CARTOONING AS 'EPITHEATRE': THE CASE OF VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN LONDON

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Cartoons and comics have long shared similarities with televisual and filmic forms of comedy. Laurence Grove has made a clear link between the genres in his *Comics in French* (2013, pp. 36-36)[1]; Scott McLeod made similar observations in *Understanding Comics* (1993)[2]; and David Kunzle pointed-out the way comic strip anticipated the film strip in his classic *History of the Comic Strip*[3]. The single-frame cartoon, however, has an even more venerable connection to performative comedy, via the mass entertainment that pre-dated film by several millennia: the theatre. The classic form of the comedy routine is known literally as a 'sketch', signalling its origins in French vaudeville and British music hall, but also its debt to drawn, *dessinée* forms of comedy and satire. A cartoon or caricature is usually imagined as a scene from a larger drama – the *case* or image, with its *cadrage* or border forming the approximation of the stage.[4] But beyond such conceptual and figurative connections, historic periods of cartooning culture and practice have themselves been intimately associated with the theatre, its cultures and practices; to the extent that cartooning in Victorian and Edwardian London (c.1840s-1910s) can be described as 'epitheatrical' in nature.

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1 Laurence Grove, *Comics in French*, Oxford & New York: Berghahn, 2013, pp. 36-36.
2 Scott McLeod, *Understanding Comics*, Northampton, MA: Tundra, 1993.
3 David Kunzle, *The History of the Comic Strip, Volume II: The Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 348 ff.
4 These categories and descriptors are summarised in: Cole, *Comics in French*, 2013, pp. 24-36.

‘Epitheatre’ is a still-recent coinage that describes artforms, forms of literature, social life and practices that are dependent upon the theatre but not necessarily located within plays or playhouses. Originating in Mark Stevenson and Wu Cuncun’s analysis of the nineteenth-century Beijing theatrical world[5], the concept is readily applicable to contexts like Victorian London where the theatre became a significant aspect of the Habermasian public sphere, serving as more than mere venues for diversion and entertainment. Cartoons and the comic papers that carried them, were crucial components of those interconnected worlds, as best epitomised by the case of Matthew Somerville Morgan (1837-1890), whose epitheatrical career has seen the most recent engagement with the concept pioneered by Stevenson and Wu[6]. In what follows, I seek to expand the scope of that earlier study of Morgan, to include his contemporaries and inspirations, and perceive in the broader culture of British cartooning a distinctly epitheatrical context.

Theatre and Epitheatre

Stevenson and Wu first pioneered the notion of epitheatre when struggling with the often extremely stringent requirements imposed by the Australian Research Council, as part of its annual cycle of grant applications. Their desire to study aspects of the theatrical culture of early modern China that were not exclusively based on the plays and performances themselves led them to define ‘forms of literature and social life that are dependant [sic] on the theatre but not necessarily located within plays or playhouses’[7]. In drawing themselves on a coinage first used by George W. M. Harrison in relation to the theatrical imaginary of Plutarch[8], Stevenson and Wu seemed reticent to move too far beyond the handy notion as a conceptual framework

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[5] Mark Stevenson, ‘Epitheatre: Definitions and Developments’, 4 June 2010, https://www.academia.edu/241964/Epitheatre_Definitions_and_developments; Cuncun Wu and Mark Stevenson, ‘Speaking of Flowers: Theatre, Public Culture, and Homoerotic Writing in Nineteenth-Century Beijing’, *Asian Theatre Journal*, 27: 1, 2010, pp. 100-129.

[6] Richard Scully, ‘”The Epitheatrical Cartoonist”: Matthew Somerville Morgan and the World of Theatre, Art and Journalism in Victorian London’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16: 3 (December 2011), pp. 363-384.

[7] Stevenson, ‘Epitheatre’, p. 3.

[8] George W. M. Harrison, ‘Plutarch the Dramaturg: Statecraft as Stagecraft in the *Lives*’, *The Statesman in Plutarch’s Works, Volume II: The Statesman in Plutarch’s Greek and Roman Lives*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, p. 56.

for aspects of their own field. Yet it has a great deal of utility when applied to the study of cartoons and caricature, as will become clear.

Not only were the comic papers of Victorian London filled with theatrical news and gossip, but many of their most notable staff-members conducted parallel careers in the theatre, either professionally or as amateurs. Regular attendance at theatrical performances was part of the everyday routine of many of these cartoonists and satirists. So too, while magazines like *Punch* (1841-1992; 1996-2002), *Fun* (1861-1901), and *Judy* (1867-1907) were headquartered in the press district of Fleet Street, their counterpart and rival *The Tomahawk* (1867-1870) had its first offices within the theatrical and marketplace district of Covent Garden. At 30, Tavistock Street – just down the road from the Covent Garden Theatre (today's Royal Opera House), it was quite literally an epitheatrical enterprise in its early days[9].

