED TO  
MAKE AN  
"IMPWESSION."



1. "Ah," said J. Toffoe, Esquire, as he strolled past the shade of the charming Miss Mowbray on lovely muggy day last week, "there she is. Now's the time to make an impression."



2. And so he did, but not the sort he wanted, for a horse put his foot in an unusually deep puddle, and sent up a "mud spot." And the worst of it was he saw the fair one enjoying the fun through the window!

Figure 8.9

'He wanted to make an "impweession" '  
(from IC 70, p.2, 1892)

THROUGH THE SEASIDE LODGING-HOUSE WINDOW.



(1) This is Bounding Billiam, looking what he called "dooid aly" at a pretty little thing at a window. (2) This is the pretty little thing at the window, and— (3) This is how Bounding Billiam looked through the glass of a lodging-house window. (Yes B. B. has ever since boasted that he made an impression on the pretty little thing!)

Figure 8.10

'Through the seaside window'  
(from CC 54, p.2, 1891)

HIRSUTE ADORNMENTS EXTRAORDINARY.



Showing how an otherwise uninteresting countenance may, by the growth of a little hair, be made to assume as well a warlike, mercantile, foreign, legal, or artistic appearance.

Figure 8.11

'Hirsute adornments extraordinary'  
(from CC 54, p.1, 1891)

AN OPTICAL ERROR.



(1) You think Washington has an extraordinary early moustache, don't you? (2) But he hasn't, after all. It is only the pattern of the chair.

BEHIND AND BEFORE.



(1) If you think these men are friends— (2) You are mistaken.

Figure 8.12

'An optical error'

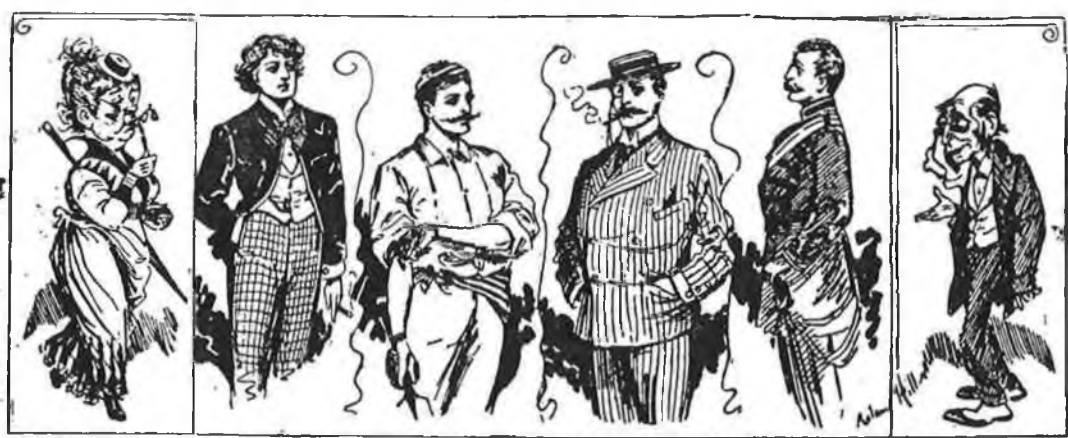
'Behind and Before'

(from CC 53, p.4, 1891)

WHO THEY THOUGHT THEY WOULD MARRY, AND THE SPECIMENS THEY GOT.



Little Lord Snoots had just come into 100,000*l.*, and his only trouble was who should be Lady Snoots. There was little Jessie Smith, the Squire's daughter; Lottie McRay, of the Gaiety; Miss Marie, the petite French widow; or that sweetly jolly girl, Connie Jones, the champion tennis player. He loved them all equally. Which should it be? Strange to say, they all refused him, and he was eventually claimed by his lovely cousin, the Hon. Miss Binks, Chairman of Women's Rights Committee, &c.



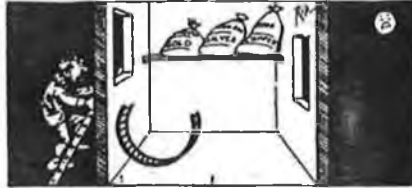
The Lady Clementina was rich, if no longer young and beautiful, and she was beloved (so she thought) by MacSmith the actor; the Hon. Gen. Bowler, captain of the county shroton; Fildis the artist; and Captain Blocher of the 56th. But they were a long time coming to the point, consequently, when Professor Backbone, F.R.G.S., M.P., &c., offered his hand and heart, he was accepted.

Figure 8.13

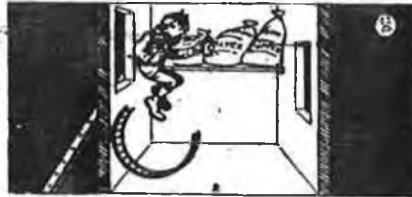
'Who they thought they would marry, and the specimens they got'

(from CC 18, p.8, 1890)

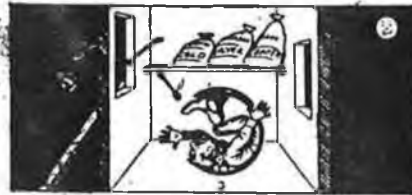
THE "PATENT SAFETY" BURGLAR  
EJECTOR.



(1) BURGLAR: "I reckon this 'crib' is about the softest thing I've had this many a day."



(2) "Hallo! what the dickens is this?"



(3) "O, mercy! what am I going!"



(4) "Jee-whoo! I was never 'cleaned' so clean in all my life!"

Figure 8.14

'The "Patent Safety" Burglar Ejector'

(from CC 53, p.1, 1891)



Puzzle No. 1.—How to enjoy yourself on finding that "there isn't a bed to let in the town."

Puzzle No. 2.—How anyone can be mean enough to occupy a machine for an hour, and keep a crowd waiting.

Puzzle No. 3.—How to get rid of a headache under the above circumstances.

Puzzle No. 4.—How to look pleasant when you are obliged to jump out and haul up the boat.



Puzzle No. 5.—How is it that when you have determined to wear out your old clothes by the seaside you meet the best-dressed men you know?

Puzzle No. 6.—Why do the bathing-machines start with such a jerk?

Puzzle No. 7.—Who are the people who enjoy cheap amusements like the above?

Puzzle No. 8.—Why is it that just as you are leaving for home you meet the prettiest girl you ever saw?

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETOR BY THE "ANSWERS" COMPANY, LONDON, AT 106 FLEET STREET, E.C.4.

Figure 8.15

'Some puzzles of the seaside'

(from CC 16, p.8, 1890)



A QUIET DRIVE BY THE SEA

A Brighton bath-chairman's idea of a suitable route for an invalid lady

Figure 8.16

'A quiet drive by the sea'

(from 'Mr. Punch at the Seaside' (no date)

— reproduced in J.K. Walton (1983),

The English Seaside Resort, p.204)



# ally sloper's Half Holiday

CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. VI.—No. 269.]

SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1889.

[ONE PENNY.]



### 'OOOF GATHERERS AT MARGATE.

"Often, when I have been down with Bob at Margate, I have been amused at those boys who sing that mournful strain, 'Oh, chuck us a 'a'penny in the water!' by the side of the Jetty; but I never dreamt that my revered Parent would ever sloop so low as to join their ranks. Mamma writes to say that she caught Poor Papa and all the children in the sea the other morning 'oof gathering, whatever that may mean, and that they returned home dripping, with not more than the price of a pint of winkles among them. Sometimes, I think, it would be better if I had no Pa."—TERRIE.

### ANOTHER POLICE OUTRAGE.—(A Fact.)



1. Sai was a Salvationist, and although rather testy on his side, determination, with the aid of a policeman, to save the sinners' souls.

2. Here we see worldly-minded Captain Buggins, who, without conceding to argue the question, orders her off in a peremptory manner.

3. This, of course, did please, and here we depict Buggins taking a man advantage of the opportunity offered to him, and wheeling her off to the station.

### RACECOURSE ROBBERS.

In 1841 Renton Nicholson, otherwise "Lord Chief Baron Nicholson," hit upon the idea of visiting the principal race meetings with a refreshment booth, and at Epsom announced:—

"GRILLED CHICKENS, RABBITS OF HAM, AND LAMB CROPS WITH QUARTS OF PALE."

Directed by the Commodore Magistrate or Master Cook of the celebrated Jockey and Jock Society.

"Lord Chief Baron Nicholson invites his patrons to a trial of his latest invention, namely, Grilling and Dressing Pigeons on a Racecourse. He has been in the habit of serving their customers with a glass of champagne and a rump of Tower Hill, but Lord Nicholson is the first Justice who received who ever personally participated gastronomically on Epsom Downs."

With this booth, which was very popular for a while, Nicholson made a good deal of money, and even at a small race meeting (Romford) he once took on the first day upwards of £200, which, however, as will be seen, he had some trouble to keep safe.

The London police took their way back to town when the first day's racing was at an end, and the booth-keepers, therefore, found themselves, with considerable misadventure, at the mercy of the blackguardly scum and rabble that usually take possession of the course at nightfall—lay-out outs, cadgers and tramps—ready for any mischief. The news of the good business Nicholson had done was buzzed around, the sum taken, of course, greatly exaggerated, and

Figure 8.17

' 'Oof gatherers at Margate'

(from ASHH, Vol. VI, No.269, 1889)



MR. OXFORD (a boating enthusiast): "Mother, this is Mr. Kortney, the professional oarsman. He's just won the three-mile race."  
MRS. OXFORD: "Did he win any money?"  
MR. OXFORD: "Why, yes; a hundred pounds."  
MRS. OXFORD: "Why doesn't he take some of it and buy some clothes?"

Figure 8.18

'After the Regatta'  
'from CC 23, p.4,  
1890)

Figure 8.19

'Blouses and Bloomers. -  
A case of General Utility'  
(from CC 259, p.1, 1895)



BLOUSE AND BLOOMERS. - A CASE OF GENERAL UTILITY.

1. Mrs. UZZA DATTY is very accomplished, don't you know. She wears her blouse like this for walking; and—

2. She just turns it upside down when about to cycle, and it makes a splendid pair of bicycling bloomers.



THE SPINNING WHEEL.

Ancient.

Modern.

Figure 8.20

'The spinning wheel'  
(from FW 187, p.4,  
1896)

KEEPING UP WITH THE PROCESSION.



O'FLANIGAN: "Faith, 'n' what are yez doin' thot fur, Murphy?"  
 MURPHY: "Whiat, will ye! So that the neighbours will t'ink that Biddy and the gur-s-la hev gone to the sayshore for the sayson. It's fashionable, it is, old mon."

Figure 8.21

'Keeping up with the procession' and 'Profitable Athletics' (from IC 49, p.5, 1891)

PROFITABLE ATHLETICS.



OLD HOULIHAN: "And it's an athletic club yure afther wantin' to join, is it?"  
 YOUNG HOULIHAN: "Yis, nor; for company and exercise."  
 OLD HOULIHAN: "Company and exercise, indade! Jist take one of me spare hods on yure shoulder to-morrow mornin', an' O'H'll bring yez to a job where yer'll hod plenty av both."

Figure 8.22

'Real portrait of the editor of "Comic Cuts" at last' (from CC 16, p.8, 1890)

REAL PORTRAIT OF THE EDITOR OF "COMIC CUTS" AT LAST.



He was a healthy young man when he started the paper, but three months' work has reduced him to a confirmed invalid.

GOT A BITE.



TRAMP: "Well, I've found a real friend at last! After all, the world ain't—"



INVENTOR (at window): "Pity to see a big fellow like that with no appetite."

Figure 8.23

'Got a bite' (from IC 10, p.4, 1890)

has been decided to group the cartoons and pictorial sequences, advertisements, jokes and funny story competition for reasons elaborated below. Because of their formal difference to these items, despite their common editorial anchoring, the serialised and non-serialised fiction will be dealt with together with non-fictional narratives separately in Chapter Nine.

'ONE HUNDRED LAUGHS FOR ONE HALFPENNY'

To begin with we will look at the pictorial elements in the comics. From page 1 of Comic Cuts (Figure 8.1) we are struck by its scattered, disordered look. The symmetry of the masthead sits over an array of parallels and perpendiculars fencing off the various pictorial gags, with no logical direction to the reading.

To add to the asymmetry, the degree of artistic accomplishment and the range of technique are extremely uneven. Those cartoons with a predominance of blacked solids fare best in the struggle for attention while those with any degree of shading by single strokes or cross-hatching tend to merge with the poor quality paper. The consequent imbalance in the page makes horizontal or vertical reading impossible.

At this stage in the development of the comics it is not really worthwhile to look at the stylistic aspects of the artwork, for the most outstanding feature of these cartoons is that the jokes, such as they are, are primarily verbal. Amid the visual disorder and the difficulties of making much sense of these pictures on their own, the captions provide the order. In

many cases they address the reader directly with a rhetorical or teasing question, and this has the functions of drawing the reader in and establishing continuities between the different items. It is at this level of verbal anchoring, then, that we shall be primarily considering these visual elements.

There are exceptions to this. These are the sequences which involve climactic, violent and visual jokes, normally in the ultimate frame. Examples of this are 'BROWN DIDN'T SEE IT', 'THE INDIARUBBER BALL GAME', 'ADDING INSULT TO INJURY' (Figure 8.1), 'LAYING THE GHOSTS', 'TOO INQUISITIVE' (Figure 8.4), 'A TIE THAT UPSET TWO FOND LOVERS' (Figure 8.4 and 8.5), 'THE RUNAWAY BARREL' (Figure 8.5) and 'A RUDE AWAKENING' (Figure 8.8). Though these might be deemed prototypes of the modern comic strip, the absence of recognisable, regular types, let alone characters, makes them a minor tendency among the visual elements, and the comic strips that did develop in the '90s can be shown to have drawn more from the structures of the other types of cartoon and sequence with their verbal anchoring.

Among these cartoons we can detect two basic tendencies: a fascination with the corporeal, in terms of self-grooming and dress as a key to raising social standing; and a fascination with deception and self-delusion.

#### The editor as punster

Within these tendencies we are identifying several different things. Firstly, there is a degree of word play in the cartoons, mostly in puns: 'TWO TOGETHER', 'A TAIL OF WOE' (Figure 8.1). 'NEARLY A CALAMITY' scores at the expense of the Cockney dropped

'h' (Figure 8.4), as does 'HE WOODEN(T) LET GO. (A 'ARMLESS JOKE, THIS) (Figure 8.5). 'VERY BADLY WORDED' appears to be making a pun at the expense of the double meaning of 'dish' as holder and food alike, while 'SLIPPED HIS MEMORY' (both Figure 8.7) does likewise with the word 'grease'. Most of these trade largely on the verbal gag, with the pictures acting as mere adjunct. The puns constitute a sort of shared joke between editor and reader, a delight in the knowledge of the richness of words at the expense of the ignorant, and the two Cockney gags reveal who that is supposed to be. This is continuous with the current in humourous weeklies, of elevating the reader to a priveleged position as critic of humanity's failings, but its operation at the level of the manipulation of words indicates a direction towards fun-poking rather than the serious criticism of social types. The duplicity in verbal punning, which establishes the editorial presence, is extended by the more complex combination of visual and verbal gags.

#### 'QUERY, WHY?'

'NOT A FIT' (Figure 8.1) depicts a 'masher', the aspirant rake and dandy, striding along in a posed, affected manner; in the second picture, he is tied in knots with wild, bulging eyes; and finally, he rests in the arms of a helpful 'bobby' as a doctor looks on. Like other examples, the sequence makes practically no sense without the aid of the accompanying captions, and the form they take establishes a standard technique in such sequences, which is related to the pun. "What's the matter with this

masher ...?", asks the first caption in a rhetorical way. The figure is well-executed, with the classic paraphernalia of the height of fashion in the '90s (shiny topper, monocle, high collar, and wide cuffs to the shirt, cravat, tails, checked trousers, spats and black shoes, cigarette with curving tail of smoke, and cane), the classic profile (long nose and chin, large ear) and the strutted walk as indicators of sartorial and behavioural elegance. But the height of fashion is ultimately his undoing as the high collar swallows the cigarette and sends him into a seemingly epileptic fit which leaves a red-nosed, frizzle-haired and limp wreck for the final picture. The rhetoric of the caption ('... He looks all right, doesn't he? So thought the bobby!') establishes the editor as the authoritative judge of truth beneath false and affected appearance and dress. This is a derivation of the techniques evident in ASHH, but there are important differences.

The masher is presented not so much as a social type of specific class origins, but as a type identifiable by standard corporeal appearance and dress, and by his pursuit of romantic escapades. As Ronald Pearsall points out, the masher in the '80s and '90s was generally a much lower-runged version of the Regency 'dandy', less concerned with dress (his arrival signalled the universal accessibility of the 30 shilling suit) than with an overt expression of sexuality. But he was equally to be found among the upper classes. As such he was unattached to any specific social sector and a status to which anyone could aspire [3]. This sequence is concerned with the notion of corporeal codification and codes of dress as indexes to personality typing

on a classless social stage, as opposed to typing by class. It does indict personal failure to master the codes of appearance and behaviour. The fact that the masher is by far the most frequently encountered type in the comics [4] marks a significant move away from ASHH.

This celebration of corporeal embellishment as a means to enhance social standing, combined with the mockery of individual failure to master it is reinforced by 'QUERY, WHY?' (also Figure 8.1). Whether the joke here is on pathetic attempts to overcome plain looks by the cultivation of moustaches or beards, or the unfortunate accentuation of existent features by a bad choice of areas in which to cultivate facial hair, is unclear. What the sequence does indicate is a fascination with the attempt to augment social status by the refinement of a more 'distinguished' personal appearance, now at the physiognomic, even more than the full, corporeal level. And once again, failure to master the code is put down to personal ineptitude. The code itself is legitimate [5].

The reader himself [6] may occasionally be drawn into this exercise in simultaneous fun-poking and legitimation of such codification. Despite the absence of a central character or a standard narrative form, these sequences nevertheless illustrate the emergence of a standard formula: a sort of before/after structure depicting truth and false appearance, or vice versa. In 'AN OPTICAL ERROR' (Figure 8.12) [7], the reader is invited to play the game. The knowing caption smugly states: 'You think Mashington has an extraordinary curly moustache, don't you?' In



this case the joke is on the reader's acceptance of the apparent three-dimensionality of the cartoon, and on the moustache in particular as a colourful indicator of rank. Such pictorial sets [8] are a further extension from the verbal pun. Anchored, as they are, by the editorial, rhetorical devices, they illustrate the open-endedness of the cartoons in these early stages. The absence of a narrative structure complicates the element of 'surveillance' on the reader's part, since his own understanding of what is happening is open to question. In the absence of a regular character in formulaic narrative adventures, and despite the absence of a complex, multi-layered figure like Ally Sloper, there is a degree of ambiguity in these cartoons and a running commentary/dialogue including editor and readers. The open-endedness, however, is much more formulaic than in ASHH, and is less to do with a hierarchical scale of social types, and more with the admission to or exclusion from a world of male social equals, based on personal adornment. The target in all of these cartoons is an ego inflated through superficial transformation, but with no logical foundation in real personal attributes [9].

#### Moustachios in a month

Such cartoons constitute a playful commentary on forms of codified appearance and behaviour which are actually reinforced by the advertisements of pages 2 and 6 (Figures 8.2 and 8.6). 'GOLDEN BALM' is a skin preparation for 'removing all pimples, freckles, blotches, unsightly and diseased conditions'. 'MOUSTACHIOS IN A MONTH' guarantees facial growth with 'HIRSUTINE'. These are the serious, unambiguous versions of the

promises that are partly undermined, or at least questioned in the cartoons [10]. In addition, the ads. all have an air of 'invention' or newness about them. 'HUTCHIN'S PATENT UMBRELLA SNAKE' is 'one of the best and simplest inventions of the day', an umbrella fastener, an additional, brand-named prop to an already essential prop for the young aspirant.

Even more so than with ASHH (which carried comparatively few ads.) the presence of these ads. makes the comics a straightforward reflection of the commoditisation of cultural production and consumption. They promise access to a 'new' democracy of unproblematic social intercourse free of personal barriers to self-improvement in good appearance and behaviour. There is, however, a degree of pseudo-individualising in operation here, to the extent that the emphasis is on achieving a personal identity by purchasing a brand-name product. The 'CRYSTAL PALACE (JOHN BOND'S) GOLD MEDAL MARKIN INK or PENCIL' ad. warns: 'Actions at Law granted with injunctions, cost and damages awarded, against wrongdoers for selling colourable imitations'. And this notion of individuality is extended by the offer, with every bottle, of the free gift of a personalised rubber stamp.

This kind of advertising clearly points the way to the modern advertising industry as we know it. However, it is as yet some distance from the contemporary manipulation of personal vanity as a direct adjunct to industrial needs [11]. Its outrageous claims are not mediated by subtle persuasive techniques. And the degree of scepticism which the proliferation of patented products must have generated - the miracle cures for

all 'ills', including baldness, blushing [12] and skin complaints ('GOLDEN BALM' above) - is duly reflected in the cartoons. The naive 'consumer', the inevitable counterpart to the 'commodity' and the unscrupulous producer armed with questionable 'testimonials' from doctors are, indeed, lampooned, however ineptly in the Mr. Chips episode reproduced in Chapter Seven (Figure 7.2). 'THE "PATENT SAFETY" BURGLAR EJECTOR' (Figure 8.14) [13] was a typical enough humorous commentary on the seemingly endless string of patented products for the improvement (in this case protection) of the home.

We can see in the regular and extensive ad. slots the realisation of Harmsworth's strategy, as described by Williams, of making advertising the basis for his papers' survival, and this is reflected in the populism and editorial boasts of the editorial address [14]. However, we can sense in these cartoons both a celebration of the commoditised world newly available to the reader and a combination of unease and mockery at his manipulation. The criticism is partly directed at the unscrupulous producer but more at the naive consumer himself, as exemplified by the masher.

In a related way to the movement in the editorial address as noted in Chapter Seven, we can read these types of cartoons and the ads. as catering quite specifically to the needs of the lower middle class, since all the evidence suggests that it was to this class that rules of personal grooming and public behaviour were most valued. In a very rigidly hierarchical world of clerkdom, in which the chances of promotion must have seemed remote to the lower runged clerks, but whose appearances had to be kept up on a

low income, it seems reasonable to suppose that the cultivation of 'hirsute adornments' was seen as a means of evening the odds. This is certainly the case as elaborated by one of the quintessential novelists of the 'lower middle class', H.G. Wells, in Kipps [15].

Wells describes young Kipps' initiation to the apprenticeship of public display and formal flirtation as a means of entry to the world of equalised social status in fashionable dress and deportment in these terms:

'There is a quite perceptible down upon his upper lip, and his costume is just as tremendous a "mash" as lies within his means. His collar is so high that it scars his inaggressive jawbone, and his hat has a curly brim, his tie shows taste, his trousers are modestly brilliant, and his boots have light cloth uppers and button at the side. He jabs at the gravel before him with a cheap cane, and glances sideways at Flo Bates, the young lady from the cash desk. She is wearing a brilliant blouse and a gaily trimmed hat. There is an air of fashion about her that might disappear under the analysis of a woman of the world, but which is quite sufficient to make Kipps very proud to be distinguished as her particular "feller", and to be allowed at temperate intervals to use her Christian name'. [16]

Nor is Kipps above pun-making:

'"You are a one for being roundabout", says the lady.  
 "Well, you're not so plain you know".  
 [...]  
 "You're not a bit plain - you're" (his voice jumps up to a squeak) "pretty. See?" [17].

We can see in the emphasis on fashion that Wells is recreating an impression among the 'lower middle class' in the '90s (Kipps is a draper's assistant) of a 'new' era in which some respectability was affordable through one's mode of self-presentation. The

attempted cleverness with word-play tends to reinforce a picture of Gissing's 'quarter-educated' feigning literacy through the morsels of manufactured humour and fragments of 'information' from their new reading matter. This is precisely the sort of pun-making evident in Comic-Cuts and the other papers. The point is that it is a decidedly 'lower middle class' and male world, and the inevitable tensions which pervaded the status of this class are evident in both the editorial jokiness of Comic Cuts, and in Wells' slightly tongue-in-cheek guide to codified 'gentlemanly' behaviour and its supposed status attributes.

This reinforcement of the notion of codified rules of presentation and the scepticism at the degree of real elevation it can afford the aspirant social climber are constructed according to the needs of the 'petty bourgeois' reader. And this notion of symbolic democratisation is a myth. We can demonstrate this ironically through the figure of a 'masher'. For if, as Pearsall argues, the 'masher' was a sort of new, classless social type in his definition by sexual orientation, that definition encompassed a distinctly working-class variant. As reflected in the music-hall songs, this variety was characterised by a far more overt sexuality than is evident here, and was wont to invade the once exclusive West End haunts of the privileged with a vulgar assertion of the new symbolic equality of common dress without any adherence to mannered respectability [18]. The working class 'masher' (alongside the working class version of the 'swell') was one aspect of the threat of 'democracy' to the upper classes as articulated by Arnold and other cultural critics. But he was quite alien to the sort of positive

democratic world as elaborated in the comics, in which sexual designs are channelled into a common sense of propriety and are restrained, no matter how far it is stretched. Likewise, the working class female equivalent was by no means reticent in sexual matters [19]. But this is missing in the Harmsworth comics.

We can begin to get a picture, then, through these cartoons and ads., of a decidedly male, petty bourgeois construction of the democracy of self-aggrandisement through grooming. If it is questioned, it is only at the level of individual inability to make the most of it, and in this function the editorial captions bolster the reader's ego. This puts the comics on a continuum with the older humorous weeklies and ASHH, but their functioning in this respect has narrowed dramatically. And as with the anchoring editorial address, it is never quite clear what exactly are the parameters to this taken-for-granted code which is negatively defined by its eschewing of the 'vulgar' or the 'offensive'. But neither is it clear as to what exactly these terms encompassed, because they are virtually absent.

These arguments can be further elaborated by the examination of the other cartoons in this issue of Comic Cuts.

#### Those holiday engagements

'THOSE HOLIDAY ENGAGEMENTS' (Figure 8.4) introduces perhaps the most common backdrop in the Harmsworth comics: the holiday, and especially the seaside resort. This cartoon should be read in tandem with 'THE LATEST SELL' (also Figure 8.4). The seaside constitutes a location in which the participants, far removed

from the tensions of urban living, can be seen to be equalised by their common mode of dress. Boys wear sailor suits, men straw boater hats, striped blazer and plain white flannel trousers; women and girls wear white frilly dresses and flowery broad-brimmed hats. The seaside resort consists of promenade, pier, beach, cliff-walk and open-cab ride. It therefore provides a perfect venue for the further indulgence of self-publicity as an assertion of populist appeal on the part of Mr. Comic Cuts ('THE LATEST SELL') and for the reinforcement of the notion of a code of behaviour, especially in romantic matters ('THOSE HOLIDAY ENGAGEMENTS').

The seemingly neutral venue of the seaside, as observed in the review of ASHH, and as evident here, is celebrated as a universally accessible means of relaxation and mutual enjoyment, where romantic escapades can be pursued to the point of engagement, though the reference to 'those holiday engagements' in the caption reveals the smug, sceptical editorial eye. The point is, however, that even with this questioning editorial anchor, the seaside holiday is exalted as an affordable avenue of escape to the reader and offers the democratising adornments of special seaside outfits. A good example of this is 'SOME PUZZLES OF THE SEASIDE' (Figure 8.15), a series of illustrated editorial queries calculated to massage the reader's status as a seasoned but world-weary traveller through their empathetic tone. The 'How/why is it?' introduction establishes a mutual bond of voluntary victims to the trap of asserting status through public display in the seaside holiday [20].

The seaside also provides an opportunity to fire another

potshot at the naivete of the unwary consumer in an age of false promise in commoditised production. 'THE GOING AND COMING-HOME OF BLIBBERS' shows the Blibbers family in silhouette marching proudly to the seaside and returning below in variously bedraggled states. The elder son wears a guaranteed 'UNSHRINKABLE' suit (the tag is still attached) which has, of course, shrunk by his return [21].

Such cartoons are, then, contiguous with the concentration on the corporeal and the structure of the duality of truth and false appearance. But it is likewise remarkable for what it omits.

John K. Walton reinforces the point I have been making regarding the emulative impulses of the lower middle class, the fact that

'the competition for status put pressure from below on established families to express and validate their position by appropriate patterns of consumption, which in turn were copied by aspiring inferiors as best they could'. [22]

The retreat by the upper classes to the race meetings, the spas and the seaside resorts was followed in turn, therefore, by the progressively lower orders. The process, as argued in Chapter Five, was increasingly facilitated by rising wages and falling commodity prices, while improved transport facilities made the seaside towns more accessible, and these offered both the 'medical properties of seawater' and the opportunity for public display [23]. While this may well have broadened horizons for the lower middle class, it



also extended the possibilities for the even lower orders who may not have been able to manage a full week by the sea, but the occasional day-trip was well within their means. Walton plots the evolution of a 'common' holiday culture based on mutual tolerance among the classes in the 1900s, but in the 1890s many of the resorts were frequently invaded by a degree of 'rowdyism' among the lower working class day-trippers, drawn predominantly from the unskilled work sectors of London and Liverpool [24] as opposed to the more 'respectable'/ skilled workers of the northern textile towns. In this regard we should also note that a number of the larger resorts - Blackpool, Brighton, etc. - were by the '90s becoming quite large urban centres, and the leisured existence of the seafront could not completely mask their inter-class tensions [25].

