

## **Mediating between the Mass and the Individual: *Punch* Caricatures of the Great Exhibition of All Nations**

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This article is concerned with an analysis of class relations and behavior during the Great Exhibitions of All Nations, the mega-event organized by Prince Albert in May 1851, as illustrated by articles and caricatures published in *Punch*, the most famous popular press magazine at the time. Aiming at the rising middle-class readership, *Punch* revealed an underpinning humorous, even critical attitude towards class differentiation and individual representatives, thus depicting both the birth of working-class consciousness and the consolidation of a middle-class attitude towards the two extremes of the social scale. *Punch's* ambivalence in portraying the aristocracy and the working class in “The Pound and the Shilling” cartoon and its colonial, conservative attitude towards the non-Brit in “Perfidious Albion” and “The North-American Lodgers in 1851” are examples to support the argument that individual class consciousness was being molded into mass consciousness at the start of the 1850s in England.

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**B**uilt by Joseph Paxton in 1850-1851, the glass building which contained the Great Exhibition of All Nations, nicknamed “the Crystal Palace” by *Punch*, was a breakthrough in architecture, arts and crafts, class relations, and class and public behavior. It was the first building made entirely from glass, designed like a huge conservatory (Paxton had won his fame as a conservatory builder before); yet, it created a space in which the representatives of the different English social classes could meet. People from all walks of life came to see the exhibition, and travelers’ guides were published and circulated with the intention of educating the public, mainly the lower classes, and of regulating behavior during the visits (four out of the six

million visitors were working-class). The novelty of this huge event lay in the fact that previous exhibitions in England and Europe had been industrial shows by Mechanics' Institutes designed to teach science to working-class people, rather than international events designed to bring together nations from the Americas, Asia, and Africa, besides Europe, as the Crystal Palace exhibition managed to do. Although annual exhibitions of arts and crafts had previously been organized in both England and France (e.g. the 1844 French Industrial Exposition), the 1851 London mega-event was the first large international exhibition, aiming at creating a "universal brotherhood"<sup>1</sup> which opened the way for similar expositions set up later in Paris (1855, 1867), Wien (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Sidney (1879), to name but a few. The "universal brotherhood" which Prince Albert envisioned had at its core the image of England as the world's leading nation in science, industry and art. While the Great Exhibition focused on an English nation marked by economic progress and social change, it also aimed at displaying highly cherished Victorian values such as work, commerce, self-discipline, and consumption. The Great Exhibition became a site of negotiations between the various meanings rendered by a multitude of narratives concerning industry and manufacturing goods, democracy, nationalism and identity, ethics and aesthetics, class relations, race and ethnicity and, last but not least, entertainment, leisure, and tourism (Ciugureanu 145), thus superseding the French national expositions held intermittently between 1797 and 1849.

Among these various and competing narratives, the one that has drawn my attention for this article is concerned with class relations and behavior as illustrated by the *Punch* caricatures during the period when the exhibition was open to visitors. The purpose of the present essay is to explore the magazine's depiction of the relationship between the mass and the individual in its pictorial representations of the upper, middle and working classes in England at the time, as well as of particular racial and ethnic groups, as featured in the caricatures that appeared during the event. Officially organized by Prince Albert, with Queen Victoria's blessing, the event owed its resounding success, to a large extent, to the working class, the hands that produced most of the works displayed. The organizers' policy was to encourage working people to visit the exhibition on special days (the famous "shilling days") with the dual purpose of making them feel proud of their work and of educating them to behave properly under such circumstances. This led not only to a significant

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1. See Prince Albert's address in the *Exhibition Supplement to The Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851.

increase in the number of visitors, but also, and more importantly, I shall argue, to a shift in the meaning of the word “masses,”<sup>2</sup> from its derogative signification as a synonym for “mob” to the more positive connotation of the term as a body of common people sharing a similar socio-economic status.

To ensure the presence of the largest possible number of people at the exhibition, the organizers devised an ingenious way to encourage working-class visitors: they agreed on reduced entrance fees on the so-called “shilling days” when the admission fee was one shilling instead of five. Yet this decision resulted in two problems: firstly, how to transport crowds of people from distant places to London and, secondly, how to ensure the “proper” behavior of the working-class visitors and prevent the vandalism and possible riots that the upper-classes feared. The first problem was solved by the ingenious idea of organizing one-day trips to the exhibition with the help and approval of the workers’ employers. Most of the visits to the Great Exhibition by these “day trippers” (as they came to be known) were organized by Thomas Cook, the oldest tour agent and the inventor of mass tourism, who took advantage of the railway and brilliantly conceived of the notion of rail tours. The effect of mass trippers combined with the reduction in the entrance fee led to a huge increase in the number of visitors: of the total of six million who saw the Crystal Palace, four million came on shilling days. Moreover, factory owners encouraged their workers to participate in the event, covered some of the expenses or accepted payment in installments. Travelling to the exhibition and visiting it became, therefore, a mass event, which, according to the documents of the time, never backslid into riot or vandalism. The working-class people did not behave, therefore, like a “mob,” as many of the upper classes had predicted.