Most notably, though, it was via the very framing of the cartoons themselves that their epitheatrical nature is apparent. The earlier, Georgian and Regency satires of James Gillray (1756-1815) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) appeared more as voyeuristic peeps through keyholes or windows, into the lives of the great and powerful. The caricaturist was therefore displacing what should be private into public view (quite literally, as such prints reached their widest audience and readership through display in the print-shop windows of St James, Haymarket, and other districts)[10]. But by the Victorian Age, when politics was rapidly becoming more public, and the consumption of caricature more private, the situation was inverted. Consumers of caricature were consumers of a public spectacle, making the theatrical mode much more appropriate as a setting for satirical imagery and commentary. In part, this may have had much to do with the new ascendancy of Shakespeare, to whose works cartoonists had regular recourse[11]. The celebrated simile from *As You Like It* was never more appropriate than in this period:

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely Players;
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts.

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[9] *The Tomahawk*, Volume I, 1867, Frontispiece; Scully, '"The Epitheatrical Cartoonist", p. 381.

[10] Richard Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume I: The Founders*, London, The Political Cartoon Society, 2018, p.14.

[11] Jonathan Bate, 'Shakespearean Allusion in English caricature in the age of Gillray', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49, 1986, pp. 196-210; Alan R. Young, Punch *and Shakespeare in the Victorian Era*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007.

Preceding *Punch*

In the years before the appearance of *Punch* on the London newsstands, Britain's greatest satirical artist was arguably John 'HB' Doyle (1797-1868)[12]. Doyle's 'Political Sketches' were a great novelty in the period of agitation for reform, imagining all manner of scenes in which the establishment and its discontents engaged one another in combat. This was quite literally the case in his depiction of the rebellion of Tory MPs against the Duke of Wellington's foreign policy in 1830[13]; and more effectively by the fall of Sir Robert Peel in 1846, both drawing on *Julius Caesar*[14]. Peel lies, surrounded by his dagger-wielding fellow Tory MPs, at the foot of a statue of the Whig leader and former prime minister, Lord Melbourne, in a direct parody of the murder scene (fig. 1)[15]. Melbourne's statue takes the place of the original of Pompey; amongst the group to the right are the leading protectionist Lord Bentinck (as Cassius), the chief advocate of free trade Richard Cobden (taking the role of Brutus), and the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell. Lords Russell, Morpeth, and Palmerston, Richard Lalor Shiel round-out the group; the figure approaching the fallen Peel on the left is the flamboyant up-and-coming Conservative MP, Benjamin Disraeli. Peel utters Caesar's famous admonition '*Et tu brute* [You too, Brutus?]', and the caricature is subtitled with Brutus's justification for his and others' actions: 'Not that I loved Cæsar less [But that I loved Rome more]'[16]. That Peel's government was toppled largely by a revolt from within its own ranks – and by a combination of unlikely allies – is therefore well captured by Doyle's use of the theatrical parallel, and by the 1840s he was already well practiced at such allusions[17].

[12] On Doyle's life and career, see: Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume I*, pp. 38-75.

[13] 'HB' [John Doyle], *Scene from a Suppressed Tragedy entitled The Turco Greek Conspiracy*, London, Thomas McLean, 18 June 1830.

[14] 'HB', *The Fall of Caesar*, London: Thomas McLean, 18 July 1846.

[15] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (c.1599), Act III, Scene I.

[16] Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene II.

[17] Doyle had used the same scene before: 'HB', *The Death of Caesar*, London: Thomas McLean, 29 April 1836.

Fig. 1

As early as the 1820s and through the 1830s, Doyle utilised the witches of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to imagine a number of issues[18], including the prospects of Prince Ernest Augustus acceding to the throne (he eventually succeeded his brother William as King of Hannover in 1837, but not of Great Britain and Ireland)[19]; and *Hamlet* was appropriated for his comment on the libel suit that ended the *Morning Journal* in 1830[20]. Aside from Shakespeare, a favourite point of reference was the evergreen *Beggar's Opera* (1728) by John Gay; the opportunity for depicting politicians in drag being too amusing to pass-up[21]. Doyle also imagined politics in general as often little better than a farce, or comic play[22], or the statesmen and policies

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[18] 'HB', *The Tricoloured Witches*, London: Thomas McLean, 6 June 1831; William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (c.1604), Act I, Scene I.

[19] 'HB', *The Prophecy*, London, Thomas McLean, 13 November 1829.

[20] 'HB', *Alas! Poor Yorick*, London, Thomas McLean, 29 May 1830.

[21] 'HB', *A Scene from the Beggar's Opera*, London, Thomas McLean, 9 March 1831; *Reconciliation between Peachem and Lockit*, London, Thomas McLean, 23 June 1835; *Scene from the Beggar's Opera*, London: Thomas McLean, 14 April 1841.