At the height of these tensions there is no little evidence of their existence in the comics. Punch dealt with the problem directly, with its definition of 'Midsummer madness. - Going to the seaside in search of quiet' [26]. Its cartoon version of the promenade shows the bustling lower orders in pursuit of pleasure, with what looks like a depiction of Ally Sloper himself in one corner, borrowed unannounced from ASHH (Figure 8.16) [27].

Sloper's own adventures likewise deal with the issue, but through the disguise of Sloper himself. ''OOF GATHERERS AT MARGATE' [28] (Figure 8.17) shows Ally ''oof gathering' (a slang term for dancing) with the kids at Margate pier, holding out his bucket and singing, as Tootsie remarks, 'Oh, chuck us a ''a'penny

in the water!' to the tourists above. Ally is disguised in a boy's swimsuit, but is nevertheless pelted with seaweed and shells, as an exclamatory and clearly mortified Mrs. Sloper looks on from a nearby rowing boat. This cartoon illustrates Sloper's multiple identity well. He is the suburban husband freed at last from the imposed domesticity of his family, breaking every convention in one act. And he is the 'rowdy' tendency itself, neutralised in some childish play-acting with the kids. He could as easily be read as a comically innocuous manifestation of the violent aspect to the 'respectable' working man at leisure, as represented by Bill Banks (see Footnote 25, Chapter Five).

This sort of duplicity is absent from Comic Cuts, Chips and Funny Wonder, for the reverse side of Sloper's family man persona is never seen at all, and this constitutes a serious distortion of the reality of the seaside resort. It is a further extension of the construction of a populist inclusivity which is limited by a male petty bourgeois world view of the proprieties of domesticity, so-called 'respectability' and patriarchy.

As she liked

'THOSE HOLIDAY ENGAGEMENTS' reinforces the impression that these comics, in spite of the claim to familial orientation in the editorial address, are principally for a male readership. Women generally play a marginal role in the cartoons. At times they are depicted as victims of their own illogical and ignorantly founded reasoning or as simply stupid. 'CALLED HER NAMES'

(Figure 8.8) is a good example of the latter [29].

Alternatively, the theme of the 'new', liberated woman is taken up, and generally as a positive endorsement [30].

The predominant representation of women, however, is exemplified by these two cartoons. The young lady, as an alternative to the editorial caption, or a second cartoon revealing 'truth' behind false appearance, assumes the task of puncturing the inflated ego or hopes of the pretentious young man. 'A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE' (Figure 8.5) and 'TOO FAT TO SINK' (Figure 8.7) are variations on the theme [31]. The difference between the role of woman as unthinking buffoon and insensitive critic is slight. In both they are presented collectively as simply another social type in what is definitely a young, male world. The difference, though, is that from this marginalised position illogicality can turn into a use of irony which can question the neutrality of patriarchal social attitudes, this in a situation where every aspect of behaviour and appearance is subject to precise scrutiny and analysis.

The level of irony and wit in such cartoons is, however, extremely poor. Very few contain anything like the level of burlesque in Sloper, and if there is any form of dialogue between editor and reader, it is restrained and narrow in scope. But this is the point. It is a man's world, and it is pitched at the level of the needs of the lower middle class. Women become 'young ladies', potential threats to the aspirations of the young, socially climbing gentleman and little more. But this is a very narrowly constructed world calculated to bolster the standing of the

reader as above this level of failure. In this regard, another important aspect of this mannered world is the representation of the Irish.

#### An Irish Remedy

As with the representation of women, the appearances of Irish figures, as the most frequently represented 'colonial race', are quite contradictory.

We can see derivations of the overtly racist representation of the Irish from Punch in the Harmsworth cartoons, but as with ASHH they are characteristically robbed of any specific political backdrop, a factor which consequently defuses the potentially anarchic threat of violence, and the caricatural features tend not to be too outrageous [32].

By far the most frequent aspect of Irishness to be treated is the inability to think in common-sense logic. 'AN IRISH REMEDY' and 'NOT TO BE DONE' (both Figure 8.8) are good examples of this. Such instances parallel the representation of women. And similarly the perversion of logic may equally be used as an ironic commentary on the social-climbing aspirations of the more central figures in the cartoons. 'KEEPING UP WITH THE PROCESSION' (Figure 8.21) has Murphy boarding up his front door in a perverse effort to follow fashion: '... the neighbours will t'ink that Biddy and the gur-r-ls hev gone to the sayshore for the sayson', while in 'PROFITABLE ATHLETICS' (Figure 8.21) [33], farmer 'Old Houlihan' advises a smartly dressed 'Young Houlihan' that he will find all the 'company and exercise' of the athletics

club he is seeking by taking 'one of me sphare hods on yure shoulder to-morrow mornin''.

Murphy boarding up his house is both a humourous gloss on the stupidity of the Irish and on the lengths to which the impecunious would-be climber is prepared to go. 'Old Houlihan' points up both the monotony and lack of exercise in his son's (probably office) employment, which is sending him in search of an athletics club, and the shakily-founded elevating function of the institutionalisation of 'leisure'. Such representations are an extension of the tendency observed in the editorial address itself towards an attempt to depoliticise racial taunts and (more insidiously perhaps) to 'normalise' prejudice. These gags (which are, I admit, far from outrageously funny in any sense) are a variant of the theme of illogical reasoning as a means of spiking the authoritative or the pompous. Though they are couched in a rather patronising attitude, their racism must be distinguished as qualitatively different from Tenniel's efforts in Punch.

'Hurry up there, funny people'

Page 2 of the chosen issue of Comic Cuts is taken up with the readers' funny story competition (Figure 8.2). The reader is actually given the opportunity to join in the paper's own practise of legitimated plagiarism - 'If ... [the story] ... is from a book or a paper, the latter must be at least five years old'. As for the jokes themselves, they extend the trends evident in the cartoons.

There is a delight in wordplay - the gibe at the expense of an old couple ignorant of the term 'ditto' ('A POUND ...'), a pun

on the word 'bite' ('HE EXPECTED ONE'), some laughs at the foreigner's inability to master the subtleties of English 'THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE'. 'LITTLE LAUGHS' (Figure 8.7) and 'SPARKLES' (Figure 8.3) give us more of the same. 'THE POINTS ...' and 'WHERE' illustrate the different representations of the Irish. 'SHE WOULDN'T ...' and 'DISAPPOINTED' reveal both aspects of the representation of women referred to above. These stories reinforce the editorial link with the reader as fellow observers of human folly, and this link is actually spelt out in 'THE EDITOR'S WEEKLY TALK' from an 1896 Funny Wonder [34].

A "Would-be Humorist" requests a joke-writing formula and the editor duly provides some 'rules' which 'should be committed to memory'. Rule 1 suggests a Continental backdrop as 'No Englishman cares to read of his own country'. Such backdrops are actually rare in the jokes and cartoons, but the message is essentially to distance the reader from his immediate surroundings. Rule 2 suggests 'Start off with a query, as "You ask me why Bob Montgomery never smiles?" or, "You want to know why Eva Greville's hair is prematurely white? Then I'll tell you"'. This establishes the requirement of editorial authority, the element of dialogue, through the query, between writer and reader, and the concentration on the corporeal. It is openly admitted that it functions in 'tickle[ing] his [the reader's] vanity at the beginning. Rule 3 channels the 'rules' into a specific story. 'Make the hero lose at gambling', he advises, and for background information he suggests guidebooks, or failing that, faking knowledge. This is an editorial invitation to join

in his own trick of claiming universal knowledge from a position of smug, untravelled pretence. Rule 7 advises 'Always wind up with a query ...' and gives some poor potential punchlines which, the editor assures us, 'are all good'. This pitches him at the mediocre level of most of the cartoons and jokes. It was precisely this type of pompous, pretentious humour that was ridiculed as quintessentially lower middle class by Punch and other upper middle class efforts [35], but was the mainstay of Comic Cuts and the other Harmsworth papers.

Ironically, it is this sort of pomposity that is gently prodded in the cartoons themselves. There is a restrained language in the cartoon captions, which is also evident here in these 'rules'. There is a stiffness to the cartoon figures (especially, in these early years, the figure of Mr. Chips as the only signed, guaranteed original cartoon character in the comics). There is no inherent meaning to most of the cartoons, so that it is through their verbal anchoring that we reconstruct their meaning (in any case, the lack of any common stylistic technique makes them difficult to read in their own, purely visual terms). As pointed out above, the editor actually admits that in many cases, new captions (or 'jokes' as he imaginatively calls them) are added. And through this verbal medium, a game is in process between editor and reader. It uses the same framework as is evident throughout the history of Victorian humorous weeklies, but the focus has narrowed. There is no intended duplicity in the class identity of the characters because, it is claimed, they are classless. The leading and undermining of the reader's perceptions of what is happening is conducted at the

level of delusions regarding appearance and status. And the editor is no longer the intrepid explorer like Egan, or a complex invention like Sloper. He has a paternal, classless persona paradoxically rooted in a petty bourgeois suburban code of domesticity.

The cartoon which, perhaps, encapsulates all of these elements more than any other, is 'REAL PORTRAIT OF THE EDITOR OF "COMIC CUTS" AT LAST' (Figure 8.22) [36]. This cartoon could have been taken from anywhere. Indeed, it looks like the original joke might have been at the expense of a gullible addiction to 'patent' medicines. Here it is transformed into a gentle sub-editorial gibe at the editor, giving the impression of the weekly allowance of fun among the office staff. It is also an 'in-joke' on the 'portrait of the editor' topping the editorial column. It might equally be read as an extension of the promotion of the hard-working editor extending the democratising gift of shared humour to all his readers. And finally, it conforms to the common before/after formula of false appearance and truth.

When I say that the dominant motif within these cartoons is the transmission of 'lower middle class' prejudices I mean that the persistence of these formal and thematic elements reflects the fact that it was to this class that these elements appealed most - and for the reasons outlined in Chapters 5-7. The arrival at this particular form of humour can be read as the ultimate outcome of a process evident in ASHH.

There are still unanswered questions here, however. It was



argued that ASHH constituted a complex negotiation of the political populism as experienced by its readers, and that it engaged with the complexities of class relations. In the Harmsworth papers, it is actually quite hard to track down any consistent representation of working class figures of any description. 'VALUABLE INFORMATION' (Figure 8.4) is a good instance of the sort of representation we do encounter: a brash, vacant looking 'cockney youth' in a tight-looking suit talking rubbish and being told off by an 'Old Gent'. 'ADVICE THROWN AWAY' meanwhile (also Figure 8.4) shows an inversion of this, as the 'Imp' '(... evidently designed for the gallows)' turns the tables on a patronising 'Old Gentleman'. In neither scenario are those figures shown in their natural habitat of urban slum, but on a train and in a fairly upmarket street, where their offensive behaviour is anyway fairly innocent. As with the other cartoons, this is likewise some distance from the 'rowdyism' of the seaside.

Nor is it easy to find any remnants of Mayhew's cadgers. What we do find, occasionally, is the underclass figure of the 'tramp', as represented in 'GOT A BITE' (Figure 8.23) [37]. In search of a square meal, the 'tramp' becomes a victim of the very essence of muscular Englishness, the bulldog. This is a fairly typical example of the shiftless loafer as extra-societal threat, in search of free food and getting his just desserts [38].

And 'extra-societal' is an appropriate description because, as with the figures above, the tramp is generally presented in fairly neutral social territory, he exists outside the urban slum and is usually depicted in the countryside, where his reluctance

to find work is duly punished.

This overview returns us to Orwell's conclusion on the boys' weeklies, that the working classes simply do not enter. And it suggests a quite deliberate exclusion of ideologies or types incompatible with the general 'petty bourgeois' world view in the cartoons. It is similar to Mattelart's and Dorfman's (1973) analysis of the Disney comics, in which their search for the working classes leads them to the 'Beagle Boys', three masked villains dedicated to stealing Uncle Scrooge McDuck's billions [39].

However, this is neither an argument about what part of reality is in any sense deliberately excluded, nor an argument for what 'should' have been included. I am investigating the social reality of the petty bourgeois 'world view', if such it can be termed, with its self-limiting horizons and its succession of pathetic fallacies. The negotiation of this 'mentality' by the comics reflects both the solidity of this social type and the neurotic vulnerability of its individual members.

The notion of a socially neutral code of deference and decorum available to all its members is one aspect of the negotiation of this mentality. The failure to deal with real differences in favour of a concentration on an underclass in the figure of the tramp is another aspect. The depiction of the tramp, in the absence of recognisably 'working class' people, is a means of reinforcing the claims to social status of this lower middle class. Both aspects of this negotiation contribute to a kind of populist inclusion of the reader which denies class

differences, but there were tensions inherent in this, for the limited representation of types like the masher and locations like the seaside belied a reality of complication by class differences. The tramp getting his come-uppance could not seriously conceal the reality that the underclass or 'residuum' in London, including the categories of 'semi-criminals', loafers and the casual poor which were not properly differentiated, were perceived as a serious threat to all those classes above.

There are thematic and formal continuities between these elements of the comics and their fictional and non-fictional narratives. It is on these components that we shall concentrate in Chapter Nine. It is posited that the revolution around the concept of criminality in these elements is another form of negotiation of the position of the 'lower middle class' in relation to those at the lowest level. Likewise, I feel that these are certain tensions running through this process. On completion of this chapter, hopefully we will have created a basis for understanding the creative role of the comic strip in resolving such tensions.

## CHAPTER EIGHT - NOTES

1. In CC 91, p.2, 1892, Mr. Comic Cuts explains that "As soon as the pictures are selected and paid for they are "edited" by me, the jokes improved, and sometimes when the picture is good and the joke poor, another joke must be found".
2. Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth (1959), Northcliffe, p.200.
3. Ronald Pearsall (1983(1969)), The Worm in the Bud: The World of Victorian Sexuality, p.71.
4. Other examples of the masher getting his come-uppance include 'HE WANTED TO MAKE AN "IMPWESSION"' (Figure 8.9 - IC 70, p.2, 1892), in which a cultivated exaggeration of upper class language is suggested by the mispronounced 'r'. 'THROUGH THE SEASIDE LODGING-HOUSE WINDOW' (Figure 8.10 - CC 54, p.2, 1891) shows 'Bounding Billiam' seeing himself as "doosid sly" as he gazes longingly at "a pretty little thing" - moustached and swaggering, he sports a cigar and cane. The third cartoon reveals the truth, as his face flattens out to accomodate a wicked leer, a pencil-like moustache, adolescent fuzz on the chin, enlarged hands and feet, shrivelled legs and an absurdly overt phallic symbolism in the huge cigar, which runs directly into an equally outsize cane.
5. 'HIRSUTE ADORNMENTS EXTRAORDINARY' (Figure 8.11 - CC 54, p.1, 1891) is a similar example of the half-spoofing, half-endorsing depiction of 'how an otherwise uninteresting countenance may, by the growth of a little hair, be made to assume at will a warlike, mercantile, foreign, legal or artistic appearance'. It stands equally well as a convincing argument for the equality of appearance with rank, the achievement of an individual identity ironically through the adherence to codes of self-presentation associated with different professions; and an attack on the superficial attempts at exclusive identity by these professions.
6. The impression from these cartoons is invariably that the intended reader is male, despite the 'family' magazine air of the editorial address. See also below, 'Those holiday engagements'.
7. CC 53, p.4, 1891.
8. 'BEHIND AND BEFORE' on the same page is another good example. This time the hat is the status prop. A fence conceals what appears to be a friendly but formal greeting as hats (topper and bowler) are tipped in mutual recognition. A view of the reverse side of the fence reveals that the hats are actually in flight as a fight is in progress. Again, the economical captions state the case: '(1) If you think these men are friends - (2) You are mistaken'.

'AN OPTICAL ERROR' is about the potential absurdity of attempted enhancement by facial hair. These cartoons are concerned with the mutual deception involved in codes of deference and decorum - the delusions from which the reader himself is by no means free - created by mannered

- 'respectable' behaviour and would-be self-adornment.
9. The indeterminacy of the social identity of these figures is further exemplified by a near-regular character from The Funny Wonder, 'Slimjim'. 'SLIMJIM'S FIBS', the visualisation of his 'horse-taming' story (FW 3, 3rd. series, p.4, 1894) shows the boastful Slimjim posing triumphantly with a foot on his horse's head. The accompanying cartoon shows the horse actually swinging him by the scruff of the neck. 'ANOTHER OF SLIMJIM'S FIBS' (FW 3, 3rd. series, p.4, 1894) contrasts his tale of rescuing a family from a fire singlehandedly, while the 'truth' shows him limply pouring water down the chimney. What exactly he is supposed to be in social terms is not clear, but as a personality type he is obvious enough.
 

An occasional variation on the undermining of ill-founded egoism is exemplified by 'WHO THEY THOUGHT THEY WOULD MARRY AND THE SPECIMENS THEY GOT' (Figure 8.13 - CC 18,, p.8, 1890), in which the ugly but wealthy 'Little Lord Snookes' and the 'Lady Clementina' are pictured ogling the objects of their sexual desire: '... the Squire's daughter ', '... the petite French widow', 'MacSmith the actor' etc. Their eventual spouses are revealed to be the equally ugly Miss Binks, 'Chairman of Woman's Rights Committee' and Professor Backdown, respectively.
  10. Figure 8.11 appears to be a clearly intended joke at the expense of 'HIRSUTINE'.
  11. For an analysis of advertising in the twentieth century (in the US) in terms of the manipulation of personal and familial identity, and the construction of a limited version of 'truth', see Stuart Ewen (1976), Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture. Ewen's understanding is firmly grounded in Frankfurt School Critical Theory, the notion of the 'culture industry' as an extension of industry itself, so that advertising in the sense we know it now really begins with the Fordist project in the 1920s for the transformation of worker/producer into the consumer.
  12. "EDWARDS' 'HARLENE' World-Renowned HAIR PRODUCER & RESTORER" was a frequent advertiser in the first year of Comic Cuts and Chips. Its subtitles read: 'For producing Luxuriant Hair, Whiskers and Moustaches, Curing Baldness, Weak and Thin Eyelashes, Dandruff, Scanty Partings, or Restoring Gray Hair', and promised 'Testimonials, also a valuable treatise on the Cultivation of Hair, and some extraordinary facts of the efficaciousness of the HARLENE, forwarded free on application' - CC 32, p.13 (a special double issue Christmas number), 1890. 'VARNHAGEN'S SYSTEM' for a 'RAPID, PERMANENT AND INEXPENSIVE CURE' for 'BLUSHING' was another regular - CC 53, p.7, 1891.
  13. CC 53, p.1, 1891. "WHY THE PRINTER WAS SACKED" is another good example from the same issue (p.8). In an ad. for "Dr. McPHITTS' HAIROIL", the 'before using' and 'after using' illustrations have been reversed by the printer, so that 'after using' shows a bald head.

14. The following is a typical example, again from CC 53, p.2 (1891):

'We want to employ so many artists that there shall never be a dull number of COMIC CUTS, that the paper shall always be full of laughs, and this can only be done by a bigger sale.

A bigger sale will enable us to get a larger price for our advertisements...

We want, therefore, every person who reads this article to say to himself, if he likes COMIC CUTS and is a friend of the paper:

"I will make up my mind to help this paper if I can".'

15. The general thematic focus in Kipps is set by its opening quote from "Manners and Rules of Good Society" by a Member of the Aristocracy:

"Those individuals who have led secluded or isolated lives, or have hitherto moved in other spheres than those where well-bred people move, will gather all the information necessary from these pages to render them thoroughly conversant with the manners and amenities of society".

16. H.G.Wells (1968), Kipps, p.58.  
 17. Ibid., p.59.  
 18. T.W. Barretts song from the '80s is a good example:

"(....)  
 By profession I am a tripe dresser,  
 Sometimes I'm a trusser of fowls,  
 But at night I'm all there as a masher,  
 When I mouch out the same as the owls."

Cited in Pearsall (1983), op. cit., p.73.

19. This example from another music hall song illustrates the point:

"Come closer, dear  
 Place your arm 'round me,  
 I will make you feel queer.  
 Fondle and kiss me  
 When no one is near..."

Cited in ibid., p.76.

20. CC 16, p.8, 1890. "OUR SUB-EDITOR'S FATAL SURPRISE" in the same issue (p.4) is an interesting counterpart. The sub-editor "starts for the country, in full expectation of the annual miseries and disappointments", but is progressively shocked to discover that the promised delights of his holiday location are real. Finally, "it was too much. Reason

foresook him. Insane". The joke here is on our persistence with annual holidays, despite our mutual expectation of the inevitable week of sheer hell. It is the classic paradox that we are supposed to be enjoying ourselves in spite of the evidence, because these are designated leisure times and locations. It is therefore both an acceptance of the situation because there is no alternative, and a radical questioning of it. Ironically, in dealing with the subject at all, it is a celebration of the very affordability of a week's holidays away - a privilege the reader can indulge in, whatever the realities. The sub-editor as subject reinforces the editor-reader bond.

21. FW 184 (3rd. series), p.1, 1896. A means of avoiding embarrassment in such situations is recommended in the sequence immediately above this, "IMPORTANT TO ALL WHO WEAR FLANNEL TROUSERS". Fashionable Harry is clever enough to don golf stockings with his flannels (despite the accusation of clashing colours), so that he can conceal the inevitable shrinkage due to rain by merely pulling them up to make his trousers look like walking knickers (a sartorial requisite for braving the elements).
22. John K. Walton (1983). The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914, p.216.
23. Ibid., p.217.
24. Ibid., p.213-215.
25. On the patterns of urban development in the resorts, see ibid., chapters 3-5.
26. Mr. Punch at the Seaside (no date given), p.22. Cited in Walton (1983), op. cit., p.204.
27. "A QUIET DRIVE BY THE SEA". Reproduced in ibid., p.204.
28. ASHH Vol. VI. No. 269, p.1, Saturday, June 22, 1889.
29. "AFTER THE REGATTA" (Figure 8.18) is another useful example. Mrs. Oxford asks why Kortney, the professional oarsman, does not spend some of his prize money to buy some clothes, unaware that his apparent underware is his athletic gear.
30. As with Harmsworth's ventures on Iliffes's cycling magazines in the '80s, the bicycle is frequently viewed as a portent of women's liberation (Figures 8.19 and 8.20). "BLOUSES AND BLOOMERS - A CASE OF GENERAL UTILITY" also reflects the manipulation of the need for special cycling clothes as a new avenue for the fetish of "fashion" - CC 259, p.1, 1895.
31. Another typical instance, "A HARD HIT", has Miss Dashaway innocently exclaiming to "best mash" Fred, on receiving his present of a pug dog, that "It's just like you!" - CC 74, p.2, 1891. "A SMART GIRL AT THE SEASIDE" has the following exchange:
 

HE: "I wonder why those girls stared at me so hard as I passed them?"  
 SHE: "Oh, I don't know - some girls will stare at anything". CC 53, p.5, 1891.
32. The sequence entitled "POOR IRELAND AGAIN" is almost benevolently patronising in its treatment of the "thick mick". Bowled over by a giant snowball, Paddy O'Rafferty

draws out his shilelagh to club the nearest (innocent) gentleman available: "Oi'll tache ye, ye spalpeen (whack), to attack a poor definceless man (whack) behind his back" (whack, whack, whack). The title is pretty ironic, given the outcome, but rather than being patronised within some moralistic framework for condemnation, Paddy's tendency to reactive violence is deemed rather pathetic. IC 70, p.3, 1892.

33. Both IC 49, p.5, 1891.
34. FW 158, pp.4-5, 1896.
35. See L. Davidoff (1973), The Best Circles, Chapter 2.
36. CC 16, p.8, 1890.
37. IC 10, p.4, 1890.
38. "A DISTURBER" further illustrates the unsympathetic representation of such types. This time Dusty Rhodes and his dog Bobbins laze in the middle of the road, only to be ridden over by a cyclist who exclaims "Drat it! How bumpy these roads are." IC 312, p.5, 1896. The ideology of the tramp will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 11 and 12.
39. Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman (1973), How to Read Donald Duck.



## CHAPTER NINE

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REREADING THE COMICS, PART II:  
FICTIONAL AND NON-FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

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'MISSING - 10,000 REWARD'

Page 3 of issue 119 of Comic Cuts (Figure 8.3) presents the much promised start of the serial 'MISSING - 10,000 REWARD'. The story is of young banker George Dale who, betrothed to a baronet's daughter Madeline Temple, has a seemingly brilliant career and happy marriage ahead of him, in spite of the baronet's misgivings. Happiness is shortlived, however, as George is framed by partner Hawksley, who accuses him of fraud. A 'stunned' George stands in 'the shadow of disgrace', while Madeline discovers that he has 'fled'. Episodes in subsequent issues reveal that George has in fact gone in search of his partner. A warrant for his arrest is issued, he is found and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. From Comic Cuts, no. 122, the story is billed as 'a thrilling story of prison life' and becomes a chronicle of the preservation of personal dignity in the face of degrading forces, while Madeline meanwhile offers a 10,000 reward for news of Hawksley in an effort to try and clear George's name.

This story is perfectly continuous with the other textual elements of the comics, and I shall attempt to show that it is

typical in some respects of broader movements in popular serialised fiction in the 1890s.

One of the consistently striking aspects of the story is the reference to George's outstanding looks. From the outset, he has

'a face which all through his life had served him as a passport to favour. His eyes and hair were dark, his features strong and clearly cut; his expression was at times playful, at other times sad. There was something in the set of his head that suggested power and decision of character'.

This of course is nothing new in popular fictional heroes. What is significant is the way that these looks carry George through prison life as an evidently intelligent and cultivated figure. Despite being shorn of his impressive and fashionable moustache, his face, 'refined of feature, delicate, sensitive' still 'stood out from among the coarse and evil faces around him like the countenance of an Apollo among the debased visages of satyrs and fiends' [1]. Beauty adopts a new function. George's fellow convicts are urban degenerates born into physical malformity and perpetuated in that state by living conditions. Transplanted into the compulsorily clean environment of prison, their physical make-up is still nevertheless an index to inherent evil and this transcends the cleanliness.

This emphasis on physiognomy captures the essence of the newly current eugenic theory in the 1890s which was being increasingly applied both to the elaboration of a racial scale linking intellect with facial formation (based in the experiences of imperial conquest) and to the quasi-scientific understanding of the urban slum-dwellers as a biological state perpetuated by

conditions (Chapter Six). At this serialised fictional level, the context of the prison seems to represent a threat, not just of false imprisonment, but of entrapment by low-lives, Mayhew's cadgers and street-folk, transplanted now from their natural habitat to prison. Here any doubts cast by Booth's identification of casualising or Mayhew's respect for the culturally oppositional nature of the 'wandering' tribe are eliminated as they are identified unequivocally with habitual criminality, social pathology. The hero is unambivalent in his attitudes to this world. The virtual absence of working class figures in the cartoons is matched by a parallel absence here, and in their place we are treated to a chronicle of the horrors of forced inclusion with the residuum, the ultimate nightmare of any reader seeking respectability.

'MISSING' represents one aspect of the visible attempts in these stories to come to terms with the problems of class relations, and such prison stories were one of the most popular genres in the Harmsworth comics. While it must be pointed out that the understanding of prison conditions was often couched in a moralistic condemnation of brutal conditions, 'MISSING' shows a tendency towards the presentation of the prison as a medium for comparing the survival of the biologically fittest in maintaining their own integrity, despite these conditions, with the further degeneration of the unfit because of these conditions [2].

'HIDDEN LONDON'

'THE ADVENTURES OF A GENTLEMAN CADGER; OR FIFTEEN YEARS IN HIDDEN LONDON', heralded as an 'intensely interesting and true account of life among those who live by their wits in the great city' [3], was a variation on the prison theme. Chronicling the experiences of a 'gentleman' progressively reduced to destitution, in which state he passes through the gamut of cadging devices, it was an advance on Mayhew with the added bite that the investigator is also the investigated, put there by necessity. Despite conditions, like the investigator and the innocent convict, his noble-browed superiority remains intact throughout.

A further variant on this was the series of 'professional' anecdotes, by doctors and barristers, those who have been in direct contact with low-life and can bring a sense of condescending verisimilitude to their accounts [4].

