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PICTURE WORLD

Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media

Rachel TEUKOLSKY

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Introduction

Visual Culture in the Victorian Mediascape

A photograph held in the Victoria and Albert Museum opens onto the idealized world of the Victorian parlor (Fig. 0.1). On the display table, luxurious commodities signal the tasteful sphere of middle-class consumption: a stereoscope with stereographic cards, an illustrated book opened upon its pictures, a photographic album, a framed engraved portrait, a statuette of an angel, an erotic sculpture of a girl bashfully concealing her nudity. The nineteenth-century viewer would have perused this doubled photograph through a stereoscope, making the image burst forth into an illusion of three-dimensional depth. In the scene of Victorian visual pleasure, the body of the spectator entered imaginatively into the volumetric space of picture, texture, and art. The photographed scene sustains Walter Benjamin's description of the parlor as a supreme expression of the nineteenth-century self, constellating "the universe of the private individual."[1]

Benjamin theorized the parlor as an insular refuge from the chaos of urban modernity, an upholstered, curtained shell devoted to protective self-fashioning. Yet the parlor was not quite the hermetic casing that Benjamin envisioned, I will suggest here, nor was it a site of mere idle luxury. With its profusion of visual objects, the parlor can also be seen as a portal. It was home to the picture-world of the nineteenth century, in the form of the mass-printed photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and illustrations—ephemeral and often disposable—that flourished in the era of mechanical reproduction. These alluring objects were miniaturized spectacles that served as portals onto phantasmagoric versions of "the world." In the world-interactive site of the parlor, mediating between private and public, families received visitors and displayed objects as evidence of a certain cosmopolitanism: maps, globes, cabinets of stereographs with views of faraway places, an illustrated Bible on a stand with scenes from the Holy Land, illustrated newspapers and magazines on a table, prints and portraits on the wall depicting figures from religious and political history.[2] The parlor's objects did not merely

[1] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1939), in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 20.

[2] As Thad Logan writes, "The Victorian parlour—extraordinarily rich in detail, situated in a central position within the theory and practice of Victorian culture—can be taken as a kind of synecdoche for that culture itself, a microcosm of the middle-class Victorian world, miniaturized, as if under glass" (xiv). Logan, unlike Benjamin, highlights the role played by women in possessing and

Picture World: Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media. Rachel Teukolsky, Oxford University Press (2020).

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Fig. 0.1 Unknown artist, *Still Life*. Stereographic photograph. Albumen print mounted on glass, c. 1860–70. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

represent burnished collectibles; they also consisted of the daily or weekly objects of new media, flowing through in the form of news, visual fashions, up-to-date entertainments, or obsolete trends. Objects in the parlor space were dynamic, mutable, and contemporary, taking into themselves many worlds over time. Tom Gunning writes that the parlor falls "under the dominion of the image and semblance," as "the optics of interior space take on the complexity of the phantasmagoria."[3] He points to the presence of optical toys like stereoscopes, kaleidoscopes, and magic lanterns, but his account also opens onto a broader metaphorics of world-making and illusionism via the image. Benjamin, writing of the interior's assemblage of heterogeneous times, places, and memories, concludes of its possessor: "His living room is a box in the theater of the world."[4] This thought indicates a more permeable sense of the parlor's enclosure, phantasmagoric but also scopic, opening onto a series of shifting views. The illustrated Bible serves as an exemplary object to anchor this space, as it mediated between tradition and modernity, the near and the far, the rare and the popular. Many of the multiform works of new Victorian visual media opened onto worlds-within-the-world, animating fantastical leaps across space and time while concretizing and literalizing a Victorian world picture.

decorating the parlor space. See Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[3] Tom Gunning, "The Exterior as *Intérieur*: Benjamin's Optical Detective," *boundary 2* 30:1 (2003), 105–30: 107.

[4] Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *Arcades Project*, 19.

This book studies the modern media world as it came into being in the nineteenth century. Machines were harnessed to produce texts and images in unprecedented numbers; in the visual realm, new industrial techniques generated a deluge of affordable pictorial items, consumed at intimate scale. These early forms of a widely shared media culture transformed the nineteenth-century experience of everyday life. "New media" today might bring to mind cyberspace, hypertext, and other digital innovations. But media invention itself is not new, and every epoch has had to confront the unruly and transformative effects of new communications technologies.[5] *Picture World* turns to the small-scale printed matter of the Victorian media revolution, the mass-printed photographs, posters, cartoons, and illustrations typically designated by scholars as ephemera. Though "ephemera" implies objects existing on the margins of a weightier dominant culture, I relocate these items to a central role, using them to illuminate Victorian ideas about aesthetics, art, and visual value. The book brings together objects from across the cultural spectrum, from fine-art paintings to penny cartoons, from canonical novels to advertising copy, in order to capture the chaotic reality of the nineteenth-century cultural landscape.

I argue that nineteenth-century aesthetic ideas spring into a startling new account when considered through the lens of the century's new visual media. Each of the book's chapters explores a keyword in Victorian aesthetics, a familiar term whose meanings are disrupted when paired with a new media object. "Character" shows new dimensions when considered with caricature, in the new comics and cartoons appearing in the mass press in the 1830s; likewise, the book understands "realism" through pictorial journalism; "illustration" via illustrated Bibles; "sensation" through carte-de-visite portrait photographs; "the picturesque" by way of stereoscopic views; and "decadence" through advertising posters. These juxtapositions capture the book's methodology, which finds deep meaning in ephemeral objects typically excluded from categories of high art. *Picture World* uses the relics of the nineteenth century's cultural life to interrogate its deeply held values, arriving at insights still relevant in our own media age.

This method braids together high philosophy with lowbrow or middlebrow culture. It brings together the vast intellectual currents responding to modernity with the similarly massive proliferation of conventionalized material cultures. At the heights, we can ponder Martin Heidegger's claim that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture."[6] Heidegger speaks of the tendency to render experience in visual form, transforming "the world" into an artificial schema of representation enabling human conquest and mastery.

[5] See Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); and the essays collected in Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, eds., *New Media, 1740–1915* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

[6] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology: And Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland, 1977), 115–54: 134.

Modernity, for Heidegger, presents itself as "the age of the world picture." While he focuses on the conditions giving rise to modern science, his terms seem especially apt to characterize developments in nineteenth-century Britain—describing not merely Britain's imperial activities around the globe, but also limning its advances in professionalized science, its refinements of philosophical empiricism, its creation of new forms of objectivity, its insistent technologization of culture. The tremendous production of machine-made images—in books, prints, photographs, and newspapers—functioned, through technology, to grasp the world as a picture in many dimensions. W. J. T. Mitchell frames a similar point to Heidegger in "Showing Seeing," an essay theorizing the study of visual culture. "Visual culture is the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision," he writes. "It is not just that we see the way we do because we are social animals, but also that our social arrangements take the forms they do because we are seeing animals."[7] Mitchell's claim serves as a useful hinge between Heidegger's grand philosophical account of modern visuality and current scholarship on the more humble, granular works of image culture, whose aggregate comes to constitute the understandings of larger social bodies and ideas. While Heidegger's phrase "the world picture" is singular and monolithic, Mitchell's concept gestures toward the nineteenth century's myriad world pictures, constructed and refracted across a range of new visual media.

Visual culture designates an innovative field that brings together cultural studies, art history, textual studies, critical theory, philosophy, and anthropology—all the interdisciplinary breadth necessary to encompass the diverse phenomena of "the visual" in modern life. In fact, the word "visuality" itself has a Victorian origin, coined by Thomas Carlyle in 1840 to describe a potent and revelatory form of seeing.[8] Likewise, visual culture as a concept also has nineteenth-century roots. One of its earliest theorists was the rebellious dandy poet, Charles Baudelaire. His essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), though usually remembered for its indelible figure of the flâneur, also offers a profound meditation on the nineteenth-century's mechanization of the image. Baudelaire mocks the stultifying world of museums, high art, and unmemorable paintings. True art, he insists, is found not in museums but on the streets; and not in paintings but in machine-made items such as engravings, fashion plates, and the sketches of a contemporary magazine illustrator, Constantin Guys. It is Guys who is "the painter of modern

[7] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," *Journal of Visual Culture* 1:2 (August 2002), 165–81: 170, 171.

[8] Carlyle coins the word "visuality" in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840). He praises Dante's powers of vision in *The Divine Comedy*: "Through all objects he [Dante] pierces as it were down into the heart of Being," seeing "with intense earnestness, into truth, into clear visuality" (108–9). Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that Carlyle's notion of visuality opposes an Enlightenment idea of clear seeing, according with Carlyle's conservative, pro-slavery politics. See Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5:1 (April 2006), 53–79.

life," who captures modernity in all its vibrant, urban manifestations. Baudelaire celebrates lithographs and other new visual media for their speed and cheapness; they are the objects best suited to contribute "to that vast dictionary of modern life" documenting the new urban scene.[9] While the modern artist's task, tracking the ebb and flow of "the daily metamorphosis of external things," might seem "trivial," Baudelaire asserts that this "relative, circumstantial element" constitutes the most important aspect of beauty (4). Quick and quickly obsolescent media, unlike more eternal works of high art, bespeak a transcendent presentness: representations of modern life are pleasurable for their "essential quality of being present" (1). And so Baudelaire famously hails "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" aspects of modernity, whose fleeting truths are best conveyed by the evanescent forms of visual culture (13). Fashion plates, newspaper illustrations, or printed lithographs all lose value over time; they are fragile, cheaply made, quickly outmoded, and eminently disposable. Yet the cultural critic moves against the grain to recover these obsolescent objects, a striking move in an era whose aesthetic canons tended to cherish old-master painters and poets. "The Painter of Modern Life" proposes a quite radical theory of aesthetics, embracing not the lasting monuments of the ages but the flimsy debris of modernity. The essay is one of the first manifestoes to declare the aesthetic and historical value of visual culture, working to redeem such doubtful traits as reproducibility, circulation, and democratic access.

More than a century after Baudelaire was writing, the nascent field of visual culture studies emerged in the 1990s to examine the rise of modern image culture. "The image, which stands at the centre-point of contemporary visual culture," write Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall,

> presents itself as a simple, singular, substantive entity—a sort of 'fact' or punctuation point (punctum), as Roland Barthes once called it, in its own right, whose capacity to index or reference things, people, places and events in the 'real' world appears palpable, irreducible and unquestionable.[10]

W. J. T. Mitchell, in "The Pictorial Turn," says that the picture is "a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurality."[11] He

[9] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 4. Further citations will refer to this edition parenthetically.

[10] Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, "What is Visual Culture?" in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Evans and Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 1–7: 4. Visual culture studies is abundant in diverse handbooks, guides, anthologies, and readers. A useful compendium is *Visual Culture: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols., ed. Joanne Morra and Marquard Smith (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[11] W. J. T. Mitchell, "The Pictorial Turn," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11–34: 16.

also notes, though, that "we still do not know exactly what pictures are," pointing to the difficulty facing any theoretical attempt to unify the visual culture field and its objects.[12] Svetlana Alpers, looking back on the method of her influential art-historical study *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (1983), observes the cluster of interests that for her constituted visual culture. They included "notions about vision (the mechanism of the eye), . . . image-making devices (the microscope, the camera obscura), and . . . visual skills (map making, but also experimenting) as cultural resources related to the practice of painting."[13] Though Alpers still subordinates all of these interests to "the practice of painting," her diverse account of Dutch visuality limns a method concerned equally with paintings and with less elevated forms of cultural expression across a range of institutions, practices, and objects.