The second problem, educational in content, was solved by the publication and circulation of travelers’ guides (such as Richard Askrill’s *Yorkshire Visitors’ Guide to the Great Exhibition*), in which visitors were instructed in how to behave in the city: to avoid spitting, to be careful to bathe and wear clean clothes, to avoid pushing and to move in a clockwise direction in the

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2. My use of the words “mass” and “masses” is grounded on Raymond Williams’ analysis of the terms in the “Conclusion” of his *Culture and Society*. His point is that throughout the nineteenth century the “masses” acquired three new meanings (physical, social and political), thus generating “mass thinking,” “mass suggestion” and “mass prejudice” (Williams 297-98). Despite the novelty in the signification of “masses,” it had not ceased to denote by mid-nineteenth century the derogatory meaning of “mob”: “gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit” (298). The Great Exhibition signified a crucial moment in the creation of the positive meaning of “masses” as opposed to “mob,” and *Punch* played an important part in this shift of meaning.

building (Reynolds 101). Additionally, popular stories such as “The Cheap Tripper” by Eliza Cook, or novels like *1851: or, the Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family* by Henry Mayhew were meant to instill in the common people the desire to take the trip to London and explore the place by themselves. However, this seemingly democratic invitation to the masses of workers was actually the government’s attempt to ease the political tensions in England at a time when the ruling class was faced with “increasingly discontented industrial workers and the radicals of the Chartist movement” (Reynolds 100). The fear of the “mob” led to a completely new approach to the lower social classes by the upper class in its attempt to win the hearts and minds of people. Teaching them to adapt to the industrial progress of the country, to become aware of their economic plight and political potential was a positive endeavor that opposed the conservative attitude of regarding working-class people as a gullible, fickle, uneducated, not to mention filthy mass, unable to behave in a civilized way (Reynolds 102).

This democratic openness was supported by both the propagandistic popular narratives and the visual representations of the Great Exhibition in the periodical press of the time. The event was portrayed by both the quality press, such as *The Illustrated London News*, a conservative daily newspaper, and by the popular press, such as the weekly periodical *Punch*. Though the two publications mentioned shared the same founding father (Mark Lemon), in 1842 and 1841 respectively, they became distinctly different when Lemon decided to stick with *Punch*, the major purpose of which was to comically or cynically undermine the serious news presented by the quality paper (Noakes 152). Moreover, while *The Illustrated London News* targeted a large and mixed audience to whom it conveyed the official views of the ruling class,<sup>3</sup> *Punch* aimed at the rising middle-class readership to whom the events were presented with “respectable humor and social conscience” (Noakes 151-52).<sup>4</sup> This could be the reason why, with the exception of the exhibition opening, *The Illustrated London News* usually focused on the long, dry, object-by-object description of the exhibits, while *Punch* showed more interest in the people and engaged in sketching those who either contributed to, or were somehow affected by, the exhibition, most often by means of humorous caricatures.

The grand opening of the exhibition was the event illustrated by both periodicals. Yet, while *The Illustrated London News* offered a propagandistic,

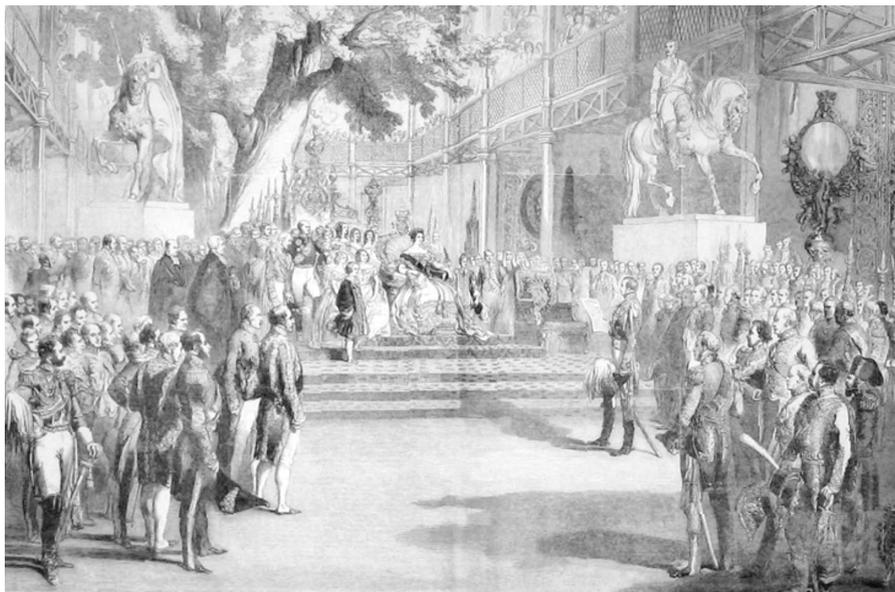
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3. In 1851, due to the Great Exhibition, the circulation of *London Illustrated News* reached 130,000.