All of these efforts were contiguous. They made very strenuous claims to veracity (the 'gentleman cadger' was consistently backed up by the editorial column in this respect). They always contained a figure of 'neutral' social origins - barristers were held as servants of the general public, dedicated to eliminating serious crime, doctors were unselfishly devoted to saving lives, the 'gentleman cadger', robbed of position, was presented as a universally sympathetic character. And all were obsessed with the more colourful types of criminality and semi-criminality, which of course was nothing new, for in this sense, they were on a continuum with the 'Newgate Calendar' (containing

the last confessions of imminent execution candidates, it was one of the most popular broadsheets of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), with the highwaymen stories of Lloyd, Purkess and others, the Newsagents' Company's concentration on urban juvenile crime, and a great deal of assorted nineteenth century periodical productions. And as with all of these, there was a lingering element of the gothic about them [5]. What distinguished them from earlier narrative formulae, however, were the presence of this apparently neutral guide and the notion of an innate criminal tendency [6]. In this regard they indicated the most outstanding new direction in popular fiction in this period, the emergence of the 'detective' genre.

#### The Criminal Mind

There can be no doubt that the 1890s saw the first great wave of popular 'detective' fiction. After his debut in Beeton's Christmas Annual in 1887 ('A Study in Scarlet'), Sherlock Holmes reappeared in a series of short stories in the Strand Magazine from 1891 onwards. Harmsworth introduced Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee in the Halfpenny Marvel in 1893, and Nick Carter was imported from the US around 1900 [7]. Lesser figures included Falcon Swift, Ferrers Locke, Dixon Hawke and Martin Track, avian featured sleuths not merely acting as guides to the criminal underworld, but dedicated to eliminating it.

The Harmsworth comics were no exception. Illustrated Chips ran 'Dirk, the Dog Detective' in 1893. And his The Jester would later run 'Hawkshaw the Detective'. In 'The Two-Faced Man; or,

Crime, Conscience, and Retribution' [8], from Comic Cuts, detective Ned Cricklewood is on the trail of burglar Charles Peace. Peace was actually a real figure, a notorious burglar among London's well-to-do, and with the added distinction that he invariably used a gun. Significantly, his real identity was, as E.S. Turner points out, 'the respectable Mr. Thompson of Evelina Road, Peckham' [9]. In this sense, therefore, he constituted a strange paradox, for he was a living parody of the bourgeois individualist pursuit of self-gain, and what allowed him to succeed was a system which invariably sought its suspects in the lower orders. In Comic Cuts, however, Peace becomes a more colourful variant of the 'criminal' classes, a 'strange, misguided man' whose crimes are rendered particularly outrageous because of his privileged background. His fictionalised adventures are written in terms of the romantic prospects of Ned and girlfriend Hester:

"I have heard he always shoots, Ned; is that so?" she asked, looking anxiously up into his face. "Suppose he should shoot you"

The tendency in such detective stories is towards the grouping of the 'criminal' classes in terms of an innate criminal inclination, the notion of the 'criminal' mind. In this way these stories showed points of contact and some divergences from the more upmarket detectives.

The origination of the 'detective' genre as a discrete fictional form is usually credited to Edgar Allan Poe, who first explored its possibilities in his short story 'The Man of the Crowd' in the late 1830s. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', which

first appeared in Graham's Magazine in 1841, introduced Poe's detective, C. Auguste Dupin, and he was to re-emerge later in 'The Mystery of Marie Roget' and 'The Purloined Letter'. While fictional police detectives were by no means uncommon in subsequent decades (Dickens's Mr. Bucket in Bleak House (1851) is a notable early example), what made Poe's work so important were his didactic passages on analysis, which establish a new scientific rationality to methods of forensic examination, and by extension, social investigation. Fragments of seemingly unconnected evidence were reassembled for a string of inferences which led ultimately to calculated and deliberate individual motive and action. And yet Poe never limited himself to unerring faith in a mathematical sort of logic. He stressed the 'poetic' aspect to human motivation and action, which is unpredictable within the terms of formal logic [10]. This qualification can be extended by the evidence of Poe's obsession with the gothic in the 'tales of mystery and imagination'. Despite the scientific gloss, he was always concerned with the multiplicity of ulterior motives, alternative logics, invisible clues, the insolubly mysterious or the fantastic. In this, we can see important points of contact with Dickens and Mayhew, though the problematic in Poe is the fixation of the individual, rather than group or class, within the social formation.

There are important continuities and discontinuities between Poe and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. By the time Holmes makes his debut the gothic hangover which affected Poe had all but disappeared. Holmes can talk now with assuredness of 'the

Science of Deduction and Analysis', based entirely on inferences from the immediately visible. By observing what others can see but fail to perceive, Holmes can generate a complete picture of the whole from the fragment: 'a man's finger-nails ... coat-sleeve ... boot ... trouser-knees ... the callosities of his forefinger and thumb ... his expression ... his shirt-cuffs' [11]. The parts need not be assembled to make the whole. For Holmes, a single part is effectively equivalent to having the whole. The pattern of the early stories is indicated by the titles themselves: 'The Engineer's Thumb', 'The Speckled Band', 'The Five Orange Pips', etc. And once it is established, the whole is found to be a coherent, organic mass. As Moretti (1983) argues, the object of the exercise, detecting and indicting the criminal, equals 'the victory and purge of a society no longer conceived as a "contract" between independent entities, but rather as an organism or social body' [12]. The riddle of individual and social composition is solved. The part is the criminal individual, s/he represents the criminal class malignant to the social organism. The vivacity uncovered by Egan and Cruikshank, the savagery, but almost of the noble variety, which Mayhew found, are channelled into a uni-dimensional, habitually criminal class, but whose essence of criminality is variously inflected in its innumerable manifestations of criminal activity.

Conan Doyle was heavily influential in determining the technique and form of detective story-writing. The climactic moment, the ultimate denouement and revelation attains a new significance as the inexplicable is rationally explained. The reader is invited to participate with the author in the mutual



pleasure of social surveillance through the ever-reliable Holmes. Holmes rarely leaves the comfort of Baker Street for very long, preferring to draw his conclusions from his clients' descriptions, but even when he does exercise his delight in disguise, the props only superficially conceal the unaffected Holmes who, with his appreciative friend and narrator, Watson, is the neutral, dissecting and infallible guide to the criminal underworld. Criminality is only as deep as its appearance, in obvious and oblique detail. But unlike the playful obsession with appearances in the cartoons of ASHH and Comic Cuts, Holmes uses visible detail for the precise designation of his subjects to the 'criminal' class.

As Ernest Mandel argues, the rise of detective fiction reflects an

'objective need for the bourgeois class to reconcile awareness of the 'biological fate' of humanity, of the violence of passions, of the inevitability of crime, with the defence of and apology for the existing social order'. [13]

It reflects a tendency in bourgeois society for

'all human relations ... to become quantifiable, measurable and empirically predictable. They are broken down into components and studied as under a microscope ...' [14].

The obsession with eliminating criminality is, therefore, common to all detective fiction, and at its apotheosis in Holmes, there is a high degree of didacticism, which is based on the notion of a social organism, from which certain 'criminal' elements are very definitely excluded. We can certainly find

this element in the detective fiction of the Harmsworth comics, but the formal devices are different. Instead of the careful plotting from the fragment outwards, the criminal is generally identified at an early stage and the subsequent narrative sustained by action sequences. 'Danger! A Detective's Story', for example, has the hero strapped to the floor of a speeding locomotive by his arch enemy, and hurtling to his doom. Luckily, the engine runs out of steam, he is rescued by a passerby, and signals an oncoming train [15]. But despite the lack of overt didacticism, we can perceive a marginalising and exclusion of the criminal class from the society of 'decent' people.

The proliferation of detectives at this time was extended by in-jokes at the expense of the detective, who would appear as occasional colourful guests in Comic Cuts and Illustrated Chips. Issue 37 of Chips, for example, introduces Smellemout the detective. Mr. Chips sceptically quips that 'we don't like detectives. The last one who came to our office 'detected' a fur coat and a new portmanteau - perhaps you can tell me something about their whereabouts' [16]. Despite their spoofing of the detective genre, the very presence of these joke detectives is indicative of the fascination with the scientificisation of criminal investigation and, by corollary, the integration of the non-criminal classes, including the reader, into the social 'organism'. As argued in Chapter 4, the history of nineteenth century periodicals reveals a fascination with criminal activity, but the emergence of detective fiction, I would argue, constitutes a change of direction, and the best way

to illustrate this, once again, is by comparison with Ally Sloper.

The most outstanding criminal investigation case of the 1880s surrounded the 'Ripper' murders of late 1888. There were eight murders in all, and they are believed to have been perpetrated by one man who became known as 'Jack the Ripper', due to the common features of disembowelment in the murders. What is fascinating about them is not only the fact that the murderer's identity was never established and that they ceased, inexplicably, as suddenly as they began. (In this regard, a century-old 'Ripper industry' has thrived on mostly outlandish guesswork, nominating every famous personage of the day, including Conan Doyle himself). They also revealed the total inadequacy of police detective methods, which involved the destruction of vital evidence and led ultimately to their most pathetic effort, the photographing of the eyes of the most badly mutilated victim, Mary Jane Kelly, in the absurd hope that her killer's image might be registered on the retina. As Pearsall remarks,

'compared with the present police force, the Metropolitan Police of the eighties was like the Keystone Cops compared to the unfailing heroes of innumerable television series' [17].

The 'Ripper' murders were, moreover, a politicised issue, for they took place in Whitechapel, in the heart of London's East End, at the height of the unemployment and casual labour problem, less than two years after the riots of 1886. They were, therefore, a serious indictment of the flip-side to the police

role in containing demonstrations. The Star further exacerbated a tense situation by encouraging the formation of Vigilance Committees in the East End. The humourous papers, led by Punch, laughed out loud, and ASHH was no exception, but the laughter was of a nervous variety, reflecting a persistent ambivalence to the police as offering any degree of protection to society from its alien threats.

'A SAD MISHAP' [18] (Figure 9.1) shows Ally gallantly 'place[ing] himself at the disposal of the Scotland Yard authorities'. Tootsie relates how 'disguised as a detective' (a joke, since Sloper is shown in bobby uniform with 'AS' printed on his buttons), Ally succeeds in arresting Sir Charles Warren, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, basing the arrest on the theory that 'the murderer, to put people off the scent, gets up like well-known men'. This is a twist to the subsequent theories of some well-known figure disguised as a low-life. The laughs also come from the fact that Warren is in the process of questioning a butcher, the most obvious but unpromising candidate after surgeons; and Sloper's dog Snatcher making off with a leg of meat in the confusion. 'Bloodhounds are not in it with Snatcher', remarks Tootsie, a gibe at Warren's failed initiative of hiring blood-hounds for the hunt.

Although pitched at the level of an elaborate fun-poking effort, the gags at the expense of the police in this cartoon nevertheless connect with broader political issues. At precisely that time when the 'detective genre' was emerging as a recognisable form, we can see the basis on which it was founded being questioned by real, politicised events, and through their

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CONDUCTED BY GILBERT DALZIEL.

Vol. V.—No. 234.]

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]



### A SAD MISHAP.

"Of course it was not to be wondered at that Papa should place himself at the disposal of the Scotland Yard authorities. With the knowledge he possesses of the East of London, his help was readily accepted, and, disguised as a detective, my Parent has been prowling about Whitechapel for several nights past. An unfortunate occurrence took place, however, on Wednesday, when stupidly he arrested Sir Charles Warren himself. Poor Papa's theory is that it is not at all unlikely the murderer, to put people off the scent, gets up like well-known men. Bloodhounds are not in it with Snatcher."—TOOTIE.

### THE DREADED MINOR ASSERTS HIMSELF.



1. "Tired! Impoverished! down on your knees. Know you not, fellow, that I am a minor!"



2. "I have not paid for the dogs. Do I not know, sir? Lie, and tremble in your shoes! I am a minor."



3. "I married her! I know it. Will have to keep her! Alas, alas! know you not I am a minor!"

### HUNG IN CHAINS.

In No. 181 of "ALLY SLOPER'S HALF-HOLIDAY," we under the heading of "The Fine, Old-Fashioned Smuggler," told the story of the horrible murder of two men, called Malley and Chester, who informed against a band of atrocious ruffians implicated in the robbery of Poole Customs House. Among those hanged for the crime were Richard Mills the elder, and Richard Mills the younger, father and son. Four of the murderers were, after death, hung in chains, but the Millses were not, and they are said to have been so rejoiced at escaping this post-mortem punishment that death seemed to assuage in them no terror, whilst one Jackson, their accomplice, was so horror-stricken at being measured for the rope to be used, that he died of fright before the door of his execution arrived. On this man's body were found three scraps of paper charms, "to preserve travellers from accidents on the road, headache, falling sick seas, fevers, which craft, all kinds of mischief, and sudden death." His neck was, after all, not hung in chains, but flung into a hole over the place of execution, at Chichester, and a stone erected "as a memorial to posterity, and a warning to this and succeeding generations. A.D. 1718."

About six months after the death of the two Millses, a second son was condemned to death for another barbarous murder, the exact motives for which is not very clearly set forth in the only account of the transaction I can find, but it is to be supposed that the victim, Richard Barkham, was

Figure 9.1

'A Sad Mishap'

(from ASHH, Vol. V, No.234, Oct. 20, 1898)

refraction in sensational newspaper coverage by cheap newspapers like the Star and Reynolds' Newspaper and by humourous weeklies from Punch to ASHH. The coverage of the murders in these papers at one level represents a new phase in sensational journalism, the manipulation of the reader by playing up the unsolved, enigmatic aspect to the case. At another, it constitutes an engagement with a politicised problem.

We do not, however, discover this irony or complexity in the Harmsworth comics. Indeed, we could see the 'detective' fiction in them simply as a rather more crude version of the process evident in the upmarket detective fiction.

At this point we could argue that this tendency is related to the currents in the cartoons towards the elaboration of a democratic world of achievement by personal grooming and adornment with a populist inclusivity based on the undefined notion of the 'inoffensive'. That is, it is a more precise designation of those elements excluded from the cartoons, the direct translation of 'low-life' into criminality, something entirely alien to the social organism, but which can be tracked down and eliminated. In this way, then, we can perceive a refinement of the reverse side to the populism of the editorial address and its extensions through the cartoons: the exclusion of the absolutely lowest class fractions as a means of further stressing the inclusion of the reader in this populist vision. It would provide a solution to the problem we have tried to identify at the heart of the history of the Victorian humourous weekly.

Our analysis also argues, however, for the inclusion

of the fictional and non-fictional components in the comics along with the visual elements on a continuum in the development of Victorian periodical publishing. This is to the extent that they constitute a dialogue concerning the class location of the reader. The 'gentleman cadger', the 'professional' and the 'detective' are all extensions of the device of the editorial column in negatively defining its populist inclusion by what can be excluded [19].

Find your way to 'Comic Cuts' Office

The final element of our chosen issue of Comic Cuts to be examined was our point of departure in Chapter Seven, the editorial address. It, above all, can be seen to hold the miscellaneous elements together as a whole.

Being August the editor is 'lying on his back on the sands at Margate', where he has time to ponder his readers' insistence on sending in old jokes marked "original", forgetting the dubious origins of his own early efforts. The rest of the column is taken up with a resurrection of the newsagents' battle, this time over refusals to sell Harmsworth's new paper, 'The Wonder'; an encouragement to vocalising 'public' opinion by threatening to take custom elsewhere; a joke love-letter from an eighteen-year-old, which provokes an oath of allegiance to the 'nice and round ... and a bit gaudy about the trimmings' Mrs. Comic Cuts; the solution to a competition to find the face of the office-boy in the 'portrait of the editor'; and the details of another amusing piece of COMIC CUTS self-publicity - leaving black footprints up

and down Margate pier with "READ COMIC CUTS" inscribed on them. 'Every resource of the detective is being tried to trace the delinquent, but hitherto without avail', the only clue being that a gatekeeper 'noticed a short, stout man enter, wearing a long dust-coat with the collar turned up, and a broad-brimmed hat'. The latter description is evidently of Mr. Comic Cuts himself, the joke being on the ineptitude of the detective, while at the same time reinforcing the amateur or professional sleuth as dominant fictional genre and as a focal point for popular-scientific investigation. Combined with the backdrop of the beach at Margate, Comic Cuts extends his knowing, quizzing captions into his own experiences as a mythical biographical lynchpin.

In this anchoring column, then, we can see the focussing of the essentials of all the other components. This is a populist address, but its appeal is clearly limited to certain 'privileged' class fractions.

We can see these comics then, in their entirety, as a progressive negotiation of the variants of populist politics. Given the comics' own self-professed apolitical stance this may not appear to be evident on the surface. But there is one instance of a serialised fictional work which exemplifies the political mediation of these comics. It is atypical in its overtly political ideologies, but I feel that it expresses more clearly the major currents running through the comics.

'READY? - ALAS! Not ready! OR, HOW BRITANNIA CEASED TO RULE THE WAVES' was announced in issue 257 of Comic Cuts as



'an absolutely new kind of story ... [that] ... does not deal with characters and scenes which only exist in the writers' imagination, but foretells with terrible and vivid accuracy what might easily occur if the present condition of things goes on much longer; and the authors of the story have been studying for months past the condition of the vast hordes of unemployed, which are, alas! everywhere around us' [20].

Commencing in issue 258, the story was indeed a pioneering effort in that it connects the political concerns of imperial maintenance (via the navy) and domestic prosperity (through consistent employment). It describes the potential disaster as a result of British naval decline - a chain reaction of a declaration of war by Russia and France, the cutting off of food supplies, an exacerbation of the unemployment problem through a consequent famine, and the manipulation of the unemployed in rioting by a conspiracy of foreign spies via the ringleader, (Black) Jake Dean. Describing itself as 'our new mysterious melodrama', the story has all the classic features of nineteenth century melodrama, outrageous coincidences and exaggerated speech and actions.

Jake's brother Samson, an honest 'workman', is firm friends with naval Lieutenant Hilliard, both are in love with Ethel St. Barbe, daughter of St. Barbe the millionaire M.P. The latter is leader of the 'peace-at-any-price' party in the House of Commons, and a notorious sweater in his workshops and factories. After warning the police of the planned riots, Samson Dean is singled out for execution by the conspirators and Jake drawn by lot as his executioner. Hence, a moral dilemma.

In addition to such coincidences, the language of the characters is unusually stilted. St. Barbe, for example, seen to

be gaining unduly from the war, actually voices his glee out loud in a sort of stage 'aside' to the reader:

"That little dabble of mine in wheat was a good move. It went up a shilling a quarter yesterday. This war will send it up another four shillings. Hurrah!"

Then the men in my boot factory. They'll have to come on at the wages they went out at. Their union's broken; their wives won't let 'em hold out any longer. Hurrah!" [21].

These are the technique and language of 1830s melodrama. The difference now is the changed political framework. St. Barbe is presented as an anachronistic hangover from laissez-faire liberalism, and as such a potential added insult to the injury of domestic and imperial disaster. Samson, Hilliard and Ethel are but cyphers for a dream of the future integration of the classes according to common needs (survival and prosperity through the Empire). As for Jake, he is a half-sympathetic character, the victim of factory sweating, summary dismissal and manipulation by Britain's enemies, who abuse his hitherto unrealised 'natural instinct of a born leader of men whether for right or wrong'. The unemployed are mostly honest men, driven by hunger to anarchy and murderous revenge on St. Barbe. Among them, however, is an inevitable 'sprinkling of the thieves, to whom a crowd of any kind is a workshop, and the only kind wherein they labour'.

This is, in essence, a direct translation and exaggeration in fictional terms, of the basic tenets of 'social imperialism' as outlined in Chapter Six. Indeed, this was the platform on which Harmsworth himself stood for election for the Tories in Plymouth in 1895 [22]. As such it represents an unique instance

of an overt 'political' message, in its narrow sense, in the comics. The question of deliberate political manipulation is worth considering here. Harmsworth was nominated for the Party on March 29th, 1895. He immediately bought a local Portsmouth newspaper, the Evening Mail through his brother Harold. It was to provide a local medium for his campaign. In order to convey his Chamberlainite political ideas, he conceived of a serialised story for the paper entitled 'The Siege of Portsmouth'. Written by Beckles Wilson under his supervision, this was a warning of Britain's lack of preparation for war at sea and of the threat of her economic opponents. It was equally the basis of Harmsworth's political campaign in the key naval port of Portsmouth.

Now it is impossible to make direct links without documentary proof, but the story in Comic Cuts was announced on April 13th, 1895 (CC 257) and commenced on April 20th, immediately after Harmsworth's nomination and as 'The Siege of Portsmouth' story was beginning. It too shared the same fears of naval decline. Surely it is reasonable to suggest that these stories are directly politically mediated. In addition, we could argue that although unusual in its handling of an overt political theme, this story focusses all the trends current in the comics in these years in a more easily legible form. It spells out more clearly the sort of limited organic social vision on which the other textual elements are founded. This vision is limited in that it will include only the honest among the 'unemployed', and deliberately exclude the 'unemployable', represented here as the most easily manipulable by alien threats. It constitutes a more positive version of a negotiation of class identity based on an

abstracted vision of encoded social interaction and on the elevation of the reader above the level of the criminal classes. Here we can see who exactly is included as well as excluded, but we still get the impression that it was to the lower middle reaches of a class society that this sort of vision appealed most. Finally, it includes the other side to these fears of inner urban degeneration, the emphasis on imperial stability.

What we are saying, therefore, is that the comics can be read as holistic entities, including a variety of disparate components, which negotiate in a generally disguised way the populist politics of the 1890s. Yet despite the evidence of this serial, the problem of an understanding of class relations in the comics is nevertheless occluded. I believe that we can perceive a progressively more complex engagement with the unresolved issue of class, and we can see this ironically in the evolution of the most formulaic element of the comics, the comic strip. If Ally Sloper can be seen as a solution to the understanding of class relations specific to the '80s, then the comic stripped characters can be read as specific to the '90s.

## CHAPTER NINE - NOTES

1. "MISSING - 10,000 REWARD", CC 124, p.6. 1892.
2. As noted in Chapter 7, 'The Confessions of a Ticket-of-Leave Man' (an ex-convict on parole) was the first serialised story in Comic Cuts, having previously appeared in Answers. Shortly after 'MISSING', Comic Cuts ran a story called '"55": The Gentleman Convict', and 'Convict "99"' was another early story. These convict numbers serve to emphasise the hero's achievement in transcending the attempted universal homogenisation and degradation of the inmates.
3. From the introductory to the second instalment. CC 29, p.2, 1890.
4. For example, 'Stories from a Barrister's Career', IC, 16-28, p.6, 1890-1891.
5. One of the 'Stories from a Barrister's Career', for example, relates the story of the Mannings who buried their murder victim under a kitchen flagstone, a narrative which bears some comparison with Poe's 'Tell-Tale Heart', in which the paranoid murderer imagines the heart of his victim beating beneath the floorboards; or even with 'Sweeney Todd', whose victims' bodies rotted in the cellar, the smell consequently arousing the suspicions of worshippers at a nearby church.

A variation on the gothic theme is instanced by 'Dark Pages from the Book of Fate', a series of two-part stories which appeared in Comic Cuts in 1895. Like the 'Stories' in Chips, many were concerned with the solution of particularly horrific or mysterious crimes. One episode, 'An Ordeal by Blood', hinges on the incident of the corpse at an inquest bleeding afresh on being touched by the unwitting murderer, so invoking 'the old historic ordeal, whereby accused persons were forced to touch the body of the slain, and if that body chanced to bleed afresh, held guilty of the deed'. CC 53, p.3, 1891.

6. The converse of the rule that innate good breeding survives wrongful conviction is that a criminal tendency cannot be disguised. 'An Ordeal by Blood' introduces the murderer at an early stage in the proceedings, though he is not identified as such until the end. His identity, however, is hinted at thus:

'In entering the court I accidentally jostled against a man whom, from his attire, I should have judged to be a gentleman, but that he responded to my immediate apology with a scowl and an ill-mannered imprecation.'

7. E. S. Turner (1948), Boys Will be Boys, pp.117-164.
8. Commenced in CC, 115, p.7, 1892 and continued thereafter in IC 100, p.7, 1892.
9. Turner (1948), *op. cit.*, p.61.
10. Edgar Allan Poe (1962), 'The Purloined Letter', in Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Stories and Poems. Poe makes a similar analogy in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', between the chess-player

- and the whist-player.
11. Arthur Conan Doyle (1974), A Study in Scarlet, p.29.
  12. F. Moretti (1983), Signs Taken for Wonders, p.135.
  13. Ernest Mandel (1984), Delightful Murder: A Social History of the Crime Story, p.8.
  14. Ibid., p.16.
  15. IC 40, p.6, 1891.
  16. IC 37, p.2, 1891.
  17. Pearsall (1983), op. cit., p.379.
  18. ASHH, No. 234, p.1. October 20, 1888.
  19. In spite of the early plagiarisms and borrowed stories in the comics, we can sense that the stories were increasingly written especially for them, and in some cases the editorial voice is extremely overt. This aspect reaches a peak in Comic Cuts 'The Blue Room Mystery' which, it was claimed, was written by the editor himself. Letters were actually invited from readers proposing a solution to the mystery, and prizes offered for correct answers. Results were given in CC 304, p.3, 1896, though the answer was not, of course, published. In CC 302, 1896, the editor claims a substantial circulation increase through its influence, and even claims to have received letters from readers sharing the characters' names. This jokey chumminess with the readers is part of the limited dialogue established with the readership.
  20. CC 257, p.7, 1895.
  21. CC 259, p.7, 1895.
  22. Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth (1959), Northcliffe, pp.181-190.

## PART IV

Chapters Ten, Eleven and Twelve examine the emergence of the first regular comic strips from the mid-1890s onwards. The arguments presented here are twofold: firstly, that these strips continue the trends established in the miscellaneous elements of the comics in the early '90s; and that they continue the dialogue with the reader concerning his/ her social location. The manner of this dialogue, however, is quite distinct from these earlier elements. There is an increasing tendency towards the formulaic representation of types with no direct referents in reality and in increasingly fantastic adventures. Yet we can identify an historical specificity to the social tensions of the 1890s and specifically to the precarious social positioning of the 'lower middle class'.

Chapter Ten looks at the earliest regular characters. Chapter Eleven analyses the ideology of the most outstanding figures, a pair of tramps, in their early and later guises, in terms of how they reinforce a feeling of superiority for the reader. It is argued that they stand mid-way between an older tendency in humorous periodical publishing towards the representation of recognisable class types and figures of indeterminate social origin. They are, therefore, a harbinger of the development of the modern comic strip character. Chapter Twelve looks at an alternative character to the tramp, a representation of a casual labourer, and examines the reasons why this figure, by contrast, did not become a standard figure.

## CHAPTER TEN

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE COMIC STRIP: CHUBBLOCK HOMES TO THE "WORLD  
FAMOUS TRAMPS"

---

It was from this miscellaneity of components that the regular 'comic strips' and characters emerged from the mid-1890s as the dominant element in these humorous weeklies. The centrality of the strips to the comics can be gauged by the fact that by 1900 all three of Harmsworth's titles and those of his competitors carried full front-page strips, usually at least one strip on the back page and a few smaller strips on the inside pages.

The outstanding feature of these strips was the fact that in many cases they hardly qualified as coherent, self-contained pictorial narratives at all. As we have seen, there was no shortage of cartoon narratives in the comics from the outset. Many of these, indeed, were quite economically and clearly constructed, using captions only in a minor supporting role. However, when the regular characters and strips appeared in 1893, they were very different. Most strikingly, they were formally quite awkward. Sequences of three to eight frames, they were supported by large descriptive paragraphs, including dialogue, in the absence of by now familiar speech and thought balloons. In many cases the pictures are quite difficult to follow on their own, so that such paragraphs are essential. We could argue that this awkwardness stems from the fact that the strips developed



more from the structure of individual cartoons and editorial captions than the neatly assembled sequences based around visual gags. This development, moreover, encompassed both form and theme.

The accompanying paragraphs in these strips extend the function of the early cartoon captions as reviewed in Chapter Eight. They reinforce a pseudo-intimate editorial address in their self-referentiality and their use of direct speech to the reader. Their structure, therefore, is not so much sequential as, in a sense, conversational, between editor and reader. The fundamental theme, as in the various components of the comics, is the inclusion within, and exclusion from, a new democratic universe as promised by the editor himself. Although there are regular characters now, their adventures revolve around this theme, for some are continuous with Ally Sloper to the extent that their precise social identity is hard to pin down, and therefore they reinforce a constructed notion of 'classlessness'. Others, on the other hand, are marginalised social figures failing miserably to conform to normality. Together, these characters function in massaging the reader's ego as somehow standing above the level of class difference. The most significant aspect of the development of the strips in this regard is the establishment of the tramp as the 'typical' comic strip figure. This development can be read both as a natural extension to the historical tension central to the cheap humorous journal in the nineteenth century and as historically specific to the social tensions of the 1890s - it was a form of negotiation, for the reader, of the enduring problems of 'casual

labour', the 'residuum' and the criminal threat to social stability.