In the 1990s, visual culture studies bore the wrath of some art historians who circled the wagons to protect their traditional bailiwick.[14] Today, the divide between a conservative art history and a radical visual culture studies is more muted, as some departments have reconfigured themselves under a broader mantle of "visual studies," and art historians often consider a wide array of visual media, including the mass-produced objects of print culture. *Picture World* positions itself at the forefront of a new art history, one that encompasses design history, the history of photography, and the history of visual ephemera. Art history's expanded visual field is apparent, for example, in the Victoria & Albert Museum's blockbuster 2011 show *The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860–1900*, which featured posters, wallpaper, and domestic crafts alongside canonical paintings and sculptures. In seeing Britain as a vital site of nineteenth-century visual cultural production—in a field that has traditionally favored France—*Picture World* participates in some of the newer trends opening up the art-historical field.[15]

Having said this, readers will observe that many of art history's traditional disciplinary techniques are absent from the book. The chapters contain few discussions of artists, schools, periods, provenance, archives, or any analysis

[12] Ibid., 13.

[13] Svetlana Alpers et al., "Visual Culture Questionnaire," *October* 77 (Summer 1996), 25–70: 26.

[14] Many of the art-historical critiques of visual culture appeared in the "Visual Culture Questionnaire," published in *October* (1996), cited above. Douglas Crimp responded to these critiques in defense of visual culture in "Getting the Warhol We Deserve," *Social Text* 59, 17:2 (1999), 49–66.

[15] Contributors to the "new" art history, especially in the British context, include (among many others): Morna O'Neill, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875–1890* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010); Jo Briggs, *Novelty Fair: British Visual Culture between Chartism and the Great Exhibition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); and Tim Barringer and Wayne Modest, eds., *Victorian Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

evincing what W. J. T Mitchell describes as the discipline's "forensic skills of connoisseurship and authentication."[16] My method takes its cues from literary and cultural history, resulting in an approach to the image that is occult, sideways, deliberately estranging. Influenced by cultural critics like Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, I privilege philosophical and conceptual analysis, crossing genres and bridging the word–image divide. In fact, *Picture World* enacts a radical interdisciplinarity, bringing together a broad range of different humanistic and technological fields. Visual culture studies, media history, art history, literary history, and cultural history number among the book's disciplines. The chapters move across media to study novels and poems alongside photographs and illustrations.[17] The analysis never presumes a vague equivalence between different kinds of sign-making; each medium moves according to its own distinct generic rules and expectations. But no single medium is ever consumed in a vacuum. The book weaves together both visual and textual strands to present a revisionist, multidisciplinary approach to "culture" as it was lived and experienced in the nineteenth century. Modern-day academic divides between disciplines have obscured the cross-media connections studied in the book. This approach speaks to a certain historical reality: in the nineteenth century's turbulent media moment, the bounds of high art and mass culture were not yet fixed, and words and images mingled indiscriminately in the cultural field.[18]

A key aspect of *Picture World*'s interdisciplinarity is its theorization of aesthetic ideas by way of cultural studies. Scholars have typically explored concepts such as realism or the picturesque by looking to novels, paintings, or other vaunted objects in today's aesthetic canon.[19] The people who actually lived in the nineteenth century, however, would have experienced a proliferation of new visual media in their daily lives, whose codes and ideologies intersected with the fine arts

[16] Mitchell, "Showing Seeing," 168. For a study of nineteenth-century new media objects that takes a more traditional art-historical approach, see Patricia Mainardi, *Another World: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Print Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017). Mainardi's book centers on French visual culture, with meticulous chapters that survey the objects and provenance of different new media, focusing on historical details, the forensic particularities of medium and technique, overviews of the typical subjects appearing in each form, and detailed notes about artists and makers. My chapters, by contrast, pursue a different set of questions, motivated more by the disciplinary interests of cultural studies than by those of traditional art history.

[17] An essential source in the interdisciplinary study of Victorian visual culture is Kate Flint's *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Flint studies Victorian imagery of sight and looking across a range of visual-verbal objects.

[18] W. J. T. Mitchell strongly critiques the idea of a purely visual media, asserting that "all media are mixed media" ("Showing Seeing," 170). He provides a spirited defense of word-image studies, rebuking those who would erect media difference as a "barrier that must be policed and never crossed" (173). In fact, the Victorian picture-world was distinctive for its overt textuality, as it was insistently scripted with captions, labels, explanatory boxes, illustrative quotes, long interpretative essays, explanations and illuminations. I pursue this argument in *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[19] It is important to note that novels, while epitomizing high art and literary canonicity in the academy today, occupied a much more ambiguous and vexed status in the nineteenth century.

to create intense fantasies of time and space, self and other. My approach breaks down the boundaries that have typically divided high art from mass culture; it produces a new way to study aesthetics, describing art values according to an expanded array of objects. Familiar concepts become new to us when we explore their simultaneous appearance in objects of high art and more popular, conventionalized visual forms. For example, I argue that the "sensation" phenomenon of the 1860s—usually associated with scandalous crime novels—had a visual component, in the photographic carte-de-visite portraits of actresses, courtesans, and female criminals. Though scholars have typically understood sensational artworks to offer bodily thrills and forms of unmediated experience, my turn to photography uncovers how sensation was in fact a deeply mediated and insistently visual aesthetic. The tendency of the modern disciplines to focus tightly around particular objects, forms, and genres has obscured the actual cultural expression of nineteenth-century aesthetic phenomena, in media both high and low. In recovering the multimedia dimension, my account reflects the actual complexity of Victorian aesthetic ideas, observing their expression across a range of objects and formats.

These chapters take Victorian Britain as the epicenter of the nineteenth century's new visual media. (And, within Britain, London inevitably dominates as a cultural producer, though other terrains make an appearance as well.) This centering on Britain is not coincidental: as the cauldron of the industrial revolution, Britain was a key innovator in the visual technologies that transformed techniques of printing and distribution. The British Empire, too, was a motor of visual culture production, from illustrated Bibles printed to evangelize in the colonies to illustrated newspapers reporting on imperial conquests abroad. Having said this, the book's chapters also reflect the geographical porousness of the nineteenth-century picture world, as influential words and images flowed across borders without regard for national traditions. Gustave Doré, the French Bible illustrator, was more popular in England and America than he was at home in France. Oliver Wendell Holmes, the American photography theorist, modeled his account on British aesthetic categories and adopted a British-style imperial worldview. And aesthetic movements from realism to decadence began in France before taking on distinctive British formations. The aesthetic categories studied in the book, while particularized to Britain, speak with a resonance beyond Britain, characterizing the broader values of industrializing nations in the nineteenth century.

The chosen categories in *Picture World* are not random: each one speaks especially and uniquely to the nineteenth century. Raymond Williams, in *Keywords,* writes of how certain key vocabulary words register problems of meaning over time, waxing and waning in their usages, serving as palimpsests into a culture's "ideas and values." Certain prismatic keywords are prone to "innovation, obsolescence, specialization, extension, overlap, transfer," or radical changes in their meanings

across history.[20] The categories studied in *Picture World*, while dominant in the nineteenth century, have each since been depreciated according to certain modernist or postmodernist sensibilities. The picturesque has been seen as derivative tourist kitsch; realism, as deceptive illusionism; illustration, as a descriptive mode fit for children's books; character, as an outmoded investment in traditional concepts of personhood; sensation, as a crowd-pleasing, titillating formula; and decadence, as an elitist love of frivolous opulence. Each of these modes was in fact defined by the rise of mass culture in the nineteenth century, a popularization that in many ways still casts a shadow over them. My goal is not to recuperate these aesthetic modes—whose political attachments are often suspect and fantastical—but to study them for the light they shed on nineteenth-century thought, values, politics, and desires. Taken together, these keywords capture a penetrating snapshot of aesthetic values distant from us, but also, as the chapters pursue, still familiar in lingering ways.

The objects studied in *Picture World* could credibly be labeled as popular culture, mass culture, kitsch, or ephemera. I choose to use "mass culture" or "mass-produced, machine-made" objects as descriptors. Popular culture has often been taken to name the inexpensive items marketed to the working classes, while mass culture has been seen to target a more heterogeneous audience, mixing together different constituencies near the middle.[21] Many of the new media studied here defy classification in terms of audience, since they could be purchased at a variety of price points. For example, consumers of limited means could view cheap stereocards using cardboard stereoscopes, while wealthier consumers could view glass stereographs using polished wood stereoscopes. This latter group might own grand cabinets holding thousands of views. Likewise, illustrated Bibles were sold inexpensively in parts with advertising wrappers, but wealthier families might choose to collect all of the parts into a single book, binding them in customized

[20] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 17.

[21] Scholarship on concepts of mass culture, popular culture, and mass media does not offer a consensus about the meanings or historical timelines for these terms. Patricia Anderson, in *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), dates the rise of mass culture to after 1832: before this time, "popular culture" catered more exclusively to working populations, but after 1832, certain mass-circulated items catered to a greatly "expanded culture," "an unprecedentedly numerous and socially diverse public—in other words, the mass" (12). Raymond Williams, in *Keywords*, notes that the unstable word "mass" connotes two opposing meanings, one celebrating a potent social force, the other insinuating qualities of ignorance, manipulability, and destructiveness (195). While "mass media" usually describes twentieth-century communications in the wake of radio or television, scholars have found origins for mass media in the nineteenth century, especially in the mid-1850s, when the British government abolished the "taxes on knowledge" that had inflated newspaper and periodical prices. For a helpful anthology of nineteenth-century sources, see *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*, ed. Andrew King and John Plunkett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Leo Lowenthal's study traces a historical arc stretching back to the Renaissance in *Literature and Mass Culture: Communication in Society, Volume 1* (New York: Routledge, [1984], 2017). Lowenthal uses the terms "mass culture" and "popular culture" interchangeably.

leather and displaying the resulting work on a fancy stand. Caricatures are the most low-cost items studied in this project; but even there, the first "Galleries of Comicalities" appeared in sporting newspapers targeting an audience of both working- and middle-class men. Generally speaking, the intimate objects of Victorian visual culture were consumed by bourgeois readers from high to low, families in or near the middle who could perhaps afford to pay sixpence for the *Illustrated London News* or who collected photographs of their friends and favorite celebrities in thick albums. Pictures often entailed some small amount of expense, which means that this book does not examine culture pitched to the most destitute of Victorian audiences. All of these objects appeared on the tides of visual fashion, obeying trends of intensity and obsolescence, as technological advances enabled the circulation of affordable objects to ever-greater numbers of people.

Mass culture has been targeted by a range of hostile critics and theorists over the years. In the mid-twentieth century, Adorno and Horkheimer attacked "the culture industry" for making art into a soulless capitalist enterprise, enslaving the masses from above. They preferred the Kantian object of autonomous high art, which promotes individualism by inspiring complicated acts of aesthetic judgment. By contrast, the new mass culture prefabricates experience for the viewer, making him (inevitably "him") into a manipulable zombie: "[I]ndustry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his schematizing for him." The critics denounce "aesthetic barbarity" in everything from Hollywood films to jazz music.[22] Similarly, Clement Greenberg, in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), disdained kitsch as the "rear-guard" of art; its origin in machine production served as a perfect metaphor for its consumers' mechanistic mindlessness. "Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations."[23] These critiques today seem slightly old-fashioned for their dismissive accounts of culture consumption—as though uneducated people, less at home within the rarified confines of high culture, are inherently ill-equipped to bring their own imaginative individualism to the objects they consume.

Scholars working with the theories of Michel Foucault have also seen visual culture as depriving modern subjects of agency, although for different reasons. Foucault theorizes modernity as a prison-house of visuality, in which subjects live under a constant state of surveillance and control. Images have played a key role in enforcing state hegemony—the mug-shot photograph, standardized in 1888,

[22] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (1944), in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 120–67: 124.