4. The readership of *Punch* was between 25,000 and 30,000 in the 1850s.

congratulatory, highly deferential presentation of the royal family attending the event on its two large front pages (Fig. 1), *Punch* published a caricature of an idealistic representation of a happy crowd in which the royal family rubbed shoulders with people from the middle class (Fig. 2).

Despite the organizers' belief that crowds of people would be present at the inauguration, the reality was that a little over 2,000 people turned up. They obviously belonged to the upper classes (upper-middle and aristocratic), because they had the means to purchase the expensive tickets. However, *The Illustrated London News* (Fig. 1) shows a large crowd of people, an almost undifferentiated mass, turned towards the central figures of the image (Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and the royal family), while a second representation of Prince Albert (the statue on horseback) is visible on the right. The illustration attempted to construct from the very beginning the image of a distinctly successful event, which gathered more people than it actually did, to pay homage to Prince Albert and to reinforce the idea that Great Britain was a strong nation supporting its monarchy. The mass of people in the picture is obviously sketched to mirror both Britain's political strength (the royal family, the MPs and the representatives of the army gathered in one place) and its economic prosperity (the crowd attends an international exposition of manufactured goods, most of which were English).



*Figure 1. The Illustrated London News' version of the Grand Opening of the Great Exhibition.*

In striking opposition, “Her Majesty, as she appeared on the First of May” (Fig. 2), published by *Punch*, offers a comical perspective on the grand opening. Queen Victoria, much younger and slimmer in the picture than in reality, holds Prince Albert’s arm and is surrounded by her family and a crowd



HER MAJESTY, as She Appeared on the FIRST of MAY,  
Surrounded by “Horrible Conspirators and Assassins.”

*Figure 2. Punch caricature of the Great Exhibition.*

of young ladies, suspected of being prospective “horrible conspirators and assassins,” as the caption ironically suggests. The narrative behind the cartoon hinted at Queen Victoria’s excessive fear of an alleged plot if she appeared in front of an exceedingly large crowd, even if the crowd was made of “well-behaved ladies and gentlemen” who could afford the pricy ticket, as suggested by the article “Those Who Live in Glass-Houses Shouldn’t Throw Stones!” published by *Punch* prior to the opening (*Punch* 20: 174).<sup>5</sup> Since nothing of

5. The article “Those Who Live in Glass-Houses Shouldn’t Throw Stones!” was published in *Punch* on April 26, 1851. It satirizes the decision of the Executive Council of the Great Exhibition to organize a private, secluded visit of the Royal family at the exhibi-

the kind happened, *Punch* captured the situation and ironically represented the possible “conspirators and assassins” in the form of a crowd of ladies with a few men behind, recognizable from their raised top hats. Moreover, the only other noticeable figure in the picture, who distinguishes himself from the crowd by respectfully bowing to the royal family, is Mr. Punch, portrayed on the right-hand side. Though one can notice a similarity between the two illustrations, regarding the picturing of the crowds as an undifferentiated mass, there is, however, a distinction between the two images in as far as mass behavior is concerned. In the former, the reader is offered an idealized illustration of high-class behavior when the monarchy is around; in the latter, the genteel behavior is undermined by the raised top hats suggesting an exaggerated salutation to the royal family (or, perhaps, to the ladies on the balcony?), indicative of a harmlessly subversive middle-class attitude towards the royal family and the ruling class.