This argument is a challenge to the basic tenets of the structuralist approach to forms of communication as outlined briefly in Chapter Two. Structuralism has identified the 'classic realist text', the narrative form of the nineteenth century novel, with the establishment of the capitalist social formation. This analysis has been extended to cinema, and the comic strip, whose evolution in the US has historical parallels with the development of Hollywood cinema, might equally be read as a harbinger of a more established capitalist social structure in the twentieth century. Such an analytical direction is actually suggested by Umberto Eco's analysis of Milton Caniff's 'Steve Canyon' strip in the 1940s [1]. It is maintained here that the trajectories of the British and American comic strips cannot really be seen to be interlinked, and that the comic strip narrative at this time was far from a universal standard. This is more than an issue of form. It is an extension of the argument as elaborated thus far, that every form of 'popular' communication must be read in terms of its historical and geographical specificity [2].

This is also a questioning of the ideas of Denis Gifford on the subject. Gifford's books and articles constitute the only extended effort to assess the comic strips in this period. While his work is in no way academic - more a form of national nostalgia - it is through this work that the strips have thus far been seen [3]. It is important, therefore, to review this work

now as a means of developing the basis for my own analysis of the comic strips in the 1890s.

"Happy Days: Gifford's "Funny Wonders"

Denis Gifford's overviews of the development of the comic strip in the 1890s work from a very limited core of information. Gifford invariably abstracts the comic strip from the context of the miscellaneous periodical in the early '90s. He sees the first regular strips and characters in the Harmsworth titles as developing from a combination of the influences of James Henderson's Funny Folks (1875), which carried occasional, but no regular pictorial strips, and ASHH (1884), which carried the first regular weekly cartoon character.

Denis Gifford is a collector of comics who writes for fellow collectors. His books are full of figures - dates, issue numbers, prices (original and for prospective collectors), circulation figures, even the physical dimensions of the comic - and in a racy style uninterrupted by commentary. On Ally Sloper and Funny Folks, he writes that

'He was the first to appear in comicbook format (Ally Sloper: A Moral Lesson, a paperback reprint collection of 216 pages and 750 pictures was published in November 1873, price one shilling), the first to have his own comic paper (Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday published weekly from 3 May 1884), and the longest lived in comic history (the last regular Half-Holiday was on 29 September 1923, the very last published in Scotland in 1949) [...] It was James Henderson who unfolded the average sixteen pages into an eight-page tabloid, 11x16 in., and called his fifty-fifty combination of text and cartoons Funny Folks, 'A Weekly Budget of Funny Pictures, Funny Notes, Funny Jokes, Funny Stories'. One penny every Monday, No. 1 was published on 12 December 1874, and carried an editorial introduction in verse' [4].

He explains that

'comics are a continuing saga, and there lies the rub: there is no point in their history where we can pick up a particular paper and proclaim it 'Comic Number One' [...] This makes comics intriguing to the historian, infuriating to the collector' [5].

The history may be 'intriguing', but what is 'infuriating' to the collector is also his source of pleasure - an endless list of titles and numbers to be sought and collected.

This concentration on form is combined with a peculiar brand of nostalgia and a notion of 'tradition'. These are wrapped up in the 'nationalisation' of a commercial, corporate enterprise as a 'British' institution. He insists that the comics were symbols of 'British enterprise, British business, British patriotism, British humour' [6], and each stage in his version of the evolution of the comics is mediated by the implicit notion of a sort of 'national' sense of humour. The major types, even the style of the comic strip characters in the '90s are seen to somehow tap a vein of 'traditional' humour that was already there.

The mastery and standardisation of the comic strip form is attributed to individual 'genius', and to one artist in particular, Tom Browne. The most prolific and imitated artist of the '90s, Browne is deemed to have remoulded the traditional mainstays of British humour into a standard, lasting shape.

Born in Nottingham in 1870, Browne's first published work appeared in James Henderson's Scraps on 27th April 1889. Gifford notes the prophetic title, 'He Knew How To Do It' [7]. Browne

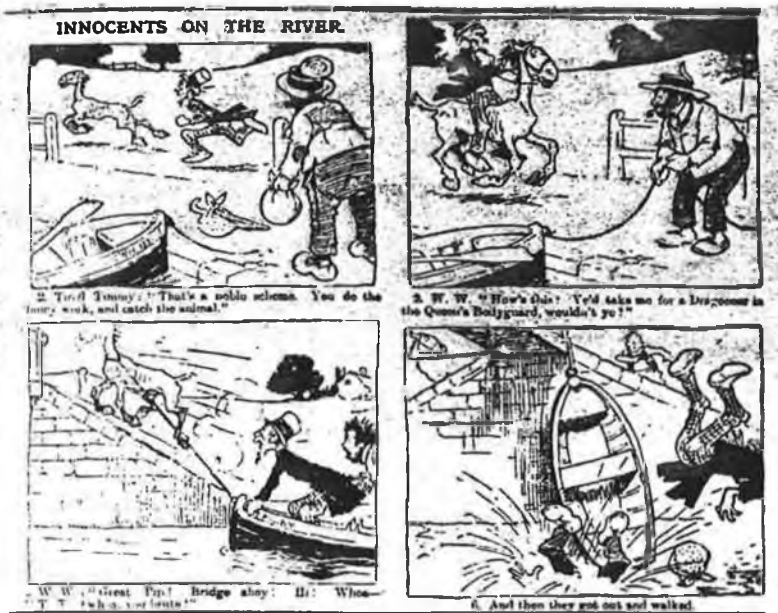


Figure 10.1

'Innocents on the river'

(from IC 298, p.1, 1896)

ADVENTURES OF CHUBBLOCK HOMES AND SHIRK, THE DOG DETECTIVE



1. Chubblock Homes, the great detective, had hunted everything, from rumps to lost keys, but he never hunted little fat pigs before. "Tried him!—our Adolph—our little curly-haired cherub—and great rewards are yours! That's his picture; let Shirk sniff it!" So said the guardian of Adolph, the Baby Pig.



2. The chase begins. "What is going on?" asks Chubblock. "Also: poor Adolph. "Oh, let me hear the wail!" gurgled the guardian being in the slippers.



3. "No, no!" said the big and beefy man. "I have not cooked your little Adolph; but I saw a man go by with him towards the dog show." That was enough. On went Chubblock Homes and Shirk. The owner of Adolph was tired; so he roars.



4. At the dog show. The rubber hat fetched with Adolph; but he failed for a daily paper had made a sketch of the little pig. The judge was looking at what a fortune you dog, and gave him first prize. Shirk, however, had sniffed the dog, took a good sniff at the drawing. Then the show was recommenced.



5. Hello! a lot of ladies fighting. "Say," cried Chubblock Homes, "tell me, young man in the button, what is the cause of yonder battle?" "Oh, it's only the mothers fighting over the way the first prize went in the baby show." Oho! the baby show. A suspicion flashes through Chubblock's mind.



6. The way the first prize went in the baby show. They thought the potato, duckles, is the thing you're looking for. But the little pig, taking their prize with him.

Figure 10.2  
 'Adventures of Chubblock Homes and Shirk  
 the dog detective'  
 (from FW 219, p.1, 1897)



Figure 10.3  
 'Adventures of Chubblock Homes and Shirk on the scent of Babez Jalfour'  
 (from CC 256, p.5, 1895)

EPHRIAM  
 BROADBEAMER  
 SMUGGLER  
 PIRATE AND  
 OTHER THINGS

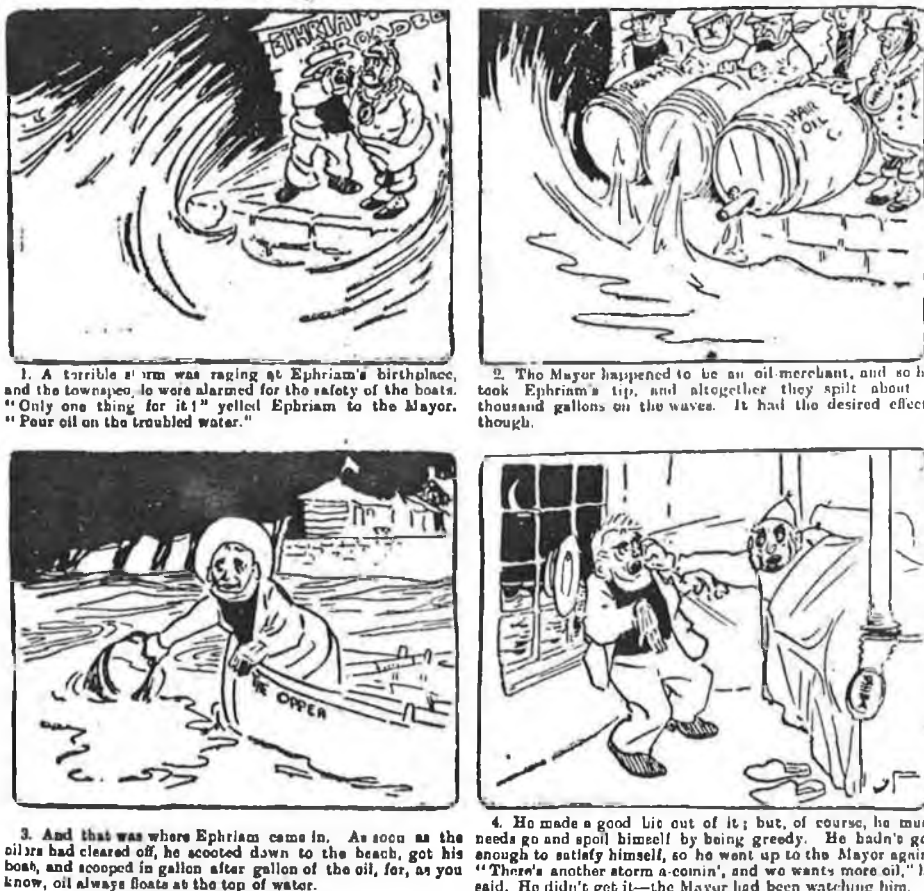


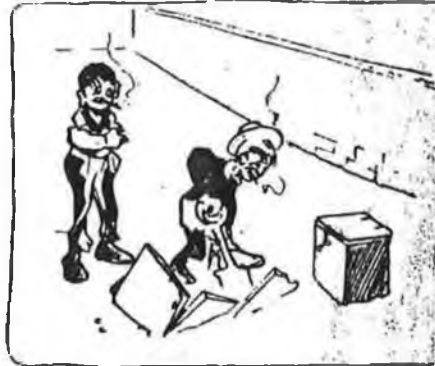
Figure 10.4  
 'Ephriam Broadbeamer ....'  
 (from FW 284, p.4, 1898)



1. "See here," said Hiram B. Boss to the City man, "I've buried treasure in your back garden at home--£10,000 of it. Gimme a cheque for £200, and I'll give you the plan. I've got to catch a train."  
 "Ha-ha! not me," laughed the City man.



2. Hiram saw he was not to be had, "I rather calculate I'll have to make it a bit easier for him," he murmured. So he bought about five bags' worth of brass counters, and buried them in that chap's back garden.  
 But he had observed.



3. And presently, two umps of boys came and dug up the box with those counters, and took it away, and in its place put a box they had borrowed from their little brother, who was away from home.



4. The next time Hiram turned up in that City man's office, he said: "See, I'm back again! I missed that train; but if you'll promise me the £200 the minute I shows you the gold, I'll take yer no yer condemned garden and hold the lantern while yer digs it."  
 "That's better," said the City man. "Have a cigar."



5. "Ho, ho!" said the City man, "the gold, the gold, the red, red gold!" when he dug up the box.  
 "Gin that £200 in notes," said Hiram.  
 "I've only got to undo the catch," went on the City man, "and wealth is mine, beyond the dream of a policeman!"



6. But it wasn't wealth he got. No; it was a nasty, ugly, little Jack jumper which the umps had borrowed from their little brother.  
 "My! didn't Hiram have a happy, happy time!"

Figure 10.5

'Hiram B. Boss'

(from FW 259, 5, 1898)



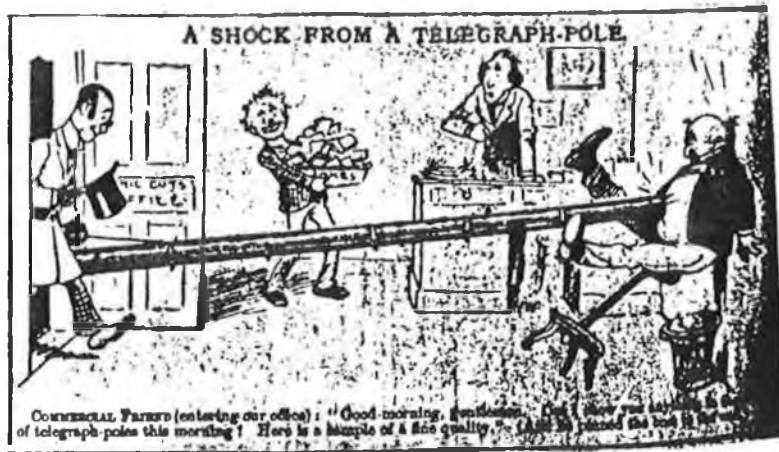


Figure 10.6

'A shock from a telegraph pole'

(from CC 256, p.8, 1895)

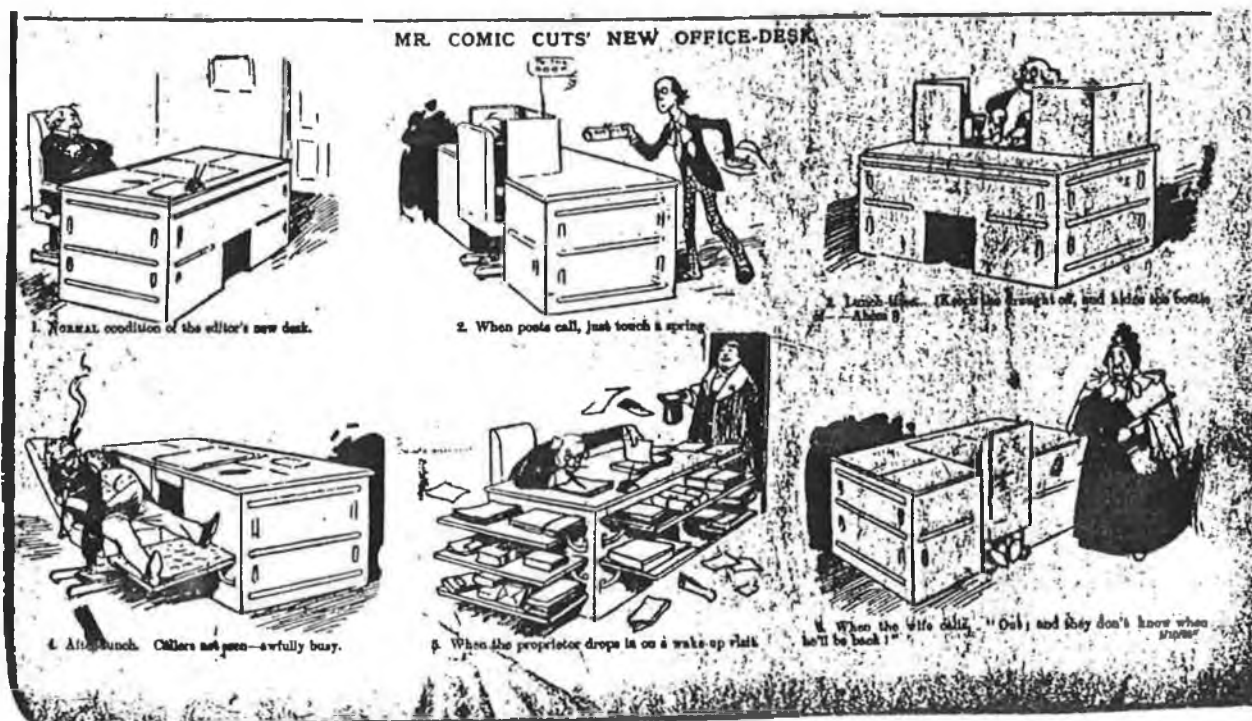


Figure 10.7

'Mr. Comic Cuts' new office-desk'

(from CC 282, p.1, 1895)

later answered Harmsworth's advertisement for artists and began to submit work regularly for Comic Cuts and Chips. Browne's 'set' for Chips on May 16, 1896 entitled 'Innocents on the River' (Figure 10.1) [8] has two tramps, Weary Waddles and Tired Timmy, capture a horse to tow their stolen rowing boat down the canal. The horse reaches a steep bank at a bridge, the boat is consequently lifted out of the water and the tramps overturned in the canal. Gifford has written that it was the current editor, G.H. Cante, whose intuition sealed the fate of these figures:

'Sensing something eternal in these casually-created characters Cante called for more, and the artist [...] cheerfully obliged' [9].

Elsewhere he explains that this scenario 'caught the public's fancy', and the same characters reappeared on June 20 to cover the whole front page and to commence a series of adventures, though under the slightly different names of Weary Willie and Tired Tim, which lasted until their eventual demise on September 12, 1953. Despite Browne's early exit from the comics in 1900, the characters were continued in similar style by, among others, Percy Cocking and Albert Thacker Brown. The latter called Brown 'a genius. The genius, the pop of his day, the artist we all wanted to be' [10].

Gifford acknowledges that Browne by no means invented regular strip characters. A young Jack B. Yeats had created an earlier such figure for Comic Cuts in 1893 [11]. A spoof of Conan Doyle's Holmes, Yeats' invention was a detective with the punning name Chubblock Homes. Other, less frequent Yeats characters included swindler Hiram B. Boss and smuggler Ephriam

Broadbeamer in the Funny Wonder from 1897 to 1898. Frank Holland's Chokee Bill and Area Sneaker, a pair of Cockney burglars, made their debut in Chips in 1895, with occasional sideways moves in an attempt to popularise a new addition to the Harmsworth titles, the Comic Home Journal (commenced in 1895). They eventually progressed to front-page status in Comic Cuts in 1897. Comic Cuts Colony, drawn at different times by E., F., and T.F. Wilkinson chronicled the attempts of black Africans to imitate the institutions and master the construction skills of their supposedly 'civilised' colonial superiors. It varied from a large single cartoon to a two to four frame strip.

Browne's style, however, was to be adapted as a standard. Gifford puts this down to his

'crisp linework coupled with carefully-spotted solid blacks ... [which] ... was perfect for the comic weeklies, especially Harmsworth's ha'porths with their cut-price printing, low-quality newsprint paper, ill-etched blocks and cheap, near-grey ink.' [12]

A.E. Johnson's assessment was more extravagant: 'If the man-in-the-street could draw at all, his instinct would be to draw like Tom Browne' [13]. A picture emerges of a 'genius' whose stylistic simplicity appealed both to cost-cutting publishers and a mass readership attracted by its unelaborate, universally accessible clarity.

As for Browne's characters - 'tramps, burglars, coppers and saucy schoolboys' - they are less his invention than part of 'the mainstream of the British comic paper' from which he drew [14]. The origins of this 'mainstream' are unexplored. That Browne's

work is simply typical or even quintessential is emphasised by comparison with Yeats' work:

'His ... [Yeats'] ... artistry stands alone in British comics. 'Hiram B. Boss' and 'Ephriam Broadbeamer' are clearly unique crooks, just as his 'Chubb-lock Homes' is out of the ruck of comic coppers - traditional game in the Victorian comic, traditional game today.' [15]

Gifford's suggestion that Yeats' difference 'might be expected of the son [sic] of a poet (William Butler Yeats)' [16] is almost reminiscent of Mr. Comic Cuts' cynical ejection of poets by his Fighting Editor. The ease with which the 'traditional' achieves an ahistorical and uninterrogated continuity, from which Yeats' work is excluded, is akin to the way that Comic Cuts establishes its unquestioned anti-intellectual populism.

Although it is entirely non-academic, it is important to reveal the inadequacy of this approach to the comics in every respect. Gifford virtually ignores the miscellaneous periodical context from which the comic strips emerged, with the result that the actual thematic and formal influences on Browne and the other artists are confused. Moreover, his picture of individual genius is combined with a notion of 'tradition' which obfuscates historical analysis, and returns us to the picture of self-perpetuating formulae in the works reviewed in Chapter One. In order to understand these comic strips, we need to see them both as an extension of the role of the humorous journal in negotiating the class location of the reader, and a move to something qualitatively new.

To elaborate this argument, we must look at some of the forerunners to Browne's "world famous tramps", as they were later

introduced on the front page of Chips.

Comic Stripped Adventures: Chubblock Homes and 'the noted Shirk'

Gifford chooses to emphasise the domination of Browne's comic strip style in the '90s by comparison with Jack B. Yeats, whose work is deemed to have been far less influential. Yet, if we look at Yeats' characters, they are perfectly in keeping with the early trends in the comics.

Chubblock Homes was, obviously enough, a spoof of Sherlock Holmes, with the name of a patent lock as his punning title. Instead of Dr. Watson as his assistant he was accompanied by a canine companion, 'the noted Shirk', a parody of 'Dirk, the Dog Detective', a non-pictorial variation of the detective theme in Illustrated Chips. Homes had the same classic facial features as Holmes, the aquiline nose and chin, but here the similarity ended. Sporting a broad-brimmed hat and a long, cassock-like coat, he had a priestly look which made him more like G.K. Chesterton's later creation, Father Brown. Instead of Holmes' pipe, he had a long, thin cigar, perched permanently on his lower lip, trailing a narrow, waving zig-zag of smoke. The joke was that it was Shirk who inevitably solved the crimes, and by wholly unscientific means.

In Figure 10.2 [17], for example, he tracks down a stolen pig by catching its scent from a painting. In some instances, the crimes were not even referred to, as evidenced by his efforts to capture the 'wily' villain, Babez Jalfour, serialised in several episodes in Comic Cuts in 1895. Jalfour's particular brand of

criminality is unknown and seemingly irrelevant to the plot devices of unlikely coincidence in his capture and his fortuitous and undetected escape (Figure 10.3 [18]). The backdrops, moreover, are virtually irrelevant to the basic joke at the expense of scientific forensic method. In most cases, they consist of lightly sketched props. In this case, the setting is 'Comic Cuts Colony' as borrowed from one of the other regular features (more of which below): hence the black bearers. But the formula of 'Comic Cuts Colony' is not transferred across. It merely generates a few gags, the prop of the snake with a pun-name, the "bore-constructor", and a kangaroo concealing Jalfour in its pouch in the next episode.

Chubblock Homes is yet another in a sequence of joke detectives in the early 1890s. Homes' blundering at pace through an exotic but minimal set is a gibe at Holmes quietly working through the clues at Baker Street before the brief descent into the criminal underworld and solution by deduction. He can equally be read as another humorous means of dealing with the issues of what constituted the criminal threat to social cohesion, and where exactly the reader stood within the current network of social relations. Holmes was the socially neutral guide to the criminal world. Homes, however, is an enigmatic guide to an enigmatic world bearing little resemblance to the real social world. He represents a further confusion in the exploration of the issues of popular inclusion and designation as anti-societal threat in the detective fiction and even, to an extent, in the joke detective. And yet, by laughing at the notion of the detective and his criminal prey, Chubblock Homes simultaneously

legitimizes it more forcefully than earlier serious and non-serious detectives in his role as a regular, entirely fictional figure.

It is difficult to assess Yeats' own creative input into this character. It is true that his style is certainly unusual. There is a certain dynamism to his rubbery, angular figures and a directional continuity to his sequences which are lacking in earlier efforts. These figures, set against sparse backgrounds, sit uneasily in the regular, rectangular frames. However, it is not really Yeats' style which sets him apart from the general trends in the cartoon and strips at this time. Thematically there is nothing very unusual about Chubblock Homes, or Yeats' other characters for that matter. Ephriam Broadbeamer (Figure 10.4 [19]) and Hiram B. Boss (Figure 10.5 [20]) were certainly odd crooks who cannot be seen as any kind of standard social or criminal type. But they nevertheless revolve around the continuous theme of trickery and deception. As with Homes, they differ from predecessors only in their status as regular cartoon figures with no definite referents in reality.

If Yeats' characters were both continuous and discontinuous with their predecessors in these ways, what set them apart from Browne's characters was their verbal character. While there is no documentation for this, it does seem that, as with the cartoons, the characterisation and pictorial sequence were the artist's creations and the titles and captions were added by editorial staff later. What makes these strips different to the cartoons and to Browne's strips is the fact that they were not

anchored to the same extent by the populist editorial voice. The captions sit somewhat uneasily with the pictorial narrative. They do not perform the same anchoring function, typically through the medium of a smug editorial query, that we observed in the cartoons. Instead, they have a more descriptive function, with the occasional pun thrown in. The creation of an entirely fictional figure, a spoof of another fictional character, practically severed from the medium of the pseudo-intimate bond between editor and reader, marks a departure in the comics. Chubblock Homes, therefore, was one direction that the comic strip might have taken, and in artistic and narrative technique, Yeats was a talented cartoonist. It was not, however, the direction that came to dominate.

#### The Extended Adventures of Messrs. Comic Cuts and Chips

The more typical trajectory of the comic strip is indicated by another early effort. This was the comic strip depiction, from 1894, of the adventures of the editor, 'Mr. Comic Cuts', with occasional guest appearances by his rival, 'Mr. Chips'. Simultaneously, Mr. Chips' strip adventures were appearing in Illustrated Chips. As with Homes, these are perfectly contiguous with the early trends in the comics. Figure 10.6, for example, 'A SHOCK FROM A TELEGRAPH POLE' [21], has a double meaning in the title, a pun on electrified telegraphy as the 'commercial friend' pins Mr. Comic Cuts to the wall with his (no doubt patented) telegraph pole [22].

This sort of effort is an adjunct to the editorial address itself and to the cartoon titles and captions. It represents a



move beyond the editor as guide to fashion, romance etc. to the role of guide to himself as an elderly office manager with a juvenile and lazy staff, perpetually bothered by unwanted nuisances - mostly poets and salesmen. He is more than ever the embodiment of the persona of amused imperturbability cultivated for humourous magazine editors throughout the century. And he is far removed from the half-jeered, half-elevated Bohemian journalism practised by Ally Sloper. Like the jokes and the cartoons, the fictional Comic Cuts and Chips author themselves. Sloper has at least one foot in the real world. These editors live in a world of endless mirth in which they increasingly become simply another type more than an externally positioned guide to their world. In a related way to the mashers, their code of respectability, their attempts at office management are at once legitimated and undermined. They may actually achieve this themselves.

Figure 10.7, for example, reveals some of the tricks of Mr. Comic Cuts' trade [23]. In addition, the final picture in the sequence reinforces Comic Cuts' status of suburban hen-pecked husband. And this is further emphasised in the later strips [24]. Mrs. Comic Cuts even graduates to the role of narrator, taking up the mantle of Sloper's daughter Tootsie. The ironic interplay of picture and text is absent, however, as Mrs. Comic Cuts simply describes the pictures.

In another episode, Mr. Comic Cuts takes up the role of Sloper as guide to an expanded world of 'leisure'. In his game of golf with Chips, he notches up a series of hefty fines. The

pretensions to leisured aristocracy in the game, and the soft, suburban Comic Cuts' humiliation at the hands of the slightly more gangly, man-about-townish Chips are faithfully described by Mrs. Comic Cuts:

'"DEAR READERS, - My poor husband was induced by that odious wretch Mr. Chips to join a golf club. 'You'll be glad you joined our club', said Chips. 'It only costs 3 a year to join, and its a very inexpensive game'.'" [25]

In the office, at home and at play, then, Mr. Comic Cuts is a combination of sharpness and bumbling ineptitude - though he is increasingly self-referential, his world is firmly planted in suburban domesticity. His position of respectability and achievement is to be admired, though the source of his security is also to be feared: domestic imprisonment.

The point is that like all of the miscellaneous elements of the comics, these developments indicate the extent to which each textual component was anchored by the editorial address. Like Yeats' creations, these characters are far more self-referential figures than anything previously seen in the comics. The editor is still the middle-aged, hen-pecked suburban man, but more than before, he acts mostly as a guide to himself at play. It constitutes a more formulaic way of legitimating a suburban domesticity. And in its direct address to the reader and the commentary of Mrs. Comic Cuts, it continues the role of the Sloper cartoons (with Tootsie's commentary) of drawing the reader into this reconstructed social world by direct exhortation. Such strips bear some resemblance to Homes in the self-referentiality of the characters and also some difference in the clearly greater

emphasis on the editorial anchor. The readers are equalised by the reassertion of a legitimate code to a far greater extent than the parallel process in Homes, who reinforces the equalisation of the readership through detective fiction by designating certain alien, criminal threats.

#### Comic Cuts Colonies

'Comic Cuts Colony' was a one joke strip on the ill-fated weekly attempts of some black 'natives' to reconstruct their own versions of British institutions. In 'MILITARY NOTES FROM COMIC CUTS COLONY - THE EASTER MANOEUVRES' [26], for example, an effort to emulate the British army has them literally in pantomime outfits for uniforms, using giraffes for mounts and eventually blowing themselves up. It is not so much the overt racism in the strip that is interesting as the way that institutional codes and conventions are legitimated through the scene of their distortion by a marginal group. To this extent, it is comparable to the basic trend in representations of the Irish, though with slightly more political undertones at this, the height of imperial conquest. Their depiction is far more grotesque than any of the Irish cartoons - clearly in this case the possibility of causing offence to any of the readers did not enter into consideration.