[23] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, [1961], 1989), 1–33: 10.

being a classic example.[24] Foucault's narrative has dominated the study of Victorian visual culture. Scholars have rightly observed the myriad ways that new visual technologies, especially photography, enforced a regime of power over Britain's "others," whether these were the impoverished, the racially marked, the foreign, the criminal, or the insane.[25] Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) follows Foucault in arguing that new nineteenth-century devices such as stereoscopes functioned to discipline viewers into docile modern workers.[26] Foucault's dark link between vision and power belongs to a longer twentieth-century philosophical strain denigrating the visual sense for its hegemonic, imperial connotations, as Martin Jay has traced.[27] For critics following in the wake of either Adorno or Foucault, visual culture is inherently reactionary, inhibiting social progress, enforcing hierarchies and solidifying the status quo.

While these approaches seem fitting for a certain subset of Victorian visual media—the photographic archive of empire seems especially stark—the objects considered in *Picture World* open onto more ambiguous terrain, and invite a different set of questions.[28] Foucault's singular model of correction and control ultimately feels too limiting to encompass the sheer variety and complexity of nineteenth-century media effects.[29] I instead look to a multifaceted Victorian archive premised on qualities of desire, imagination, magic, and memory, all the fantastical elements harnessed by a rising consumerism and commodity culture. Notions of desire and fantasy are invoked here not in a psychoanalytic sense, and

[24] See Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 3–64. Foucault uses Bentham's panopticon as a profound and disturbing symbol for modernity in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1978). Important visual-culture scholarship influenced by Foucault appears in the collection edited by Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[25] See, among others, Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[26] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

[27] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For a brief discussion of diverse theories of nineteenth-century visuality, see Rachel Teukolsky, "Visuality," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46:3–4 (Fall/Winter 2018), 937–41.

[28] W. J. T. Mitchell protests the critical tendency to condense visual culture objects into "the exclusive vehicle of political tyranny." Noting that this reductive method allows the critic to score an easy "political victory," Mitchell gestures toward a more complicated and dispiriting truth, which is that "[s]copic regimes can be overturned repeatedly without any visible effect on either visual or political culture" ("Showing Seeing," 175). Instead, Mitchell proposes a more nuanced approach, seeing "the visual image as [both] instrument and agency" (175).

[29] Naomi Schor usefully critiques Foucault's influence on visual culture scholarship in "*Cartes Postales*: Representing Paris 1900," *Critical Inquiry* 18:2 (Winter 1992), 188–244. Schor writes, "Such an obsessive, not to say paranoid explanatory model . . . leaves no residue, no excess, no waste, no detail, no small everyday gesture, however small and apparently insignificant, unaccounted for, unsaturated with dire meaning" (192).

without any intention to discover universal imaginings based on innate qualities of mind. My understanding follows more in the line of Raymond Williams when he writes, in *Marxism and Literature*, that "all consciousness is social." Williams chooses the word "feeling"—after rejecting "world-view" or "ideology"—to designate his sense of the individual's intimate relationship to culture and its objects. "We are concerned," he says, "with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt."[30] It is in this sense that I approach the Victorian photograph collector or Bible owner, the maker of a cartoon scrapbook or the reader of an illustrated newspaper.

This method also takes it cue from Walter Benjamin, whose unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927–40) offers a vast archaeology of nineteenth-century Parisian visual culture. Benjamin takes objects as diverse as dolls, dioramas, and shopping arcades as the basis for philosophical meditations about work, aesthetics, and the industrial economy. He acknowledges the role played by capitalism, profit, inequality, and labor exploitation in the creation of the world of commodities. But he also finds meaningful purpose in delving into the appeal of those commodities, trying to understand the wellsprings of human desire and visual pleasure.[31] For Benjamin these fantasies are often utopian, the "dream wish" of a society freed from capitalist and militaristic oppression, imagining forms of collectivism, equality, and abundance for all. While I don't follow Benjamin into his more mystical flights, I share his mixed assessment of visual culture objects, deserving of both skepticism and abiding interest, as they serve as avenues into the profound cultural imaginary of the industrial age. All the contradictory elements of Victorian desire are bound up in these images: empire, the will to power, xenophobia, racism, religious stereotypes, patriarchy—crossed with curiosity, desire for contact, ambivalence, anxiety, exposure, eccentricity, transgression, and boundary-crossing of every kind. In studying the Victorian picture world, I take seriously the nineteenth-century desire to be elsewhere and otherwise.[32]

[30] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 130, 132. Williams writes these words in the famous chapter where he theorizes "structures of feeling."

[31] This attitude of both critique and generosity also distinguishes Stuart Hall's writings on black popular culture. Even while Hall critiques the commodification of popular culture—its inseparability from "the circuits of power and capital" and its relentless work of "homogenization" and "stereotyping" (26)—he also sees it as "an arena that is *profoundly* mythic. It is a theater of popular desires, a theater of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented . . . to ourselves for the first time" (32). Stuart Hall, "What is this 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" in *Black Popular Culture*, ed. M. Wallace and G. Dent (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1992), 21–33.

[32] W. J. T. Mitchell envisions a progressive form of visual culture by proposing that images might ideally serve as conduits to "the face of the Other," following Emmanuel Levinas. As beneficial "go-betweens in social transactions," images might help to mediate face-to-face encounters ("Showing Seeing," 175). Yet in the case of the nineteenth century, it seems rare for an image to invite the kind of deep sympathetic connection theorized by Levinas. Nineteenth-century literature invents and perfects models of literary sympathy that don't really have a visual analog. Visual depictions of, say, *Oliver Twist*'s street urchins or Mayhew's ragpickers more often work to distance and detach the other, especially in racializing ways, safely marking out difference for a presumably British middle-class

Nineteenth-century media studies have been diverse and divergent, and *Picture World* attaches itself to some scholarly strands, while pushing away from others. One dominant approach, pioneered by Friedrich Kittler, studies the era's new machines and technologies enabling mass communications—from the typewriter, to the telegraph, to the telephone.[33] By contrast, *Picture World* focuses on images rather than machines. The book contributes to what is now a growing field of humanistic media studies interested in questions of aesthetics, including histories of photography, illustration, periodicals, and other machine-produced modes of visual representation.[34] This project was born out of the current academic interest in new media, one embracing "the relativity of the new," in the words of Jussi Parikka.[35] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999), describe how media transitions are never abrupt or definitive;

spectator. I would suggest that a more typical form of Victorian visual engagement with otherness came in the form of virtual travel or projection. Victorian spectators could imagine themselves inserted into a scene of vast otherness, whether on a battlefield in the Crimea (in newspaper journalism), in the desert with wandering Jews (in an illustrated Bible), or amid the Gothic ruins of a medieval abbey (looking into a stereoscope). Projected imaginatively into the image, the spectator was momentarily taken out of the self. This kind of imaginative projection was indeed privileged, but it also enabled potential transgressions, as these scenes opened out onto a multitude of alternative religions, nations, social classes, genders, ethnicities, and histories.

[33] Important studies of nineteenth-century media technologies include Jay Clayton, *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace: The Afterlife of the Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Laura Otis, *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Jason Camlot, *Phonopoetics: The Making of Early Literary Recordings* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019); John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Aaron Worth, *Imperial Media: Colonial Networks and Information Technologies in the British Literary Imagination, 1857–1918* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2014).

[34] An incomplete list of key nineteenth-century humanistic media studies with a visual dimension includes: Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Alison Byerly, *Are We There Yet? Virtual Travel and Victorian Realism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch*, ed. Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011); Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: The Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture, 1855–1875* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c. 1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Susan Zieger, *The Mediated Mind: Affect, Ephemera, and Consumerism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

[35] Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 11. The field of media archaeology tracks connections between new media and old, with an especial interest in "failed" or discarded technologies neglected by history. For a useful overview, see the introduction by Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology," in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, ed. Huhtamo and Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1–21.

new media constantly recycle or "remediate" the effects of the old, juxtaposing both familiar and novel ways of seeing and knowing. While *Remediation* focuses largely on contemporary media, its method serves as a powerful model for earlier media studies, especially those focusing on the nineteenth century, when mechanically reproduced objects often imitated the effects of earlier, singular, auratic artworks.[36]

This fact touches on one of *Picture World*'s recurring themes, as each chapter describes how Victorian visual culture courted forms of inauthenticity and fakery.[37] From new iron-ribbed buildings clad in medieval-styled stonework, to mass-printed books decorated with Gothic tracery, to illustrated newspapers purporting to offer panoramic views of "the world": examples abound here of deluded, fallacious visual accounts of space and time. Yet my analysis aims to exceed mere critique. I want to try to think deeply and generously about the fake and the fraudulent, eschewing a reflexive ironic stance. To be deluded is to be human, a state from which no one is excluded. The book thus locates sites of authentic feeling in some very inauthentic places, from clichéd destinations on the tourist track, to the faddish relics of celebrity culture, to the fabricated ancient world of an illustrated Bible. Each chapter traces out, in its conclusion, ways that our contemporary culture still pursues some of the same, recognizable desires through new media: the carte-de-visite album of photographic portraits anticipates Facebook, a modern-day book of faces; the search for the picturesque view in painting or photography anticipates the Instagram lifestyle, documenting a patently artificial, yet still pleasurable, assembly of picture-worthy "Kodak moments." Postmodern theory, following Baudrillard, might suggest that these media effects of the past and the present are simulacra, hollow imitations offering nothing real or redeemable. *Picture World* resists this move. Feeling is where we find it, even when it is generated by objects that are patently manufactured, erroneous, or irrational.

The temporality within each chapter, moving from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, suggests an analysis not quite linear. History is understood as a constellation rather than an arrow, following Walter Benjamin.[38] The method is especially important for the objects studied in this book, which have often been lined up in a tidy row by scholars tracking the pre-history of cinema. To label an object as "pre-cinema" inherently privileges the more modern medium,

[36] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

[37] In *The Deceivers: Art Forgery and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), Aviva Briefel writes of how art forgery, fakery, and fraud were treated with surprising complexity in the nineteenth century, and at times defended on cultural and economic grounds.

[38] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 253–64.

predetermining our gaze to search only for qualities appropriately "cinematic."[39] Instead, I want to pause with the "present-ness" of an object, to use Baudelaire's concept, entering imaginatively into the fantasies it furnishes. Stereoscopy thus appears not merely as a precursor to the cinema, but also as a technology looking back to Romanticism, expressing a nostalgic yearning for authentic feelings in nature. In fact, new technologies are not always necessarily futuristic or forward-facing, despite modern-day assumptions. *Picture World* avoids a teleological account, attending to the worldedness of each object, the unique formal and cultural effects immanent to an object's particular history. I attempt to understand the object's "essential quality of being present" (again, Baudelaire) for both the nineteenth century and for ourselves.

An understudied aspect of that presence, I argue here, is the human body. One crucial aim of this project is to re-corporealize the Victorian image-world, bringing the body back to an understanding of the illusion and consumption of images.[40] This emphasis pushes against postmodern accounts that have taken Victorian media as early instantiations of the virtual, the abstract, and the immaterial—all qualities germane to an internet age. Postmodern media theory today emphasizes the posthuman, the self-as-machine, the automatized and decentered subject, aligning new technologies with an incipiently robotic humanity.[41] In *Picture World*, however, I conclude that this theory is anachronistic to the deep embodiments of the nineteenth century. While the Victorian era is notorious for prudery and puritanical attitudes toward the body, these viewpoints coexisted with an overwhelming and almost delirious investment in physical life and physical pleasure. All of the media objects studied in this book drew upon bodily pleasures for their appeal. These carnalities were usually packaged within a safely educational or moralistic framework. The stereocard is a perfect example: on one side, the doubled photograph generated a three-dimensional illusion—voyeuristic, tactile, presenting the scene in fetishistic detail. On the card's flip side, the printed

[39] Works on nineteenth-century visual culture as the prehistory of cinema include: Hermann Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History: An Encyclopaedia and Annotated Bibliography of the Moving Image before 1896*, ed. Anne Hecht (London and Munich: Bowker, Saur, in association with the British Film Institute, 1993); and Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema*, trans. Richard Crangle (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000). Stephen Herbert collects primary sources about photography, stereoscopy, and other optical devices in *A History of Pre-Cinema*, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 2000).