[22] 'HB', *A New Farce called a County Meeting*, London, Thomas McLean, 3 August 1830; *A Scene from the New Farce of 'I'll be your second'*, London, Thomas McLean, 26 May 1832.

of the day spanning the whole spectrum of 'Tragedy and Comedy'[23]. It was only a very slight stretch to imagine the politicians themselves as actors, as in his depiction of Lord Brougham as *A Great Actor Playing to Empty Benches*, or King William IV, during the debates over the Great Reform Bill of 1832[24].

The recourse to theatrical allusions was also dependent on the time of year, and the annual cycle of performances in London's West End. Doyle would have been particularly aware of these ebbs and flows, as the premises of his publisher – Thomas McLean – was itself adjacent to the Theatre Royal, Haymarket[25]. Particular performances that were then on-stage would inspire topical comments (e.g. the autumn performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 1838)[26]. The summer months often saw ballet and dance adapted to political commentary[27]; while the winter months and the Christmas season saw Doyle adapt the traditional pantomimes and their cast of characters (including Harlequin, Clown, and Pantaloon, as well as a host of fairies)[28].

Mr Punch

The pantomime was a particularly favourite device for the cartoonists who succeeded 'HB' as Britain's greatest talents: the men of *Punch; or, the London Charivari* (1841-1992; 1996-2002). Appearing in 1841, as 'HB's career was beginning to stagnate, *Punch* employed one of Doyle's sons – Richard (1824-1883) – who drew upon a very similar set of tropes as had his father; interspersing Classical, Biblical and historical allusions with those drawn from the theatre. Unlike his father, who had the luxury of working alone, Doyle was just one of a number of staff-members on what

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[23] 'HB', *John Bull between Tragedy & Comedy*, London, Thomas McLean, 15 March 1831.

[24] 'HB', *A Great Actor Playing to Empty Benches*, London: Thomas McLean, 14 September 1832; *A Great Actor Between Tragedy and Comedy*, London, Thomas McLean, 10 February 1834.

[25] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume I*, p. 54.

[26] 'HB', *A Scene from Don Giovanni*, London: Thomas McLean, 10 October 1838.

[27] 'HB', *The Rival Artistes or Sketches from the King's Theatre*, London, Thomas McLean, 17 July 1832.

[28] 'HB', *Grand Christmas Pantomime*, London: Thomas McLean, 17 January 1832; *A Scene from the Popular Farce of Tom Thumb*, London: Thomas McLean, 20 February 1837; *The New Christmas Pantomime*, London, Thomas McLean, 22 December 1845.

became the great model of the Victorian comic periodical, which took as its mascot the chief character of the ubiquitous children's puppet-show, and included theatrical reviews and gossip in its contents[29]. *Punch*'s founding editor, Mark Lemon (1809-1870), was also a playwright (of more than sixty melodramas, comedies, and operettas)[30]. So too were many of his successors, including Tom Taylor (1817-1880) – a production of whose 1858 farce *Our American Cousin* was being watched by Abraham Lincoln when he was assassinated in 1865[31] – and Sir Francis Cowley Burnand (1836-1917), whose output was nothing short of prolific[32]. While chief cartoonist John Leech (1817-1864) was a talented illustrator of contemporary London, his cartoons tended to depict real-life situations, and rather than imagine politicians on stage, he preferred to draw the theatrical world as he saw it. Quite famous is his 'The Great Social Evil' (fig. 2), depicting a scene 'not a hundred miles from the Haymarket', in which a prostitute happens upon a well-to-do acquaintance sheltering from the rain, and assumes that she, too, is 'gay'[33]. Reinforcing the point is the poster for Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*: concerning a famous courtesan, Violetta, the opera ignited controversy when it was performed at Her Majesty's Theatre in summer, 1856. With Stevenson and Wu's work in mind, it is worth noting that prostitution was probably the epitheatrical pastime *par excellence*. A police report issued on 20 May 1857, and therefore the main subject of Leech's comment, claimed a total of 480 prostitutes working in 45 brothels situated in London's theatre district alone[34].

[29] Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1997, pp. 717-729.
[30] Hugh Chisholm, 'Lemon, Mark', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Volume 16, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 413.
[31] 'Our American Cousin', *The Era*, 24 October 1885, p. 8.
[32] Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama – Vol 5, Late Nineteenth Century Drama 1850–1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp. 288-289.
[33] John Leech, 'The Great Social Evil', *Punch*, 10 January 1857, p. 114. On the Haymarket as a site of prostitution, see: Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, London & New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 83.
[34] Massimo Zicari, *Verdi in Victorian London*, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 2016, at: https://books.openedition.org/obp/3121?lang=en.

