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Thomas Milton Kemnitz

The Cartoon As a Historical Source

> It is the pride of "PUNCH" that the "Cartoon of the Week," in which for so many years he has regularly crystallised his opinion of the week's chief idea, situation, or event, is truthfully representative of the best prevailing feeling of the nation, of its soundest common-sense, and of its most deliberate judgment—a judgment . . . seriously formed, albeit humorously set down and portrayed. It follows, therefore, that the "PUNCH" cartoon is not to be considered merely as a comic or satirical comment on the main occurrence or situation of the week, but as contemporary history for the use and information of future generations cast into amusing form for the entertainment of the present. Current national opinion frequently becomes modified, and history may qualify—it may even radically alter—the view of the day; but the record of how public matters struck a people, an imperial people, at the instant of their happening, is surely not less interesting to the future student of history, of psychology, and of sociology, than the most official record of the world's progress.[1]

Spielmann, historian of *Punch*, had no doubts about the importance of cartoons to historians when he wrote these lines in 1906. Since then historians have exploited cartoons to illustrate their books. A few biographies and studies of cartoonists have appeared, and there have been some descriptive histories of the cartoon.[2] But most of these works are concerned with the cartoon itself rather than with using cartoon material as evidence to answer wider questions. The cartoons are frequently fascinating, but their value to historians lies in what they reveal

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1 M. H. Spielmann, *Cartoons From "Punch"* (London, 1906), I, v.

2 See, for example, Draper Hill, *Mr. Gillray* (London, 1965); Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York, 1968); J. Chal Vinson, *Thomas Nast: Political Cartoonist* (Athens, Georgia, 1967); David Low, *Autobiography* (London, 1956); *idem*, *British Cartoonists, Caricaturists, and Comic Artists* (London, 1942); Frances Sarzano, *Sir John Tenniel* (London, 1948). See W. A. Coupe, "The German Cartoon and the Revolution of 1848," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IX (1967); Victor Alba, "The Mexican Revolution and the Cartoon," *ibid.*; Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, "The Cartoon in Egypt," *ibid*, XIII; M. Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature: A Study of Opinions and Propaganda* (Oxford, 1959), 2v.; William Murrell, *A History of American Graphic Humor, 1865–1938* (New York, 1938); Allan Nevins and Frank Weitenkampf, *A Century of Political Cartoons* (New York, 1944); Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York, 1968); W. A. Coupe, *The Illustrated Broadsheet in Germany in the Seventeenth Century* (Baden-Baden, 1966/67), 2v.

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about the societies that produced and circulated them. Historians have been slow to explore the possibilities of cartoon material as evidence, and there has been correspondingly little attention paid to methods. The concern of this article is to suggest some approaches to using cartoon material.

"Cartoon" is an imprecise term which is now applied to a multitude of graphic forms. Yet, if we can distinguish between the forms, "cartoon" is a better term than others such as "caricature" which describe a technique of cartooning.[3] Cartoons can be broadly divided into two categories: cartoons of opinion and joke cartoons. Cartoons of opinion are primarily visual means of communicating opinions and attitudes or of "summing up" situations; humor may be present but is not a necessary part of a cartoon of opinion. Joke cartoons, on the other hand, are designed to communicate humor. Often the distinction between the two is almost as easy to make in practice as it is in theory.[4] Not only are the cartoonists themselves at pains to make their intentions evident—and they are skilled in the art of communication—but also the journals, which have been responsible for publishing cartoons for the past century and a half, have been careful to make the distinction. Thus in modern American newspapers the cartoon of opinion is often on the editorial page, but the joke cartoons appear on other pages. The distinction between joke and opinion cartoons does not always work. Occasionally a cartoonist—or even a style of cartooning—may communicate both.[5] In such cases, historians can ask the questions they would normally ask of both joke and opinion cartoons.

This article focuses on cartoons of opinion, but a brief discussion of joke cartoons is not out of place. Joke cartoons are of importance to the

3 "Cartoon" has the added advantage of being a word that did not originally refer to graphic satire at all but rather meant a preparatory sketch for a painting. It took on its new meaning in the 1840s in *Punch*, and has since proved expandable as the forms of cartooning have multiplied. "Caricature" on the other hand refers to the technique of exaggeration or distortion of features—a technique employed by most political cartoonists but sometimes absent from social and foreign affairs cartoons.