[40] Benjamin Morgan explores the importance of embodiment to nineteenth-century aesthetic and scientific theories in *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017).

[41] Postmodern theories of nineteenth-century media appear canonically in Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter,* trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990). Other important postmodern media histories include Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, trans. Julie Rose (London: British Film Institute, 1994); and Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, trans. Gloria Custance (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

label provided salient historical and ethnographic factoids, quotes from a local authority, or a few lines from Wordsworth or Scott. Though the stereoscope was deemed safe for use by women and children, its educational bent did not obviate its grounding in the body, its vertiginous pleasures based in the physical facts of vision and sensation. Victorian culture today is stereotyped for its ascetic disavowals of corporeality, but the nineteenth-century explosion of commodity culture points in a different direction, as all of the objects I study proffered embodied pleasures, from cartes de visite portraits of courtesans and opera singers to the violent, nudity-laced illustrations of Gustave Doré's illustrated Bible.

Critiques of mass culture and critiques of Victorian media technologies in fact share a striking commonality. All of these propose that mass media usage entails a form of passivity, mindlessness, or evacuated agency. Friedrich Kittler writes that the advent of the typewriter, with its forms of "mechanized writing," brought to an end the "dream of writing as the expression of individuals or the trace of bodies."[42] Kittler uses media history to attack Romanticism's exquisite humanistic subject, tracking instead the nineteenth century's techno-inspired states of human automatism. Jonathan Crary, in *Suspensions of Perception* (1999), aligns mass culture with "states of distraction, reverie, dissociation, and trance."[43] Susan Zieger assigns a more positive valence to mass culture's states of "reverie," "enchantment," and "daydreaming," which occur beyond "the rational mind taken up with egoistic cognition."[44] But all of these assessments ultimately resonate with Horkheimer and Adorno's culture-dazed zombies, aligning mass culture with a depletion of agency. For scholars trained in forms of aesthetic high culture, mass-cultural items or technologies are often consigned to a denigrated realm of "guilty pleasures." This book takes a different view. I suggest that culture consumption does not take place away from the self, or beyond identity, merely in off-hours or apart from truly important matters. The very concept of ephemera, locating certain forms of culture at the margins, is incommensurate with its import in conjuring aspects of self and identity. We are often purposeful in choosing our mass-produced worlds, in whatever forms these materialize. Victorian users actively collected photographic cartes de visite, carefully arranging the portraits in albums to mirror the hierarchical world they occupied. In this, they anticipated the large number of people today who spend hours arranging and presenting identity on social media. The Kantian bias of humanities scholars toward complicated, autonomous artworks is perhaps incongruous with the way that many of us actually live our lives, surfing the net, browsing, collecting, studying, arranging, digesting, assembling many of the raw materials of the self.

[42] Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 16.

[43] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 46.

[44] Zieger, *Mediated Mind*, 8.

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Picture World makes an idiosyncratic choice by compressing many different visual media into a single study. In a university culture inviting hyper-specialization, the book goes against the grain by opening onto a series of worlds, expansive and investigatory rather than sharply definitive. I cannot make any claims to comprehensiveness: a complete account of the Victorian mass-produced image would overfill the bounds of any reasonably sized study. Instead, each chapter offers a methodology, a suggestive pairing of object and concept, an investigation into a rich world that might be developed by other scholars in future studies.

The book progresses in a loosely historical sequence. The first chapter examines notions of "character," which, in nineteenth-century studies, has often connoted the rounded, deep, psychological self of the realist novel. Yet the chapter traces an alternative history by looking to caricature, in some of the earliest comics ("Galleries of Comicalities") appearing in sporting newspapers in the 1830s. These caricatures portrayed an idea of character that was grotesque, masculinist, and brilliantly exteriorized, especially in depictions of "the cockney," the urban mischief-man whose subversive masculinity hovered at the borderlands of class, respectability, and propriety. Cartoons featuring the cockney often combined crude racism and misogyny with anti-authoritarian, carnivalesque humor. Character in these images manifested in grotesque renderings of bodies deformed by the economic pressures of the new urban economy. Cockney male figures expressed a wild, mock-violent energy, giving voice to some of the explosive frustration felt by working- and lower-middle-class men after the failures of the Reform Bill of 1832. The chapter shows how Reform-era visual culture was deeply influenced by the young Charles Dickens, whose earliest themes were in turn taken from an extant caricature culture. With roots in sporting cartoons, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836–7) mocks the "great man" theory of character while celebrating the urban male rogue, Sam Weller. In the character dynamism of post-Reform London in the 1830s, grotesque, ingenious physicality gave expression to fundamental instabilities of social class and economic precarity. Caricature's ephemeral images undercut any classical stability of self, producing an idea of character that was messy, funny, rebellious, grotesque, and improper.

The second chapter turns to the complex topic of "realism," which scholars have typically limned using novels, paintings, or photography. But I expand our notion of the style by turning to the illustrated newspaper. The hand-drawn, hand-engraved images of this Victorian new medium hovered in the borderland between fact-based journalism and illusionistic art. The chapter focuses on reportage of the Crimean War (1853–6), often called the first "media war": this was the first international conflict to be documented by independent war correspondents, on-the-spot sketch artists, photographers, and illustrated newspapers at home. New media technologies allowed the British public to see the war as an immediate reality, especially in journalistic exposés of the war's mismanagement.

The chapter argues that the Crimean War prompted a representational crisis demanding a new visual vocabulary, one that pictorial journalists addressed using four kinds of reality effects. I designate these effects as the descriptive, the authentic, the everyday, and the plausible, and I track them through the Crimean War's distinctive journalistic imagery, including "the Valley of Death," scenes in the trenches, the battle's aftermath, the war reporter, the amputee, and the nurse. This expanded realist history links new journalistic practices to the new realist novel, focusing on George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), published just a few years after the war, and famous for its realist manifesto. The decade witnessing Britain's first dedicated war reportage also saw the first use of "realism" as a term of literary criticism, showing how the mid-century realist aesthetic emerged from transforming representational norms across media and genres. The chapter's conclusion pursues mid-Victorian reality effects into a contemporary BBC war documentary series, *Our War* (2011–12), arriving at a sense of realism's moral complexity: the style might work to highlight the world's political problems, even while its techniques serve to affirm the established status quo.

Chapter 3 looks to "illustration," a crucial keyword in Victorian aesthetics, reflecting the rise and golden age of the mass-printed illustrated book. I turn to the vast but understudied body of religious illustrated books. The illustrated Bible, newly affordable and profusely illustrated, typically served as the centerpiece of the Victorian parlor. An illustrated Bible amplified all of the aesthetic ambiguity surrounding illustration more broadly. The age-old subject matter—images of Moses and Esther, Jesus and Mary—evoked an aura of pre-industrial authenticity and artistry, even while religious publishing thrived on new media networks and new kinds of print technologies. While the concept of illustration might imply that images are subordinated to a controlling text, the illustrated Bible—likely the single most ubiquitous Victorian illustrated book—proposed a different view. Illustration here served as a form of world-building, presenting a fantastical yet empiricist vision that drew upon recent discoveries in history and archaeology. Bible illustrators worked to make the Bible "British," despite its Middle-Eastern roots, and in doing so upended some typical Victorian markers of identity. British artists created a complicated world picture in Bible illustrations by leaping across time and space, encompassing dualities of East and West, ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, patriarchal and democratic, magical and rational, and self and other. The chapter considers Bible illustrations by Gustave Doré and John Everett Millais, among others, as well as the depictions of Jewish customs by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Simeon Solomon. I conclude that the Victorian illustrated Bible created a template for the modern mass-marketed religious experience, from epic Hollywood Bible movies to biblical theme parks.

Chapters 4 and 5 turn to the quintessential new visual technology of the nineteenth century, photography. Each chapter looks to a mass-produced type of photography that has been less studied by art history. In Chapter 4, I show how

the emergence of tremendously popular cartes de visite, small photographic portraits, contributed to the so-called "sensation" craze of the 1860s. Scholars have largely focused on sensation novels, known for their lurid crime plotlines and outrageous villainesses. Yet, as the chapter shows, sensation was a multimedia phenomenon that encompassed both novels and photographs. More than merely a literary aesthetic, sensation was in fact was a broader response to new forms of spectacular female celebrity—as seen in the wild popularity of photo portraits of actresses, opera divas, prostitutes, even Queen Victoria, all wielding unprecedented cultural power via their pictorial publicity. The carte-de-visite medium, circulating women's portrait photographs in millions of paper copies, perfectly encapsulated sensation's dialectic between embodiment and mediation, and between individual celebrity and the democratized mass. These themes drive the plots of sensation novels, especially Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and M. E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. The chapter ultimately pursues imagery of the "technosexual woman" into the present day. A 1997 London art show titled "*Sensation*" strikingly recapitulated 1860s themes with its spectacular display of erotic, mediatized female figures. I conclude that carte-de-visite culture can claim many new-media descendants, from Facebook's digitized book of faces to queens and porn stars appearing side-by-side in the same tabloid magazines.

Most middle-class Victorian parlors would have contained an illustrated family Bible, an album of photographic cartes, and, as Chapter 5 explores, a stereoscope with which to view a collection of stereographic cards. When viewers peeped into the device, the stereoview's dual photographs leapt into startling three-dimensionality, making the stereoscope the perfect vehicle for virtual travel. Destinations ranged from Egypt to Niagara Falls. Scholars have interpreted stereoviews either as avatars of scientific realism or as forbears of a postmodern, human–machine interface (especially in the influential work of Jonathan Crary). Yet the chapter diverges from both of these accounts by seeing the stereoview as extending the mode of the picturesque, the high-art landscape aesthetic of the eighteenth century. The picturesque featured artful scenes in nature, but it was also deeply imbricated in new visual technologies, with devices that ranged from the Claude glass, to the camera obscura, to the stereoscope. Though postmodern accounts have taken the stereoscope to inaugurate abstract, even robotic sensibilities, I show how the device actually worked to remediate Romantic ideals: it was a kind of organic machine and prosthesis attached to the spectator's body that enabled an extraordinary, humanistic experience. The chapter pursues the stereoscope's embodied picturesque from Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey to Ruskin's Gothic cathedral. I show how the visual technology enabled corporeal fantasies across space and time, reflecting an imperial power dynamic of global visual mastery. The conclusion finds that the modern 3-D film also reproduces some of the same fantasies, as seen in James Cameron's blockbuster *Avatar* (2009): here,

too, a new, organic technology offers a heightened sensory experience that enables a natural pathway back to an authentic self.

Chapter 6 moves to the confounding artistry of *fin-de-siècle* advertising posters. Posters were mass-produced, disposable, and advertised commodities like cocoa and the circus. But they also starred in major art exhibitions in London and Paris and were attacked for their "decadent," avant-garde styles. Our usual idea of the Decadent movement in the 1890s connotes literary authors like Oscar Wilde and Joris-Karl Huysmans, spinning visions of an aristocratic, countercultural lifestyle. Yet decadence, as the chapter shows, also manifested in visual media, and was reacting to the rise of a middle-class consumer culture of which it was very much a part. The graphic designer Aubrey Beardsley created advertising posters using decadent visual styles, shocking critics even while successfully marketing consumer goods. More broadly, pictorial posters became metaphysical symbols that were seen to embody the rise of commercial modernity. This turn was celebrated by decadent theorists but attacked by conservative critics, who saw the advent of multicolored posters blanketing city spaces as a sign of imminent cultural decline. Pictorial posters adopted new visual methods of surrealism and mysterious indirection that reflected late-Victorian theories of self and mind. I conclude by tracing a line from Aubrey Beardsley to another graphic designer, Andy Warhol, whose advertisements for Absolut Vodka recapitulated the transgressive decadent embrace of commodity culture. Warhol's poster arts show how the combination of high and low culture, packaged in striking visual form and communicated with an ironic tone, still works as a modern-day advertising technique—pointing to, more broadly, the way that avant-garde shock strategies are still called upon as persuasive commercial forces.