Fig. 2

Punch's greatest cartoonist (Leech's contemporary, and Richard Doyle's successor) Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) was himself an amateur actor, and seems to have conceptualised his cartoons as scenes from plays (often even including the boards of the stage beneath the feet of his imagined statesmen, monarchs, and allegorical characters). In the 1840s, Tenniel appeared in several light-hearted comedies and farces, something which underscores his 'deep fascination and devotion… for the theatre'[35]. Frankie Morris has made the most compelling case for Tenniel's particular fondness for pantomime, something he used in his *Punch* work as well as his even more famous

[35] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume I*, p. 124.

illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872)[36]. Tenniel imagined figures as diverse as Otto von Bismarck, Pope Pius IX, and the various emperors of Russia and Austria as characters in Christmas pantomime (fig. 3)[37]. His ability 'to imagine a single scene from the great drama of politics and history', or to 'illustrate a single episode from a larger story', was intimately connected to his awareness of how stagecraft worked in practice[38].

Fig. 3

Upon his retirement in 1900, Tenniel was succeeded as chief cartoonist by the serial playgoer Linley Sambourne (1844-1910). Sambourne delighted in the theatre, and his diaries indicate that he sometimes attended two or even three productions in a week[39]. When called-upon to draw real-world political figures, he was therefore ready and able to adopt theatrical imagery, and amongst his most regular characters was the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II.

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[36] Frankie Morris, *Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2005, pp. 155-169.

[37] John Tenniel, 'Rough Nursing for the New Year', *Punch*, 2 January 1875, p.5; 'The Old "Business"', *Punch*, 21 January 1882, p. 31.

[38] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume I*, p. 124.

[39] Linley Sambourne, unpublished diary, 5 & 6 January, 1893; 9 & 12 March 1901.

The Kaiser's own theatrical style made him perfect for such roles as 'Herr Wilhelm the Quick-Change Artist' (fig. 4)[40], 'The Imperial Crummles' (adapting a character from Charles Dickens' 1839 novel *Nicholas Nickelby*)[41], or a narcissistic 'manager-actor' who insists upon casting himself in the lead role[42]. From a position of 'Splendid Isolation' (Lord Salisbury's preferred foreign policy) the British view of the 'Theatre of Europe' was very much that of the spectator. Well into the twentieth century, Sambourne used stock characters and musical pieces – including pirates, as in 'Melodrama in the Baltic'[43]; or famous music-hall songs, like G. H. MacDermott and G. W. Hunt's *By Jingo!* (1878)[44] – to illustrate his points.

Fig. 4

[40] Sambourne, 'Out of an Engagement', *Punch*, 17 October 1896, p. 182.
[41] Sambourne, 'The Imperial "Crummles"', *Punch*, 8 January 1898, p. 2.
[42] Sambourne, 'A New Rôle', *Punch*, 14 January 1898, p. 14.
[43] Sambourne, 'Melodrama in the Baltic', *Punch*, 2 August 1905, p. 83.
[44] Sambourne, 'Copyright Expires', *Punch*, 24 March 1909, p. 209.

Sambourne in turn was succeeded in 1910 by Sir Bernard Partridge (1861-1945) who, like Tenniel, pursued an acting career before turning full-time to illustration and cartooning. Partridge's career, though, was of a far more serious nature than Tenniel's amateur dramatics. As 'Bernard Gould', he appeared in a number of major performances, including George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (1894)[45]. He rubbed shoulders with the giant of the Victorian stage, Sir Henry Irving[46], and in the end was forced to choose between his acting career, and the more regular income provided by a salary on *Punch*[47]. Even moreso than his predecessors, therefore, Partridge was an epitheatrical cartoonist, and his cartoons are even more carefully designed to present the appearance of stage, lighting, scenery, and costume. Partridge was also a regular illustrator of more serious theatrical news items[48], and his attention to detail is evident in both his comic, as well as his serious, work. Just as Sambourne had imagined Kaiser Wilhelm II as an actor, so too did Partridge. His 'On Tour' (fig. 5) laying on the metaphor rather thickly, as Wilhelm 'the Moor of Potsdam' is not only a Shakespearean figure, but one who is:

'Unter den Linden' – always at home,

Under the lime-light' wherever I roam![49] The Kaiser had, on 31 March 1905, on the initiative of the German foreign office, landed at the port of Tangier on the Moroccan coast. This was an area of increasing French influence, and Wilhelm's arrival was a deliberately provocative action, designed to test the recent Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale*, as well as promote German interests in the region[50].

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45 Richard Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume III: Heirs and Successors*, London: The Political Cartoon Society, 2018, p. 100; Linley Sambourne, unpublished diary, 7 May 1894.

46 Sambourne, unpublished diary, 3 November 1900; Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, London, William Heinemann, 1907, p. 298.

47 R. G. G. Price, *A History of Punch*, London, Collins, 1957, p. 160.

48 Bernard Partridge 'Tragedy and Comedy', *Illustrated London News*, 21 November 1891, p. 664; 'A Night at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden', *The Sphere*, 30 June 1900, p. 717; 'Miss Ellen Terry as Beatrice', *The Sketch*, 13 June 1906, p. 5.

