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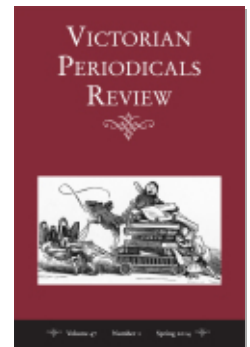
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## The Role of Visual Appearance in Punch's Early Victorian Satires on Religion

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Victorian Periodicals Review, Volume 47, Number 1, Spring 2014, pp. 66-86 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press  
DOI: 10.1353/vpr.2014.0006



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# The Role of Visual Appearance in *Punch's* Early Victorian Satires on Religion

DOMINIC JANES

In 1841, the year *Punch, or the London Charivari* was launched, the Church of England was in a state of ferment and division. The rise of what was known as “Low Church” Evangelicalism centred on moral exposition from scripture was being challenged by the Catholic liturgical revivalism of the “High Church” Oxford Tractarians and their Ritualist followers.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, legal reforms had removed most of the impediments that had been applied to Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. Given that religion was an important topic of public concern, it is hardly surprising that it made an appearance in the pages of the new publication. This article examines a range of anti-religious satire that appeared in *Punch* during the early and mid-Victorian eras, focusing specifically on those visual media that emphasized visible aspects of deviance rather than theological differences of belief. Such mockery made use of tropes taken from the literary Gothic and, to a lesser extent, Orientalist discourse in order to question the moral rectitude of religious enthusiasts, particularly those with Catholic and medievalist tendencies. Satirical illustrations tell us a great deal about middle-class metropolitan attitudes towards religious minorities. I argue that studying the combination of word and image in these *Punch* satires can lead us to a fuller appreciation of the degree to which visual appearance provided a key focal point for religious contestation in early and mid-Victorian Britain.

## Anti-Evangelicalism

Soon after its inception, *Punch* became an influential periodical, achieving a circulation of approximately 165,000 in 1850.<sup>2</sup> This circulation was concentrated among the urban middle classes, particularly those residing

in London. Its founding editors, Henry Mayhew and Mark Lemon, were committed to a Liberal social agenda, but by the later 1840s, after Mayhew's departure from the editorial staff, the magazine eschewed the more extreme tone of much of the radical press of the previous decades. This meant that *Punch* increasingly found its way into the homes of the respectable middle classes.<sup>3</sup> The magazine's consequent commercial success was thus achieved at the cost of losing much of its initial radicalism.<sup>4</sup>

In early issues of *Punch*, the writer who was most notable for employing a sharply critical tone toward the political establishment and social hierarchy was Douglas Jerrold. Between September 1841 and March 1845, Jerrold published sixty-seven articles in *Punch*, which he signed with the initial "Q." One of these contributions, "Politics of the Outward Man!" (1841), denounces those who mock their opponents for their visual appearance. He complains that in the eyes of the political establishment, "Wisdom is to be purchased only of the tailor. Morality is synonymous with millinery; whilst Truth herself— pictured by the poetry of the olden day in angelic nakedness—must now be fully-dressed, like a young lady at a royal drawing-room, to be considered presentable."<sup>5</sup> He thus emphasizes that in early Victorian London, political critiques are focused on style rather than substance. Yet when it comes to attacking the upper ranks of the Church of England, particularly Evangelical supporters of Biblical literalism and their missionary endeavors, he too falls back on critiques of visual appearance. This tendency is particularly apparent in his attacks on Exeter Hall, a key center of Evangelical activity in London during the 1830s and '40s.

Opened in 1831 at a cost of £36,000, Exeter Hall was located on the Strand in a complex of offices focussed around a grand assembly room which was extended to seat 3,000 people in 1850.<sup>6</sup> Designed in the classical style, the hall featured a tall, narrow entrance flanked by Corinthian columns, above which was inscribed the word "Philadelphieion" ("loving brothers") in Greek script.<sup>7</sup> By the 1840s, the hall had become one of the pre-eminent platforms for the expression of Evangelical causes and, as such, served as a key meeting place for Low-Church Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and others. For this reason, Exeter Hall became the special target of Jerrold's critique of Evangelicalism. By giving voice to Jerrold's prejudice, *Punch* made itself unpopular among Evangelicals, not because it did not share their zeal for reform but because it criticized their neglect of local charities and their focus on converting the heathen abroad. In "A Hint for Exeter Hall" (1848), Jerrold writes, "We think that Exeter Hall is a little too apt to search for distant wretchedness, with a telescope" and further alleges that the "famishing shoe-binder or seamstress is [seen by Evangelicals as] a homely commonplace; the benighted Chinese an exotic darling."<sup>8</sup> Evangelical missions to the Holy Land aroused his particular scorn because they diverted much-

needed resources from philanthropic efforts in Britain. For example, in “Exeter Hall Pets” (1844) he writes, “Oh the Evangelical imagination clothes them [Jews] with the mystic beauty of the place. . . . Oh, ye miserable Christians, who hunger and waste in English lanes and cellars,—why are ye not Jews, glorified by distance, dwelling at Beyrout and Hebron!”<sup>9</sup>