Confronted with a decrease in the number of visitors in the days that immediately followed the grand opening, the organizers devised their plan of attracting the masses of lower- and working-class people to visit the Crystal Palace, leaving much of the quality and popular press to express the idealistic belief that a democratic, equalitarian attitude towards class-relations was being formed. This “wishful thinking” attitude (Behagg 78) is both represented and undermined in “The Pound and the Shilling” cartoon by John Leech (Fig. 3), one of the most frequently reproduced images in histories of England and commentaries about the Great Exhibition. The utopian view of a brotherhood of social classes, promoted in the conservative publications of the time, is ambivalently represented by the *Punch* cartoon. At first sight, the image looks like an illustration of the balanced harmonious relations between the rich and the poor. In fact, it may well be seen like an allegorical representation of the exhibition space as the ideal place where the upper and lower classes would happily rub shoulders, especially since it was published on a full page, and, as a rule, full page illustrations in *Punch* were invariably meant to be read allegorically. For instance, Steve Edwards interprets the cartoon as an illustration of social and political allegory. According to Edwards, while the figures on the right, who stand for the aristocracy, represent specific individuals (identified as the Duke of Wellington and his daughter-in-law, the Marchioness of Douro), those on the left, who stand for the working commu-

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tion while the masses of middle-class people, who had already purchased tickets, would have to wait until the queen left to be allowed to visit the exhibition. It seems that, eventually, the council went back on its decision.

nity (the navy and the carpenter), are metonymic figures of their own class (30). Edwards reads the cartoon as an allegorical tale of a presupposed rapprochement between the two classes, based on “patterns of desire” (32). He brings as arguments the ambiguous gender of the carpenter, the problematic relation between the working-class men and the upper-class women, which may hint at sexual desire, the gesture of the little navy boy who offers flowers to the little upper-class girl, interpreted as a possible vision of a future with erased social borders (31-32). Although in his analysis Edwards mentions the two intriguing characters on the extreme left and right sides of the picture, he does not pursue the discussion further, beyond the reference to the extreme left-hand side figure as looking like “an invader from a novel by Henry Fielding” (30).



THE POUND AND THE SHILLING.  
“Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here?”

*Figure 3. Punch caricature of the Great Exhibition.*

My reading of the cartoon, however, which argues for a more ambivalent attitude towards class relations, will bring into discussion the two extreme figures both as individual characters and as individualized representatives of the two social classes under scrutiny. Behind the recognizable upper-class group, with smiling faces and a benevolent attitude, there is the image of the lady, in the extreme right corner, who betrays fear and suspicion. Her counterpart in the cartoon is represented by the funny caricature of a possibly drunken man in the extreme left corner who observes the meeting with a disturbingly cynical look. The fear in the lady's eyes and the cynicism in the drunken man's look represent the attitude that the *Punch* cartoon conveys with a view to undermining the "wishful thinking" of the union between the upper and lower classes. Thus, the front image, which apparently shows a harmonious, happy encounter between the two classes, is counterbalanced by the two marginal individuals who reveal the real feelings of the two crowds: fear and suspicion on one side, cynicism and disbelief on the other. The probing, suspicious attitude at the possibility of a real democratic relation between the two opposing social classes is also supported by the third marginal, yet important, figure in the picture: the man on the balcony. Identified as Mr. Punch or as the voice of the magazine readers, or as both (Edwards 34), the man on the balcony has a full bird's eye view of the whole scene and seems to utter the question in the caption: "Whoever thought of meeting you here?" The mass of the balcony people, whose voice and representative Mr. Punch seems to be, may be read as the link between the upper classes and Labor symbolically portrayed in the centre. Also identified by Edwards as "a middle class space and voice" (34), in view of the magazine's readership, Mr. Punch is actually a representative of the mass on the balcony. While the right-hand side of the central image shows the duke and duchess standing for the aristocracy and the left-hand side sketch the navy and the carpenter as emblematic figures of the working class, the missing link between the two, the link which could contribute to the fulfillment of the "wishful thinking" or to its undermining is the middle class, the undifferentiated, yet present, mass on the balcony.

The middle-class attitude, as revealed by the cartoon, is rather ambiguous. Is it supportive or subversive of class reconciliation? According to Richard Noakes, *Punch* captured the details of the nineteenth-century landscape with "uncanny skill" (152). As Richard Pearson notes, in the early 1850s, *Punch* shifts from being an "anti-newspaper," from parodying the daily press reporting on events, to targeting people outside its middle-class readership while mildly humoring its own audience (Pearson 188). It is both the uncanny skill that Noakes mentions and the less malicious fun made at the *Punch* readers

that “The Pound and the Shilling” image may reveal. It is a disturbing understanding of the gap between the aristocracy and the working-class people that the cartoon insightfully unveils while showing both an optimistic hope for the “wishful thinking” fulfillment and a pessimistic attitude towards the possible appeasement of class tension. On the other hand, the cartoon reveals a middle class, generally formed by the male readers of the magazine, which is both present at, and absent from, this crucial meeting. It is present as audience (both in the picture and outside it); yet it is absent from the central space where the historical meeting is supposedly taking place. Could this be read as class prejudice or as still unformed class conscience?