49 Partridge, 'On Tour', *Punch*, 5 April 1905, p. 237.

50 Richard Scully, *British Images of Germany: Admiration, Antagonism & Ambivalence, 1860-1914*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 265.

Fig. 5

The Rivals of Mr Punch

Arguably, the theatrical connection – and epitheatrical phenomenon – was even more pronounced at *Punch*'s log-time rival paper, *Fun* (1861-1901), which was founded by prolific dramatist Henry J. Byron (1835-1884) and possessed a jester for a mascot. *Fun* boasted playwrights of the standing of Francis Burnand (before he was recruited by *Punch* – see above), and theatre critics like E. L. Blanchard (1820-1889)[51]. Thomas Hood the Younger (1835-1874), another playwright, was a long-time editor; and *Fun*

[51] Richard Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume II: The Rivals of Mr 'Punch'*, London: The Political Cartoon Society, 2018, p. 17.

staff-member Tom Robertson (1829-1871) famously imagined the staff of the magazine in a scene from his 1865 smash-hit play *Society*[52]. The scene has been hailed as the 'high-point of the new naturalism of dialogue' and 'attention to realistic detail of setting and stage direction' that characterised Robertson's contribution to the Victorian theatrical revolution[53]; making the epitheatrical nature of *Fun* indisputable. To cap it off, the still-famous Sir W. S. Gilbert (1836-1911) – collaborator with Sir Arthur Sullivan on so many comic operas – also wrote and drew in *Fun*'s pages[54]. He is well-known for having included political satire in his theatrical work, and indeed his play of 1873 – *The Happy Land* – saw characters more normally found in the cartoons of the day (Prime Minister William Gladstone, Chancellor Robert Lowe, and A. S. Ayrton, Commissioner of Public Works) jump off the page and onto the stage[55].

It is with respect to *Fun* that an epitheatrical case can most strongly be made, via an overview of the career of scene-painter-cum-cartoonist Matt Morgan. The subject of significant study in its own right, I do not intend to rehearse Morgan's connections to the theatre here, but his example truly does point to the way certain satirical forms of literature and art, as well as the social life from which they derived, were dependent upon the theatre. Morgan's were probably the most self-consciously theatrical of all Victorian cartoons, especially once he re-established his career – post-*Fun* – at *The Tomahawk*. His *Fun* work 'drew heavily on his experience of the theatre'[56], and characters as remarkable as his version of Abraham Lincoln or King Christian IX of Denmark could be readily reimagined as stage performers, or characters drawn from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *King John*[57]. But at *Tomahawk*, the usual restrictions of printing even full-page cartoons were lifted, and Morgan's abilities as a scene-painter – honed for many years in the later 1850s into the 1860s – were given a much grander scale. *Fun*'s standard page was 21 x 27cm and Morgan's cartoons were invariably printed in black

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[52] Richard Schoch, 'Performing Bohemia', *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, Volume 30, nº.2, Winter 2003, p. 3.

[53] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume II*, p. 18.

[54] See: Jane W. Stedman, *W.S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, esp. pp. 11-29.

[55] Martin Meisel, 'Political Extravaganza: A Phase of Nineteenth-Century British Theater', *Theatre Survey* 3, May 1962, pp. 26-29.

[56] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume II*, p. 23.

[57] Matt Morgan, 'A Yankee Olmar', *Fun*, 15 November 1862, p. 84; 'War', *Fun*, 30 January 1864, p.196; 'Old and True', *Fun*, 19 March 1864, p. 4.

and white. *Tomahawk* could accommodate fold-out pages of fully 46 x 27 cm, and lavish colour printing gave his cartoons a character almost unique in all of Victorian satirical art. The impression given by his ‘I’ll Follow Thee!’ (fig. 6) – a reimagining of the battlement scene from *Hamlet*, with the then-Prince of Wales looking to pursue the ghost of his great uncle, George IV into a life of debauchery – is striking[58]. The bluish-green ink allows for a ghostly form to appear, and moonlight to play on the clouds, the seas, and the stones of Elsinore, while the earthly characters appear in more solid black ink.

Fig. 6

Morgan continued to work in the theatre concurrently with his cartooning for *Fun* and *Tomahawk* (and also the *Arrow* and the *Comic News* in 1863-5). His scenes and costumes for the spectacular pantomimes *Cinderella* (1864-1865), *Ali Baba* (1866-1867), *Babes in the Wood* (1867-1868), *Robinson Crusoe* (1868-1869) and the *Yellow Dwarf* (1869-1870) were much remarked upon in the press[59]. He was therefore also in a good position in the later 1860s to use his experience to wage a concerted campaign against the office of the

[58] Morgan, ‘I’ll Follow Thee!’, *The Tomahawk*, 29 June 1867, pp. 89-92.