The book's conclusion examines the early cinema of the 1890s, to look at the ways it invoked and transformed earlier Victorian visual traditions. The earliest films were shown at fairgrounds and mass entertainment venues, and thus differ from the more parlor-oriented objects studied in this book. Yet all of the visual culture items found in the Victorian parlor opened onto "the world" and public life in fantastical and phantasmagoric ways. Seen from this perspective, the eye-tricking pleasures of early cinema were a logical extension of previous mass visual phenomena. No wonder that some of the earliest films imagined the nineteenth-century picture-world come magically to life, from enchanted albums, to animated caricatures, to figures in advertising posters throwing foodstuffs at passersby. The Victorian picture world contained a visual storehouse of fantasy and desire, whose legacies extended into the twentieth century and beyond.

1

Character

Flat, Zany, Grotesque: Caricature and the Politics of Character

Early-Victorian Caricature and Personhood

Caricature has always struggled to find aesthetic credibility due to its association with debased cultural modes like mass art, ephemerality, topicality, simplification, exaggeration, and comedy. In this chapter, however, I look to caricature as an important cultural and political site for the imagining of persons during Britain's Reform era. The agitation for Reform legislation coincided with the moment when caricature first gained broader circulation in mass-printed periodicals, engravings, and comic sketch-books in the late 1820s and 1830s. While eighteenth-century prints were elaborate and expensive, early-Victorian illustrated magazines and newspapers sold caricatures for pennies apiece.[1] I argue that caricatures—by artists like George Cruikshank, Robert Seymour, and Hablot "Phiz" Browne—presented an implicitly politicized version of character that differs from our usual sense of the nineteenth-century concept. Unlike the realist novel, with its psychologically deep characters, these ephemeral images undercut any classical stability of self, producing an idea of character that was comic, provisional, grotesque, and improper. Caricature's characters emerged in the 1830s after the Reform Bill failed to lift up working-class people and fueled the populist sentiments that would swell the ranks of Chartism in the 1840s. Producing savagely comic assaults on authority, these images targeted "great men" and their acolytes, epitomizing a deflating version of character in which grotesque, deformed bodies incarnated harsh political truths.

There's a particular logic to opening a book about nineteenth-century visual culture with the 1830s and its environs. It was in this decade that transforming technological developments enabled the first cheap illustrated magazines and affordable caricatures. And the Reform Act introduced an influential vision of

[1] Illustrated printed matter became inexpensive due to technological innovations in Britain. These included (according to Patricia Anderson) "mechanized paper-making (1803), the steam-powered press (1814), and multiple-cylinder stereotype printing (1827)"—all of which enabled the "low-cost, high-speed dissemination" of both words and images in the early 1830s. Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 2.

Picture World: Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media. Rachel Teukolsky, Oxford University Press (2020).

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198859734.001.0001

democracy: it ushered in new aesthetic and political ideals that would become definitive across the century. The democratic ideals of Reform, however, differed from the political reality, which entailed massive inequality and disenfranchisement for most British people. Caricatures in the 1830s gave frenetic visual expression to the frustration inspired by these conditions.

Historians have designated the late eighteenth century as caricature's Golden Age, celebrating the densely worked, lavish images by Rowlandson, Gillray, and Isaac Cruikshank.[2] This chapter instead looks to the smaller, more accessible and inexpensive caricatures of the late 1820s and 1830s, cheap and ephemeral, epitomized by "the flying sheet" read by travelers on the new railway lines.[3] Quick consumption defined the visual/verbal "sketches" and "scraps" appearing in new popular magazines and newspapers. These periodicals printed the earliest comics, whose name derives from the "Gallery of Comicalities" that appeared in sporting newspapers of the late 1820s. In *The Art of Caricature* (1981), Edward Lucie-Smith writes that caricature's popularity emerged from the unique nature of print itself: "Print is, after all, a very special mode of communication. It speaks to us privately, as individuals, yet cheapness of material and rapidity of production make it available to almost everyone."[4] Unlike the more elite caricatures of the eighteenth century's Golden Age, the new caricatures of the 1830s opened onto a very different chapter in the history of the medium, one geared toward a more populist and lower-middle-class ethos.

The chapter analyzes caricature as a specific aesthetic strategy, one that constructs character from the outside, from surface details, traits, movements, and behaviors, rather than by plumbing internal depths. The account invokes the etymological roots of "character," which lie in notions of carving, or engraving,

[2] Helpful sources on caricature's history include: Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); William Feaver, *Masters of Caricature: From Hogarth and Gillray to Scarfe and Levine* (New York: Knopf, 1981); M. Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum,* Vols. 5–11 (London: British Museum Publications, 1954), covering the years 1784 to 1832; Ian Haywood, *Romanticism and Caricature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Edward Lucie-Smith, *The Art of Caricature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); Brian Maidment, *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order, 1820–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Henry Miller, *Politics Personified: Portraiture, Caricature and Visual Culture in Britain, c. 1830–80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); and Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008). Robert L. Patten's two-volume biography of George Cruikshank is a veritable goldmine of information about caricature, spanning the "golden age" of late-eighteenth-century caricature into the mid-Victorian period: Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times, and Art. Volume 1: 1792–1835* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992) and *George Cruikshank's Life, Times, and Art. Volume 2: 1835–1878* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

[3] "Railway travellers . . . find *continuous* reading on a journey not quite agreeable or practicable, and are induced to have recourse to the flying sheet and other ephemeral prints." Quoted in the advertisements opening Charles Maybury Archer, ed., *The London Anecdotes for All Readers* (London: David Bogue, 1848), n.p.

[4] Lucie-Smith, *Art of Caricature*, 13.

as conveyed by the Greek word for a stamping tool. Caricature invites us to think about character's visual qualities, which are not typically foregrounded in literary discussions of a novelistic character whose focus is inherently linguistic. Thus John Frow's *Character and Person* (2014) focuses especially on the rise of fictional character in the eighteenth century and "that impossible illusion of inwardness that gives novelistic characters their 'peculiar affective force.'"[5] Literary history has privileged the rise of the Romantic subject, starting in the late eighteenth century and culminating in Jane Austen's novelistic realism or in William Wordsworth's deep poetic self in nature.[6] Yet many different kinds of character flourished in the nineteenth century, only some of which featured in the classic realist novel or Romantic poem. In seeing caricature as an art form in its own right, I eschew a negative comparison to character-as-inwardness, instead exploring a form of character defined by surfaces, one engaged in a performative grotesque, a satire of norms, and a comic exaggeration that valued visibility and, often, political critique.

Caricature has accrued negative connotations for its tendency to reduce the body to its most recognizable signs: identity becomes encapsulated in cartoonish, exaggerated externals.[7] Popular racist stock types of the 1830s included the Jewish used-clothes seller and the newly freed Caribbean slave. The Victorian visual typing of peoples participated in a dark lineage, leading to eugenics, scientific racism, and violent genocidal attacks on those deemed "other."[8] Visual typing in

[5] John Frow, *Character and Person* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 113. Frow is quoting from Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336–63; 356.

[6] Ever since Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel* (1957), scholars have tracked an arc from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, moving from the superficial, comic characters of Richardson and Fielding to the psychologically deep characters of Jane Austen. Deidre Lynch, in *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), sharply criticizes this narrative, noting that Austen's "deep" characters are just as much ideological constructs as the superficial characters that preceded them. Yet even Lynch still portrays eighteenth-century literary history as a deterministic arc whose teleology lands at Austen and the creation of the deep Romantic self (see 207–49). While I depart from the narrative privileging the rise of the Romantic subject, I have been influenced by Lynch's powerful account of an earlier eighteenth-century model of character, one found in literary texts, caricatures, even in the faces on coins. These character-surfaces were all linked, Lynch argues, by a "typographical culture" of exchangeability (5): character was not interior and individualized but more part of a commercial "system[] of semiotic and fiduciary exchange" (6). While Lynch finds that this earlier type of character gave way to Romantic models of deep psychology, my analysis suggests that surface-based modes of character persisted into the nineteenth century.

[7] Joseph Leo Koerner censures caricature for its superficial treatment of character. In caricature, "the face's legibility" is "founded on the manipulation of abstract signs and conventions that lay no claims to any real interiority" (10). By contrast, his essay (following Levinas) favors the more authentic, ineffable, painterly faces found in Rembrandt's self-portraits. See Joseph Leo Koerner, "Rembrandt and the Epiphany of the Face," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics,* 12 (Autumn 1986), 5–32.

[8] See Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); and Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Roxann Wheeler studies the eighteenth-century tradition of physiognomy and racist character types in "Racial Legacies: The Speaking Countenance and the Character Sketch in the Novel," in *A Companion*

caricature accompanied the mechanization of print: "stereotype" and "cliché" were both coined in the early nineteenth century to describe printing processes, suggesting the way that mass print itself created an idea of too-familiar, iterative characters.[9] Yet while caricature participated in these developments, it also moved in an opposite direction, celebrating eccentric individualism, deviance, and the transgression of norms rendered in a grotesque style.[10] These twin opposing strands also inhere in notions of character itself, which drives on the one hand toward essence and representativeness, and, on the other, toward distinctiveness and individuation.[11] The chapter studies the 1830s as an especially fraught moment in the history of both caricature and character. The character sketch, a defining visual-verbal form of this moment, captured the instabilities: popular comic taxonomies limned the types of urban characters, even as character itself was destabilized by economic and industrial disruptions.

Caricatures of the 1830s dwelled especially on the new male professional types that hovered ambiguously between proletarianism and respectability, entertaining a new idea that social class was performative rather than organic and innate. Under these conditions, the lower-middle-class man emerged as a key protagonist of modernity. Numerous caricatures featured "the cockney," the urban mischief-man whose subversive masculinity hovered at the borderlands of class, respectability, and propriety. These comic images combined often crude racism and misogyny with anti-authoritarian, carnivalesque humor. Cockney male figures expressed a wild, mock-violent energy that gave voice to some of the volatile frustration felt by working- and lower-middle-class men both before and after the Reform Bill of 1832. The cockney type was popularized by likely the single most influential visual-verbal item of the early-Victorian cultural world, Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), with its renowned illustrations by George and Robert Cruikshank. *Life in London* spawned two decades of popular culture obsessed with sports, roguishness, urban comedy, and the bachelor lifestyle. Egan's ensuing sporting newspapers introduced the first Gallery of Comicalities in 1827, establishing the roots of modern-day comics. An important contributor to this raucous visual culture was the young Charles Dickens, whose early works emerged directly from extant caricature types and themes. In the sports-themed *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836–7), Dickens mocks the "great man" theory of character while celebrating the urban male rogue, Sam Weller. Dickens's characters

to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 419–40.

[9] The *OED* dates the first usage of "stereotype" to 1799, and the first usage of "cliché" to 1817. The words first referred to printing processes, but took on figurative meanings after 1850.

[10] Robert L. Patten writes of caricature's eighteenth-century emergence as "another manifestation of the Romantic movement, the exploration of individuality and difference that confuted Augustan assumptions about universal norms." *George Cruikshank's Life,* i.70.

[11] See Lynch, *Economy of Character*, 35.

reappeared in pirated form across visual and print cultures of the 1830s, their comic male types resonating with audience desires and resentments. In the character dynamism of post-Reform London in the 1830s, grotesque, ingenious physicality gave expression to fundamental instabilities of social class and economic precarity.