4 Sometimes the distinction is easier to make in practice than in theory. A child incapable of dealing with this verbiage can easily differentiate between "Dennis the Menace" or "Bugs Bunny" and the work of Mauldin.

5 Among modern cartoonists, Patrick Oliphant frequently employs the political cartoon format to communicate a humorous view of the national or global situation. Golda Meir as the ultimate Jewish mother juxtaposes stereotype and international situation for the purpose of humor: "Bring on the Chicken soup." Walt Kelley's "Pogo," on the other hand, exploits a comic-strip format to satirize current events.

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historian because they reflect social attitudes. The joke cartoon until this century was too frequently a superfluous graphic illustration of a verbal joke. Many early joke cartoons would have been just as good—or bad—if only the caption had been printed. But the modern trend has been toward relying on a mixture of verbal and visual jokes, or on purely visual jokes, such as William Mauldin's great World War II cartoon of a cavalry sergeant standing next to a wrecked jeep with his pistol pressed against the hood and his pained face averted. There was no need for a caption, and none appeared. Joke cartoons rely upon—and help to perpetuate—a number of social attitudes and stereotypes, many of them relatively trivial, such as that of the woman driver. They generally do not address themselves to the important social questions but frequently comment upon the mechanics of working out social problems. Difficulties of interpretation may make them harder to use than social cartoons of opinion, but if used sensitively they can provide insights into social attitudes.

Joke cartoons—and their modern offspring, the comic strip and comic book—offer intriguing possibilities to historians beyond the evidence of social attitudes. Their illustrations can be used by visual historians interested in such matters as house interiors, street scenes, and dress. They will provide a rich lode of evidence when historians approach humor as an important and revealing facet of society. The part cartoons play in the formation of the sense of humor of a generation merits study. And the relation between comic books and comic strips and the fantasy life of a generation is also worth exploring. As an atavistic but non-violent Robinson Crusoe was a source of juvenile fantasy for early nineteenth-century English boys, so the altruistic but violent Superman, Lone Ranger, and Batman play their part in the lives of more modern American children. Historians will someday assess the importance of these images in the development of a generation.

Cartoons of opinion can be divided into those dealing with domestic politics, social themes, and foreign affairs. This division is more than merely thematic, for techniques vary with subject matter. Political cartoons are specific: they depend on the viewer's recognition of the characters, subjects, and events depicted. Caricature is frequently used to aid identification. Stereotypes are used only occasionally in political cartoons: John Q. Public, the Southern Senator, John Bull, the German Michael. By contrast, stereotypes are much more frequently used in social cartoons, where references to specific people are rare. Cartoons

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dealing with foreign affairs use the techniques of either political or social cartoons along with national symbols.

The cartoon of opinion has had a long and varied history since Martin Luther employed it against his opponents. Its relation to other media of communication, its form and function, its contents and conventions, and the means of its production have varied in different locales and at different times. Yet through all the changes, the strengths of the cartoon as a medium of communication have remained reasonably constant. It generally conveys its message quickly and pungently.[6] Consequently, the cartoon is more likely to get its point across than other printed means of communication. Many more people grasp the point of the cartoon on the editorial page than read the editorials or signed columns. When the cartoon was not linked to newspapers and when fewer people could read fluently, the disproportion between cartoon viewers and editorial readers may have been still higher in urban centers.

In content as well as accessibility, the characteristics of the cartoon have changed little. It can match any other media for invective and is an excellent method for disseminating highly emotional attitudes. It has been employed frequently and effectively as an aid in building up resistance to the policies of politicians and as a weapon of propaganda, generally in ridicule.[7] The cartoon also is an ideal medium for suggesting what cannot be said by the printed word. When cartoons were sold separately, they were not subject to the censorship and libel laws hampering newspapers. Thus, at times, such as in England in the

6 This is not to say that the cartoon must be blunt and direct to put its message across effectively. Cartooning is an art—albeit a popular art—and it can be subtle and suggestive. William Hogarth's detailed prints convey meaning on a number of different levels. In "A Harlot's Progress," for instance, the wall hangings in the rooms are significant and provide a commentary on the central action. Many cartoons that now seem to be weak were effective methods of reminding viewers of substantial issues by suggestion rather than by direct statement. Such methods work only when the issue has one clearly right side—at least in the judgment of the cartoonist. Matt Morgan found suggestive methods to remind his viewers in the 1872 election that Horace Greeley stood for reconciliation of the nation and the end of the military occupation of the South that Grant fostered.