[59] Richard Scully, ‘Sex, Art and the Victorian Cartoonist: Matthew Somerville Morgan in Victorian Britain and America’, *International Journal of Comic Art*, 13: 1, 2011, pp. 302-305.

Lord Chamberlain, who was responsible for the censorship of the theatres across the whole period from 1737 to 1968.[60]. Lord Sydney's attempt to regulate the costuming, particularly of ballet-dancers, was met with cartoons such as '"Propriety" Behind the Scenes!' (fig. 7), showing the cast of an imagined pantomime (possibly even *Robinson Crusoe*, which was then drawing to the end of its run) wearing high-necked collars and full-length breeches instead of the skimpy tights and tutus worn in reality[61]. For added comic effect, the little pair of performing dogs are also wearing trousers, as are the legs of the large table against which Harlequin is resting[62].

Fig. 7

Morgan continued his parallel theatrical, and epitheatrical cartooning career, after emigrating to the United States in 1870, leaving the field to other up-and-coming cartoonists of note. At *Fun*, Paul Mary Grey (1842-1866), and then another son of John 'HB' Doyle – Henry (1827-1892) – took up the role of chief cartoonist, peppering their work with pantomime villains and theatrical characters of note[63]. Fred Barnard (1846-1896) followed them in

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[60] Scully, *Eminent Victorian Cartoonists – Volume II*, pp. 28-31.

[61] Morgan, '"Propriety" Behind the Scenes!', *The Tomahawk*, 13 February 1869, pp. 69-71.

[62] Although unclear, Morgan may have depicted Lord Sydney himself, as the top-hatted gentleman surrounded by ballet girls to the left of the image (although his presence in the original painting is doubtful).

[63] Paul Mary Grey, 'When Rogues Fall Out', *Fun*, 14 April 1866, p. 45.

the late 1860s, before John Gordon Thomson (1841-1923) took over in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War. Thomson was more attached to the comic possibility of his images, but occasionally had recourse to something more serious, as in his depiction of Benjamin Disraeli, first Earl of Beaconsfield, as Shylock from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (fig. 8)[64]. Disraeli's own Jewishness (he was baptised into the Church of England in 1817, aged twelve) makes the image as distasteful to today's reader as it no doubt did to some in 1880. The cartoon imagines Disraeli's great rival, Gladstone, as Portia (disguised as the lawyer Balthazar) challenging Shylock to take his bond despite the laws against it, thus saving the life of Antonio (here imagined as John Bull, the personification of Britain)[65]. The precise context for the cartoon was the approach of the 1880 general election, and the clash of Disraeli's Conservatives and Gladstone's Liberals ultimately won by Gladstone. Himself an outright partisan of the Liberal Party, Thomson was able to draw upon all manner of theatrical metaphors to demonise Disraeli and champion William Ewart Gladstone, right down to 1893, when Thomson retired, and *Fun* turned away from liberalism towards the right. During those decades, Thomson helped *Fun* to truly rival *Punch*, and even to 'surpass' it, 'in its commentary on literature, fine arts, and the theatre'[66].

Punch's other major rival – the Conservative-leaning paper named *Judy* (1867-1907) after Mr Punch's own puppet wife – also depended for its popularity on theatrical connections, notably via long-time editor Charles H. Ross (1835-1897). A former civil servant, Ross edited *Judy* between 1869 and 1887, and supplemented his income by writing 'plays, pantomimes, penny dreadfuls, theatre criticism, novels, and even sermons'[67]. But Ross was not the most significant epitheatrical figure on *Judy*: that honour goes to his lifelong partner – professionally as well as romantically – the cartoonist and actress Marie Duval (1847-1890). As editor, Ross helped foster Duval's remarkable talent in creating 'Ally Sloper', perhaps the first universally-recognisable cartoon character[68], as well as casting her in numerous of his plays

[64] John Gordon Thomson, 'Shylock and His "Pound of Flesh"', *Fun*, 18 February 1880, p. 67.
[65] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (c.1596), Act 4, Scene I.
[66] Ted R. Ellis III, 'Victorian Comic Journals', in Alvin Sullivan (ed.), *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1984, p. 504.
[67] Simon Grennan, Roger Sabin, and Julian Waite, *Marie Duval: Maverick Victorian Cartoonist*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2020, p. 20.
[68] Roger Sabin, 'Ally Sloper: First Comics Superstar?' *Image and Narrative*, 7, 2003, n.p.

during the 1870s[69]. Duval was therefore given space to express all manner of opinions in a manner unavailable to most women of the period, including being quite overt in her criticism of the mid-Victorian hypocrisy concerning women's idealised domestic role, and the realities of women in the work-place, using her experience in the theatre as a major touchstone[70].