Whereas the grand caricatures of the late eighteenth century satirized kings and politicians, early-Victorian caricatures featured ordinary everymen, carousing in pubs or in the streets—a seemingly safer and less political vision.[12] Yet politics still inhered in these more humble depictions, even when they avoided explicit legislative matters. Political energies came through in depictions of plucky pickpockets, despicable fat men in power, and jovial celebrations of "Nobody," a recurring caricature character. The political overtones, moreover, were complicated and at times unsavory. Early-Victorian caricature marketed itself to men: its imagery expressed the explosive energies of populism, taking the viewpoint of the aggrieved white male. Some of the images make for a discomfiting viewing experience today, with their cheerfully violent, racist, and misogynist overtones. These comic assaults on authority and celebrations of the little guy were consumed across classes, appealing as much to repressed bourgeois gentlemen as they did to disgruntled working-class laborers. The "energy" of caricature was both political and visual: character was rendered in lines that were wobbly, weird, distorted, and unfinished, deliberately avoiding polish and refinement. Caricatures reflected the way that older forms of identity were being destabilized by new labor conditions in the urban landscape.

My analysis opens onto some larger conclusions about alternative models of personhood depicted in a minor aesthetic mode: unlike the art forms of bourgeois

[12] Within the admittedly small world of caricature scholarship, the 1830s have been portrayed as the dismal end of a glorious radical era. According to David Kunzle, caricature's Golden Age occurred in the late eighteenth century, when luminaries like Gillray and Rowlandson unleashed scurrilous visual attacks on entrenched authorities and Tory politicians. After 1815, Kunzle contends, caricature became subservient to mass tastes, losing its radical edge. Kunzle blames Dickens, in particular, for single-handedly popularizing a safer kind of comedy, which resulted in caricature becoming bourgeois, moralistic, and domesticated. (This account of both caricature and Dickens's early works seems reductive, as the chapter will suggest.) See David Kunzle, "Between Broadsheet Caricature and *Punch*: Cheap Newspaper Cuts for the Lower Classes in the 1830s," *Art Journal* 43:4 (Winter 1983), 339–46; and Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip, Vol. 2: The Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Dorothy George presents a similar narrative in the *British Museum Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires* (Vol. 11, xiii–xvii), whose twelve collected volumes of British caricature ends, significantly, in 1832. The notion of caricature's decline is vigorously contested by Brian Maidment in *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order, 1820–1850*. Maidment argues that caricature's new commercial appeal to a broader, less-educated audience did not necessarily entail its decline into triviality. He explores various aesthetic modes deployed by the newer caricatures, such as a "firm narrative shape" and a more "naturalistic" style heralding the "origins of social reportage" (14). Even Maidment, however, suggests that the subjects of 1830s caricature were "social" rather than "political" (21)—a distinction that this chapter resists, as it observes how the social milieu of these images was everywhere politically fraught. While it is true that "Golden Age" caricatures more explicitly attacked government figures, the scraps and sketches of the 1830s also produced an unmistakable anti-establishment ethos, as the chapter pursues.

individualism, dependent on evocations of depth and roundedness, caricature used satire and aggressive mockery to raise questions about who is allowed to be gifted with personhood, and when. The caricature account of character in the 1830s ultimately pointed toward a new idea of social identity, one unfixed from an older, hermetic class system, in which the (male) self emerged as performative, flexible, and supremely adaptable.

The Political Grotesque: Bodies of the People

Caricature's signature style is the grotesque. Philip Thomson notes how grotesquerie works by juxtaposing disparate elements, especially the comic with the horrific—as in Jonathan Swift's plan, in *A Modest Proposal*, to solve Ireland's poverty problem by cannibalizing babies. The resulting defamiliarization, Thomson suggests, produces effects of both aggression and alienation: by pushing viewers beyond their expectations, the grotesque results in feelings of disturbance and even disgust.[13] Caricature's linguistic origins themselves encode an idea of violence, as the Italian verb *caricare* signifies "to load or charge, as a firearm"—implying that an exaggerated, comic drawing might serve as a kind of weaponry.[14] These belligerent aspects made caricature a fitting medium to express political and social forces, scripted across grotesque bodies.[15]

This charged mode of comic drawing gave expression to the political ferment roiling the 1830s, an especially unstable and dynamic phase in the modernizing transformation of Britain. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened in 1830, and by 1840 nearly 1,500 miles of track had been built across the United Kingdom. On the one hand, this was a moment of progressive reforms—a Whig government ushered in the Reform Act of 1832, enfranchising more of the male middle classes; the Factory Act of 1833 limited child labor, while slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833. On the other hand, though, working-class unrest escalated during the decade, responding to the massive capitalization of industry and factory work. The New Poor Law of 1834 forced those receiving charitable assistance into workhouses, a development vilified in progressive quarters. In 1838, activists drew up the People's Charter demanding universal suffrage, inaugurating the first organized working-class labor movement in history.[16] The

[13] Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), 4, 58.

[14] Patten, *Cruikshank's Life*, i.94.

[15] In *Caricature* (Harmondsworth, UK: King Penguin, 1940), E. H. Gombrich and E. Kris use a psychoanalytic model to propose that caricature's aggression emanates from "the eternal child" embedded within a universalized human nature (27). An expanded version of the argument appears in an earlier scientific paper: E. H. Gombrich and E. Kris, "The Principles of Caricature," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 17 (1938), 319–42.

[16] Many of these developments are discussed in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848* (New York: New American Library, 1962).

instability in Britain's political, social, and economic life during this decade found its expression in caricatures whose comic violence responded to the government's inability to effect meaningful social change for the country's working and lower-middle classes.

These political energies animate many of the images produced by caricaturist George Cruikshank. He had started his career in the 1810s with expensive, elaborate, and often scurrilous caricatures appearing in single broadsheet format. By the mid-1820s, however, he had shifted his output to suit the new mass market, producing more affordable and simpler images, cuts in weekly newspapers or "scraps" in cheap sketch-books and everyday books. A grotesque iconography of politicized bodies appears in Cruikshank's sketch-book, *Phrenological Illustrations* (1826). Each page contains five to seven different small cartoons illustrating different phrenological Faculties (Fig. 1.1). These "scraps" find humor in subversive, deflating puns and distorted, misshapen bodies. In "Hope," a thin man in a destitute interior gnaws on a bone while a thin dog looks on, hopefully. In "Veneration," a grotesquely fat man in an alderman's hat salivates in worshipful contemplation of a giant beef haunch. Many of the scenes have explicitly urban

Fig. 1.1 George Cruikshank, "Hope." *Phrenological Illustrations*, 1826. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

settings and referents—"Covetiveness" shows a street urchin lifting a handkerchief out of a clueless gentleman's pocket, while "Language" shows brawny working-class women arguing on a dock amid a crowd of sailors. Phrenology's scientific confidence gets punctured by the rebus-like format of the cartoons, whose puns deconstruct the totality of each Faculty. Meanwhile, the familiar types of the fat politician and the underfed working-class man speak to the broader political concerns of the 1830s, attacking those in power while offering a mocking, ambivalent sympathy to those in the underclass.[17] Cruikshank's scraps offer us a clue as to how to read the politics of 1830s caricatures. Even when politicians or Reform are not explicitly mentioned—as in an image of a pickpocket stealing a gentleman's handkerchief—these images still invoke certain stark political realities. Both the desperately poor and the venally wealthy appear in grotesque bodies, implying that modern economic conditions are deforming of character both high and low.

Some caricatures expressed a political grotesque more directly. An 1832 image from the "Gallery of Comicalities," appearing in *Bell's Life in London*, mocks the Church's refusal to support the Reform Bill. In "Contrast; Or, Before and After 'the Bill'" (Fig. 1.2), the caricature juxtaposes two panes. First, a Bishop rejects John Bull's appeal for support of the Bill: "We, bishops, don't 'make rods,'—you know the rest—so toddle!" In the second pane, the positions are reversed and now a parson petitions a common man for tithes. "Hodge" replies:

> I'll see you & the whole Bench of Bishops d—d first. Remember THE BILL. We, children of Reform, do not 'make rods'—you know the rest—so mizzle, or curse me if my mastiff shan't have the tithe of your corpus!

An excited dog in the corner gapes with toothy jaws, awaiting his opportunity to bite the parson. The cartoon presents a typically intense condensation of punning and visual play. The Bishop, big-bodied and puffy-faced, manifests the gross embodiment of privilege, his religious "corpus" become "corps." The church tithe is literalized into the humiliating bite of a dog, whose eager jaws threaten violent yet humorous retribution. The dog in this cartoon is not incidental; animals appear frequently in early-Victorian caricatures, signifying a cynical materialism. While the Church is supposed to be a holy and disinterested institution, its demand for tithes here amounts to nothing more than the avaricious bite of a hungry dog. John Bull's body is also stout and clownish: everyman

[17] As Robert L. Patten points out, the "fat man" in caricature had alluded to John Bull, the English everyman, since he was introduced in 1712. But George IV's grotesque girth, during his regency (1811–20) and his reign (1820–30), came to signify a corrupt, corpulent politics. See Patten, "Signifying Shape in Pan-European Caricature," in *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759–1838,* ed. Todd Porterfield (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 137–157: 144–46. Also relevant is Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003).

Fig. 1.2 "Contrast; or, Before and After 'the Bill.'" Detail from annual collection of the year's "Gallery of Comicalities." *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 1832. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

characters in caricature are often rendered grotesquely, even while they appear in sympathetic or admirable guises. There are no true heroes in this carnivalesque world. The everyman is as malformed as anyone else, implying a more generalized theory of humanity as animalistic, self-serving, and absurd. Still, though, the political grotesque expresses moral opinions by featuring a reliable cast of villains who fatten themselves on the land while common people suffer or starve.

Caricature's political grotesque resonates with the carnivalesque rituals analyzed by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* (1968). Bakhtin looks to Renaissance folk festivals in which peasants dressed up in outrageous, bawdy costumes, creating an atmosphere of transgressive equality within a radically unequal and divided society. He argues that the distinctive style of this riotous carnival is the grotesque. He contrasts the classical body—pure, bounded, idealized, isolated—with the grotesque body, which is fleshy, multiple, protuberant, mobile. For Bakhtin, the classical body serves as the ideological foundation of the bourgeois self—"the private, egotistic 'economic man,'"—whereas the grotesque body signifies a teeming "all-people's character," "the collective ancestral body of all the people."[18] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), elaborate on Bakhtin's theory, noting how the grotesque body

> has its discursive norms too: impurity (both in the sense of dirt and mixed categories), heterogeneity, masking, protuberant distension, disproportion, exorbitancy, clamour, decentred or eccentric arrangements, a focus upon gaps, orifices and symbolic filth (what Mary Douglas calls "matter out of place"), physical needs and pleasures of the 'lower bodily stratum,' materiality and parody.

Stallybrass and White contrast these qualities with those of the classical body, defined by regimentation, control, normalization and centering.[19] For Bakhtin, as for Stallybrass and White, the grotesque is the quintessential style of the people, channeling ancient folk traditions that challenge social hierarchies and the status quo.

A grotesque body that incarnated populist 1830s politics was "Nobody," a stock character-type with medieval roots.[20] Nobody sported a cheerful head atop elongated legs, torso weirdly missing. He appeared in caricatures across Europe as a mock-hero, long-suffering, foolish, innocent, often a scapegoat. In Britain he was also aligned with "Everybody" (cf. C. J. Grant, *Every Body's Album & Caricature Magazine*, 1834–5); both of these character types embodied the humble man with no power or resources. Nobody's antagonist was "Somebody," all stomach and no

[18] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.

[19] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 23.