This formula recurs repeatedly in the Harmsworth titles.

'Comic Cuts Colony' itself lasted for over fifteen years. Chips had neanderthals substituting for the natives in a large regular cartoon called 'Stone-Age Chips' in 1904, and 'Casey's Court' was in a similar format on the back page, a slum rookery like the

American 'Hogan's Alley' [27], crawling with kids manically attempting to imitate their betters. The Funny Wonder, by this time merged with another Harmsworth venture, The Jester, had an Irishman, complete with overhanging upper lip and beady eyes, essaying similarly ambitious exercises in 'The Doings of Dooley' [28].

The common strand is the way in which the readers are invited to revel in their own superiority by comparison with a marginalised social group failing miserably to master the basics of civilised behaviour. As such, these efforts are yet another extension of the editorial anchor.

#### Chokee Bill and Area Sneaker

Frank Holland's creations were a variation on Yeats' creations in that they all took up the theme of criminality running through the early comics. As with the comic stripped editor, also, and the variants of 'Comic Cuts Colony', they reinforced the populist inclusion of the readers and the marginalisation of the criminal/low-life class. Chokee Bill would narrate the story of misfired burgling efforts, addressing the editor in a string of unintentional puns as the following passage shows:-

"DEER MR. EDDITTER, - The man wot said 'a thing of booty is a joy for ever' was a fraud. It's my opinion as 'e knew nutthink about booty, an' werry likely 'e'd never done a burgle in 'is life" [29].

The exaggerated Cockney [30] is unusual in the comics, as we have seen. Geoffrey Pearson correctly cites these burglars as a manifestation of the latest concept of criminality in the 1890s:

'hooliganism'. The idea of the juvenile 'hooligan' [31] was another aspect of the late Victorian fears of the threat to imperial stability from the heart of the Empire itself [32]. The tendency of the comics was not, however, to deal with such issues directly, and if this growing paranoia is latent in the adventures of these burglars, undercurrent to their comical endings, it is unusual to encounter such fears as overtly as this. In a different way to the Yeats strips, then, Chokee Bill and Area Sneaker are untypical of the more dominant tendency in the comic strips.

There were, then, a few different currents in the development of the early, regular comic strips which, in varying degrees were continuous with the trends in the early years of the comics. In particular, we can see a basic revolution around the tension between popular inclusion in the democracy promised by the editorial address and the problem of who was to be excluded. The strips are different in the way that they were anchored by the verbal address to the reader. The Yeats ones were probably the least verbalised of them all. The adventures of the editor and 'Comic Cuts Colony' are most continuous with the early cartoons in the creation of a pseudo-intimate bond with the reader. The burglars show some degree of anchoring by the complicit pleasure of editor and reader at their undoing. With the exception of the Yeats efforts, all show a high degree of verbal anchoring, which minimises the importance of the visual narrative.

None of these, however, was to become a formal or thematic standard. The formula that was to become a standard, the

adventures of Tom Browne's pair of tramps, would incorporate all of these trends. Moreover, its repetition and standardisation were to mark a transition to a new kind of medium, the formulaic resolution of the tensions running through the early comics as analysed in Chapters Eight and Nine. The tramps, like the burglars, included an element of criminality, but it was rendered innocuous by their classless personae. They offered a means for the reader to assert his own social superiority, though this was combined with a sort of avenue of escape from social tensions. Most importantly they combined the language of the editorial address with a vocabulary and dialect which corresponded to nothing in reality. They were both continuous with the fundamental tension running through the history of the cheap humorous journal in the nineteenth century and an original invention in their own right. In some respects, particularly in their largely verbal nature, they are closely related to simultaneous developments in music hall.

## CHAPTER TEN - NOTES

1. Umberto Eco, 'A Reading of Steve Canyon', Twentieth Century, December 1976 (translated by Bruce Merry).
2. Aspects of the evolution of the comic strip in the US will be taken up in the discussion of later American influences on the British comic strip in Chapter Twelve.
3. Denis Gifford (1976) Victorian Comics; (1975); Happy Days! A Century of Comics; (1984) The International Book of Comics; 'The Funny Wonders', Art & Artists, February 1971.  
 Denis Gifford was a comic strip artist himself, working on Amalgamated Press' (Harmsworth's company) Knockout and "Telestrip" in the London Evening News in the 1950s. He has written over twenty-five books on comics and cinema and edits the 'Association of Comic Enthusiasts' bulletin, a roughly monthly collection of articles on comics from newspapers, profiles of comic strip artists and their work, news of exhibitions, profiles of comic strip artists and their work, a price guide to the current range of comics on sale and a means of advertising for collectors and potential buyers.
4. Gifford (1976), op. cit., p.7.
5. Ibid., p.6.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p.28.
8. IC 298, p.1, 1896.
9. Gifford (1984), op. cit., p.20.
10. Cited in Gifford (1971), op. cit., p.50.
11. Originally a three frame strip on the inside pages, Homes progressed to the front page of the Funny Wonder in 1894.
12. Gifford (1984), op. cit., p.20.
13. Cited in Gifford (1971), op. cit., p.51. From A.E. Johnson (1909), Tom Browne, R.I..
14. Gifford (1971), op. cit., p.51.
15. Gifford (1976), op. cit., p.41.
16. Ibid.
17. FW 219, p.5, 1897.
18. CC 256, p.5, 1895.
19. FW 284, p.4, 1898.
20. FW 259, p.4, 1898.
21. CC 256, p.8, 1895.
22. In a related example from Chips, "THE NEW PHOTOGRAPHY. MR. CHIPS TRIES IT" (IC 292, p.1, 1896), Chips has a new patent camera which allows him to see inside the heads of his staff. Picture No. 4 is an opportunity for an editorial attack on the 'penny dreadfuls'. The caption reads "Then we examined the head of our office-boy's younger brother, who has taken to reading 'penny dreadfuls' of late. We found he thought of nothing but Indians and revolvers'.
23. 'MR. COMIC CUTS' NEW OFFICE-DESK', CC 282, p.1, 1895.
24. 'LA BELLE PULL. (Tudor Street French)', CC 313, pp.4-5, 1896; 'MR. AND MRS. COMIC CUTS SEE A GHOST', CC 304, pp.4-5, 1896.
25. 'THE EDITOR'S ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES (Told by Mrs.

Comic Cuts)', CC 408, pp.4-5, 1898.

26. CC 257, p.5, 1895.
27. 'Hogan's Alley' was an important forerunner to the emergence of the comic strip in the US in the 1890s. Developed by R.F. Outcault from his 1896 cartoon, 'The Great Dog Show in M'Googan Avenue' in Pulitzer's New York World, it was a lively comic depiction of a New York Irish slum, with much of the humour contained in the dialectal phonetic misspellings of background sales signs. The regular joke was the misfired recreation in the slum of some aspect of 'civilised' social organisation.

'Hogan's Alley' was most notable for its introduction of an ugly, bald and nightshirted child. The yellow of the nightshirt was the first successful use by Pulitzer's four-colour rotary press of a hitherto elusive colour and 'The Yellow Kid', as he was consequently known, became a regular feature in the M'Googan Avenue/ Hogan's Alley cartoons, a vulgar little brat whose lines were written in Brooklynese block capitals on the shirt itself.

When Pulitzer's rival, W.R. Hearst, began his 'American humorist' comic supplement to the New York Journal (October 1896), hailed as 'eight pages of iridescent polychromous effulgence that makes the rainbow look like a piece of lead pipe', he snatched Outcault from Pulitzer to draw another version of the 'Kid', this time in strip form. Pulitzer bought Outcault back, but Hearst outbid him. Finally, Pulitzer hired George Luks to draw a rival 'Kid'. The saga ultimately produced the American pejorative label for the nascent popular press, 'yellow journalism'.

See Les Daniells (1971), Comix: A History of Comic Books in America, pp.1-4; Bill Blackbeard and Martin Williams (1977), The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics, pp.13-14; Coulton Waugh (1949), The Comics, pp.1-15; George Perry and Alan Aldridge (1971) The Penguin Book of Comics, pp.95-96.

28. 'The Doings of Dooley', The Jester and Wonder 270, p.8, 1907 etc.
29. CC 413, p.1, 1898.
30. The substituted 'w' for 'v' was an older and largely redundant dialectal feature at this time. Dickens used it frequently, but it is rarely encountered towards the end of the century.
31. Geoffrey Pearson (1983), Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears, pp.51-116. Pearson's book is a study of the historical continuity between discourses on juvenile crime. The first regular usage of the term 'hooligan' is dated from the August Bank Holiday disturbances of 1898 (ibid., p.75).
32. On the developing concept of 'juvenile delinquency' in the 1890s, see also John R. Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1890-1914', Past and Present 67, 1975.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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THE QUIXOTIC TRAVELS OF WEARY WILLY AND TIRED TIM:  
THE IDEOLOGY OF THE TRAMP

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The enormous success of Tom Browne's creations, in contrast to the short existence of the comic stripped adventures of the other figures at that time, can be judged not only by their long survival, but by the number of direct spinoffs and imitations. Browne himself created a junior version of the two for the Funny Wonder in 1898, with the names Little Willy and Tiny Tim. In the same year he generated another version for Comic Cuts, a spoof of Cervantes' Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, 'The Adventures of the Wandering Knight Don Quixote de Tintogs and Sancho his Pal'. Denis Gifford remarks that Browne actually based Willy and Tim on these figures, his personal literary favourites, from the outset [1]. And for Arthur Pearson's rival penny weekly, The Big Budget (from 1898 onwards), he drew a pair of cyclists, Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy, who quickly descended to the status of tramps [2]. Trapps, Holmes & Co.'s Coloured Comic had Frog-Faced Ferdinand and Woolly Whiskered Watty (artist unknown) from 1898, while their World's Comic had Bat-Eared Bill and Mooching Mike from 1897 (artist unknown).

For Denis Gifford, tramps were simply among the 'traditional' targets for British humour, and Browne's particular formulation is a conflation of humorous tradition with figures

of literary excellence, which gives them a special appeal. Superficially, there is also the visual combination of a tall, gangly figure with a short fat one, which seems to constitute a magical formula running through to Laurel and Hardy, who often descended to the level of tramp, and whose popularity equally declined in the early 1950s [3]. Their appearance in this form is, however, historically specific to the social tensions of the 1890s. They cannot be read simply as the products of Tom Browne's imagination.

Tramps with alliterative names were common enough at the time of Browne's tramps' first appearances: Lazy Larry [4], Solitary Sam [5], Tom Tatters [6] were among the numerous names used. The name Weary Willie actually appeared in a single cartoon underneath Browne's 'Innocents on the River' entitled 'WORKING IT OUT' [7] and again some weeks later in a 3-picture sequence called 'TWO LARKS' [8], before being adopted as a name for the regular partner in Browne's team. The usual representation of the tramps at this time, as we have seen in Chapter Eight, was as extra-societal threats, loafers in search of free food and receiving their just desserts.

'Innocents on the River' (Figure 10.1) showed some important differences from the typical presentation of tramps. Firstly, there is a certain self-destructive element in the sequence: failure is consequent on the tramps' lack of foresight, and their dependence on objects and animals, as opposed to their interference with any third party. Secondly, their costumes and dialogue in the captions suggest a former grandeur leading to a fall from grace. Willie's top hat is still in fairly good shape,

and his coat looks like it might once have been the mark of a gentleman. His moustache and beard have an absent-minded, unkempt professorial look. Tim sports a punched out straw boater hat and white jacket patched at the elbows, with the more proletarian or peasant features of permanent five o' clock shadow and pipe. The dialogue is mock aristocratic - "I say, Timmy ...", "... a noble scheme", "Have you the luncheon-basket ...", "Great Pip! Bridge ahoy! ..." - and mock country gent - the "ye" of "... Ye'd take me for a Dragoonier in the Queen's Bodyguard, wouldn't ye?" We might even read an element of Irish in the "ye". In terms of artistic style, Gifford is right to say that its pictorial composition reads well. Shading is minimised in favour of black and white solids and these are nicely balanced as each picture follows a rule of thirds more or less throughout. Yeats' mercurial diagonal movements and sparse or non-existent backgrounds are superceded by fairly static compositions with pseudo-grandiose snatches of dialogue.

These elements were carried through their subsequent adventures. In one episode, they become highwaymen as their latest money-making scheme. They hold up a farmer, steal a horse, but are thrown and arrested by the police [9]. Frequently, their ultimate arrest results from counter-productive fighting with each other, as in 'A FIRE ESCAPE ADVENTURE' and 'THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE BOAT-RACE', where their attempt to set up boats for spectators is foiled as they have a fight and capsize their own boats [10]. Inevitably in these cases, defeat is self-inflicted. A variation on the theme is a visit to the

editorial offices, from which the unwanted pests are eventually ejected through a collective effort from the staff. In 'WEARY WILLIE AND TIRED TIM PAY A VISIT TO TUDOR STREET', Tom Browne himself sends them through a trapdoor in the floor, and they are seen out by the Fighting Editor [11]. In 'WEARY WILLY AND TIRED TIM HAVE A LIVELY TIME AT TUDOR STREET' (Figure 11.1) [12], the in-joke is carried to its apotheosis. Frame 3 shows them chased from the Answers office by Alfred Harmsworth and his brother Harold themselves, armed, suitably enough, with two pairs of scissors. In Frame 9, Harold Harmsworth is the middle figure with hands on hips, while Leicester, Alfred and Cecil Harmsworth look on from the right. Apart from the joke of merging real with fictional editorial figures, we can perceive some further developments over the original 'Innocents ...'

The figures have changed noticeably. Willy (who dropped the "ie" ending and replaced it with a "y") has lost his moustache, and removing his hat reveals a balding head. Tim on the other hand is more spherical, has more hair and looks younger. He is now clad in an Eton collar and blazer, with white trousers, suspended by a single brace, and little round hat with a ribbon. Together the ensemble suggests an absurdly obese and degenerate Little Lord Fauntleroy. Willy has lost his topper, and is reduced to an out-of-shape derby. The once black overcoat is now white, sawn off to the upper sleeves to reveal the hooped sleeves of a sailor's shirt, while the scarf likewise suggests a sailor's costume. The odd boot on the left leg suggests a half-successful fishing trip in 'traditional' comic style. Despite the changes, the question of who exactly these figures are supposed to be is

# 1/2 ILLUSTRATED CHIPS 1/2

No. 396. Vol. XVI. (New Series). [SERIES OF 12 WEEKS] PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. (TRANSMISSION ADDRESS AT PAGE 2110) APRIL 2, 1896.

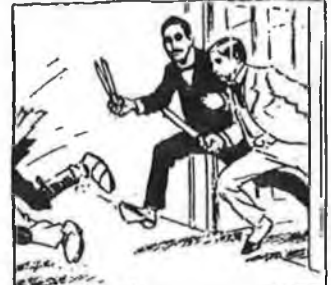
## WEARY WILLY AND TIRED TIM HAVE A LIVELY TIME AT TUDOR STREET.



1. "The other day two mysterious gentlemen called at Chips. 'Please, sir,' said the tall, slender baronet, 'can you tell us where we can find Mr. Chips? We have called the purpose of looking him in hall.' 'Yar, and bottles, we'll find him at "Answers" office."



2. "Then William and Timothy (for that is what they and their names were) walked across. 'How for it?' Timothy was heard to remark. "Now to scatter the double-dud of riddle's giblet."



3. "But as soon as the Editors saw them, they armed themselves, and prepared to assault the visitors. "Lie-billards!" cried the great, "we have tumbled into Sacco, Told's by mistake!"



4. "But they had another try, for they meant to carry out one breaking instance, and so looked at the "Fanny Fodder" idea. "Be ready to speak live," murmured William. "I'm not squeaker!" responded Tim.



5. "But the speaking (whatever that may be) was not done, for a furious animal sprung out of the office, and William and Timothy were once more put to flight, Timothy crying "Murder!" loudly and William calling for his mother.



6. "Presently, however, they came to the post-room. "Ah!" cried the short, stout nabob, "we shall find sympathy here, at least; and perhaps we shall cross Mr. Chips." "For hope" said William. "prose not."



7. "But it appears that, owing to his having smashed up all the furniture of his last office, the Fighting Editor's quarters at home changed, and he it was who answered the knock. "Who's there?" he said sternly. And the visitors stood somewhat surprised.



8. "They were even a little bit more startled when the mighty man of muscle heaved them through the office window. "Oh!" gasped Timothy, "I think we're having a drop too much!"



9. "And when the unfortunate fellows scolded the ground, they resumed gathered round and jested them. "He that per hact, Willy!" gasped Editor. "Four fellows! I felt quite sorry for them. Yours sincerely, The Non-Site Editor."

Figure 11.]

'Weary Willie and Tired Tim have a lively time at Tudor Street'

(from IC 396, p.1, 1898)

Our New Sensational Story: WANTED! £1,000 REWARD. See page 2.

MIXED THINGS  
 BY  
 CHIPS FUNNY MAN

ILLUSTRATED  
**CHIPS** **1/2**

No. 471. Vol. XVIII. (New Series.) [Continued from page 466.] PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. [Published weekly except on Sundays.] SEPTEMBER 9, 1899.

A WILD NIGHT'S ADVENTURE WITH SPRING-HEELED JACK



1. "With that big, long do I strike you?" asked Tim. "March on—throw me—put me—burst me!" but you're just too wonderful for words!" smiled Willy. "Are you flying tonight, Jack, or a night microphone? Oh, I know now! You're the Human Bat what we read about in the 'Wander'."



2. And sure enough that vampire had a guilty conscience of it that evening on the common "Wander". "I am the ghost of your last article!" roared the miser. "Don't run, children; let's stop and try together." "No one does," roared the miser, "we never had a party at last, only with a deal like that! To be!"



3. So the hat stepped in to see how Sophie and Jack were getting on with their spouting. "Goodbye and later on!" yelled the chap; "may I be stowed in here if it isn't the old 'so'!" "Vow! Hush! Hush! Take it away!" scolded the maiden. "I'll never marry with anything like that to the family."



4. Once more across the common the hat spotted a few of his old enemies. "Hi, you bastards!" he whistled. "I've got you now, and if I don't knock you out of your wits you may be injured!" "Don't touch us, Master Hat," yawned the cops; "we're too busy in the..."



5. But if the cops were nervous the night birds weren't, and they looked up to see what the new meant. "Ere, what do you call yourself?" asked the old crew. "Let's have a taste!" "Frob, jove!" "Willy," shrieked Tim, "ere are some nasty dicky-birds hating your little job!"



6. Poor Willy was in the midst of a topic to go to the races, and possibly a roundabout yakale came along with a gun and other horrid instruments. "Come, lad, come, and be with me," snorted Tim, as they pushed him into the pond. "I am coming, gratis Jimmy," whined Willy. Then the cold waters closed over them. But they'll appear, as per, in a nice way next Thursday.

Figure 11.2  
 'A wild night's adventure with Spring-heeled Jack'  
 (from IC 471, p.1, 1899)

THE ADVENTURES OF THE WANDERING KNIGHT DON QUIXOTE DE TINTOGS AND SANCHO HIS PAL.—No. 3



1. "See yonder moated castle!" murmured Tintogs. "The thore (that the fayre, fat maid of forty dwells. We will go hence quickly. Who knows but what her heart may soften when she doth observe our gallant show!"



2. Having lied themselves to the castle, they did cast soft speeches across the moat, and induced the lady fayre to stoje. Don Quixote overcame all her scruples, and under the wing of night they resolved to fly.



3. Tintogs, by the aid of a rope ladder, brought down from her bower his little love-bird. "Fayre maid, I lo-ove you!" he murmured as he placed his foot down on something soft. "Zounds, man! tread on someone else's ear next time," yelled Sancho.



4. "Place your head upon my shoulder," murmured Sancho. "No, not your hand, fathead!" The poor moke sighed deeply, and tears of anguish rolled down its cheeks; it could not bear so much love all at once; but for Sancho's assistance, it might have collapsed in the middle.



5. But see! a ghostly figure draped in white approacheth! Its finger pointing straight in front, it cries, "Begone!" "I will! I will!" howl our heroes, and straightway they disappear into the moat. "Great cheese-cake and toffy-drojs!" gasps the moke as he sits upon his fayre burden.



6. 'Twas but a sorry reason for so much fright—two pages and a sheet; but the moke stopped not to find this out, but vanished into the night. And ere Tintogs and Sancho Panza had come up to take the air, ye pages had vanished, and thus was true love nipped in the bud.

Figure 11.3

'The Adventures of the Wandering Knight Don Quixote de Tintogs and Sancho his pal'

(from CC 442, p.3, 1898)

# Special War Number.

Special War Numbers of the WONDER, id. and CHIPS, id. will be published every week. Latest War Pictures and Descriptions of Great Battles. Grand War Stories of thrilling and exciting adventure every week in the WONDER and CHIPS.  
Readers are advised to order their copies in advance.



# The FUNNY Wonder



No. 35 NEW SERIES.

ONE HALFPENNY, EVERY SATURDAY.

DECEMBER 23, 1899.

## REMEMBER MAJUBA! A GLORIOUS CAVALRY CHARGE—BOERS TURN AND RUN!



Just as the beautiful country was becoming visible in the opening dawn, the battle commenced. It was quite clear that we were entirely unexpected, and it was some time before the flurried Boer gunners recovered from their surprise, and then to our vigorous shelling with a few badly aimed shots. While our guns kept steadily at work on the enemy's battery, infantry moved towards the Boer position, and the horsemen made a detour to get on their flank.

At this moment a well-directed shot from a big Rival gun smashed the carriage of a Boer gun, and put the weapon out of action, whereupon our troops made a dash up the hill.

The Boers turned and fled, pursued by Bethune's Horse, the Carabineers, and the Mounted Police.

It is reported that in consequence of the feeling of insecurity aroused by this successful sortie, the enemy refused to make any further stand, and continued to retreat.

Figure 11.4

'Remember Majuba'

(from FW 35, p.1, 1899)



# ILLUSTRATED CHIPS

No. 486. Vol. XVIII. (New Series.) [SIXTH YEAR.] PRICE ONE HALFPENNY. [PUBLISHED BY] DECEMBER 23, 1899.

THE NOBLE ARMY OF WEARY UNWASHED WANDERERS SPIFFLICATE THE BOER ARMY.



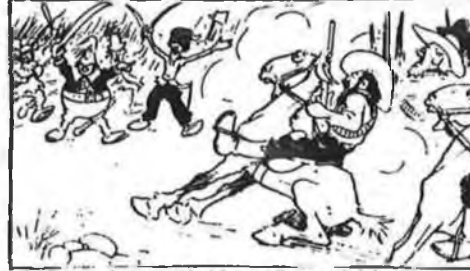
1. Up! their gallant spirits led with Willy and Tim hurried back to form a "Tramp Truck" to take out to the Tramp-truck. And here they are enquiring the weary Dutch work. "Now then, my handsome old!" chirped Tim, "you'd say any in that? Free drink, would you?" "Four gallons!" whistled the Wanderer, "why I'd do twice a week for that!"



2. Such a tempting offer could not be resisted, and straight away the great Army of Weary Unwashed Wanderers was formed. "Now then, old boy!" quoth Tim, "it is requested the horse, 'why can't you show a chest, and be a good?" "Surely, old boy!" giggled Willy, "no sooner's sent it to the wash, and it won't come back!"



3. So all they went on board their penny patent packet, and set sail for South Africa. "First one-up!" howled the ship, "was a noble to carry me past the jolly Kruger! This beats all the Dutch cheese I've ever - milled! There! Where's my stout bottle!"



4. "At 'em, we leave away!" howled General Tim, "and don't forget to get a can of War-!" "Wasn't it?" answered the Dutchman, "no can't fight those dirty ones!" How the dog of iron before we get a dig in the (Tramp) Free State! Help! Murder! Texaco! You-oh!"



5. But it was no go! The dusty Wanderers were on em before you could say "Hooray", and jabbed the Boers all over the shop. "By the Blum-bellie see you me to!" howled the Dutch cheer, when Tim stepped him out with his rusty blade. "That he begs to me, stop hurting it when I tell you! Wow!"



6. That settled it. The Boers weren't going to tackle 'em again, so the Noble Army of Tramps marched into Pretoria. "Ah, for Heidy!" quoth Tim, "I think we've - tried Mr. Kruger's back this time! Squaring you over a little evening with the lot, and drink the health of the good old British flag with cheer!"

(And they did, too; and if you take a peep at next Thursday's CHIPS' Special War Number, too, you'll see something worth seeing.)

Figure 11.5

'The noble army of weary unwashed wanderers spifflicate the Boer army'

(from IC 486, p.1, 1899)

**HOW PRETORIA WAS CAPTURED BY WEARY WILLY AND TIRED TIM!**



1. Willy, Tim, and Timmie the Flea were on the track that made them sure of again to werry the Boer chaps, and give 'em' 'nother a laugh. "Don't forget to bring ol' Kruger's 'shokers' back with you, moral the Tommies. Not forgetting a shov for the good ol' Margate Flea." "I'll give you one on the lobs with me cobb hammer!" "Tudnob, vobers."



2. Then they came to the Me out of werry other ever--it shows a matter much, and in the middle a leaflet will was heard. "Look!" squeaked Willy. "I've taken a horse out of our napper with the Lintkin's 'shov! Somebody call the hospital! You-oh!" "For I..." "Don't be silly," said Tim. "I think I had it, on when all the fess' look along."



3. Now, our pals never take chance. So, when the time arrived, they fired up their portable tin fan. "Pop pop, Willy," said Tim cheerily. "I saw you feet, up there, Pop pop!" "Gorram, you barrel chested crackpot!" roared Willy. "I've werry enough to know better. Get on with the job, or I'll give you one on the lobs with me cobb hammer!"



4. And directly the Union Jack went up the Boer spotted it, and come to make inquiries. "Give us a look at you, mate," said Van Housenburgh to Kruger. "I bet dat vobers' 'shokers' and der British Army 'shovs, saysays." "Oop!" roared Kruger. "we've here in de time, I bet my ankle."



5. And then some werry werry made to fall down early, and fallen out inoperative ponds. "Get the Housenburghs see you up to!" growled Kruger. "You've werry naps per-fer-fer!" "Ah, ooh!" "Tired after, mate," smiled Willy. "I'll jock with a shov until we've finished our garden, and then we'll attend to you."



6. "Now, mate, what's the row?" yelled one jake. "Please to remember there's red de de de in them shovs!" from back from the Boer lagers. "You've werry naps per-fer-fer!" "Ah, ooh!" "Tired after, mate," smiled Willy. "I'll jock with a shov until we've finished our garden, and then we'll attend to you."



7. "You will have your shovs!" called Willy and Tim, and here they did! And being Timmie and the dog, to guard the crowd, off they rode to Pretoria. "Boy, Willy," roared Tim. "those old boys do bet a lot, don't they?" "Dear my, ole pal," chuckled Willy. "How're for Tim Kruger the Second?"



8. And when they entered Pretoria the Boer crowd turned out to cheer, thinking that Kruger and Van Housenburgh had arrived. "Ho ho, my ladsy brother tonguey burghers," cried Tim. "we've werryed the British Army, and captured Joe Chamberlain!" "Whereupon the old gun got so excited that he kicked a Dutchman in the shin."



9. "Now, then," said Tim to the commandant, "bury your man off in Housenburgh, and give General Roberts a dog on his bitchee--and, mate, you, if I catch any of you playing matches on the road I'll hang you across the neck." "Ah! I bet you on," smiled the Dutchman. And off went the dusty crew. (And this isn't the death. The rest of it is on page 2.)

Figure 11.6  
 'How Pretoria was captured by Weary Willy and Tired Tim'  
 (overleaf)



10. And later on the gals opened the gates to let in the British Army. "Wotso! Bobs, me boy! come along in and make yourself at home," said Willy, "Misch obliged, I'm sure," smiled our champion general; "and if you don't mind I'll ask all my boys in with me to take a muckin' o' juckle with you." "Why, certainly," chirped Tim. "Let 'em all come."



11. And wasn't it fun when the Boer Army, after finding they had been fooled, returned, to find the British in confusion! "What's the game?" asked Tommy Atkins, when Boer tried to climb the wall; "this is the Queen's private property." "Ach! is dat so?" howled the other Boers; "den dee game vus oop, and ve trank de Kruger never no more."



12. Then the band played, and up went the British flag with cheers. "Timmy, my noble friend," said Lord Bobs afterwards, "I appoint you Governor of Pretoria at thirty be a week. And your old pal Willy is made Chief Officer of the Canton." (He to next week's Cantre you'll find them both some again playing up their monkey tricks as usual.)