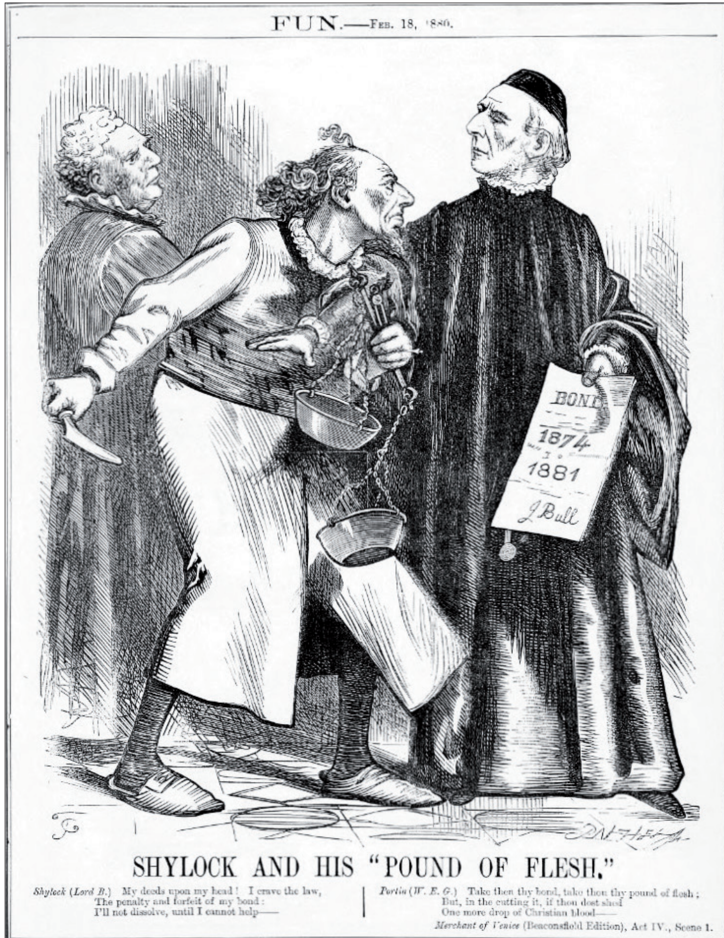

Fig. 8

[69] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, p. 21.
[70] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, pp.42-50

Duval is probably closest to Morgan in terms of her intimate knowledge of the contemporary stage, and her ability to express her expertise in cartoon form. While drawing for *Judy*, she appeared in *Punch* and *Fun* writer F. C. Burnand's *The Beast and the Beauty* (1869), Ross's melodrama *Clam* (1870) at the Surrey Theatre, the burlesque *The Beggar's Uproar* (1870), and *Ruth, or a Poor Girl's Life in London* (1871), as well as *Silence* (1871) and the pantomime *The Birth of Beauty* (1872)[71]. Touring in 1870 and again in 1873 (latterly with 'Mr H. Ross's Company'), Duval was injured in an accident in Yarmouth in 1874 while performing in a production of *Jack Sheppard*, thus ending her theatrical career[72]. The birth of her son in December of the same year no doubt limited her output, but she continued her epitheatrical work on *Judy* until 1885, working alongside the likes of William Henry Boucher (1837-1906), one of the foremost rivals to John Tenniel in terms of skill and execution[73]. As a whimsical foil to Boucher's seriousness, Duval helped maintain the popularity of *Judy* in important ways. As Roger Sabin has shown, Duval and Ross's great creation himself leaped off the page to become a character of the stage[74], and her own drawings faithfully reproduced the various actions, poses and attitudes common to stage performance (fig. 9)[75], as well as using the ever-popular pantomimes as the basis for humorous comment[76].

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[71] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, pp. 21.

[72] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, pp. 93-94.

[73] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, pp. 19-20. On Boucher, see: Richard Scully, 'William Henry Boucher (1837-1906): Illustrator and *Judy* Cartoonist', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 46: 4, 2013, pp. 441-474.

[74] Roger Sabin, 'Ally Sloper on Stage', *European Comic Art*, 2 (2), 2009, pp. 205-225.

[75] Grennan, Sabin, and Waite, *Marie Duval*, pp. 160; Marie Duval, 'Behind the Scenes', *Judy*, 22 January 1873, p. 142.

[76] Duval, 'Pantomimical', *Judy*, 22 December 1875, p. 101.

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BEHIND THE SCENES

TRAGEDY.

Heroine (to Dresser). Take care, now, you don't leave go of my train till I get my cue.

THE UNDECIDED GENTLEMAN.

I beg your pardon, I'm sure, if I was staring rudely; but I've been up and down all over the place for half-an-hour, and I've lost my eye-glass, and can't find the way out.

FLOATING CAPITAL.

Pantomime Time.

Calculated to give Terrestrial Bodies a bad attack of Pins and Needles.