[20] Patten notes that the stock type of "the torso-less creature goes back in imagery to Odysseus, who tricked Polyphemus by giving his name as Nobody" (*Cruikshank,* i.316). Nobody appeared throughout early-modern Europe in "woodcuts that printers reused from stock for centuries" (ibid.). Bakhtin records joking medieval prayers to a "subversive St. Nemo" (*Rabelais and His World*, 413–15). Gerta Calmann documents the early-modern satirical print tradition in "The Picture of Nobody: An Iconographical Study," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23:1–2 (1960), 60–104; for English caricatures, see 97–9.

legs, an arrogant persecutor of the lowly. It will be immediately apparent how these figures encoded a nascent class politics, as the human body was politicized in its parts. Legs ("shanks") were laboring, supporting, while torsos or stomachs were controlling, consuming. George Cruikshank published a sequence of scraps in 1831, "Nobody Made Fun Of," gently mocking Nobodies with captions such as "Spindle Shanks & Drum Sticks," or "The Friend in Kneed" (Fig. 1.3). The legs of these figures are absurdly long, with their heads propped surreally on top. While Nobody belongs to a longstanding folk tradition, Cruikshank recasts him within a new urban scene: these male figures clearly occupy the Dickensian milieu, with their lower-middle-class costumes and behaviors—playing music on a fiddle, dancing, toasting drinks in a pub. In the central scrap Nobody sits for his portrait; an ornamented chair rises ridiculously above his low, torso-less body, as the cartoon mocks his pretensions to respectability. Cruikshank emphasizes Nobody's antinomian politics in a series of 1841 scraps commenting on the New Police Acts (Fig. 1.4). Each scrap, captioned with the phrase "Nobody is allowed to . . . ," depicts Nobody getting up to childlike mischief, from spinning a hoop to playing Punch. The phrasing playfully imagines an upside-down world in which laws grant Nobody more freedoms—rather than the grim reality, in which new police laws will inevitably coerce and constrain. In this scrap fantasy

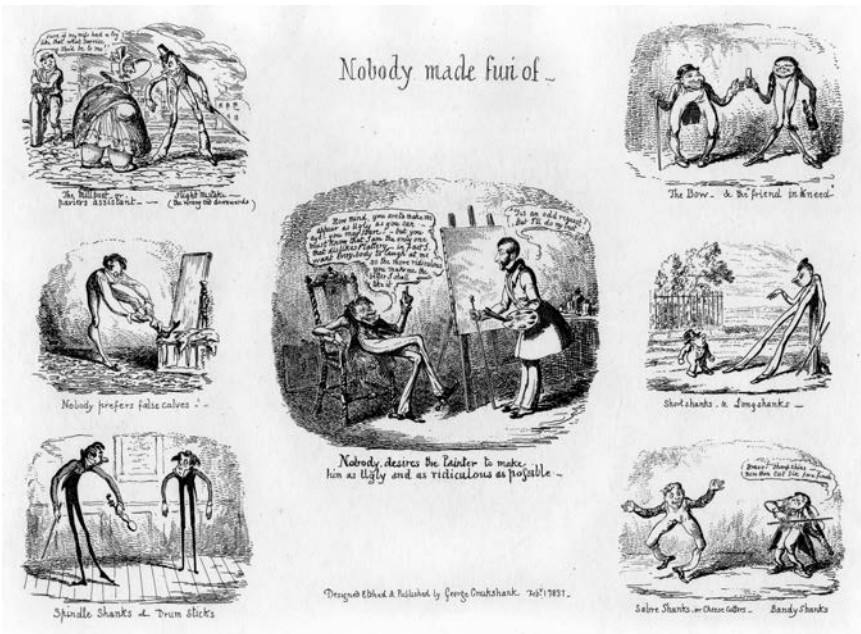


Fig. 1.3 George Cruikshank, "Nobody Made Fun Of." *Scraps and Sketches*, 1831. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 1.4 George Cruikshank, "Commentary on the 'New Police Act' (No. 2)." *George Cruikshank's Omnibus*, 1841. Courtesy University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

world, "Somebody gets punished"—a grotesque, all-stomach Somebody—while, triumphantly, "Nobody is allowed to mangle a Policeman—with impunity." The scrap depicts Nobody joyously running a flattened policeman through a laundry press.[21]

Populist characters like Nobody incarnate a Bakhtinian grotesque. They embody a dispersed identity, multiple and many-bodied, as opposed to a more elite, bourgeois individualism. These values in caricature reflect other satirical, early-Victorian attacks on the Great Man theory of character and history, as seen in, for instance, the subtitle to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–8), a "novel without a hero." Caricature's long-legged Nobody functions as part of a broader class critique of character, implicitly questioning who is allowed to be individuated, named, and gifted with a rounded identity.

Punch: The London Charivari

Carnivalesque caricature in the 1830s described a moment of transition, as ancient folk customs were being repurposed for new, modern rituals. Caricature culture often meditated on the ongoing shift from the country to the city, from folk festivals to city street parades, and from village identity to working-class urban identity. This transition is reflected in the title of the nineteenth century's most famous caricature magazine, *Punch, or the London Charivari* (founded in 1841, price 3*d*). The magazine in its earliest incarnations wedded folk tradition to urban modernity, adopting a puppet as its mascot—another grotesque comic figure whose flattened personhood served to satirize cultural and political norms.

"Punch" was a belligerent glove puppet with roots in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* (*Pulcinello*) who appeared in eighteenth-century rural fairs with his put-upon wife, Judy. Around 1785 Punch began to perform regularly in London street shows, and in 1841 he became the emcee and "house personality" of the successful caricature magazine.[22] The figure of "Mr. Punch" thus traced an overlapping arc from folk fair favorite to city street performer to print culture icon. All three of these aspects are visible in the title page of *Punch*'s first number, July 17, 1841, depicting an urban audience gathered before a puppet show and highlighting the folk puppet tradition (Fig. 1.5). (Among the crowd in the foreground, a child pickpocket rummages in a gentleman's pocket, rehearsing a popular caricature theme.) Early numbers of *Punch* stressed Mr. Punch's

[21] These scraps appeared as part of a series originally issued in nine monthly parts from May 1841 to January 1842. They appeared in book form as *George Cruikshank's Omnibus*, ed. Laman Blanchard (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1842). The two pages of Nobody scraps appear on pp. 32 and 34 of this edition; the first page is dated June 1, 1841.

[22] Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841–1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997), 52.

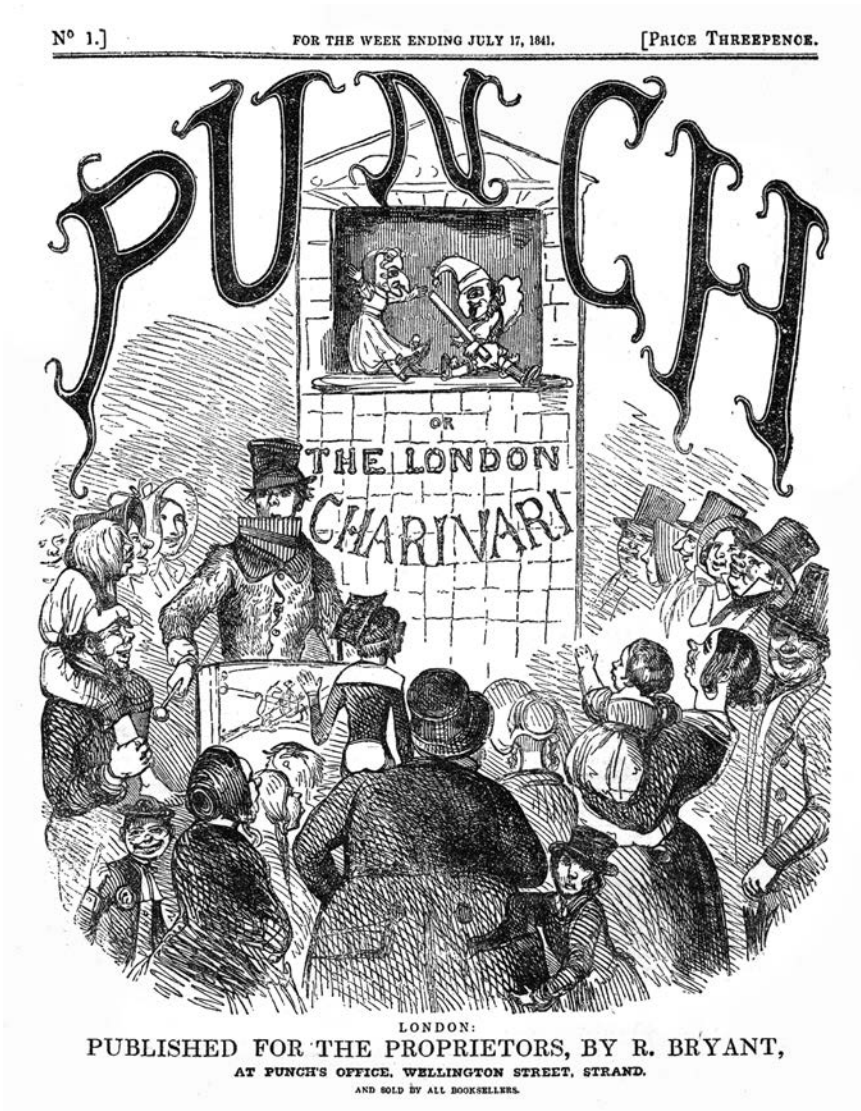


Fig. 1.5 Title page of *Punch*'s first number. July 17, 1841. Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo.

puppet qualities, exaggerating his hook-nosed features and hunchbacked shape—in fact, his deformed puppet body often appeared to be all legs and no torso, a version of the old folk figure of Nobody (Fig. 1.6).[23] The early caricature

[23] Mr. Punch resembles the torso-less "Nobody" in "Punch's Information for the People—No. 2," *Punch* 1:5 (August 14, 1841), 58.

Fig. 1.6 "Punch's Information for the People—No. 2." *Punch*, August 14, 1841. Mr. Punch resembles the torso-less Nobody.

version of Punch was, like his puppet-show forebear, pugilistic, combative, an outsider and commentator beholden to no one, a champion of working-class politics against "Somebodies." This print version echoed the contents of the original London street puppet show: an 1828 transcription of the show depicts Punch beating his dog and his child; beating and then killing his wife, Judy; also killing the doctor, the clown Scaramouch, and the hangman Jack Ketch. The show concludes with Punch's triumphant murder of the devil.[24] Comic violence takes on a political edge as the riotous puppet shatters the forces of constraint, order, and governmentality—an energy reflected in *Punch*'s early incarnations as a radical humor magazine in the 1840s.

A carnivalesque, country–city humor was also signaled by the magazine's noteworthy subtitle, "the London Charivari." This subtitle was taken from the influential French caricature magazine *Le Charivari,* which had been publishing

[24] See John Payne Collier, *Punch and Judy, with twenty-eight illustrations by George Cruikshank; accompanied by the dialogue of the puppet-show, an account of its origin, and of puppet-plays in England* (New York: Rimington & Hooper, [1828], 1929).