The *Punch* attitude towards social class is known to be ambivalent in the early 1850s: while still critical of government policies, it became mainstream in satirizing its own middle-class readers; while sympathetic to working-class issues, it was far from radical or Chartist. *Punch*'s radicalism, according to R.D. Altick, was based more on an attitude “out of step with the orthodox social and political thinking of the time” (186) than on its radical support for the ideals of a specific social class. That is why, in treating working-class people, the magazine displays cartoons which ridicule them alongside cartoons which reveal the importance of their work for the nation's growth and prosperity. In “The Pound and the Shilling” sketch the working class is evidently poked fun at: the carpenter holds the navvy's arm as if they were a couple, the drunken man expresses the typical image of the worker in the middle-class imagination (filthy, scornful, high on alcohol, prone to aggression). A completely different attitude is suggested by “Specimen of Mr. Punch's Industrial Exhibition of 1851,” which metonymically expresses the role played by the working class in manufacturing the products displayed at the exhibition. In the image, the caricaturist humorously places the individuals representing various crafts in glass cages: a sowing woman, a laborer, a distressed shoemaker, a sweating artisan. Thus, the shilling day visitors are literally turned into exhibits which symbolically illustrate the crafts and industries without which the exhibitory objects could not have been made and displayed. The individual becomes metonymic for his/ her class and craft, while the individual-turned-object, as the picture suggests, may become fetishistic. The satirical dimension of the image is represented by a corpulent Mr. Punch who offers the bell-jars with the human exhibits to Prince Albert.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, the picture may be read as an illustration of what Marx called commodity fetishism, revealing both the impersonality and the symbolism of

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6. See also Richard Pearson (182) for a description of this caricature.

work processes; on the other, the picture may be seen as underlying the importance attached to the particular labor which instrumented the progress of the nation, an importance which seems to be somehow overlooked by the commissioners.

The subversive attitude that *Punch* shows towards the ruling class alongside the magazine's genuine understanding of the Exhibition's real value and of its positive effects on the British economy both at home and abroad is reinforced by the publication of the cartoon "The Shipwrecked Ministers Saved by the Great Exhibition Steamer." The illustration portrays a group of ten governmental ministers on the wreck of a ship. Five of them look desperately at the horizon for a means of rescue; the other five seem to have just spotted an unexpected passing ship which may save them and are fully enjoying the moment. The ship bears the name *The Great Exhibition* and is actually built in the form of the building. A Marxist reading of this picture would obviously reveal the importance which *Punch* attached to the "hands" whose works seem to have saved the country from what seemed to be an imminent economic crisis.

In its attitude towards the Great Exhibition, *Punch* is known to have been skeptical as to its success in the beginning, while later, when it became aware of the nation's generally positive reception of the exposition (Pearson 184), it shifted its target from ridiculing social classes or individual visitors to satirizing foreigners, or rather, their absence at the exhibition. Contrary to general expectations, according to which masses of "aliens" were supposed to come and visit the Crystal Palace, foreign visitors to the Exhibition were in fact scarce. In the *Punch* article entitled "Where are the Foreigners?" the author humorously states: "We have looked for them everywhere—in the streets—in the theatres—even in the Exhibition—but we have not seen them yet" (*Punch* 20: 207). The introduction and caricatures of the foreigner represent, on the one hand, an ironic attitude targeted at the organizers who were to blame for having failed to attract alien visitors. On the other, it expresses Britain's imperialistic attitude towards the foreigner, whether colonized or not, coupled with the fear of meeting the Other as visitor. It shows the similar ambivalent attitude that "The Pound and the Shilling" cartoon portrays, transferred, this time, from a presupposed meeting between the rich and the poor to an imaginary encounter between the English and the ethnic Other (North-Americans, French, Chinese, Indians, Arab-Israeli).