7 The most prominent example in American history was Thomas Nast's attacks on Boss William Marcy Tweed. Together with the articles of the *New York Times*, they brought about Tweed's defeat in the elections of 1871. Tweed was supposed to have growled that most of the voters could not read but even the illiterate could understand "those damn pictures." This is one of the highest testimonials cartoons have ever had, and historians of graphic satire are fond of repeating it. But to keep the matter in perspective, it was worth five million dollars to Tweed to shut up the *New York Times* and only half a million for Nast to take an extended European vacation.

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eighteenth century or Germany in 1848, cartoons have commented upon the sexual and other personal habits of monarchs and politicians.[8] Even after the cartoon was incorporated into newspapers and journals, Matt Morgan in 1867 could draw a cartoon referring to the immorality of the Prince of Wales and could subsequently label it "Scandal of the Season" when he reprinted it as part of another cartoon; this could not have been stated so explicitly in words.[9] Even today the cartoon is used for attacks on politicians that would be difficult to sustain in any other medium.

But the cartoon cannot match the printed word for dispassionate comment, and it is incapable of the reasoned criticism and detailed argument of the editorial. The cartoon has played a far more important role in the dissemination of images. These may be crude at times, but there are a number of cases in which they have been effective. Thomas Nast brilliantly portrayed the venality of Boss Tweed. Herbert Block gave both a word and an image to Joseph McCarthy's tactics. David Low created in Colonel Blimp a stereotype with far wider acceptance than the readership of the paper in which his work appeared. The images have not always been negative. Lord Palmerston's popularity was enhanced by the cartoons depicting him in sporting guise. And the power of *Punch* was demonstrated in the nineteenth century in the acceptance of its John Bull by rival cartoonists and journals: John Bull with the face of *Punch* editor Mark Lemon, dressed in the garb of a yeoman farmer in an age which prided itself on its industrial accomplishments.[10]

8 The liaison between Ludwig I of Bavaria and Lola Montez occasioned many cartoons. The attraction was not simply political. The subject also gave artists and publishers an opportunity to clothe pornography with a political veneer and thus tempt many more good burghers to part with their well-pinched pfennigs. Not a few times was the King caught by the cartoonist in interesting positions with Lola. (Coupe, "The German Cartoon," 140–142.) In England, George III suffered for his parsimony even before Gillray began his savage work showing the King giving up the use of sugar in tea or having a royal banquet on one egg.

9 Morgan also attacked Queen Victoria for her retirement during her protracted mourning for Albert. In another cartoon, he referred to the widespread gossip of the relationship between Victoria and her favorite servant, John Brown (the Queen was being called Mrs. Brown). These were touchy subjects for a respectable publication, and it is widely but mistakenly believed that they led to officially inspired libel suits that forced *Tomahawk* to cease publication. Morgan himself was responsible for this story which was part of an elaborate attempt to explain why he came to the United States without explaining that he had gone bankrupt.

10 For a discussion of the characteristics of the cartoon, see E. S. Bogardus, "Sociology of the Cartoon," *Sociology and Social Research*, XXX (1945), 139–147; Lawrance H.

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The cartoon has much to offer the historian concerned with public opinion and popular attitudes. It provides little insight into the intellectual bases of opinion—for which the historian usually has better sources—but it can illuminate underlying attitudes.[11] Not only can cartoons provide insight into the depth of emotion surrounding attitudes, but also into the assumptions and illusions on which opinions are formed. They remind the historian of the importance contemporaries placed on seemingly insignificant events and of the relation between these occurrences, popular attitudes, and public opinion. They frequently offer evidence of groups deliberately attempting to shape opinion,[12] and they are a key source for historians concerned with the images of individual politicians, political parties, and social groups.