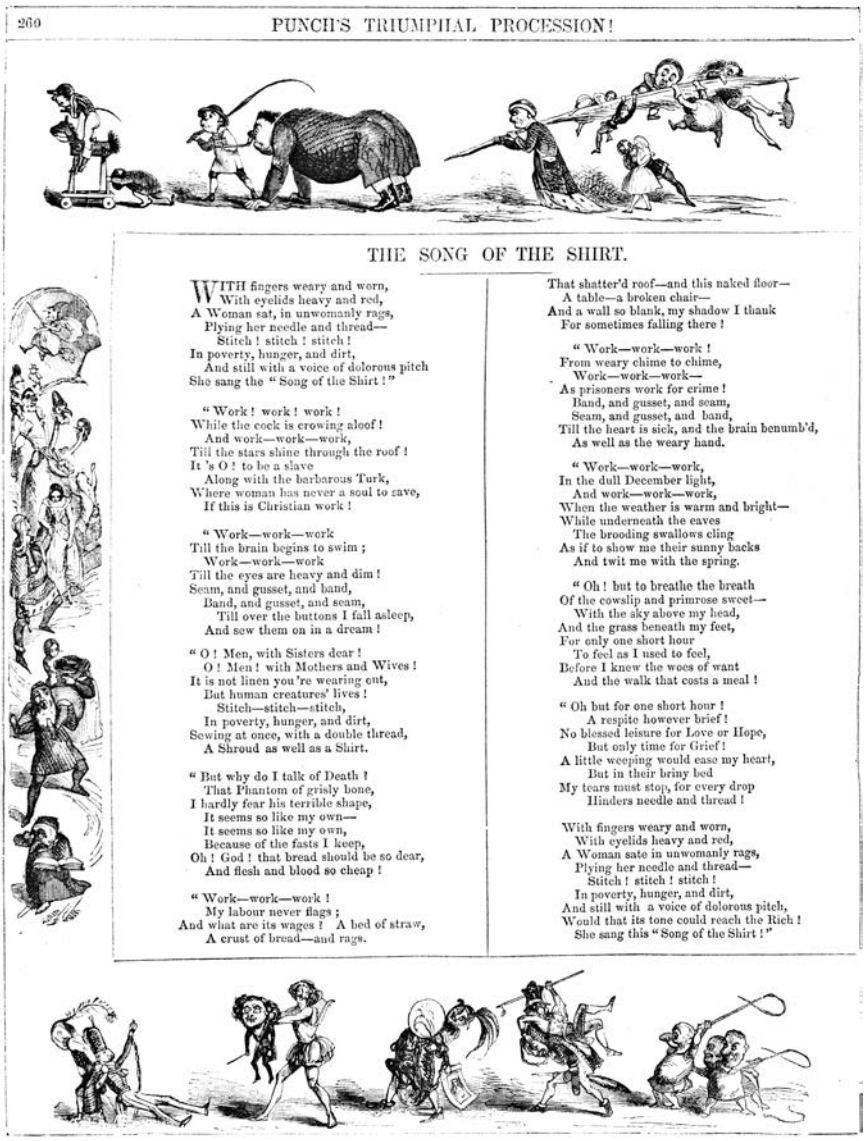
the political satires of Daumier and Grandville since 1832.[25] Both the French and English magazine titles alluded to the folk practice of "charivari," also known as "shivaree" or "rough music." Like the folk festivals studied by Bakhtin, charivari similarly involved an upside-down populist disruption—in this case, villagers banging kettles and pans and dressing up in mocking costumes in order to punish disruptive members of the community, meting out a form of popular justice. Charivari often featured a procession or costumed pageant, what E. P. Thompson describes as a form of "street theatre" in mock-imitation of the official ceremonies of church and state.[26] When *Punch* names itself "the London charivari," it announces its intention to hold city authorities to account with a kind of populist, self-anointed, comic noise-making.

Processional "rough music" is a visual iconography that recurs throughout early *Punch* numbers, as the puppet Punch leads a grotesque menagerie of weird, merry creatures in a parade around the page's margins. In fact, the urban charivari transforms our understanding of one of the magazine's most resonant early pieces, its publication of Thomas Hood's 1843 poem "The Song of the Shirt." While Hood has been canonized today as a working-class poet writing on dark and serious themes, he was known during his own lifetime as a writer of politically tinged comedy. This fact explains why his famous protest lyric first appeared in a Victorian humor magazine. The seamstress's dolorous lament mourns the deadening effects of her "Work! Work! Work!" and epitomizes the fiery, radical politics of *Punch*'s early years. "Stitch—stitch—stitch,/In poverty, hunger, and dirt,/ Sewing at once, with a double thread,/A Shroud as well as a Shirt."[27] Yet for all of the poem's dismal subject matter, its margins swarm with a pageant of grotesque comic characters, labeled "Punch's Triumphal Procession!" (Fig. 1.7). The puppet Punch leads a fantastical pageant of both humans and animals, many of them clothed in circus or jester costumes, offering an array of bizarre bodily features and odd distortions of scale. None of these characters is a seamstress, despite the female figure's popularity at the time. The figures are not named, delineated characters, but weird, flat personages; some of them oscillate between hook-nosed puppet and human character. The poem in its printed, visual context presents a grotesque, mocking aspect, as the seamstress's repetitive labor and grim dehumanization are framed by a gleeful gallows humor. The charivari parades of early *Punch* numbers reflect the magazine's transitional form, bringing a premodern village spectacle into the abstracted print culture of urban modernity.

[25] *Le Charivari* published the famous Daumier caricature depicting Louis Philippe as a pear on February 27, 1834. After an assassination attempt on the king in 1835, the government banned political caricature, and *Le Charivari* began publishing satires of everyday life. The magazine ceased publication in 1937.

[26] E. P. Thompson, "Rough Music," in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1992), 467–531: 478.

[27] Thomas Hood, "The Song of the Shirt," *Punch* 5 (December 16, 1843), 260.



260 PUNCH'S TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION!

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

WITH fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O! Men, with Sisters dear!
O! Men! with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep,
Oh! God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sate in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

Fig. 1.7 Thomas Hood, "The Song of the Shirt." *Punch*, December 16, 1843.

The antinomian qualities of Mr. Punch—along with his fellow Nobodies and caricature everymen—invite approbation of the kind expressed by Bakhtin, Stallybrass, and White. A grotesque aesthetic "of the people" seems satisfyingly anti-hierarchical and egalitarian. Yet early-Victorian caricature reflected a complicated politics true to the prejudices of its moment. E. P. Thompson sounds a note of caution: even while the charivari ritual did constitute an unalienated,

community-based form of popular justice, it also entailed more disturbing, violent aspects, enforcing social norms upon community members who differed or strayed. In particular, charivari was often performed by young men to govern or scapegoat village women who deviated from patriarchal marriage norms, whether by dominating over their husbands in arguments, committing adultery, or remarrying as widows.[28] Just because the law "belongs to the people," Thompson warns, "it is not thereby made necessarily more 'nice' and tolerant, more cosy and folksy. It is only as nice and as tolerant as the prejudices and norms of the folk allow."[29] Charivari's legacies thus range from the mild—stringing a newlywed car bumper with pots and pans—to the malevolent, in the folk-justice spectacles of American lynchings and Ku Klux Klan parades.[30] Film scholar Duncan Reekie similarly warns scholars not to "mythologise the utopian power of popular culture without acknowledging the history of popular racism, sectarianism, misogyny, homophobia, mob violence and persecution which also lies in the carnival tradition."[31] A complicated politics characterizes 1830s caricature, with its working-class sympathies and prejudices, its carnivalesque attacks on authority, especially political authority, its jingoism and masculinism, and its barely submerged aggression, grotesquerie, and violence.

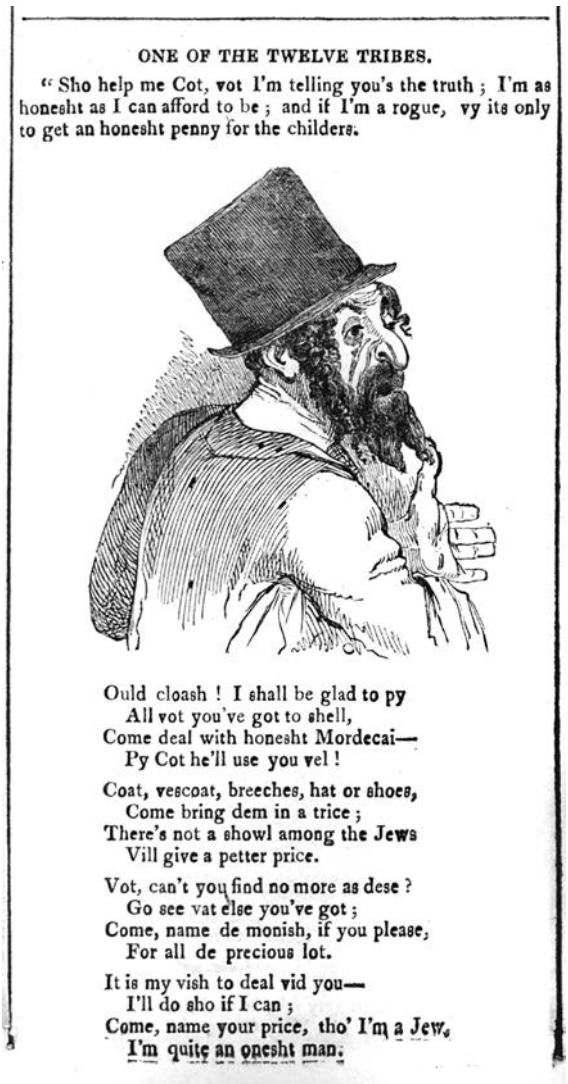
These dynamics define the humor of the "Gallery of Comicalities," the origin of modern-day comics, which first appeared in the newspaper *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* in 1827. Amid four closely typed pages of text, the Gallery of Comicalities appeared in a box on the front page in the upper-right corner, reproducing a picture with a funny caption and an accompanying poem. These early cartoons lionized the everyman's fight against Conservative politicians, the Church, and scientific authority—even while they featured numerous domestic scenes mocking the shrewish wife and the henpecked husband. Despite women's relative powerlessness in the early nineteenth century, they often appeared in caricatures as figures for the straitlaced norms of civilization, demanding that their husbands return home from the pub or the street. In one cartoon from 1832, a wizened harridan yanks her husband out of the pub, their three children clinging to her skirts (Fig. 1.8). The caption describes how "you" are seated over a pot of ale with a friend when "your spouse" unleashes

> a volley of abuse on your sottish propensities, and ordering you home on pain of having your eyes scratched out; your friend laughing slyly at your matrimonial happiness.—N.B. Stood the pot yourself, but obliged to mizzle before you had tasted it.

[28] E. P. Thompson, "Rough Music," 492. [29] Ibid., 530. [30] Ibid., 470, footnote 3.
[31] Duncan Reekie, *Subversion: The Definitive History of Underground Cinema* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 33.

Fig. 1.8 "A Visit from the White Serjeant." Detail from annual collection of the year's "Gallery of Comicalities." *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 1832. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The cartoon elevates the homosocial bond with the male friend over the tedious obligation to the wife and the domestic sphere. The misogyny of these cartoons also accompanied a broader rigidity of type, one which targeted women and scapegoated racial types such as Jews, Afro-Britons, and the Irish. "The Portfolio of Lavater the Second," offering a comic taxonomy of urban types, features a grotesque Jewish clothes-seller (Fig. 1.9), who announces in the accompanying poem, "Come deal with honesht Mordecai–/ Py Got [By God] he'll use you vel!" The image limns the stereotypical Jewish male type, with exaggerated nose, unkempt hair, and battered hat. Working-class and lower-middle-class visual culture in the 1830s proposed an anti-authoritarianism that often bristled with racist and masculinist overtones.



ONE OF THE TWELVE TRIBES.

"Sho help me Cot, vot I'm telling you's the truth; I'm as honesht as I can afford to be; and if I'm a rogue, vy its only to get an honesht penny for the childers.

Ould cloash! I shall be glad to py
All vot you've got to shell,
Come deal with honesht Mordecai—
Py Cot he'll use you vel!

Coat, vescoat, breeches, hat or shoes,
Come bring dem in a trice;
There's not a showl among the Jews
Vill give a petter price.

Vot, can't you find no more as dese?
Go see vat else you've got;
Come, name de monish, if you please,
For all de precious lot.

It is my vish to deal vid you—
I'll do sho if I can;
Come, name your price, tho' I'm a Jew,
I'm quite an onesht man.

Fig. 1.9 "One of the Twelve Tribes." Detail from *Portfolio of Lavater the Second.* Annual collection of the year's "Gallery of Comicalities." *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 1832. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The caricatures in *Bell's Life* shared a rebellious, defiant attitude with those in the early numbers of *Punch*. But the latter publication by mid-century had transitioned away from working-class culture, arriving at its more familiar incarnation as a "Whiggish," middle-class organ. This transition was tracked by the cartoon puppet icon himself: whereas the early Mr. Punch was a folk anti-hero transplanted into an urban context, still very much a puppet defined by