Figure 11.6

'How Pretoria....' cont'd.

still a little confusing. Perhaps the clothes are discards or even stolen from their social betters, consequently elevating the pretensions of their current wearers. The accompanying paragraphs have actually increased in volume, giving the heroes more space for plot exposition. Their dialogue oscillates between the pseudo-genteel and the downright crudity of slum language, punctuated by an ironic narration: "'Please sir', said the tall slender baronet [...] 'Be ready to squash him', murmured William. 'I'm yer squasher!' responded Tim."

This strange, drawn-out verbosity is well-exemplified by 'A WILD NIGHT'S ADVENTURE WITH SPRING-HEELED JACK' (Figure 11.2) [13]. 'Spring-heeled Jack' was a character from the 'penny dreadfuls' [14] who would appear on stormy nights to seek vengeance on evil-doers. Tim is dressed here in his costume of goat horns and bat-like wings to glean some amusement from frightening the innocent. The long, awkward sentences combine this mannered aristocratic address with the equally roundabout constructions of supposed Cockney, including unintentional puns based on linguistic misunderstanding, akin to Chokee Bill's above:

"Willy, dear boy, how do I strike you?" warbled Tim.  
 "Strike me - throw me - pinch me - bust me! but you're just too wonderful for words!" smiled Willy ... "You're the Human Bat what we read about in the 'Wonder'."

And the language is further embellished by oddly used verbs like 'warbled' here: 'roared', 'yelled', 'twittered', 'whistled', 'piped', 'shrieked', 'snorted' and 'whined'. It seems that the planned effect of these verbs is the impression of manic action

and attendant sounds. But the reality is that what is quite a lively sequence is bogged down in peculiar linguistic constructions which actually mark a new phase in the editorial anchoring of visuals. The pictorial sequence combines with the captions to suck the once separate editorial populism into this self-contained regular textual element.

This was the case with Ally Sloper, but there are important differences in the personae of Sloper and the tramps, and in the form of the piece, which are bound up with the changing political climate of the '90s as opposed to the '80s.

#### The Ideology of the Tramp

As analysed by Bailey, Sloper is a combination of various comic types cultivated in humorous magazines and in the music halls in the late nineteenth century. The tramp was more than a behavioural category - the gents, mashers, swells etc. parading in public places - but nor was he exactly an 'economic' category. Tramps included members of Booth's Classes A and B - the semi-criminal and the loafer happily festering in the urban slum, and casual labourers reduced by circumstances, usually the seasonality of employment, to seeking relief at the casual ward. But despite this merging of divisions, which frustrated analysis of the casual labour problem, tramps could be seen to constitute a recognisable type. Stedman Jones distinguishes between a broader category of occasional 'vagrant' and a smaller, more consistent 'tramp' element:-

'It is possible that one third of all vagrants in good times, and two thirds in bad times, were not tramps,

but mainly unskilled men moving from job to job:  
navvies, seamen returning home, Irish harvest  
labourers, and unemployed agricultural labourers' [15].

Of the professional tramps, he observes an habitual pattern unmotivated by questions of economic security or insecurity. Tramps preferred to winter in London because of the superior abundance of charity sources. April and May were spent touring the countryside, summer by the sea, and Autumn hop-picking. This seasonal pattern was an affront to the dictates of the Charity Organisation Society (C.O.S.). It also had little to do with the motivations of labourers in search of regular employment. It was a self-perpetuating pattern internalised and reproduced as an habitual preference for 'a life of chances and surprises, and the camaraderie of the common lodging house and the casual ward' [16]. Stedman Jones's sources for these generalisations of characteristics are Mayhew's London Labour... and the 1891 C.O.S. report on The Homeless Poor of London, which mirrors Mayhew's findings from the 1850s and '60s. This picture of ritual movements among the tramps co-exists with one of a general deterioration in social conditions as identified by Booth, the social imperialists, new liberals and Fabians. Mayhew's tramps survived the designation of street-folk and cadgers to 'Class A', and the strategy of its elimination as a key to broader social betterment. The tramp retained a separate identity. Like the street-folk, he had innate cultural characteristics, he was the quintessence of the wandering tribe who rejected the bourgeois work ethic for freedom of movement between city and country on a sort of 'pleasure principle' basis.

Over forty years later, in Down and Out in Paris and London, George Orwell attempted to end the myth of the tramp as 'an atavism, a throw-back to the nomadic stage of humanity' [17], by identifying the governing legislation of vagrancy as the root perpetuating factor. Stripped of any personal dignity or motivation to work by his treatment at the casual ward, and suffering from progressive malnutrition, the tramp has no option but to wander aimlessly from one 'spike' to another, and in the process uses enough energy 'to plough thousands of acres, build miles of road, put up dozens of houses' [18]. Orwell advocates a sort of quasi-work colony akin to the proposals for casual labourers in the 1890s and 1900s. While those latter proposals were being formulated, however, Mayhew's picture of innate propensity to vagrancy was still common enough. Vagrancy was not yet viewed as a function of inadequate Poor Law legislation to the same extent that casual labour was seen in terms of declining, casualised industries.

Despite the 'tramp-monster' aspect to the thesis of an innate tendency to vagrancy, there is nevertheless a certain romance to it, which even finds its way into Orwell. Disdain at the fecklessness of this world, the squalor and the stink, is combined with a fascination for its liberating aspect, its classlessness, for it was at the attitudinal level that Orwell perceived class distinctions and potential class conciliation. Determined to discover the realities of working class living, a trek which led to The Road to Wigan Pier (1937), Orwell worked hard at beating the prejudices of his youth, and worried a great deal at the prejudices he expected to find levelled against

himself. Initially afraid to speak lest his accent betray his origins, after he has donned the disguise of a tramp, he quickly realises that his ragged clothes are the mark of his status, they equalise everyone at the same level of degradation [19]. He even encounters an old Etonian at one lodging-house, and a remarkably well-read 'screever' (pavement artist) with a good knowledge of astronomy [20]. Like Egan and Mayhew in the nineteenth century Orwell, fascinated by the colourful speech of his subjects, their capacity for expression in a language of their own, devotes one chapter to explanations of slang and swearwords, and attempts to reproduce their stories in direct speech whenever possible. This is a melting-pot where class identities are lost by choice or necessity. In spite of Orwell's personal brand of emotional socialist critique, there is still an element of romance running through this chronicle of self-imposed destitution, which emerges more strongly in his retrospective summary of Down and Out... in The Road...:-

'...down there in the squalid and, as a matter of fact, horribly boring sub-world of the tramp I had a feeling of release, of adventure, which seems absurd when I look back, but which was sufficiently vivid at the time' [21].

This strange duality in Orwell's experiences was quite similar to Mayhew's ambivalent orientation, so that long after the problem of the casualised economy had been formally recognised in the political institution of social welfarism, the tramp continued to cause difficulties of definition as an 'economic' or 'ideological' type, and had a certain romantic edge to his



travels.

If there is a continuity from one century to the next in understandings of the 'problem' of vagrancy, there are historically specific reasons why the tramp emerged as he did, and in that particular form in the comics of the 1890s.

Ally Sloper was born before the riots of 1886 and Booth's ensuing survey dramatically and suddenly highlighted the darker side of the apparent democratisation through the expansion of leisure.

At precisely that time when social investigation was adopting a new scientific method based on geographical and economic divisions the tramp, who more than any other social type represented a threat to economic security and license to physical and behavioural freedom (of the street and of the countryside) emerged as one of the most important figures in popular reading. The language and the types represent a reworking or a negotiation of political manoeuvres and changing political ideologies. The emergence of this 'mass' entertainment in language and type is related to the emergence of the tramps in the comics as a negotiated articulation of the new politics.

Harmsworth's publications - the newspapers, imperialist boys' weeklies and comics - were characterised by economies of scale in production which affected the rationalisation of formulae in the textual elements. But what we are witnessing in the comic strips, as the central element in the comics, is their distancing from the visible presence of Harmsworth, as his biographers would have him, with scissors in hand improving personal tastes, and also from the 'tradition' of humorous

weeklies in which the editor acts as guide to his protagonists, fictional and non-fictional, in the nether world. The tramp figures parallel Leno in the halls as an abstraction from reality yet simultaneously are pervaded by all the tensions of real class relations.

The tramp is both a real type, and a truly 'quixotic' figure. The resemblance of Willie and Tim to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza is more than Tom Browne's personal fancy. Don Quixote was a pathetic figure sucked into a fantastic, imaginary world of chivalry and honour, a self-delusive but sympathetic character unable to deal with plain meanings and ordinary speech. Hence his eccentric, honorific language. Willie and Tim likewise use a language which corresponds to nothing in reality. Unlike Quixote, theirs is only half self-delusory, and half mocking of the mannered respectability and pretension to grandeur in language - the malapropisms work both ways. In this sense they realise what was formerly the function of the editorial captions and titles to the cartoons. This is similar to Sloper's dual function of editor and star. However, while Sloper's adventures are usually topical, and his co-stars on the front page recognisable, Willie and Tim are rarely to be found against topical backdrops, apart from major sporting events like the Boat Race. They act, for the most part, as a guide to themselves and the editorial offices. They are both a commentary on the function of the comics they inhabit (as in the 'Spring-Heeled Jack' strip) and part of that function themselves. Don Quixote was free to wander through his imaginary Spain, but was

simultaneously ensnared by the language and behaviour of his chivalric world. So Willie and Tim are freed both from the codes of dress, deference and demeanour, and the limited geographical space of the mashers parading on public thoroughfares (in which even Sloper is trapped), and from the limiting environment of suburban domesticity (in which Sloper is also stuck). Yet as a parody of these worlds, they are rooted in it by their half-parody, half-serious language.

This point is more evident in Browne's direct spoof of Quixote. Figure 11.3 [22] shows Browne's Don Quixote in a romantic bid to elope with a 'lady fayre'. This is actually a very good realisation of the character, with the original Quixote's cardboard visor replaced by an equally comical frying-pan. The theme is on a continuum with the romantically-oriented cartoons of the early '90s, with the added twist that the hero deceives himself with regard to both his own appearance, and that of the object of his attentions. And the puns adopt an historical dimension: "'Twas but a sorry reason for so much a fright - two pages and a sheet ...' (caption 6). De Tintogs and Sancho, even more than Willie and Tim, constitute a commentary on the folly of self-aggrandisement in language and behaviour as practitioners in that folly.

The romantic role of the tramps as simultaneously liberated and entrapped figures was just one aspect to their functioning. More importantly, they represented elements of Egan's colourful but harmless lower orders of the 1820s, Mayhew's savage and indirectly threatening tribe in the 1850s, and Booth's directly threatening Class A, represented on the map in black, in the

'90s.

This development in the comics was no isolated phenomenon, but must be seen as part of a general movement in forms of 'popular' culture. It can be understood broadly as the move from a 'class' to a 'mass' entertainment [23]. The most outstanding form in this regard, as noted in Chapter Three, was the music hall [24]. Its development was akin to the rationalisation of the publishing process by publishers like Harmsworth.

The changes were most evident in the historical sequence of acts. There is a direct line from the radical depiction of the unrepentant chimney sweep condemned to death in the 1840s, to his role of lovable crafty Cockney, at a considerable remove from Mayhew's coster. It is a process, as Bailey points out, 'from class consciousness through emulative hedonism to domestication' [25]. Martha Vicinus makes a similar point, drawing attention in particular to the change from the exaltation of the pastoral myth in the old street broadsides to the coster satirising the same myth in the '90s while extolling the vitality of urban living [26].

Sloper was very much a conflation of those types from the middle period of music hall. Despite the abundance of happy-go-lucky Cockneys, and the innocuous potshots at pretensions to grandeur, it would be inaccurate to say that class relations were avoided in music hall songs. One of the most famous comedians of the '90s, Dan Leno, confronted the unemployment problem directly in his persona as 'one of the unemployed':

'You've read it through in Lloyd's,

The so-called unemployed.  
 Hard rare hard work to do the midnight march' [27].

Leno, like Sloper, and in a comicalised version of what Mayhew's street-folk were actually achieving, was reproducing a classic bourgeois individualism in an almost subversive way. The individual goal was survival at all costs. He himself regarded 'the world as a football, kicked about by higher powers with me somewhere hanging on the stitching with my teeth and toe-nails' [28]. Leno's unemployed character was not far removed from the tramps in the comics, for as with these figures there was a degree of invention and disguise to him which made him unrecognisable directly as a 'real' social type. On the language of such music-hall types, Bailey concludes that it

'was a mongrelised form, and the formal derivative style mingled with the pithier vernacular of the trades and the street. Yet this was not a simple conflation of modes but a creative mesalliance, for it sustained the dramatic and stylistic tension between the vulgar and the pretentious that gave much of late-Victorian music-hall humour its point and may provide an index to significant shifts in the sensibilities of its audience' [29].

In order to follow through the argument that the comic stripped tramps constituted a form of negotiation of the lower middle class position in a new political era, we must examine now their 'finest hour' - their participation in the Boer War.

#### Willy and Tim Go To War

The Boer War broke out in 1899 after a decade in which the rapid emergence of 'jingoism', with lower middle class clerkdom at its forefront [30], had brought social imperialist ideas to a

popularly accessible level. The war therefore generated a higher degree of expectation, hope and consequently newspaper attention than any previous imperial struggle. Harmsworth's Daily Mail, which had by now established itself as the essence of a particularly lower middle class imperialist fervour, led the race to dominate coverage of the war. Chamberlain's organic vision was translated into a broadside against 'Little Englandism' which, it claimed,

'has fallen because it supposed that the people of England were selfish [...] Imperialism has won because [...] it had been able to appeal to that instinct of unselfishness which leads men to [...] subordinate the petty desire for material comfort to the commands of duty' [31].

The growth of the Empire in the 1880s and '90s was motivated by increasing strain from German and American industrial competition, a strain which was considerably worsened by the 'Great Depression'. The Empire provided a ready and cheap supply of essential raw materials like oil and cotton. Its maintenance and expansion were therefore vital to Britain's economic survival [32].

At the heart of the Empire, London became the commercial and financial centre of the world. The consequence of London's increasing importance was a multiplication both of the number of clerical positions and aspirants. However, as noted in Chapter Six, employment for these workers was generally insecure and wages were maintained at low levels. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suppose that for clerical workers involved directly in the running of imperial trade, the evidence of their

collective 'jingoism' reflected a degree of anxiety about the threat to imperial growth from foreign powers. That is certainly not to read any degree of political awareness among such workers. Perceptions of this threat would have been mediated in practical terms most forcefully by the rapid influx of German clerks to London at this time [33]. Imperialist fervour at this level, then, could be read as having an economic basis.

These are important retrospective qualifications to the contemporary discourse in the Daily Mail about 'unselfish' devotion to 'duty'. In addition, imperialism offered the possibility of full democratic participation as 'citizens' to those who endorsed it wholeheartedly. It lended legitimacy to the adoption of the 'values', behaviour and dress of one's social superiors. Therefore the call to unselfish service was a veneer to the real appeal of cultural and economic elevation.

The heightened imperialism was equally evident in Harmsworth's boys' weeklies, as noted above. We have already identified the obsession with manners in the comics as a manifestation of the lower middle class aspirations to higher status, if largely symbolic. When the Boer War broke out, the comics also went to war. Of Harmsworth's titles, the Funny Wonder and Chips were most dedicated to the war effort. From December 23rd 1899, the Funny Wonder ran a series of full-page battle illustrations on the front cover, commencing with a cavalry charge captioned 'REMEMBER MAJUBA! A GLORIOUS CAVALRY CHARGE - BOERS TURN AND RUN!' (Figure 11.4) [34]. An easy target

was established in 'Hans, the Double Dutchman' [35], an occasional strip from September 9th on. A pair of jokey war correspondents, Jack Sprat and Ruddy the Tyke made their debut on December 9th [36]. Inside, there was a series of complete war stories, 'founded on actual facts', from December 16th.

Chips likewise ran a series of war stories. Its principal contribution to the war effort, however, was the enlistment of Willy and Tim in the army. On December 23rd, in a strip called 'THE NOBLE ARMY OF WEARY UNWASHED WANDERERS SPIFFLIGATE THE BOER ARMY' [37] (Figure 11.5), they create their own army of tramps to take on and defeat the Boers (with the prior promise of free drinks and cigarettes for the volunteers, of course). This was not the first time that popular comic characters like this were sent to war. Sloper covered the Franco-Prussian war as Judy's correspondent in 1871. Nor was it the last. Willie and Tim saw the First World War from the trenches in 1914 and comics like the Beano declared war on Hitler and Mussolini in 1939. The heroes of generations of boys' weeklies meanwhile dealt with the threats of German spies.

This particular strip is interesting not really as a humorous device, but for the tensions current through it. The ideology of social imperialism as it developed in the '90s was premised on the elimination of the 'residuum' through collective commitment to empire. The presentation of the 'residuum' battling with the imperial enemies therefore constitutes an interesting gloss. In one sense they are yet again the romantic wanderers going where ordinarily the readers cannot go, spouting the same mixture of archaic constructions and ironic Cockney:



"Now then, skinny Willy", quoth Tim, as he inspected the corps, "why can't you chuck a chest, and look proud?" "Carn't, old pal!" giggled Willy; "me muvver's sent it to the wash, and it ain't come back!"'

At the same time, however, they really are the residuum, translated into a collection of props borrowed from their betters, branded with an epithet that conceals the reality of the paranoia surrounding their collective threat: 'weary unwashed'. The absurd scenario of their battle with the Boers, culminating in their rubbing shoulders with military brass intertwines fears regarding the true security of the Empire, and of domestic society. The denigration of the Boers is a fairly straightforward manifestation of what new Liberal J.A. Hobson recognised as an essentially humourless psychology of jingoism [38]. Its heightened pitch was paradoxically an index to a deeply-rooted insecurity beneath. Dispatching the tramps to the Transvaal - 'the merry Out-of-work Brigade' - is not merely adding insult to injury in denigrating the Boers. (This description, indeed, shows the degree of confusion still current at the distinction between casual labourer and tramp, conditioned unemployment and 'innate' reluctance to work.) It illustrates an undercurrent scepticism at the potential success of the social-imperialist thesis on the elimination of unemployment through the empire. Willie and Tim are Quixote and Sancho. The other 'weary unwashed' are Classes A and B, indistinguishable from one another. The tramps in the Transvaal 'spifflicating' the enemy are not a call to arms for the reader, but beyond the perpetual grins that were Browne's hallmarks - Willy's broad, toothy smile

of manic enjoyment, Tim's wide, pursed lips sandwiched in a half-drunken expression between nose and double chin - there are seeds of discontent, for the real volunteers in the Boer War were, as Price argues (see note [30]), to a large extent from the lower middle class of clerks and shopkeepers seeking domestic security through the empire. And the superficially comical notion of an 'army' of the 'merry out-of-work' is actually an indication of the degree of fearful scepticism at the promises of social imperialism.

Willy's and Tim's adventures in the Transvaal continued into 1900, peaking on April 21st when they finally capture Pretoria itself [39] (Figure 11.6), with Tim in disguise as President Kruger. This episode is longer than the others, with larger paragraphs to accommodate the Boer efforts at pidgin English. The visual depiction of the Boers is interesting in that by this stage they are virtually divested of any military props. It is as though they themselves have donned the garb of the tramps. Even Kruger's greatcoat has tattered edges and patches, his whiskers are as unkempt as Willy's, and the inverted buckets worn by the troops as hats (frame 9) are very similar to the uniform headgear of the classic representation of Irish farmers in Punch and other political humorous journals. Collectively they are referred to as 'the dusty crew' and 'my dusty brother bungling burghers' by the disguised Tim. What has happened between the earlier adventures and this one?

This episode appeared after the relief of the sieges of Ladysmith and Mafeking, both of which were met with spontaneous

outbursts of jingoistic fervour in London. While these reactions were assertions of British military superiority, the basic lesson of these sieges was the vulnerability of disciplined military force at the hands of untrained farmers, thrust by circumstances into the role of soldiers. The pitting of tramp against 'dusty' Boer was a combination of common enemies locked in a battle in costumes and language which sublimated the very overt threats that they posed to the empire, internally and externally. Neither the language of the tramps nor the Boers corresponds to a standard Germanic pidgin English nor an exaggerated Cockney as cultivated by Kipling:

'"You vos squeeze mine pertoka 'orribly! Yah ooh!"  
 "Good aftertea, uncle", smole Willy; "just wait a shake  
 until we've finished our gargle, and then we'll attend  
 to you."' [frame 5]

The use of the verb 'smile' and a past tense, 'smole', as synonyms for 'speak' and 'spoke' is quite frequent in these strips. The intended effect was a vision of manic punsters with fixed grins in combat with 'dusty Boers'. On the one hand there is a resolution of sorts of the questions regarding the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor generated by Booth's 'scientific' social analysis and the organic view of the new Liberals. In the multiple identity, the tramps focus prejudices against both Classes A and B under a defusing comical mask. On the other hand, there is a resolution of the fact that the superior organisation of farmers in guerilla groups was holding the imperial forces at bay through the confusion of their identity by half-animal representations as tramps as well.

The adventures of Weary Willy and Tired Tim in the Boer War constituted a climax to a long process running through the comics as a third phase in the evolution of the Victorian humorous journal. It was the process of negotiating the class location of the lower middle class with respect to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie above and to those classes below. It was entirely appropriate that the adventures of the major characters in the comics should reach the war front on which the fears and hopes of their readership were starkly apparent. The evidence of these adventures supports the thesis that the comics contributed to a specifically lower middle class 'common sense' understanding of social relations and its own relations to bourgeois hegemony in the 1890s.

In order to support this thesis further, in Chapter Twelve we will look at the fate of the tramps and of some of the rival strip characters in the 1900s.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN - NOTES

1. See Denis Gifford (1984), The International Book of Comics p.20. The series began in CC 440, p.8, 1898.
2. Big Budget, No. 1, p.1, June 20, 1897 etc.
3. Laurel and Hardy actually found themselves in comic strip form in Amalgamated Press' (Harmsworth's company) comic Film Fun in the late 1920s and 30s.
4. IC 298, p.1, 1896.
5. IC 341, p.5, 1897.
6. IC 394, p.8, 1898.
7. IC 298, p.1, 1896.
8. IC 302, p.4, 1896.
9. IC 317, p.1, 1896.
10. IC 307, p.1 1896; and IC 344, p.1, 1897, respectively.
11. IC 351, p.1, 1897.
12. IC 396, p.1, 1898.
13. IC 471, p.1, 1899.
14. The character first appeared in Spring-Heeled Jack, the Terror of London (publisher unknown) and resurfaced in the Aldine Publishing Company's Spring-Heeled Jack Library as late as 1904. However, as E. S. Turner (1948) Boys Will Be Boys, p.70, points out, 'the young generation was growing up that little but more sophisticated'. By this time, he would have seemed, as here, a comical gothic anachronism.
15. Gareth Stedman Jones (1971), Outcast London, p.89. His sources for this estimate are S. and B. Webb (1929), English Poor Law History, part II, vol. 1, p.403 and E. Hobsbawn's chapter on 'The Tramping Artisan' in Labouring Men, (1964), pp.34-64.
16. Ibid.
17. George Orwell (1988), Down and Out in Paris and London, p.178.
18. Ibid., p.182
19. Ibid., p.115
20. Ibid., pp.142-149.
21. Orwell (1987), The Road to Wigan Pier, p.134.
22. 'The Adventures of the Wandering Knight Don Quixote de Tintogs and Sancho His Pal - No. 3', CC 442, p.8, 1898.
23. Martha Vicinus's phrase, from Chapter 6 of her (1974) book The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working Class Literature.
24. Peter Bailey (1978), Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885, Chapter 7, 'Rational Recreation and the Entertainment Industry: the Case of the Victorian Music Halls'; and 'Custom, Capital and Culture in the Victorian Music Hall', in Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England (ed.) Robert Storch (1982); Vicinus (1974), op. cit., Chapter 6.
25. Bailey (1982), op. cit., p.198
26. Vicinus (1974), op. cit., p.273
27. Cited in *ibid.*, p.276.
28. Cited in *ibid.*, p.270.

29. Bailey (1982), op. cit., p.201.
30. Although it is now impossible to fully quantify this statement, Richard N. Price notes the disproportionate number of clerks in the volunteer regiments, the spontaneous patriotic demonstrations in the Stock Exchange after the relief of Ladysmith and Mafeking (the key points in the war) etc. - 'Society, Status and Jingoism: the Social Roots of Lower Middle Class Patriotism, 1870-1900', in Geoffrey Crossick (ed., 1977), The Lower Middle Class in Britain, p.91.
31. Daily Mail, 6 October, 1900, p. 4. Cited in *ibid.*, p.97.
32. James Sturgis, 'Britain and the New Imperialism', in C.C. Eldridge (ed. 1984), British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, p.97.
33. G.L. Anderson, 'The Social Economy of Late-Victorian Clerks', in Crossick (ed. 1977), op. cit., pp. 127-9.
34. FW 35, p.1, 1899.
35. FW 20, p.4, 1899.
36. FW 33, p.1, 1899.
37. IC 486, p.1, 1899.
38. J.A. Hobson (1901), The Psychology of Jingoism.
39. IC 503, pp.1 and 8, 1900.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

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TOWARDS THE MODERN COMIC STRIP: NEGLECTED JIM AND  
THE HAPPY HOOLIGAN

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Although Willy's and Tim's wartime adventures ended in 1900, the Boer War itself continued into 1901. It is generally accepted by historians that the principal effect of the Boer War on political theory was the gradual supercession of the social-imperialist thesis by a version of the Liberal-imperialism espoused by the Fabians. That is, the prolongation of the war drew attention to the comparative poor health of the recruits as a causal factor, and the notion that the empire would provide a platform for improving domestic social conditions began to be reversed, so that the Fabian concept of 'national efficiency' at home came increasingly to be seen as the means to imperial strength abroad. Fabian Sidney Webb put the case thus: 'How ... can we get an efficient army - out of the stunted, anaemic, demoralized denizens of the slum tenements of our great cities?' [1]. This change of direction which at last catalysed moves towards welfare reform after a decade of debate, was not exactly a reversal of thought. It was a deliberate political strategy designed to shore up the widening cracks in the existing policy. It was the latest step in overt political moves to tackle the 'crisis of liberalism'.

The shape that the Liberal government welfare reforms were

to take from 1906 onwards did not conform to a preconceived pattern [2]. The need for reform was by now agreed upon by every complexion of collectivism, and in addition to 'national efficiency' ideas spurred by the Boer War experiences, there was a good deal of socialist pressure, particularly on the question of unemployment. The first reforms were in the spheres of welfare for children and the elderly, and were hesitatingly enacted. The second and most urgent issue was unemployment, since those relief work schemes which had been enacted by local authorities from Booth's inspiration, and the subsequent coordinating mechanism, the Unemployed Workmen Act, had been unqualified failures [3].

While it was claimed at the time of the first reforms that 'unemployment' was a new phenomenon - Churchill called it 'the untrodden field of politics' in 1908 [4] - it was actually the case that Booth had made accurate appraisals of the problem in social structural terms from the 1880s and these were more refined versions of Mayhew's observations in the '50s. The report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 was the first government report to affirm those findings. The Committee shared Booth's identification of overcrowding as a causal factor in poverty, and of particular concern was the exposure of groups in well-paid or low-paid regular employment to the 'residuum' at the centre of the Empire by ties to place of employment, or inability to pay higher rent [5]. Its advocacy of labour colonies showed Booth's influence, and even more the influence of the Fabians. The basic rationale of the reforms seems to owe little to these influences,



since their principal architect, Beveridge was concerned in the new measures - labour exchanges and minimum wage legislation - to prevent unemployment rather than to provide relief per se. Yet, there is actually more continuity than discontinuity. His recognition of 'the disorganisation of the labour market' [6] as the principal causal factor in unemployment was a further rationalisation of the social conditioning thesis undercurrent to Booth, the Fabians and the social-imperialists. His distinction between 'the efficient and the unemployable', and the proposal for the latter of 'a complete and permanent loss of all citizen rights including not only the franchise, but civil freedom and fatherhood' [7] is contiguous with the same current in these ideologies, though significantly, the distinction is termed in the 'new liberal' language of citizenship, individual liberty through collective commitment. 'New Liberalism' has replaced the social-imperialists and the Fabians as the dominant political ideology, but there is a continuous, developmental narrative leading towards increasing rationalisation of a form of 'social scientific' analysis in political understanding.

How can the comics, or any form of popular reading, be contextualised against this development? These social and political manoeuvres are not in any way directly reflected in those products. We have seen that the tensions in the matters of employment security, demographic rearrangement in the late nineteenth century, specifically in London, the stagnating effects of the 'Great Depression' and the growing importance of the Empire to economic survival against international competition

were refracted and negotiated in an uneven way through the comics. There were contradictory aspects to the miscellaneous form of the early comics, just as there were contradictions in the emergent collectivist ideologies which were manifested on the one hand by the promise of a democratised, liberalised common social plane, and on the other, by the attempt to precisely define and geographically confine the threat to that plane: 'the residuum'. The comics combined a vision of uninterrupted leisure pursuits in the cartoons (Chapter Eight) with an attempt at the scientific understanding of criminality in the fictionalised serials (Chapter Nine), with a paternal editor as guide. But each element was riddled with doubts, conveyed in the double-edged jokes, distinctly unscientific and not always successful detectives. In this shape the comics were continuous with developments in humourous periodicals throughout the century.