Historians ought to approach cartoons with the same general questions that they bring to any other medium of communication. There are six interrelated areas for investigation: the artists, the means by which the cartoons reach the public, their language and symbols, their relation to other means of communication, their intended function, and their audience. All of them assist the historian in establishing the relation between popular attitudes and the cartoon.

Streicher, "On a Theory of Political Caricature," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IX (1966), 427–445; the very good W. A. Coupe, "Observations on a Theory of Political Caricature," *ibid.*, XI (1969), 79–95.

11 The distinction between opinion and attitude may be expressed as follows: opinion connotes a position on a specific issue or question while attitude represents a general orientation toward groups, institutions, processes, etc., but does not necessarily result in a specific position on a specific issue. This distinction only slightly changes the definitions offered by Lee Benson in his suggestive "An Approach to the Scientific Study of Past Public Opinion," in D. K. Rowney and J. Q. Graham, *Quantitative History* (Homewood, 1969), 25.

12 During World War I, the United States Government tried to mould opinion by establishing a Bureau of Cartoons to "mobilize and direct the scattered cartoon power of the country for constructive war work." The Bureau was originally established in 1917 under the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, but was taken over in 1918 by the Committee on Public Information. The Bureau published a *Weekly Bulletin for Cartoonists* which contained ideas that the different branches of the government wanted to emphasize and which suggested desirable captions. Thirty-seven different agencies contributed their ideas to the *Bulletin*, which was mailed to some 750 cartoonists. James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917–1919* (New York, 1939), 108–109. See also the information of the founder of the Bureau in George J. Hecht, *The War in Cartoons* (New York, 1919), 6. The products of this effort may be seen in *The Cartoon Book; Dedicated to the Success of the Third Liberty Loan by American Artists* (Washington, D.C., 1918), produced by the Bureau of Publicity, War Loan Organization. More generally, the images and subjects of American cartoons during the war were influenced by this official attempt to shape public opinion and popular attitudes.

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Spielmann was certain that the cartoons in *Punch* in the Victorian period represented public opinion. Hines went even further in asserting of cartoons that "their swift message is exactly in accord with the spirit of the age."[13] But historians should not make such assumptions. The cartoon too frequently has been employed as a propaganda tool, and cartoonists are not without idiosyncrasies that make their work unrepresentative on one point or another.

Little is known about previous generations of cartoonists. There are biographies and studies of some of the most important, such as James Gillray, George Cruikshank, Thomas Rowlandson, Honoré Daumier, and Nast. But far less information is available about their rivals, whose output was inferior in quality or quantity or whose cartoons appeared in largely forgotten publications. Yet the little-known cartoonists produced the bulk of the cartoons in most periods, and it is useful to know about their attitudes, place in society, sources of information, and relations with their subjects.[14] For cartoonists as a group, such considerations as their conditions of work are obviously related to the cartoons they produce: the nature of their work changes when they become incorporated into the disciplined world of journalistic requirements and deadlines.

The information about individual cartoonists is important not only so that group biographies can be written, but also because most cartoonists had peculiarities which made their work unrepresentative at some point. Gillray, for instance, gave more prominence to George Canning than his place in politics in the 1790s warranted, but Canning was responsible for obtaining a pension for the cartoonist. Such quirks of individual cartoonists can be spotted by a close examination of the cartoons themselves, but the historian is greatly aided in assessing them if he knows the reason for them. This is all the more true in cases where established cartoonists did work to the specifications and designs of others.[15] If no other information is available, cartoons at least enable the researcher to form an idea of the concerns and attitudes of each artist.

13 Edna Hines, "Cartoons as a Means of Social Control," *Sociology and Social Research*, XVII (1933), 454.

14 For instance, knowledge of Morgan's precarious place as a member of a fashionable set of young men in London helps in understanding his cartoons about London society, just as knowledge of his bankruptcy gives a perspective on his attacks on the high cost of fashionable dress.

15 This was a common practice in England in the late eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the principal cartoon for each issue of *Punch* was decided at the weekly staff dinner, a practice that other journals imitated.