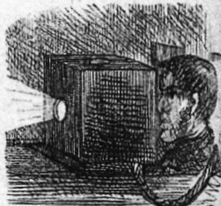
THE SYLPH AND HER SUPPORTER.

Don't tell me, I saw you laughing at that Swell in the Stalls. If you do it again, I shall drop you, so just look out.

THE BIRTH OF BURLESQUE.

DREADFUL ACCIDENT TO A FAIRY.

Rise again, then, fair Spirit, to thy bright and happy home! (*Aside.*) I say, your skirt's coming off.



THE FAIRY'S MESSENGER.

Fairies feed on Dew, do not they?

A LITTLE DIFFERENCE.

Well, don't push yourself in front of me again, that's all.

THE LIME-LIGHT MAN.

What would Fairy-land be without him!

Fig. 9

Conclusions

The satirical art of Victorian and Edwardian London can certainly be characterised as 'epitheatrical', and theatrical imagery remained a key component of British cartooning well into the twentieth century, as satirical art shifted from dedicated humour magazines to mass-circulation daily newspapers. Sir Francis Carruthers Gould (1844-1925) was still using such imagery during his time at the *Westminster Gazette*, when he took over the mantle of Doyle and Tenniel as Britain's foremost cartoonist; for instance, he could imagine the Liberal Unionist politician Joseph Chamberlain as Harlequin dancing with a tutu-clad Conservative leader Lord Salisbury following the Conservative-Unionist victory in the 1895 general election (fig. 10)[77]. *Punch* and *Lika Joko* cartoonist Harry Furniss (1854-1925) took his cartoons onto stages across Britain, North America, and Australasia as part of his *Humours of Parliament* performances[78]. And such imagery was probably not fully supplanted until the advent of television in the post-1945 period, following the death of Sir Bernard Partridge. One last hurrah was probably the impact of *Beyond the Fringe* in the cartoons of Victor Weisz (1913-1966) in the 1950s and '60s, with then-prime minister Harold Macmillan alternating between a music-hall performer or Shakespearean dramatist to a television star and back again[79].

At the height of the Victorian period, Matthew Morgan on *Fun* and *The Tomahawk*, Marie Duval on *Judy*, and Bernard Partridge on *Punch* were all decidedly epitheatrical, in that they came to cartooning via the theatre, and maintained their roles on-stage at the same time as drawing for their respective magazines. Morgan, Duval and Partridge were therefore more heavily involved in theatrical careers than their contemporaries – including the amateur actor Tenniel, and the enthusiastic attendee Sambourne – but all of them drew upon a knowledge of, and a cultural connection to the theatre in order to practice their craft. Regular reference to Shakespeare, pantomime, farce, and other forms of theatre, helped make their cartoons intelligible and relevant to

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[77] Francis Carruthers Gould, *Cartoons of the Campaign: A Collection of Political Cartoons Made During the General Election of 1895*, London, The 'Westminster Gazette', 1895, Cover illustration.

[78] Gareth Cordery and Joseph S. Meisel (eds), *The Humours of Parliament: Harry Furniss's View of Late-Victorian Political Culture*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2014.

[79] See e.g. 'Vicky' [Victor Weisz], 'A funny thing happened to me on the way to the theatre…', *New Statesman*, 3 October 1959, p. 4; '"Aw, I'm sure he's been given all the answers beforehand…', *New Evening Standard*, 3 November 1959, p. 4; 'No, dear, this isn't one of the *Beyond-the-Fringe* boys doing Mr Macmillan, this is Mr Macmillan!', *New Statesman*, 2 February 1962, p. 4; 'Vicky's Drama Award: Performance of the Year – Macmillan's "Lear"', *Evening Standard*, 14 January 1963, p. 4.

a broader public, at the same time as making them more complex and interesting. This was something that was laid down firmly by John 'HB' Doyle from as early as the 1820s and 1830s, reached its peak during the long career of Tenniel at *Punch* (1850-1900), and was sustained by Mr Punch's many rivals and imitators, including Grey, Henry Doyle, Barnard, and Thomson on *Fun*, and Boucher on *Judy*. Indeed, the very nature of these humour magazines was epitheatrical, too, with successive editors and contributors possessing close links to the world of theatre regardless of social class or political affiliation.

Fig. 10

While this has necessarily been an abbreviated analysis of the Victorian and Edwardian-era London satirical press as an 'epitheatrical' phenomenon, there remains much more to be said and explored about these interconnected worlds. Thankfully, this is something that historians and scholars of the satirical image seem already to be grasping. In addition to my own work on Matt Morgan's essential epitheatricality, the work of Frankie Morris on Tenniel, and, Grennan, Sabin, and Waite's full-length study of Duval also emphasise the importance of the theatre as an essential component of cartooning and satire in the Victorian and Edwardian period.

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