The development of the strip form as the focal point of the comic can be seen to gradually collapse the editorial and other textual functions in a standardised, formulaic structure. The evolution of the strip had little to do with increasing economy of form, the introduction of new pictorial devices etc. That form which did become the standard was more awkward in every aspect than other contemporary efforts (Chubblock Homes etc.) which were not adopted, and this is because it can only be seen to grow from the comic in its entirety, and not from a continuous 'comic strip history'. As it developed, this standard form maintained the contradictory aspects evident in the comics in the early '90s in the shape of the adventures of the quixotic tramps. The contradictions were still there, as is clearly evident in the

adventures of the tramps during the Boer War.

In the wake of the War, however, as a 'scientific' understanding of the social conditioning of poverty began to attain an institutional status, we can perceive a clear movement away from direct engagement with the issue of innate or conditioned poverty in the adventures of the tramps. Their adventures become increasingly fantastic. In 1903 they encounter a sea serpent [8], in 1904 they visit the 'Man in the Moon' [9], by 1906 they land on Mars [10] and in 1907 they reach the North Pole [11]. Never again, in the trajectory of the Willy and Tim strips as far as 1953, was there such a sustained interweaving of their fictional strip narratives with real events in a way which encompassed a complex of class and historically specific fears and tensions. The reason was that the tramps in the Boer War stood at the climactic moment of a history of discourses in humorous journals, social investigation and political thought about the rights to inclusion in and the needs to exclude certain fractions from full, democratic social participation. Their appeal was specifically to the needs of the 'lower middle class' in the late 1890s.

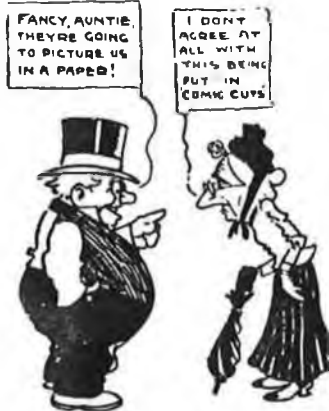
It was not that the movement towards reform in the early 1900s had some kind of hugely mollifying effect on the fears of this class about personal and collective security. It was that the grounds for political debate had changed. The Boer War exposed the problems at the heart of the Empire more starkly than ever before. The debate was no longer between a theory of innate propensity to idleness and one of conditioned poverty and

unemployment. It became a debate about what shape the reforms, which in principal were agreed upon, were going to take. Therefore, at a time when there was an increasing 'popular' acceptance of the need for reform in this particular direction, as evidenced by the election of the Liberal government in 1906, the resonance of the tramp ideology, generally and for the specific readership of the comics, lacked the force it held in the years of the Boer War. It is little wonder that the tramps became increasingly fantastic figures on a fantastic landscape. Their pertinence to the experiences, and to the 'common sense' understanding of the experiences of the readers was significantly reduced. If this seems a tentative argument, we can support it by recourse to another example of the fate of a popular comic strip series at this time, 'The Mackabeentosh Family', and of one character in particular, 'Neglected Jim'.

'We have much pleasure in introducing the Mackabeentosh Family and offshoots'

'THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY' were introduced in the editorial column of Comic Cuts on December 27th 1902 as the new front-page comic strip to commence the following week [12]. This would be an ambitious new strip involving seven regular characters. The editor (no longer 'Mr. Comic Cuts') describes the family discussion in his office, while on pages 4 and 5, the characters are pictorially represented, with characteristic utterances in speech balloons and a collective character sketch in the large paragraph below. The Mackabeentosh Family were nothing like Willy and Tim. The familial scenario was a mechanism for pitting

**THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY.**



**MR. MACKABEENTOSH ("SUNNY PA") AND AUNTIE.**

**EDITORIAL CHAT.**

I think you will get a big surprise this week—if you have not already got one—when you come across the members and offshoots of

**THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY**

in the columns of Comic Cuts. But, however big that surprise may be, I can assure you it's nothing to the shock your poor old Editor got when he reached his office rather late last Thursday morning to find it already occupied by this truly extraordinary family, whose portraits adorn our pages to day.

They were holding a lively conversation—at least most of them were—and they took not the slightest notice of your astonished old Editor. "It's a wonderful idea," said Mr. Mackabeentosh. "I only wonder we never thought of it before. We shall go into Comic Cuts every week—even on the front page."

"As to that," said Auntie, "I don't agree with the notion at all. I don't agree with any of you, if it comes to that. As for the rest of Editor."

"I love that word 'rest,'" interrupted a drawing voice; and, on turning round to see who it came from, I observed a lengthy, restful-looking individual, smoking a pipe and smiling an unutterably peaceful smile. He had piled three cushions on the floor, on which to rest his head and back, and his legs were resting respectably on my suggest and most comfortable armchair. He was attended to as "Henry the Hostler" by his relatives.

"Talking of rest," he continued lazily, with his eyes shut, "I think there's nothing so restful as seeing other people work. That's why I love an office. The sight of so many busy people makes me feel more restful than ever. Pass me another cushion, please. Thank you."

"That's always the way," grumbled a shivering figure in the corner of the room. "No one ever thinks of handing me a cushion. No one wants me. Everybody neglects me. No wonder they call me Neglected Jim!"

The shivering gentleman—who had both hands in his pockets, and his coat-collar turned up—went on growling; and he certainly seemed to have spoken the truth, for nobody paid the slightest attention to what he said.

In fact, the only answer his remarks brought was an inane chuckle from a young man who was sitting on the very edge of a chair sucking an enormous cone, and screwing up his face into unearthly contortions in the effort to keep his eyes open in position.

"Haw-haw!" he murmured. "I say, bal"

**THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY.**



**A. CHUMP PRACTISING PROPOSING TO BLOSSOM.**

Jays, y'know, I'm Algy Chump. She's weally awfully pretty. Eh, what? Don't you think so?"

He gave a nervous giggle, and directed his glance to Miss Blossom de Montanancy Mackabeentosh, the pride and delight of her father, Mr. Mackabeentosh—"Sunny Pa," as I soon found out was his familiar pet-name.

I don't know that I could honestly agree with Algy's opinion of her beauty, but then everyone has his own ideas of what is meant by true beauty. The fair damsel herself, however, seemed quite conscious of her own loveliness.

"Well, and can't a girl have a few good looks?" she cried, "without a foolish fellow always telling her of them? For goodness' sake do be quiet, and let's have a little peace!"

"Ah, those are my sentiments exactly," said the drawing voice of Henry the Hostler. He was still lying blissfully at ease with his eyes shut. "I never could stand the strenuous life. There's too much activity in the world to-day to suit me. I hate activity. A chap once tried to teach me to ride a bicycle, but it made me tired to look at it. I prefer sitting in an armchair. It's more soothing."

"There you are," murmured the voice of Neglected Jim from the corner. "No one ever offered to teach me to ride a bicycle. I always was the one to be neglected, somehow. Gosh, ain't it cold, too?"

"It's a fine, frosty morning," said Sunny Pa. "This weather is really most invigorating. Makes one feel glad to be alive now, doesn't it?"

"That may be, sir," answered another voice, which came from a tall, lanky man dressed as a gardener. His name was Rabbits, and, as a matter of fact, he was a gardener—"but it's a mighty poor look-out for the ducks, not to mention the potatoes."

"I don't agree with either of you," interrupted

**THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY.**

**I'LL BET NOBODY'S BEEN NEGLECTED A BIGGER NUMBER OF TIMES THAN NOT I HAVE "**



**NEGLECTED JIM—THE POOR RELATIVE.**

Auntie, in her high-pitched voice. "This horrid frost is the worst thing in the world for chilblains, but a thaw wouldn't do any good to the crops. I wish it would rain all the same."

"Ah, mum," said Rabbits, "but think of the cabbages. It's been the worst year as ever was for cabbages—and cauliflowers, too, for that matter."

"I don't mind what the weather's like," murmured Henry the Hostler sleepily. "I could like like this in all weathers. I'm going to sleep now. I'm tired."

"Haw-haw!" giggled Algy Chump. "I'm feeling quite light-headed—I mean light-hearted, doncheknow, is'nt it. It must be awfully joeey to be an editor. Ha, what?"

And that, dear readers, is how I made the acquaintance of the Mackabeentosh family and offshoots, and now you know them as well as I do myself. As to the personal appearance of the various members of the family, you will find them all together on the middle page of the paper this week. Besides a few portraits scattered about here and there.

They seem pretty confident of a warm welcome; such, as I thought you might like to know the quaint individuals, I have let them remain till further notice.

Figure 12.1

'Editorial' Chat'

(from CC 659, p.6, 1902)



Figure 12.2

'The Mackabeentosh family compete in a great walking contest'

(from CC 686, p.1, 1903)



Figure 12.3

'Jim tries to stop a motor-car and gets a very nasty jar!'

(from CC 714, p.1, 1904)

THE PRIVATE DIARY OF THE MACKABEENTOSH FAMILY.—NEGLECTED JIM'S GREAT IDEA!



Figure J2.4

'The private diary of the Mackabeentosh family. -  
Neglected Jim's great idea'

(from CC 702, p.1, 1903)





Readers of the B.B. living at home, who have friends in the Colonies or abroad and who wish to do them a particularly good turn, should send them a copy of the Colonial B.B. The postage on the B.B. in a newspaper wrapper is One Halfpenny to all parts of the world.

**THE ADVENTURES IN AUSTRALIA OF HAPPY IKEY HOOGAN AND HIS BROTHER GLOOMY GUS.**

(Copyright in the U.S.A. by W. R. Hammet.)

**WHAT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHO Happy Ikey Hoogan is? Then I'll tell you.** He is absolutely the most good-natured being in existence. Always trying to do good, he is generally unfortunate and has a perpetual enemy in P.C. Fairyfoot, who follows him everywhere. Gloomy Gus is Ike's brother, and takes a dismal view of life, but he usually manages to get the dues of his more genial brother. Flip is the spotted tyke. These four are the principal characters in this very funny series, for which Mr. F. Oppen is responsible.



The two brothers had an uncle in Australia who had made a mint of money in the goldfields, so when the pair took the half-day excursion to the great commonwealth—



Of course Happy would look him up to see how he was getting on. The gentleman in question is a very short time indeed in the very deplorable condition of our friend's clothes—



So immediately took him into a hat shop and gave him a small dog 'not too common'. Uncle Jake and doggie Flip came with participation, as they speak appropriate—



Things were going very nicely, and the prospects of Hoogan looked very rosy until the coming of a bigger woman who didn't notice that her child was falling—



True to his traditions, Happy bounded like a young kangaroo to render service to the enthusiastic Uncle Jake about an encouraging remark—



It is a very great pity, but little things do cause great mishaps sometimes; and this mis-trouble-in, rather dog-astrophe—was brought about by Flip the tyke.



Here's a pretty picture for you! There's the falling and gnashing of teeth. Happy, the kid, the wiggle, and Uncle Jake are responsible for the falling, and Flip for the gnashing of teeth.



Thinking the commotion and gnashing the cause of it, P.C. Fairyfoot rushes to ascertain his duty and nearly succeeds in executing Happy. Uncle Jake gets in a hard knock, too.



The dismal prospect to the dog-up is soon seen in the dog's face. The dog's attention is attracted with the dog's doggie getting gathering and galore.

Figure 12.6

'The Adventures in Australia of Happy Ikey Hoogan and his brother Gloomy Gus'

(from Big Budget 322, pp.164-165, 1903)



'It's master miller, come this way'  
Cried this for me without delay'



'No-ink-erators' 're-aword'  
Round goes the mill with measured crack,



And all the pieces quickly were  
Devoiced by the poultry there



And Max and Moritz both feel ill,  
For Mecki is going to the mill,



The miller says 'come give it here'  
And down the funnel drops the pair



And here you can the wishes see,  
Circled down as fate, as fate can be



See! peasant Mecki is coming round  
To lift his maltrucks from the ground,



The rustic cries in wondering plight  
'Why! bless my soul, the bag grows light'



Quick, pops them into his great bag,  
Just like two handfuls of old rags



Moritz! what's fasted you and Max,  
To eat nuts in the miller's sack?



Scared has he got one on his back,  
When out the corn came from the sack



Ah! now he spies with gladdened face,  
That Max and Moritz' hiding place

Figure 12.7

Wilhelm Busch's Hans and Fritz (date not given)  
- reproduced in George Perry and Alan Aldridge (1971)

The Penguin Book of Comics, pp.98 - 99



Figure 12.8

'Tommy Tootle and Billy Bootle at it again'  
 (from CC 315, p.5, 1896)



No. 82 NEW SERIES.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

JUNE 6, 1903.

**HAPPY IKE INTRODUCES HIS NEPHEWS TO THE BUNSEY BOYS.**



1. Dear reader.—We have been done in, me and George, and we done ourselves so brown that we quite forgot ourselves. Now to begin. Here you see the old two jobs of like jargonization being presented to our public. "Look at 'em eat 'em up, so you'll be able to identify 'em when we're quite done with 'em." "These are my little nasty nephews!" said Ike, "and I am sure Ferdie and George, you will give 'em a nice warm reception, and please they will give you a kick out of one of their buns when they've eaten 'em."



2. "Give 'em a nice warm reception!" said we. "What? Not art, if we talk to 'em! And here, please, give the improvements in my spelling. Those two jobs were grating brown-made cakes of the pavina stone persuasion, and me and George could not abide to see 'em doing so!" "Think of their poor little digesters!" said we, as we were to sacrifice ourselves, and eat those cakes, and so save Ike's two nephews from wasty graves. We had to be real to be kind to carry out our kind and good plan; and, in fact, I caught one of those jobs such a bash on the jaw that I took on he'd eat with his ears for some time to come.



3. The head of matter vanished from view on this, so he might have interferred with our good intentions, as he is back that way sometimes. The two jobs—when we had done with 'em—and somehow they didn't take kindly to our treatment—ranched into right side the wall, and we got round them like a treat, and I am aware you they was both grateful and comforting. "You see how good we are than reward!" said George. "Two buns in our hands are worth ten in the nephews," said me, screaming with laughter. "Then we heard footsteps, too."



4. "What do you think! You'll never guess! Of low talks, it fairly took the cake—in fact, it took both our cakes! When those jobs had some off blowing and piping their noses in the, he had just shows them the way how to up with their docks and up on the run, two, three. So they came back prepared for the fray, though afraid of them it shall never be said we wasn't. Yet here you see the comrades during the floor and otherwise doing it right in on or, and so only wanting to be friends, too."



5. And then when we was lying on the garden, would and managing our potatoes and such like each other who was the most dead of the two, and when the two comrades who had done us in was saying: "Anything that we're done that you're sorry for, we're glad of it," down comes Ma with the yard-broom, and she slapped it them and there. "We was tired and too all in such a bit. I thought one of my own legs belonged to one of the jobs, and I give it such a pinch I shall feel it to my dying day and after. The comrades!"



6. Then Ma laid in to us, as she hadn't already suffered enough! "Fight with dirty little tramps, would you!" she screamed. And in vain we tried to say how we wasn't doing any fighting—they was doing it all. Believe me or believe me not, I never got one of my terrible rights in the hole time! In the picture you see us dem with rage and spite, not petty spite, but—oh, how we would have willingly died twice to have give those jobs a kick in the back end.—Yours, till rotted well, Frazee.

Figure 12.9

'Happy Ike introduces his nephews to the Bunsey Boys'

(from The Jester and Wonder 82, p.1, 1903)





# Comic Cuts

1 1/2

No. 127, Vol. XXX, November

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY

June 25, 1904

## LUCKY LUCAS SAVES NEGLECTED JIM FROM BEING MONKEYISED.



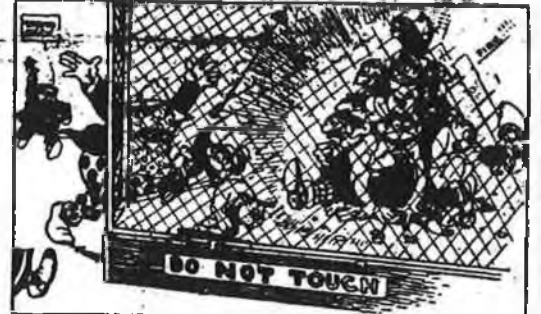
1. What do we see here? Why, we see Neglected Jim and Lucky Lucas in the Zoo. You see them trying to keep us out of this section with their "No Admittance" dodges! I noticed Jim, as they came across an open door with a notice up. "Yes," said Lucky. "They little know that nothing stops us except a chance of a snap of bottled tea with a hand on it, p'haps." "I like their game. Stay out," said Jim. Thoughtfully stopped in.



2. And, goodness gracious to say you, they walked right into the monkey-house! And the monkey were delighted to see them. "Why, it's Uncle Flipper from the country brought us nuts and oranges," said they in monkey tongue. "Have, g'wan grab hold of this bag, Jim, and I'll fetch help!" gasped Lucky Lucas. "I'm old and ugly, and it doesn't matter if I've chewed up; but you must be saved."



3. And as soon as they took the nuts and things that the monkey gave him a turn. Lucky Lucas also had an extra faw from them, on the back of the head like those! But we won't mention that. "Pop-pops-plains, do, er, er, er!" says Jim, as one grabbed him by the ear with its hind hand. "When I get out of here I'll shoot every monkey in Flan Flano!" said Lucky. "How dare they be so familiar!"



4. Now I'm out," said Lucky, "and I do anything to help! Or-out there! Where is Jim? He's gone!" But he hadn't. He was there—underneath. It occurred then when a monkey provides a monkey-house that grand old woman the pyramid form, as they, on the cheek. The doozy before she'd No. 1, green-d-d-er. "Can I put you a cup of coffee or a banana?" said Lucky. But Jim was too busy to answer.



5. Then the authorities arrived with the hose-pipe and a new box of choice language and splashed the pyramid of meats into a hyperrotating-spheroidal, which is English means simply that they got something to go on with. "Keep it there a bit, mate," said Lucky, "as 'tween if it turns 'is brain he may pay up that lub he owes me!" Splish, splash, went the water.



6. Finally they dragged Jim out with a garden-rake, and gave him a drop of something short out of a milk-can. "My man," said the old lady to Lucky, "I believe you saved him. Here is half-a-crown to found a Home for Diseased Monkeys." "I will," said Lucky. "Get your brother in if you can," said the old lady. "Oh, dear, oh, dear!" Lucky doesn't know whether to laugh or weep it alone. Jim means to turn the table next week. 2000

Figure 12.11

'Lucky Lucas saves Neglected Jim from being monkeyised'

(from CC 737, p.1, 1904)

LUCKY LUCAS AND HAPPY HARRY ARE PAINTED AND PAINED THIS WEEK



1. "There you are!" said Happy Harry, pointing to the notice announcing the escape of "Woolly Sam." "Ooah! If we could only find him!" ejaculated Lucky Lucas. "I'm willing to give a guinea!" "Why, what would you do with it?" said Happy. "Well, I'd sit a bar and a bit of matches, and—ah—did I say beer? Well, that'd be worth it. He said he'd have a pint and a quart mixed in case he ran short." "For shame," said Happy. "So much beer! For shame! Fancy forgetting whisky!"



2. And then the weird gentleman from down the road appeared. "If you fellows will promise me a blanket for reward, I can put you on to 'Woolly Sam.' I've just seen where he's hiding." "Go on, mate, the luvvy's yours!" gasped Lucky. "But I can't stop now," said the stranger. "I'm going to paint the piano at Buckingham Palace." "Oh, do go on," said Happy. "And we'll give you sixpence!" "Well," said the painter, "it's no good going unless you are disguised like Indians."



3. And he offered to disguise them. "You see, you must humour him. Paint and music are his two great weaknesses," said the academician. "Wouldn't lend paint and an extra shane do it as well, mate?" said Happy, with the six of diamonds on his top lip. "If I can take a bit of this off my mouth I don't mind slinging in 'Sammy' and 'The Lone Chord' as makeweight."



4. But they did eventually get fixed up at last, and the stranger carefully pointed out where "Woolly Sam" was hiding. "Sing an' gentlemen, or he won't come quietly!" shouted the stranger. And they sang. "I had a bit of my best notes over since I was run over by a dray," said Happy, "but I mind the time when I sang in the village choir and made their hearts rejoice."



5. "Whoa! Whoa!" "Sing up!" yelled the stranger. "You must have stopped singing!" But they hadn't. No. They just changed the tune, that's all. "Gross rabbits!" gasped Happy. "I'm fatally killed in fifteen places!" "What a late!" said Lucky. "I'll have to sit standing now for ever! All me legs are broken, and me thimblebones bent!" "Wooley!" yelled the warder. "It is 'Wooley Sam'!"



6. Yes, it was "Wooley Sam" himself who had fooled them. "You know, mate, I dread (shout it) said the first Indian. "Why can't we finish up nice for a change?" "Try to do good cattle were they?" said the cow. "I think they long for that, but I forgotten all the law I never knew. Stella's cattle and Mandy. That's the charge." And so a second Book came to a close.

Figure 12.12

'Lucky Lucas and Happy Harry are painted and pained this week'

(from CC 766, p.8, 1905)



the wits of very distinct social types against each other in formulaic situations, the most characteristic being a race. Some of these types appear in the earlier years of Comic Cuts. Algy Chump is the upper class twit with an absurdly high collar and large shirt cuffs, huge beak, pointed chin and checked trousers, spouting a stream of nonsense syllables. The editor's introduction (Figure 12.1) [13] shows him practising proposal to a picture of Miss Blossom de Montmorency Mackabeentosh, a plain girl with an equally misguided sense of fashion and of her own beauty. There is an aged 'Auntie', chinless and hunched, belligerently declaring: 'I don't altogether agree with anything or anybody'. Henry the Hustler is the tall idler, happy to survive on the follies of others while blowing smoke rings and extolling the virtues of sleep. These are figures we have seen in some shape before. In addition, there is Rabbits the Gardener, who complains perpetually about the effects of the weather on his vegetables; Sunny Pa, Blossom's fat, ageing father who espouses an absurdly optimistic outlook on everything, and is open to manipulation by the craftier members of the 'family'. And finally, there is 'Neglected Jim', a wholly original invention. Hunched into a permanent S-shape with hands in pockets, a tattered black coat hanging over them, bell-bottomed trousers with patches, banana-shaped shoes, an outsize derby, red nose (from drink or from the cold?) and a thick, droopy moustache, Jim is the dejected 'poor relative' of this social family, cursed to complain forever of the cold, and of being 'neglected'.

This strip constitutes more than the sum of various types interacting on a neutral social plane, though this is the impression given by some of the earlier strips. Figure 12.2 is a typical example [14]. The race scenario allows one frame for each character to work to type. Auntie's stinginess sends her to the nearest sale. Algy is drawn by the highest collar ever. Jim opts for a free meal, Uncle Tonk, a new addition, for a rare butterfly. Henry, meanwhile, cheats in his role as judge to collect the prize himself. This is a very tightly structured piece, showing an early, effective use of speech balloons, with variation in lettering size and boldness to indicate pitch and intensity. The pictorial sequence stands on its own as a self-explanatory 'set'. And the captions have a merely descriptive rather than expansive function. The characters, which are extremely well drawn - the costumes are invariable and the facial features very expressive - establish an immediate identity without the crutch of punning extras. Unlike Willy and Tim, this strip has not emerged as an awkward child of the miscellaneous form of the comic. This is clear from the unambiguous nature of the characters, and from the direction that it was to take.

Of the seven characters, only one was to appear every week. That was Neglected Jim. Increasingly this innocent buffoon was the victim of one of his own schemes, or faced defeat at the hands of another 'family' member. For example, he demonstrates a gramophone with a record of a dog fight, is attacked by the local dogs, and Henry the Hustler is rewarded by passers-by for the 'performance' [15]. One of his many shortlived jobs is as a mad dog catcher, for which he uses a gun, shoots at the first pup he

sees, but consistently misses, while the pup takes a shine to him and tries to lick him in the face. Eventually, he is locked in the mad dog cage himself [16]. He finds another job as a plumber but drills into Sunny Pa's gas pipe and blows up the house [17]. On this evidence, Jim would seem to bear some similarity to Willy and Tim. But he is quite distinct. The word 'neglected', to begin with, is some distance from 'weary' and 'tired'. Its connotations are of abandoned orphans, of a pathetic rather than a sympathetic character on the one hand, or a despicable one on the other. It tends to suggest an outdated philanthropic view of poverty or unemployment, a sort of 'bleeding heart' approach cultivated by the 'victim' himself. And Jim's appearance is not as a 'tramp'. His clothes are of a tradesman and his position of unemployment or his inability to hold what work he obtains are due to his own ineptitude as a worker, as opposed to the tramps' misfired scheming. Jim is undoubtedly a casual labourer, not only incapable of holding down a job, but his gloomy outlook on life seems to generate bad luck for himself. In Figure 12.3 [18] he is again the innocent victim of his good intentions. At this stage, the rest of the family have disappeared apart from some rare appearances. Jim tries to stop a runaway motor-car, but in his attempt, he bowls over a professorial gent and a policeman, flattens a dog and is arrested. This is Jim at his most typical - the innocent victim of circumstance. Yet his general lack of gumption and miserable demeanour make him a deserving one.

In formal terms also, this is far removed from Browne's work. The artist, one of the Wilkinsons, uses speed lines, cloud lines

to indicate dust, and highlight marks for certain figures. The speech balloons give an added dimension of irony. The tiny background figure throughout misreads the situation with a string of one-word exclamations - 'FIRE', 'THIEVES'. The professor, unaware of what has happened, sees it as a realisation of his scientific text - 'That must have been a fine piece of radium' (a weak and vague reference to the newly discovered element). There is a running gag in the small dog who gets flattened, to exclaim 'HM! Nice thing this'. And the young lady, who escapes unscathed, ironically declares 'Lucky no one was hurt', while a bedraggled Jim is given '100 years for driving at 80 miles an hour!!' The rhyming couplet captions are entirely superfluous to an economically constructed piece.

The difference in form between the tramps and 'Neglected Jim' is bound up with the ideological significance of the characters. There is a sense that Jim is actually a real, recognisable figure, while the tramps have by this time become mythical beasts, with no referents in reality. Jim is a casual labourer, dividing his time between seeking genuine employment and money-making ruses which lack the scheming of Willy's and Tim's efforts to undermine the system, and therefore the ability to induce a reluctant admiration. Figure 12.4 [19], for example, has Jim lure the local cats to their doom, and in the final frame set up as a butcher's stall, with a mysteriously impressive stock of sausages, to be quickly bought up by his patronising relations. This unsubtle hint at the dodgy origins of meat products was also the subject of an episode of The World's Comic's tramps (Bat-Eared Bill and Mooching Mike)

from 1898 (Figure 12.5) [20]. While these characters are conscious of what they are doing, however, Jim maintains the same expression, the same limp S-shape throughout. He keeps a certain virginal innocence to criminality, seemingly half-conscious of what he is doing. There is no recourse to linguistic confusion in Jim's speech. (The captions can essentially be disregarded, since their editorial function is simply not on a par with that of the Willy and Tim episodes. A weak description of what is perfectly apparent in the frames is punctuated by an equally weak semi-Cockney for Jim.)

Neglected Jim is a more straightforward manifestation of the 'casual labour problem' at a time when it was being directly dealt with in politics as something that was generated by social structural conditions, beyond the personal insights of social investigators. Yet while this character is indeed an active engagement with the 'problem', he reflects an ambivalent attitude to it. The connotation of his epithet, 'Neglected', is of an undue philanthropic sympathy for this class. His adventures show him consistently causing his own downfall. Therefore he is victim to his own fecklessness. In this sense he is continuous with nineteenth century representations of poverty. However, unlike those representations he has not been taken from the underworld or from the culture of the street-folk. He is the nearest approximation to a 'sociologically' identified type to emerge in these early comics. The reason why this character appeared at this time, in contrast to Ally Sloper and the tramps, whose social identity is more complicated, is that casual labour

was being accepted as a central issue in a programme of reform. It no longer constituted a threat, alone or in tandem with the 'residuum', to the individual purse, or to the collective organism of society. Unlike the nihilistic rejection of normal behaviour in a hedonistic pursuit of pleasure at the expense of the reader, Neglected Jim offers a threat to no-one but himself. His own worst enemy, his existence reflects a growing 'popular' perception of casual labour at this time. He is not at all a direct reflection of political or nascent 'sociological' language, but he does contribute to a kind of 'common sense' reworking or negotiation of the new political developments.

In examining Neglected Jim as opposed to Willy and Tim, formal considerations cannot be divorced from the thematic. In order, then, to further this exploration, we need to consider the formal influences on this figure.