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Identification of cartoons, even when signatures are lacking, can usually be made on the basis of style. (Gillray is a very difficult case because he sometimes forged both the styles and signatures of his rivals.) Thus we know that Morgan in 1867 carried on a cartoon rivalry with himself in the pages of *Tomahawk* and *Fun*, although he did not sign his work.

The means of distributing cartoons has an impact on the size and kind of audience and on the nature of the cartoons themselves. When cartoons were sold separately, the buyers clearly were buying them because they wanted them.[16] But that is not the case when cartoons are distributed as part of a journalistic or entertainment package.[17] The cartoon gained a much wider audience when it became part of a package, but it may have lost some of its impact, partly because it had to compete with the printed word and partly because its nature changed. The change in nature was to some extent the result of a new minimum requirement: no single cartoon could make the package unacceptable to the buying public. Thus the cartoon lost its scurrilous and bawdy character as well as most of its viciousness and much of its bite. What had been commonplace in the 1760s—when cartoons were incomplete without reference to the relationship between the Queen Mother and Bute—became daring a century later when Morgan attacked in the most general terms the immorality of the Prince of Wales. Publishers could not allow the cartoons to offend potential buyers.

The method used for printing cartoons frequently gives some indication of the size and nature of the audience which they reached. Copper plates—on which many eighteenth-century cartoons were produced—wear out quickly; only occasionally were cartoons popular enough to justify the expense of engraving or etching a new plate. Not until the mid-nineteenth century with the redevelopment of the use of wood blocks was it possible in England to produce runs of more than a few thousand cartoons. The improvement in techniques also made it possible to reduce the price; an issue of *Punch* in the nineteenth century cost half as much as a single black and white cartoon had cost in the eighteenth century, and *Tomahawk*—containing a colored cartoon each

16 With some exceptions: George IV sent agents to buy cartoons that he did not like in order to prevent their circulation.

17 Thus an important index of popularity is lost to the historian. *Punch* or *The Washington Post* maintain their sales even when the cartoons do not strike the public's fancy, but separately issued cartoons had to appeal to the buying public on their own merits.

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week—cost two pence in 1868 against a shilling for a single colored cartoon in the previous century. Such reductions in price made the cartoon available to a buying public of a lower social position than their eighteenth-century counterparts. Also, improvement in techniques—the perfection of lithography and the development of wood blocks that could be sectioned to allow six or eight engravers to work on a single cartoon—made it possible to produce complex cartoons more quickly than had previously been the case for relatively simple designs.

The symbols and images of the cartoon are crucial to its interpretation. Historians have to understand thoroughly the meaning of the symbols and imagery to grasp the point of the cartoon, and they must be sensitive to graphic changes of nuance. At times this may lead them rather far afield. Curtis, for instance, related the facial angles of the Irish portrayed in English cartoons of the mid-Victorian period to the scientific folklore of physiognomy and thereby showed its significance in denoting a fundamental attitude toward the Irish.[18] He also related English cartoon images of the Irish to those of Irish and American cartoonists. Such perspectives are helpful, but also necessary is the careful consideration of changes in images over time. Sudden shifts in imagery may be related to changes in popular attitudes. With care, historians can identify the time of the changes and the events that caused them.[19] The portrayal of individuals or groups of people must also be compared to the presentation of similar subjects; methods of presentation that look extraordinary and highly significant when considered in isolation may only reflect cartooning conventions rather than popular attitudes. In short, sophisticated handling of the language of cartooning is essential for interpretation.

The question of the relation between the cartoon and other media of communication is important to its use by historians. The communication media do not exist in isolation but rather affect each other in form, content, and function. The cartoon was substantially changed by its incorporation into magazines and newspapers, and the general nature of these changes is reasonably clear. But the specifics vary in each case. Some journals used the cartoon to illustrate the editorial; others, such as *Punch*, used the cartoon as its sole editorial statement; and still others printed cartoons that ran counter to the editorials. The question of

18 L. P. Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (New York, 1971).

19 Despite the work of Curtis, it remains an open question whether or not the Fenian outbreaks in the late 1860s played an important part in the image of the Irish in English cartoons.