According to the official documents of the time and the accounts of the event in the quality press, the Great Exhibition became a symbolic representation of empire and nation as mirrored in, and by, the displayed manufactured

works. This created a set of symbolical images which annihilated time and space, erased previously assumed chronological and geographical distances, while simultaneously revealing other distinctions, such as those concerning race and ethnic hierarchies (Hoffenberg 19). In the Babel Tower created at the Crystal Palace, these distinctions were made visible by the distribution of the space allotted to Britain's colonies and its neighboring nations.<sup>7</sup> An important component of the human factor at the exhibition was the one referring to the power and/or knowledge relations between the empire and the colonies. The mass of British people who visited the exhibition was counterpointed by small groups of foreign visitors and colonial representatives responsible for their specific displays at the Crystal Palace. Colonial displays, especially Indian, were actually offered extensive space due to the interest of the empire in stressing its strength, its commercial success and political control over the conquered areas.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the colonial displays from India told the story of an "imaginary, colonized subcontinent" (Kriegel 146), meant to support and legitimate Britain's possession of the place. The object which most symbolically represented Britain's extended wings over a disempowered country was the empty Indian royal throne placed in the centre of the exhibition space allotted to the colony. The empty throne suggested Britain's wishful thinking of India's eagerness to offer its throne to Queen Victoria. Although this was not going to happen quite soon (as it is known that Victoria became the Empress of India in 1877), it was important for the visitors to the Exhibition to grasp the idea that India's future as Britain's colony was sealed. Moreover, India became a kind of star of the exhibition with the display of "Koh-I-Noor," the largest diamond in the world. The throne and the diamond, symbolically representing India's power and wealth, were meant to legitimize India's complete dependence on Britain.

Yet, the colonies were encouraged to show not only rich and exotic exhibits (from an Anglo-centrist viewpoint), but also human displays (Bengali artisans, for example, fashioned ivory trinkets in their section for the enjoyment of the audience). Contrary to the spatial differentiation between the public who watched the colonial subjects and the subjects who were being

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7. Half the space of the Exhibition was occupied by Great Britain and its colonies while the other half was allocated to foreign countries. Among Great Britain's colonies, India was best represented with a largest number of exhibits. The United States had the largest second space, but failed to fill it. The next in line regarding space were France and Germany; the other countries were offered smaller or more marginal space (Ciugureanu 145).

8. See Kriegel for an insightful analysis of India's representation at the Great Exhibition.

watched, the distinction between the observer and the observed was blurred. Foreigners and locals alike became both spectators and performers in an interaction in which the English were meant to be posited as the Self or as holders of power and knowledge (they owned the most colonies, they displayed the most and best manufactured goods) and the non-English as the Other or holders of neither power nor scientific knowledge (they were subjects of the British Empire, they could not rise to the industrial progress of Britain, their knowledge was empiric or exotic).

*Punch* catches with “uncanny skill” the general English attitude of superiority towards the non-English other and ridicules it by grotesquely foregrounding the individual’s fear of the foreign visitor. Thus, “Perfidious Albion” (Fig. 4) and “The North American Lodgers in 1851” (Fig. 5) illustrate the disruption which the visitors were imagined to have produced in the supposedly clean and peaceful households of the locals. The “distinguished foreigner,” who seems to represent a multitude of races and ethnic groups, wrecks the drawing room of the hospitable, good-hearted Englishman. At first sight, the picture shows a crowd of people who have abused the host. Yet, a more careful look reveals a mass of individuals representing distinct racial and ethnic groups (a Turk, a Chinese, a Frenchman or a German reading the newspaper in the right-hand corner, a few North-Americans, one playing the piano on the left-hand side of the picture).

MEMORIALS OF THE GREAT EXHIBITION.—1851.



No. XVII.

PERFIDIOUS ALBION LETS HIS DRAWING-ROOM FLOOR TO A DISTINGUISHED FOREIGNER.—  
THE RESULT.

Figure 4. *Punch* caricature of the Great Exhibition.

As expected with a *Punch* cartoon, it is the minor details that count, because they actually unveil the hidden meanings of the picture. In this particular image, the policeman on the right-hand side, who seems to be looking for indictments, could be the key to an allegorical reading of the picture narrative. The Great Exhibition aimed at creating, according to Prince Albert in his address at the grand opening, “a universal brotherhood” through industry, crafts and art. The “Perfidious Albion” cartoon subverts Prince Albert’s wishful thinking for a brotherhood of nations by revealing the foreigner to be the embodiment of English stereotypical thinking of the Other as uncivilized or as a possible perpetrator. The individualized images of foreign races and nations do not look as if they were temporary occupants, but as if they had conquered the territory and wished to reside there for a longer time. Therefore, the image of the policeman portrayed in the act of searching for criminal clues is crucial to the reading of the picture. It both represents a self-ironical portrayal of Englishness and conveys the reassuring message that perfidious Albion is alive and watching. Through self-irony and mild satire (directed at the propaganda concerning the large democratic ideals which the Exhibition of All Nations advocated), the cartoon illustrates in fact the tension between the English and the foreigner, a tension generating, and being generated by, the fear of the Other.