#### The 'Happy Hooligan'

While it is now impossible to prove this, it seems that the most likely influence on 'Neglected Jim' in his later, solo career was an American newspaper strip character by Fred Opper, an Irish-American down-and-out called 'Happy Hooligan'. The 'Hooligan' had been running in W.R. Hearst's comic strip supplement to his New York American and Journal since 1899. Wearing a tin can for a hat, a green, checked and tattered jacket, baggy, patched trousers and the classic feature of any Irish caricature, an enormous protruding upper lip, giving him a permanently vacant expression, the 'Hooligan' underwent regular sufferings similar to Jim's. It appears likely that in his original form, the

'Hooligan' represented an American equivalent to Jim, an undisguised immigrant Irishman instead of a casual labourer, but equally a victim of his own glum ineptitude [21].

The 'Happy Hooligan' strips were reprinted in Arthur Pearson's rival Big Budget from 1903 [22] under the new title 'Happy Ikey Hoogan'. In the absence of documentary evidence we cannot make direct connections, but the situational and formulaic similarity between the reprinted 'Hooligan' and 'Neglected Jim' strips suggests some influence from the 'Hooligan' on the latter. Figure 12.6 [23], for example, shows Happy trying to save a black child from falling, but he himself trips over his uncle, who is in turn attacked by Happy's dog and joins with the cop in beating Happy. Opper used a lot of ironic speech balloons: the black baby exclaims 'pore little lamb', while in the final frame, Uncle Jake rewards cousin 'Gloomy Gus' as Happy is arrested for attempted kidnapping. All of these elements are to be found in Neglected Jim's adventures, as is Opper's trademark of the escalation of action with parallel sequences running simultaneously. The influence of the 'Hooligan' in this respect marks a departure in the direction of the comic strip for, as has been noted above, the influence of the American comic strip in the British comic was hitherto minimal [24].

In the previous chapter, we saw how the formal awkwardness of the Willy and Tim strips, visually and verbally, was a consequence of their origins in the comics' engagement with the notions of a social organism and the need to exclude certain fractions from it. As an extension of this argument, it can be

maintained that the relative economy in Neglected Jim's adventures was less to do with the adoption of stylistic advances, and more with the simpler depiction of a social type at a time when the complexity of the dialogue with the reader concerning his/her personal and collective security was being mollified and reshaped by the class-specific experience of political acts. That is, if Tom and Jerry could only have originated in the 1820s, Ally Sloper (in his later form) in the 1880s, Willy and Tim in the 1890s, and if the form of these figures was wrapped up with the specific historical conditions within which they were born, likewise, Jim could only have originated, and in that simpler, more economic shape and narrative, in the early 1900s. Therefore, in attempting to plot a progression in comic strip technique from the 1900s, as with earlier figures, we need to see this advancement in terms of the needs of a class-specific readership at this time.

The in-depth discussion of comic strip characters from Neglected Jim onwards is really beyond the scope of this thesis. However, we can illustrate this point about the historical specificity of form and theme by a brief overview of the subsequent adventures of Neglected Jim and Happy Hooligan in the British comic. If Willy and Tim were to move increasingly towards fantastic backdrops, this was likewise the fate of Jim and the Hooligan from around 1904 onwards. This reinforces the argument for the specificity of Jim to the London of the early 1900s and of the Happy Hooligan to turn-of-the-century New York. Let us look firstly at the later history of the 'Happy Hooligan'.



From 'Happy Hooligan' to 'Happy Ikey Hoogan'

The word 'hooligan' seems to have had a peculiarly Irish connotation in its American usage and this emerges clearly enough in the original 'Happy Hooligan'. There is a sense of deliberate irony in the accidental blame heaped on this good-natured buffoon, which adds a certain ambivalent gloss to a reality of brutal police handling of racial groups. In Britain, by contrast, as we have seen, the term 'hooligan' was associated specifically with juvenile crime. Pearson (1983) notes also the stress by commentators at the time on the 'un-British' nature of this juvenile delinquency and its vaguely Irish-sounding form. He observes that 'we must allow that it was most ingenious of late Victorian England to disown the British Hooligan by giving him an 'Irish' name' [25].

'Happy Hooligan''s name was changed to 'Happy Ikey Hoogan' in Big Budget, a change which gives him a roughly half-Jewish, half-Irish identity while keeping the phonetic features of New York Irish for his speech balloons. 'Hoogan' is close enough to 'Hogan' to be vaguely Irish and far enough away from 'Hooligan' to be confused directly with an issue as controversial as the problem of 'the residuum', with which it was connected as a variation on the theme of urban degeneration. There is surely an Irish undercurrent to both the American and British usage of the term 'hooligan', but in Britain the word was connected particularly connected with juvenile crime. Therefore, in keeping with the process evident in the tramps, towards an ambiguous representation of poverty, we would expect this kind of

contortion of the term and its referent.

To return to the point made in Chapter Eight regarding representations of the Irish in the cartoons of the early '90s, there is a certain progression from their depiction as an externally positioned gloss on the obsessive world of manners in the cartoons to their portrayal in these strips as an 'own worst enemy' with no specific racial identity at all. The tendency in these, the very cheapest humourous weeklies is towards the confusion of racial difference and the avoidance of racial denigration as part of their strenuous populist inclusivity. The Irishman is, to begin with, a cynical commentator on an imaginary social plane, a marginalised figure in this role, on a par with women and children. And this role is reinforced by the editor's address. In this sense, physical and political threats are denied. Later, in the strips, the same threats are made ulterior, sublimated in a figure unintentionally doomed to self-destruction by inflicting accidental violence on himself and others.

There was a further progression in this contortion. From late 1901, Harmsworth's The Wonder (formerly Funny Wonder) introduced a variation called 'Happy Ike'. Distinctly Jewish in appearance at first - he keeps the tin can hat, but gains a thick beard and large lower lip - Ike was joined by another imitation of Busch's Max und Moritz, 'The Bunsey Boys' (Georgy and Ferdy) and even a sort of 'Yellow Kid', Algy the kidlet, all of whom speak in a broadly approximated Cockney unenclosed by speech balloons. Originally quite a sly character, but who nevertheless gets his come-uppance at the hands of the kids, Ike develops into

an exact replica of Happy Hooligan, complete with two lookalike nephews ('chips of de old block'), as opposed to the original Happy's three. In this shape, the 'Hooligan' goes beyond even the union of different racial types to essentially lose contact with the real world from which he grew, as the Bunsey Boys are at some remove from the linguistic contortions of the Katzenjammer Kids. (His realisation also marks the transition in the British strips to a world populated by manic kids in perpetual conflict as they vie for self-gratification. The Katzenjammer Kids finally find their niche in the British comic.)

We have moved from historical and geographical specificity, to the tensions of London in the early '90s, to a situation where it is the defining dimension of age rather than the union of various social types in one character that smudges the tensions of class and race relations. A new era of tensions in generational relations has begun. (Figure 12.9) [26] In the passage of Happy Hooligan from specific racial type to a pastiche of racial types we can identify a tendency parallel to the development in the adventures of the tramps. It is a circumvention of a direct engagement with a resonant, widespread fear of an alien threat to society in a figure that has no direct referent in reality. And there is a progression in the depiction of this figure further away from direct reference towards an innocuous world of fantasy.

'Neglected Jim' meets 'Lucky Lucas'

Neglected Jim, likewise, underwent a significant transformation in these years. A character called Lucky Lucas had been

appearing on pages 4 and 5 of Comic Cuts since September 1903. Lucas was much more in the classic tramp mould than Jim, sporting a broad-brimmed and patched scarecrow hat, a flowery shirt and polkadot trousers and a tiny umbrella to provide ineffective protection from the sun as he lazes permanently by the roadside. He has a huge, wide mouth with thick lips, stretched permanently into a broad grin in anticipation of the good fortune to come his way. His first adventure [27] shows him soaking up the sun in front of a wall. A motorist crashes on the far side and somersaults over the wall, dropping his purse for Lucas to claim after he has gone. This was to be the formula for each of his adventures.

In April 1904, Lucas joined forces with Jim for a new double act. Figure 12.10 shows Jim's consequent transformation in the making [28]. His picture at the top shows a much straighter, alert figure, the hat pushed back from his eyes, and his thick black moustache bleached white. No longer the good-natured unemployed buffoon, Jim moves towards the ranks of the profit-oriented, scheming tramps abstracted from the world of work. He is a much more calculating figure, and the new double-act was to revolve around Jim's attempted but foiled money-making schemes and Lucas' undue rewards for his innate laziness.

In subsequent episodes of Jim and Lucas they encounter an escaped lunatic armed with an axe claiming to be Henry VIII [29]. They visit the Comic Cuts printing works, where the web-fed machine objects to their puns and swallows Lucas. He emerges at the far end covered in a full issue of Comic Cuts, and charges the local kids to look at it [30]. By June 1904, Jim has changed

beyond all recognition. The strip has by now been taken over by a new (unknown) artist (Figure 12.11 [31]). Jim's hat has shrunk to the size of a thimble, his hair is thicker, the moustache smaller, and his body has finally loosened up. The changes are not merely visual, but are linguistic as well - the captions use verbs like 'tootled' and 'cooed' (first caption), which signal that Jim has adopted a social identity akin to that of the 'world famous tramps'. As with the tramps, however, his milieux are increasingly 'fantastic'.

Eventually, Jim is dispensed with altogether and replaced as Lucas' partner by none other than a 'Hooligan' lookalike himself, this time under the title 'Happy Harry' and in much the same visual shape. Joined by a much fatter Lucas, now in Pilgrim Fathers hat, a broad Elizabethan-like collar and minus the heavy facial growth, Harry is more like Browne's Weary Willy than his old self, while Lucas correspondingly looks closer to Tired Tim. In their ensuing adventures they encounter a variety of lunatics (Figure 12.12 [32]) and mad scientists [33], are frequently blown up, by gun powder usually, or electrocuted [34]. The fantastic scenarios continue. They go to the moon [35], to 'Fairylnd' [36], and then on some international trips [37]. The transformation of 'Neglected Jim' and 'Happy Hooligan' indicates the overall trajectory of the comic strips and characters away from recognisable social types and situations towards a range of 'fantastic' figures on a fantasy landscape. The key is that all of these figures have lost most of their resonance for a class-specific readership as ideological types. There is a

distortion of the original meanings both of the British strip characters and the American imports, and this is similar to the distortion of the tramps at the same time.

That the tramps were to endure until 1953 does not in any way refute this thesis. We can legitimately draw on Orwell's writings in the 1930s in unravelling the ideology of the tramp, just as we can draw on Tom and Jerry from the 1820s and Ally Sloper from the 1860s to trace their ancestry without any sense of anachronism. What we need to be wary of is the fact that each of these figures must be viewed in relation to historically and qualitatively different forms of political, institutional, intellectual and 'popular' understandings of class relations and especially the problems of poverty, unemployment and destitution. To draw on work from different periods is not to reinforce the erroneous notion that the tramp was a timeless element of a distinctly British sense of humour. Rather, these works help us to situate particular figures within a particular complex of social relations at a particular time. In this regard, Willy and Tim can be traced very precisely to the late 1890s. In establishing a distinction between these figures in the '90s and fifty years later, perhaps the most useful explanation is that comics in the 1890s were designed for a predominantly adult readership. By the 1900s, they were beginning to pass into the world of children's reading [38]. By the 1950s, the antics of Weary Willy and Tired Tim were deemed suitable only for children. Historically specific currency turns into the timeless currency of cartoon slapstick - hence their enduring popularity.

At this point, it is appropriate to recap the principal

arguments of this thesis and to examine their implications for our understanding of the history of the modern comic and of the theory of popular culture.

## CHAPTER TWELVE - NOTES

1. Webb, S. 'Twentieth Century Politics: a Policy of National Efficiency', Fabian Tract, no. 108, 1901, p.9.
2. See B.B. Gilbert (1966), The Evolution of National Insurance and G.R. Searle (1971), The Quest for National National Efficiency, both cited in G.R. Hay's (1983), The Origins of Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906-1914, ch. 3, 'The Roots of the Reforms'.
3. Ibid., p.49.
4. Cited in ibid., p.47.
5. Gareth Stedman Jones (1971), Outcast London, pp.330-1.
6. Ibid., p.334.
7. W.H. Beveridge, 'The Problem of the Unemployed', Sociological Papers, vol. III (1906), p. 327. Cited in ibid., p.335.
8. IC 680, p.1, 1903.
9. IC 720, p.1, 1904.
10. IC 836, p.1, 1906.
11. IC 860, p.1, 1907.
12. CC 659, p.6, 1902.
13. Ibid.
14. CC 686, p.1, 1903.
15. CC 689, p.1, 1903.
16. CC 688, p.1, 1903.
17. CC 709, p.1, 1903.
18. CC 714, p.1, 1904.
19. CC 702, p.1, 1903.
20. The World's Comic 295, February 23, 1898.
21. There has been no in-depth work thus far on the early 'Happy Hooligan' strips. All of the references I have found mention it as a footnote to a history of the American comic strip. It is seen, therefore, simply as an episode in the development of comic strip narrative and not in terms of its representation of a racial and social type. See Coulton Waugh (1949), The Comics, pp.36-37; Bill Blackbeard and Martin Williams (1977), The Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics, p.17.
22. Big Budget (BB) was a ld. weekly with sixteen pages. Commenced on 19th June 1897, it ran until 20th March 1909, but became an all serial fiction boys' weekly in 1905.
23. BB 322, pp.164-165, 1903.
24. I have already remarked on the similarities between R. F. Outcault's 'Hogan's Alley' and 'Comic Cuts Colony', Casey's Court' and other efforts in the British comics. Whether there was some kind of influence here is hard to gauge, but the Irish names in 'Hogan's Alley' and 'Casey's Court' suggest some correlation.

Beyond this, however, it is hard to perceive any direct links. It is generally agreed that the main progenitor to the comic strip in the US was William Busch's narrative strip work for Fliegende Blatter from 1865 onwards. His most famous creations were two anarchic youngsters, 'Max and Moritz'. W. R. Hearst himself is believed to have spotted



the pair on a trip to Europe in 1896, and on return to New York had a young staff artist on the Journal, Rudolph Dirks, produce a direct imitation for the comic supplement. Max and Moritz became Hans and Fritz, 'The Katzenjammer Kids', transplanted now to the US. They were cursed, as was their enormous Mama and a later regular, the old sea-dog Captain, with a Germanic pidgin English. Busch's narratives were simple and uncluttered, the action proceeds from one frame to the next without the need even for the two line captions accompanying each picture (see Figure 12.7 - reproduced in George Perry and Alan Aldridge (1971), The Penguin Book of Comics, pp.98-99). Dirks developed a similarly crisp style with shorter, more rounded and rubbery figures. The undiluted glee evident in their manic expressions led eventually to their undoing each week. And he eliminated the paragraphs to give them more directly expressive speech balloons.

Despite these developments, neither Busch's work nor Dirk's derivation made any impact in the British comics in the 1890s. Busch's Max and Moritz actually appeared as an occasional feature on the inside pages of Comic Cuts in 1896 under the new names of Tommy Tootle and Billy Bootle. Figure 12.8 shows them loading Granpopper's pipe with gunpowder. However, Busch's perfectly clear sequence is attached to the usual Comic Cuts brand of unsubtle subtitling. These captions suggest that at least part of the reason why the Busch characters became standards in the US but were a shortlived venture in Britain was the unsuccessful attempt to appropriate them to Mr. Comic Cuts' universe, with himself as knowing anchor. They were not forged by the integral miscellaneity of the comics and consequently stand out as inappropriate insertions.

25. Geoffrey Pearson (1983), Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears, p.75.
26. The Jester and Wonder 82, p.1, 1903.
27. 'THE AMAZING LUCK OF LUCKY LUCAS', CC 696, pp.4-5, 1903.
28. CC 728, p.1, 1904.
29. CC 729, p.1, 1904.
30. CC 733, p.1, 1904.
31. CC 737, p.1, 1904.
32. CC 766, p.8, 1905; also CC 768, p.8, 1905; CC 773, p.8, 905, CC 777, p.8, 1905; CC 847, p.8, 1906.
33. CC 769, p.8, 1905; CC 772, p.8, 1905; CC 882, p.8, 1907.
34. CC 790, p.8, 1905; CC 792, p.8, 1905; CC 798, p.8, 1905, CC 801, p.8, 1905; CC 807, p.8, 1905.
35. CC 817, p.8, 1906.
36. CC 856 to CC 881, p.8 throughout, 1906-1907.
37. CC 900 - CC 912, p.4-5, 1907.
38. This general transformation is evident in the more juvenile orientation of another addition to Harmsworth's range of titles, Puck (from 1904); also of Pearson's Big Budget at the same time, to the extent that it ultimately became a boys' weekly in 1904; and in 1910, the transformation of Henderson's Comic Life into a children's comic.

## CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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COMICS AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE: POPULISM AND THE POPULAR

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To begin these conclusions, let us firstly summarise the arguments presented in this thesis.

The return to the 'first' comics was motivated primarily by the lack of adequate critical analyses of the contemporary comic. It was argued that the formulaic nature of the comic tends to attract a dismissive approach in critical work. Individual elements are abstracted from the comic and there are generalised arguments based on the supposed 'effects' of particular representations. This is done without any feel for the ways in which such representations are woven into coherent narratives, or any consideration of the relative centrality or incidental roles of these elements to the readers' understanding of the comic.

Such approaches to comics, coming generally from a journalistic orientation, are indicative of a long standing failure in British cultural studies to come to terms with 'popular' cultural products. More than any other cultural artefact, comics have been subjected to 'analyses' whose methodological assumptions fit pre-conceived notions about current and ideal social relations. They have been used particularly as explanations for the perpetuation of gender, class and race relations in society. Now this is not the same

as, but it is surely related to the problems inherent in the major theoretical formulations of culture. The Arnoldist approach held in opposition to the threat of an Americanised mass culture the alternative of a popularly accessible high culture. The Leavises oppositional panacea was a combination of organic folk culture and high culture. The culturalists judged such products in terms of how they reflected pre-existent, integral, class-defined cultures. Structuralism concentrates on the intra-textual relations within the product at the expense of a consideration of how the reader-text relation might vary depending on context. Post-structuralism incorporates psychoanalytical concepts, borrowed especially from Lacan, in order to account more for the reader's understanding of the text, but Lacan's concept of the 'fragmented self' eliminates the reader as subject. If we were to generalise these problems as a central failing (with due regard to their differences) it would be the basic lack of an appreciation of an active relationship between reader and text, in which certain needs for the reader, defined by his/her social location, are met, and with regularity through interaction with the formulaic text. That is, there is no adequate connection made between 'culture industry' and 'lived culture'.

We have identified the rigidly formulaic nature of the comic as the barrier to analysis. In this regard, Barker's work has been seen to offer a potential solution to the problem. While adopting his argument for the 'conversational' nature of cultural objects we have, however, rejected the argument about 'rules' for analysis, and this rejection has been based precisely on this

argument for the 'conversational' role of the comics. The implication of that argument is that there are various ambivalences and ambiguities current through the different components of the comics so that they can maintain a fluid and variable relationship with the reader. This aspect of the argument is supported by other studies, particularly from a feminist standpoint, as briefly reviewed in Chapter Four.

The most fascinating work in recent years has been Ien Ang's study of audience reactions to the television soap Dallas [1]. Based on a set of responses by letter to her own newspaper advertisement for viewers' opinions on the programme, Ang's study reveals a wide range of interpretations among its mostly female viewers. In many cases these interpretations involve a contradiction between an internalisation of the 'mass culture' approach to media texts and an apology for the undeniable 'pleasure' that the respondent has gleaned from the programme. This suggests that not only is a text capable of carrying contradictory ideologies, but that the viewer is capable of contradictory responses. She also shows that the particular way in which a viewer might respond at any one time is dependent on the context in which the text is viewed.

These studies suggest that the relationship between the 'culture industry' and the lived culture of the consumer is a dynamic and complex one which militates against unitary 'messages' in texts; and despite the undoubted tendency in cultural products towards formularisation, the attempt to identify 'rules' for the analysis of particular products is to

deny or at least to distort the very real subjectivities and context specificities of interpretation.

To develop this argument, we have turned to the sphere of 'leisure studies', and in particular the work of Peter Bailey as an historian 'deconstructing the popular' [2] as it developed as a concept in the late nineteenth century. Bailey's emphasis on 'textual analysis' as an investigative tool for the historian, and his realisation of the argument by case study in his analysis of Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday have been seen as a potential solution to these theoretical and empirical problems, for this analysis shows how the contradictory ideologies present in a text can be analysed in terms of class- and historical specificity. We have tried to incorporate this analytical approach into a framework based on the theoretical concepts of Antonio Gramsci, and this direction has been influenced by the reappraisal and application of these concepts by the Open University Popular Culture team in particular. In order to apply this framework to a generic cultural product we have chosen the early comic as the basis for the empirical work in this thesis since they were among the first 'popular' cultural products of the late nineteenth century in a sense which is comparable to the modern usage of the term.

We have tried to identify the formal and thematic roots of the early British comic strip as the central element in the new 'comics' of the 1890s. We have argued that in order to understand the emergence of the first regular recognisable 'comic strips', in the modern sense of the term, we need to see the miscellaneity of the early comics as the third phase in a

progressive development towards the generation of this new kind of pictorial narrative.

It has been our contention that these strips were primarily verbal in nature, that they revolved around the issue of the reader's class location, specifically in relation to the very lowest underclass. The reason is that this obsession with class location, expressed through a primarily verbal medium, is the continuous strand running through the Victorian humorous and related periodical publishing from which the 'comics' drew. However, while this was the case, we have tried to show that the comic strip marked a departure to a new kind of periodical publishing. It introduced characters whose identity as social types was not so easily legible as their forerunners in other types of journal. If the most outstanding figure was the tramp, his function was not simply to reinforce the reader's feeling of social superiority or security. In his adventures, which constituted a form of conversational dialogue with the reader, he encapsulated the complexity of that security, for undercurrent to it there was a degree of economic and cultural insecurity.

We have linked this new departure with the new political departure of 'collectivist' ideologies. It contributed to the experience of negotiating these political collectivisms in 'popular' thought, or, to use the Gramscian term, 'common sense'. This was, moreover, a peculiarly 'lower middle class' version of 'common sense'. Therefore, we can see the comics of the 1890s as part of a class- and historically specific negotiation of bourgeois hegemony in the late nineteenth century. They are

related to early humourous and other types of journal in this function, but they are also different, partly because the grounds for that hegemony shifted significantly through the nineteenth century.

In applying this framework, then, we have hopefully made a convincing case for the inherent ambivalence and ambiguity in cultural products and the validity of the framework in tracing the complex relationships between the 'culture industry', 'lived culture', political developments and hegemony in capitalist society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

#### Populism and the 'Popular'

It is important to point out that this return to the work of Antonio Gramsci in cultural criticism is motivated to a large extent by contemporary political developments in Britain. We should therefore establish this relationship and contextualise the understanding of the early comics within this contemporary context.

The most enlightening application of these Gramscian concepts over the past ten years has been Stuart Hall's analysis of the phenomenon of Thatcherism. Hall has incisively argued that Thatcherism works primarily by moulding a peculiar brand of populism which draws on ideological currents from the past, and yet constitutes a clearly new development. In its monetarist onslaught on post-war welfarism and in its current deregulation of broadcasting Thatcherism has resurrected the language of 'classical liberalism', almost caricaturally. In its promise to restore 'lost standards' in attacking the BBC and its pledge to



toughen 'law and order' it has developed a distorted version of 'traditional', 'Victorian values' based on the elevated importance of familial integrity. This combination of a pledged return to the free market and a strongly authoritarian direction is complicated by a promise of limitless horizons to consumerism, wrapped up in the language of the 'share-owning democracy' and in policies like the sale of council houses - the 'right to buy'. In the process, as Webster (1988) summarises, this programme has required the 'mobilizing ... [of] ... workers against unions, parents against teachers, viewers against broadcasters, the people against liberalism' [3]. Yet despite these contradictory currents Thatcherism, Hall argues, has attracted a phenomenal range of support from 'very substantial sections of the subordinate and dominated classes' [4]. It has caused a shift in the basis for political confrontation, with which the language of socialism as it is cannot cope. It does so by extending a particular kind of 'populist' appeal, a kind of 'regressive modernization' which harkens back to the imperial Great Britain of the past and forwards to a revitalised, once more 'Great' Britain in which you can join in. Some of its success lies in the legacy of the Falklands War. Its promise of better tomorrows and 'a return to the good old days' lies paradoxically in an insistence on belt-tightening and getting up 'on your bike' today, but it cannot be dismissed as an imposed 'false consciousness'. It confounds analysis by the left not least because in one respect anyway,

'every now and then - Saturday mornings, perhaps, just before the demonstration - we go to Sainsbury's and we're just a tiny bit of a Thatcherite subject ...' [5].

Hall argues that in the 1980s we have witnessed the birth of a new kind of populist politics which (though this remains to be proven by future developments) has significantly changed the site of political struggle. It has translated all of these ideologies from the past into a kind of 'common sense' language which extends a 'popular' appeal to a broad range of class fractions. In a country which never underwent a bourgeois transformation in the way that the USA did, or that Germany and Japan did, it also includes a vision of 'modernity' which stands in stark contrast to the association of socialism and the welfare state with post-war austerity. Therefore, in order to understand the appeal of Thatcherism we need to look at how it has elevated and extended elements of an essentially petty bourgeois ideology to a successful political programme. It has achieved this by combining it with 'common sense' understandings of their own social locations among other class fractions and reshaping them into a kind of 'popular' vision of society as it could be. There are internal contradictions, but that is inevitable in any constructed notion of the 'popular'. While Thatcherism contributes to continuing bourgeois hegemony in Britain, then, it does so in a qualitatively different way to conservative political programmes in the past.

The application of a framework developed in response to contemporary concerns to a range of cultural products from the past is not to revise inaccurately or to distort. Rather, it

throws an important light on the ways in which these early comics interacted with their readership and, vice versa, the comics contribute to a fuller understanding of contemporary politics. The reason is that the comics were part of the development of a new concept for the twentieth century - the 'popular' cultural product and audience, while Thatcherism has remoulded the 'popular' to new political ends.

As with Thatcherism, the early comics promoted an essentially 'petty bourgeois' ideology. It is an ideology that in its late nineteenth century and contemporary forms owes much to the appeal of imperialism. There is a common concern about individual security in which equally mythical sets of 'Victorian values' are invoked. Both are forms of defensive reaction to Britain's economic decline in the face of international competition and both developed as finance capital in London gained increasing importance while manufacturing declined. The political trajectories to which these ideologies are related, however, are different. The comics were to do with a gradual 'common sense' acceptance of collectivist political ideology and the move towards welfarism. Thatcherism is a reaction to the long establishment of welfarism. A 'petty bourgeois' ideology is reshaped as a truly 'popular' one, but the contradictions in this process are different, they are determined by the different configurations of social and power relations and the shifting ground for bourgeois hegemony in British society.

The exploration of the particular formulation of the 'popular' has been an important strand running through this study

of the comics. The Gramscian approach allows us to establish similarities and differences in the use of this concept through history; to make connections between 'popular' political projects and cultural products in terms of how they transform class-specific needs into 'popular' needs and contribute to the negotiation of relations of power and the individual's place within them.

The capacity to make these connections through this approach is important. The concentration on the aspect of 'pleasure' to the cultural text in current media criticism is a problematic development which has been subject to oppositional criticism by leftist critics. Judith Williamson bemoans the loss of a central distinction between 'reactionary' and 'revolutionary' in critical approaches. In her review of this general tendency she argues that its logical outcome is a situation where no text can be criticised without the risk of being accused of 'patronising' the consumer, and where 'subversion' can be found in practically every media product. Williamson sees this as a reflection of the demoralisation and tiredness of the left, a desperate attempt to wrest the 'popular' from the language of the right, and a strategy which erodes radical, searching criticism [6].

Williamson's criticisms reflect a continued reluctance on the left to come to terms with the problem of analysing the pleasurable aspects of the consumption of cultural products. Yet if Hall is right, and Thatcherism really does involve a profound transformation of contemporary political confrontation, despite its inherent contradictions and the fact that it is supported by class fractions whose interests it definitely does

not 'represent', then cultural criticism must come to terms with how 'popular' politics works to meet consumers' real needs, if in contradictory ways, and how concepts of the 'popular' are refracted in cultural products. The Gramscian approach provides a framework through which this goal can be achieved, and we can legitimately stress the relevance of this project both to the understanding of contemporary comics and to cultural products in general.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN - NOTES

1. Ien Ang (1985), Watching Dallas.
2. Bailey borrows Stuart Hall's phrase from 'Notes on deconstructing the popular', in Samuel, R. (ed. 1981), People's History and Socialist Theory.
3. Duncan Webster (1988), Looka Yonder! The Imaginary America of Populist America, p.176.
4. Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', in (1988), The Hard Road to Renewal, p.165.
5. Ibid.
6. Judith Williamson, 'The problems of being popular', New Socialist, 43, November 1986, pp.14-15.

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"	No. 33	" 1899
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