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similarity in content is of great importance. Are the cartoons presenting different views of the same issues or concentrating on different issues entirely or merely supplementing the editorials without adding anything? The questions are no less important in dealing with cartoons before their connection with newspapers. Careful study of the relationship can offer historians a context for the written material, on which too much reliance has been placed as a sole source for understanding public opinion and popular attitudes.

Historians must also consider the purpose for which cartoons were published. The intention of the cartoonist and publisher affect both how representative the cartoons were and what impact they had. Here subject matter is important. Cartoons on foreign affairs may be designed to unify and bolster a nation. From Gillray's attacks on Napoleon to Low's "Hit and Mus" cartoons, England's enemies have been graphically belittled and held up to scorn. The mid-nineteenth century specialized in pitting the lion against the lesser animal symbols of other nations: what chance had the eagle in the lion's paws? The *Punch* cartoons of World War I were designed to whip up hatred against the Germans and thereby sustain the civilian enthusiasm which made the sacrifices of total war tolerable.

Similarly, the political cartoons were usually produced to emphasize differences and increase the political temperature. Many cartoonists have been employed by politicians or by organs of political parties to put across partisan opinions. The uninhibited invective of the separately issued cartoons was paralleled by the only partially restrained invective of the nineteenth century, apparent in the work of Nast. But increasingly the low-key, relatively dispassionate, and balanced cartoon popularized by *Punch* has become the dominant form of political cartooning. As a result, the political cartoon now seems designed to amuse and inform the reader and thus may serve to reduce the passions of politics. The increasing element of humor suggests at worst foolishness or obstinacy rather than venality and stupidity. Despite some brilliant exceptions, the general trend has been to confine political differences within the limits of good humor.[20] This has been accom-

20 Morgan brought the *Punch* tradition of political cartooning to the United States, and it was one of the basic points of difference between Morgan and Nast in their cartoon rivalry during the Presidential election of 1872. Nast supported Grant, and he thought that the best appeal of the hero of Appomattox was to keep alive the passions of the Civil War. Therefore he waved the bloody shirt with crude power, taking off on Greeley's desire to reconcile the nation and on his statement about the need to "clasp hands across the bloody chasm." Nast depicted the editor shaking hands with the

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panied by the development of cartoons designed to sum up the situation, to provide a basically neutral comment graphically illustrating an event, the most famous of which is probably Sir John Tenniel's "Dropping the Pilot," on the dismissal of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.[21]

At the same time, social cartoons have retained their basic devices of ridicule and satire to reform customs, manners, and laws, but generally within a narrower scope and in softer tones. Here again, the inclusion of the cartoon as part of a journalistic or entertainment package has played its part in transforming the social cartoon. Rising prosperity has also played its part: the portrayal of the Irish in the United States has been chronicled briefly in an article entitled, "From Shanties to Lace Curtains."[22] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the image of the Irish had changed drastically since Nast's vicious cartoon of St. Patrick's Day, 1867, showing ape-faced Irish thugs brutally clubbing New York's finest. Nor are there many counterparts to Nast's savagely anti-Catholic cartoons, including one picturing Cardinals looking strikingly like crocodiles crawling up on the beaches to menace children. Fittingly enough, Nast was the most prominent American victim of the transformation of the political and social cartoon: by the late 1880s he could no longer find a satisfactory forum for his work.

All of these questions lead ultimately to identifying the audience and to evaluating the reception of the cartoon. Historians have tended to beg these questions, perhaps because the issues are complex and the

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Baltimore ruffians over the bodies of the Sixth Regiment, with Ku Klux Klansmen over the bodies of their victims, with the ghost of John Wilkes Booth over the grave of Lincoln, and with the air over the graves of Andersonville Prison (there being too many of them for Greeley to reach the hand of the Confederate on the other side). In Nast's hands, Greeley's arranging bail for Jefferson Davis—one of the few acts of disinterested humanity the age was to see—became sinister. Morgan, on the other hand, could not rely on stirring the cauldron of bitterness. He supported Horace Greeley, who campaigned on a platform of reconciliation and of healing the divisions of the Civil War. The reformers wanted to lessen national hostility, and Morgan had to find methods of keeping the political divisions within bounds. One of the ways he did this was through his humor. While Nast's cartoons were imparted with a scornful humor directed toward sardonic laughter, Morgan's partook of a lighter wit designed to produce an appreciative chuckle. Since then on both sides of the Atlantic, publishers have felt most at ease with cartoonists who were not so passionate that they upset the readers. This is another result of the cartoon as part of an entertainment package—offensive political passion, like sex, has been removed. Naturally enough, there are a number of exceptions to this trend toward less passionate political cartoons, primarily in journals or papers with a strong political bias and hence a committed readership.