Figure 5. *Punch* caricature of the Great Exhibition.

Such a fear is also noticeable in “The North-American Lodgers in 1851” (Fig. 5). Depicted as a wild tribe of Native-Americans, turned even wilder by the booze, the foreigners sketched in the cartoon reveal the stereotypical

image of America in the middle-class imagination: a land of loose, uncivilized behavior, opposing any Victorian rules of order, decency and cleanliness. As in the previous cartoon, the aliens wreck a house, the kitchen this time, the place symbolically seen as the women's realm. A gender-based reading of the picture narrative reveals a satirical, yet stereotypical image of woman's abuse by man imagined as a savage and aggressive beast. The women in the cartoon, appalled by the disaster, seem to suffer a double victimization: first, as cooks and housekeepers (the kitchen is ruined); second, as the weaker sex (the female figure on the right-hand side is on the point of being physically attacked or raped by the savage man). The female individuals in the picture may also be representative of mother England faced with an alleged attack by alien masses, illustrating both the fear of occupation and that of racial mixing. With both evolutionary theories and colonial expansion in progress, the Victorians grew very interested in "primitive" types of social organization and their "survival" in the present (Hoppen 472-73) and became more aware of the "danger" of miscegenation. Moreover, with the loss of the American colonies, Britain had no reason to show respect to North-Americans, who were often referred to as brutes, a term used to describe lesser creatures as well. The cartoon could therefore represent the middle class's derogatory attitude towards their former colony, an attitude that actually hides the dissatisfaction and frustration of having lost it.

A postcolonial reading of the cartoon, however, may also unveil Britain's more or less unconscious fear of the colonies striking back at their colonizers. The retaliation would be in this case twice as aggressive since the colonized, stereotypically depicted as wild and savage, also seem to have appropriated the vilest habits of the colonizers: drinking and, possibly, rape. In either reading, the mass in the image is meant to denote its worst meanings. It is the uncivilized, violent mob which the upper class feared. To *Punch*, the threat of vandalism and riot does not come from the working class, but from the alien Other. Therefore, working people are portrayed in a more complex, though somewhat condescending, manner as opposed to the foreigner, shown as a threat to the English both as individuals and as a nation. And since *Punch* could not overtly sketch people from the existing colonies and mock them, it caricatured individuals and groups from the non-British colonies whom it invested with the characteristics of the much feared brutality of "primitive" societies.

North-American displays and visitors, or rather the lack of them, also became the topic of periodical articles during the Great Exhibition. One such article is "A Hint for the American Non-Exhibitors" (*Punch* 20: 246), which

satirizes both the scarcity of American industrial products on display (they took pride in “soap, pickles, and honey”) and the small number of American visitors. Therefore, the *Punch* article ironically suggests that the large space allocated to America could be better used as a hotel, offering accommodation to those who wish to visit the exhibition for a week. It could advertise America as “Eligibly situated within a few minutes’ walk of Austria, Russia, France, and Switzerland, commanding an excellent view of the ‘Greek Slave,’ and immediately opposite the largest looking-glass in the world, by which the process of shaving may be greatly facilitated” (*Punch* 20: 246). Thus, *Punch* builds on the stereotypical image of North-America as a conglomerate of ethnic groups, as still encouraging slavery (the reference to the ‘Greek Slave’ statue), and as disregarding civilized habits (such as shaving). Portrayed as the Other, the image of North-America which *Punch* offers is that of underdeveloped, uneducated and uncivilized, ethnically mixed masses prone to vandalism.

Interestingly, foreignness is represented in most *Punch* cartoons and articles as masculine, while Englishness is usually illustrated as feminine. The gendering of Englishness may have the “Mother England” idea behind it or the concept of insularity or even the growing distinction between the formation of Englishness and the creation of Britishness, which the London-based politicians found natural to pursue in their endeavor to frame a strong national identity (Hoppen 513). This may explain why the depiction of foreignness in *Punch* is symbolically connected with “the growth of beards and moustaches” (Pearson 190) and why the representative voice of Englishness might be an imaginary wife (Sarah Veal), who complains in an alleged letter to the editor of *Punch* about her husband growing a beard and turning cosmopolitan in his endeavor to put into practice the much discussed issue of cultivating friendship and good feelings between natives and foreigners (Pearson 190). So, what does *Punch* satirize? Prince Albert’s official invitation to brotherhood, peace and friendly relations with all nations through craft and industry or the inability of the middle class to develop positive relationships with the foreign visitor, as Pearson seems to suggest (190)? As with *Punch*’s ambivalent attitude to class relations (as shown in the reading of “The Pound and the Shilling” cartoon), the visual and verbal representations of non-Englishness in the magazine may express both unwillingness to bridge racial and ethnic differences and suspicion at, or disbelief in, the upper class “wishful thinking” of creating harmonious relations inside and outside the country’s borders. We may imagine, therefore, in Figures 4 and 5, an amused, rather cynical, middle class which, though absent from the cartoons, is the audience much present outside it: the magazine readers.

