

Victorian Age Comics

European comic strips and books developed out of an existing tradition of caricature and illustration. This tradition includes the many Victorian Age (1837-1901) comic magazines *Le Charivari*, *Punch*, *Fun*, *The Comic Almanack*, and many others. Many of these magazines shared writers and illustrators, as the writings and the creators were all part of the rich multimedia community of writings, illustrations, and their creators.

Fun

Fun, dubbed *Funch* by some readers, was a contemporary to *Punch* and provides useful commentary on the significance of *Punch* and comic magazines in Victorian England and in times since. As a comic magazine modeled on *Punch*, *Fun* used an image and text combination for form and included many types of creative, playful, and critical writing often in the form of parody, verse, writings on political and literary, and cultural criticism. *Fun* also maintained the parallel with *Punch* through the use of a mascot, with *Fun*'s jester Mr. Fun and his cat as *Fun*'s mascot and *Punch*'s Mr. Punch and his dog Toby as *Punch*'s mascot. *Fun* began in 1861 and was more closely related to theater than *Punch* throughout its publication.

Fun is important as independent artifact as well as for comparative studies with *Punch* in analyses of particular topics. Because *Fun* is closely related to theater, researchers using the Performing Arts Digital Collection may find *Fun* particularly relevant.

Notable Contributors to *Fun*

- **Henry J. Byron** (1835-1884) was the founding editor of *Fun*, actor, playwright, and theater manager.
- **Tom Hood** (1835-1874) was a writer, playwright, novelist, and the editor of *Fun* after Byron. He was also the son of poet Thomas Hood, who was the first contributor to *Punch*.
- **Sir William Schwenck Gilbert** (1836-1911), a playwright, director, writer, and illustrator, best known for his comic operas produced with Sir Arthur Sullivan, commonly referred to as "Gilbert and Sullivan" and including *The Pirates of Penzance* and many others.
- **Ambrose Bierce** (1842-c1914) wrote as a novelist, poet, and journalist under his name and under the pseudonym Dod Grile. His prolific writing includes writing for *Fun* as well writing many short stories, news stories, poems, and novels, including:
The Devil's Dictionary (1906) <http://books.google.com/books?id=xynV2AEAOs0C>
Tales of Soldiers and Civilians. New York: Lovell, Coryell & Company, 1891.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=7BE3AAAAIAAJ>
Fantastic Fables: http://demo.openlibrary.org/b/Fantastic_fables
Cobwebs: Being the Fables of Zambri, the Parsee:
http://demo.openlibrary.org/b/Cobwebs_being_of_Parsee
The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce:
http://demo.openlibrary.org/b/collected_works_Bierce_2
- **Clement Scott** (1841-1904) was a theater critic, playwright, and travel writer, as well as a contributor to *Fun*. His papers are in the Rochester University Library.
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=3493>
- **H. Savile Clarke** (1841-1893) contributed to both *Fun* and *Punch* and created the book and lyrics for the theatrical musical *Alice in Wonderland*, which opened at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London in 1886. H. Savile Clarke was married to Clara Savile Clarke, author of *The Poet's Audience* and *The World's Pleasures*. H. Savile Clarke's contributions were often verse on medical and scientific subjects, and many are also available in *The Doctor's Window: Poems by the Doctor, For the Doctor and About the Doctor* (edited by Ina Russelle Warren, Buffalo, NY: Charles Wells Moulton, 1898; <http://books.google.com/books?id=GAMGAAAIAAJ>).

- **T. W. (Thomas William) Robertson** (1829-1871) was a playwright and stage director most famous for his innovative work in realism—creating plays that deal with contemporary problems and issues.
- **Sir Francis Cowley Burnard** (1836-1917) wrote plays, operas, books, contributing to *Fun*, and serving as an editor of *Punch* from 1880 to 1906.

The Comic Almanack

The Comic Almanack was another satirical periodical like *Fun* and *Punch*. *The Comic Almanack* is of particular interest because it includes illustrations by George Cruikshank (a prolific illustrator and caricaturist who created over 15,000 etchings and engravings) and texts by William Thackeray and other important literary figures.

The “Preliminary” to *The Comic Almanack* for 1835 notes that writers for it included:

- William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)
- Albert Smith (1816-1860)
- The Brothers Mayhew: Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) and Horace Mayhew (1816-1872)
- Gilbert Abbott Beckett (1811-1856)
- John Camden Hotten (1832-1873)
- George Cruikshank (1792-1878)

In addition to his caricatures in *The Comic Almanack*, Cruikshank also worked with Charles Dickens and illustrated *Oliver Twist* and *Sketches by Boz*, created political prints and caricatures that ran alone and in various other publications, and illustrated children's books, many of which are available online in the Baldwin Library of Children's Literature Digital Collection: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/UFDC/?c=juv&m=hrah&t=cruikshank&f=%20FC>

References & Further Reading

Because *Fun*, *The Comic Almanack*, *Punch*, and other comic and news writings of the time shared so many of the same writers and illustrators, many resources on one of the publications or authors also informs the others.

- Spielmann, Marion Harry. *The History of "Punch."* London: Cassell, 1895.
- Mayhew, Athol. *A Jorum of "Punch" with Those who Helped to Brew it: Being the Early History of "The London Charivari."* London: Downey & co., 1895. [Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=00rYGF6G768C>]
- Sullivan, Alvin. *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913.* London: Greenwood Press, 1984.
- Starrett, Vincent. *Ambrose Bierce.* Chicago: Walter M. Hill, 1920. [Online: <http://books.google.com/books?id=LcpGAAAAIAAJ>]
- *Punch*: http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Punch_%28Bookshelf%29