21 This cartoon was so neutral that both Bismarck and William II liked it very much.

22 John J. Appel, "From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in *Puck*, 1876–1910," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XIII (1971), 365–375.

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answers are often speculative. But considered answers based on available evidence—however speculative—are better than ignoring the questions. And the study of the cartoon is apt to become an antiquarian pastime if the search for these answers is abandoned. Identification of the audience is not easy even in cases where there is a great deal of literature about the cartoon. It becomes harder when the cartoonists or journals are obscure. Sales or circulation figures often cannot be established with accuracy. But the cartoons themselves provide helpful clues about their intended audience, and the means of distribution aid in determining the actual audience.[23] How they affected their audience is even more difficult to establish. Here the answer may depend on the relation between the views circulated by the cartoon and those put forward by other media of communication. And the cartoon evidence must be related to other indices of opinion and attitudes such as behavior. Only then can historians grope toward an understanding of the effect of cartoons on their audience in any given case.

The answers will not always prove helpful. At some points, the cartoon evidence may prove inadequate or ambiguous. Like any other historical source, it has limitations, and interpretation is difficult. But this is no reason to ignore the cartoon material or to consider it only in passing, as many studies of public opinion and popular attitudes have done. In dismissing this evidence, historians cut themselves off from a valuable source. Cartoons can tell them in some cases whether certain scandals were public knowledge. They are direct evidence that certain groups tried to manipulate public opinion. They can give a clear idea of the images politicians projected. They offer contemporary interpretations of events and reveal much of the sense of proportion of their creators. They can give an indication of the depth of emotion about

23 Knowledge of the means of distribution becomes particularly helpful when the intention of the cartoons is not immediately clear. During World War I, for instance, *Punch* cartooned consciously to aid the war effort. Among its cartoons were several attacking strikes and strikers. One showed the great hand in the sky presenting to a British striker the German Iron Cross for services rendered, while another depicted a working man holding in one hand a strike manifesto and in the other a dagger which he is about to plunge into the back of an upright British Tommy. A third showed a wounded war hero (whose arm was always in a sling—he never lost it) remonstrating with a "disaffected" working man: "What 'ld you think o' me, mate, if I struck for extra pay in the middle of an action? Well, that's what you've been doing." The cartoons are ambiguous as to whether they were intended to dissuade working men from striking or to raise indignation in the rest of the population against strikes (or both). It is helpful to know that the evidence indicates that *Punch* was not reaching the section of the working class which was striking.

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events and politicians. And they can provide insights into the popular attitudes that underlay public opinion, insights that may be more difficult to glean from written material or from other evidence of behavior.[24]

24 It is sometimes very difficult to get at "gut" issues, though modern techniques of opinion sampling have made it much easier. Nonetheless, cartoons may still be helpful. In the case of Nixon's Supreme Court appointees, weighty words of criticism have avoided expressing directly one of the gut issues: that the President was quite happy to appoint a racist. But Szep of the *Boston Globe* made this point superbly in a cartoon showing Nixon interviewing a Senator [Robert Byrd] in a Ku Klux Klan outfit: "That's great, senator. And you say you've had past experience judging cases in a court . . . at night . . . with minorities. . . ." This undercurrent would be extremely difficult to pick out of voting figures without the aid of a cartoon to guide one to it.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A new scholarly review devoted to economic history is the *Journal of European Economic History*, edited by Luigi de Rosa, formerly professor of Economic History at the University of Bari and now at Naples. The American members of the editorial board are Shepard B. Clough and Ira Glazier, with offices at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa. 19122. They invite contributions and suggestions for articles and book reviews. The Journal is published by the Banco de Roma, Via del Corso, Rome. There is no charge for subscriptions to institutions and professional economic historians.

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