In mediating between the mass and the individual, *Punch* seems to have formed a distinctive attitude as regards English and non-English crowds and individuals. The English crowds, generally made up of middle-class people, are portrayed as an educated and well-behaved multitude that seems to have shaped a consciousness of its own, capable, through Mr. Punch's loud voice, of expressing a voiced attitude towards upper-class and working people as well. Though in its attitude towards labor *Punch* shows both reticence and suspicion, the cartoons do not sketch working-class people as a mob. They are rather depicted through individuals, representatives of various crafts, which confers a metonymic or symbolic dimension to working-class portrayal. In its articles about the Great Exhibition, *Punch* has an even more cutting attitude towards the ruling class as opposed to working people. While in the description of the former, one may clearly notice undertones of irony, or more or less hidden criticism (e.g. "Those Who Live in Glass-Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones!," incidentally published on the same page as "The Perfidious Albion" cartoon), in the presentation of the latter, *Punch* shows, at times, genuine sympathy. An example to this effect is the article "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery" (*Punch* 21: 10-12), which describes a visiting day when middle- and working-class people met at the Exhibition. Following the patterns of symbolism, the author describes the middle-class people in a palette of colors ("a sunny cornfield of bonnets, gracefully waving backwards and forwards," "a rich garden blooming with all the gorgeous hues of fashion") while labor is portrayed like "an immense plantation of poplar-looking boys and of sturdy men of the circumference of oaks" (10). However, the author surprisingly catches an unexpected similitude between the Koh-I-Noor diamond and the manufactured goods at the exhibition. Thus, just as the precious jewel calls in the assistance of its poor relations (gas and coal), which basically contributed to its creation, high-class people's existence is based on working people's labor ("the Koh-i-noors of society only shine with the borrowed light of those working beneath them in station" [10]). The display of compassion and understanding towards the working class could have been intended to ease class tension and to shore up feelings of Britishness, which *Punch* contrasted with the uneasiness felt in front of the foreign other. There is an excerpt at the end of the article that describes the way in which two American officers offered to teach working-class visitors to handle guns for free. *Punch* sounds outraged at the idea and fears that America will be frequented as a "School for English Burglars" only (12). The small passage is indicative both of *Punch*'s scorn at Americans (as if Britain had not recovered from the loss of the colonies), and of the magazine's fear that in the hands of labor, guns could be extremely dangerous.

*Punch* never illustrates an English crowd as riotous. It is the non-English crowds, mostly representing imaginary foreign visitors, that are actually portrayed as a “mob” (filthy, uncontrolled, riotous, savage). In the *Punch* illustration of the Great Exhibition, the mass is either middle-class or alien. In the former case, its meaning is positive and constructive, in the latter, negative and disparaging. The shift in the meaning of the word “masses,” from disorderly, rebellious mob to a group of people sharing a similar social and economic status, occurs, according to Williams, in mid-nineteenth century (297-98). *Punch* illustrates this shift in differentiating between the caricatures of the English and those of the Other and in discriminating the foreigner against the local. The foreigner is rebellious and riotous, the English are the opposite. The group of foreigners is actually made of distinct individuals, representatives of distinct nations and races. The English are illustrated as a mass with a few differentiated figures or symbols of social class. There is obviously a strong nationalist element in the *Punch* caricatures, due most probably to Britain’s insularity and fear of a possible attack. Whether nationalism is used to cover for class tension is hard to say, because *Punch* does not really reveal class conflict. Rather, on the one hand, the periodical exposes the existence of an already formed middle-class consciousness, a consciousness greatly aware of the social, political and economic changes at both ends of the English society. On the other hand, wary of aristocracy’s good intentions, yet sympathetic towards working people, *Punch* cannot help noticing the formation and consolidation of the working class and, consequently, the rise of a new mass consciousness. However, at the time of the exhibition, the new consciousness was soon to swamp individual thinking and feeling as middle-class consciousness had done.

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