Jerrold associated the Evangelicals of Exeter Hall with an overzealous interest in Eastern exoticism. Likewise, in his 1842 essay in *Punch* describing the decoration of the hall, he emphasizes its Orientalism: “This building stands on the north side of the Strand, and is dedicated to piety and virtue. Its architecture and materials are, therefore, of corresponding holiness and worth. Staircases of highly-polished marble, with bannisters of cedar, curiously inlaid with gold, lead to the various magnificent chambers of this magnificent structure. In one place we see Sidonian tapestries and hangings of Tyre—in another the carvings and paintings of Egypt, with flaming carbuncles, and all the jewelled glories of the East.”<sup>10</sup> The “pilgrims” who come to the hall, he argues, are like the “fireside philanthropist, the good and easy man, for whom life has been one long lounge on a velvet sofa.”<sup>11</sup> He accuses such men of hypocritical self-indulgence since “it is at the Hall that the red-hot sectarian—the pulpit darling of many tea tables—denounces the enjoyments of the world, and, as it has been, would have this beautiful world clothed in sober drab!”<sup>12</sup> In other words, he is alleging that Evangelicals are attempting to conceal their own enjoyment of comfortable and indeed ostentatious lives when they advocate dull sobriety.

Jerrold’s point, that Evangelicals make a show of self-denial that is as misleading as it is sanctimonious, is echoed in a later article published in *Punch*, which remarks, “Exeter Hall dresses its charity in grave looks and black coats. But *Punch*’s grin may cover thoughts as solemn as a drawn-down lip and a dead eye. His parti-coloured doublet has a heart under it as penetrable, and as sympathetic, and as large as that as beats under the REV. JABEZ BLANK’S raven broadcloth, or DR. ANONYMOUS’ sable cassock.”<sup>13</sup> John Harvey’s *Men in Black* (1995) has traced the process by which plain, dark clothing, having originally been the dress of the poor, came to be widely adopted in the course of the nineteenth century as a marker of authority and manliness. As a result, he notes, the “nineteenth century looked like a funeral.”<sup>14</sup> Evangelical clergy were noted for dressing themselves carefully in dark outfits that were similar to those sported by dandies of the time who took care to ensure that their interest in self-presentation was focussed on discreet displays of sartorial correctness. By adopting sober dress, Evangelicals were attempting to display their superior taste without providing an easy target for critics. In response, Jerrold and other *Punch* contributors suggested that such attire was a smokescreen concealing lives of hypocritical self-indulgence. The visual modesty of

Evangelical dress, however, presented a challenge for *Punch* illustrators, who relied on grotesque images to reinforce textual satire. So, for instance, when the Roman Catholic artist Richard Doyle attempted to attack Exeter Hall in “Manners and Customs of Ye Englyshe in 1849, no. 10” (1849), he was only able to present a scene packed with social types (the ugly old woman, simple young lady, and young dandy) that failed to convey a sense of religious peculiarity (figure 1).

During the mid-Victorian period, Evangelicals began to occupy many of the leading positions in the Church of England, and their moral causes were widely seen as important and respectable. Given that during this same period *Punch* was softening its early radicalism, it is no surprise that its attacks on Evangelical religiosity diminished in the later 1840s. This softening in tone corresponds with the decline of Jerrold’s influence on religious matters and the rise of William Makepeace Thackeray’s more nuanced critique. In February 1847, Thackeray told his friend, Rev. John Allen, that in the previous year, “Jerrold and I had a sort of war [concerning anti-clericalism] and I came off conqueror.”<sup>15</sup> What seems to have happened is that the two men fought over the degree to which the hierarchy of the Anglican Church was a proper subject for satire. The striking result was that in “The Snobs of England” series, which ran from March 1846 to February 1847, Thackeray pointedly omitted the episcopate from his mockery of social snobbery and instead turned his guns on those journalists who had sought to do otherwise. However, this did not by any means bring an end to satirical attacks on religion in the pages of *Punch*. Instead, it refocused its mockery of visual deviance on Roman Catholicism, depicting it, in particular, as a pernicious influence on the established Church of England.

### Anti-Catholicism

In one of his critiques of Exeter Hall, Jerrold remarks, “Even religion to some people is more attractive when invested with a certain air of romance. The modern missionary is, to some folks, picturesque as was the Templar Knight of old.”<sup>16</sup> Here he makes an implicit comparison between the romantic fervor of Evangelical missionaries and the medieval revivalism associated with the Catholic Church. By the mid-Victorian period, romantic interpretations of medieval religiosity inspired both the Roman Catholic revival and the contemporaneous Catholic revival within Anglicanism. The leading contributors to *Punch* opposed these developments by taking part in the rabid anti-Catholicism that swept across Britain in 1850. The magazine’s stance led directly to Richard Doyle’s resignation, leaving the field clear for cartoonists who had no qualms about attacking Catholicism and High-Church ritual. The immediate spur for this furore, which

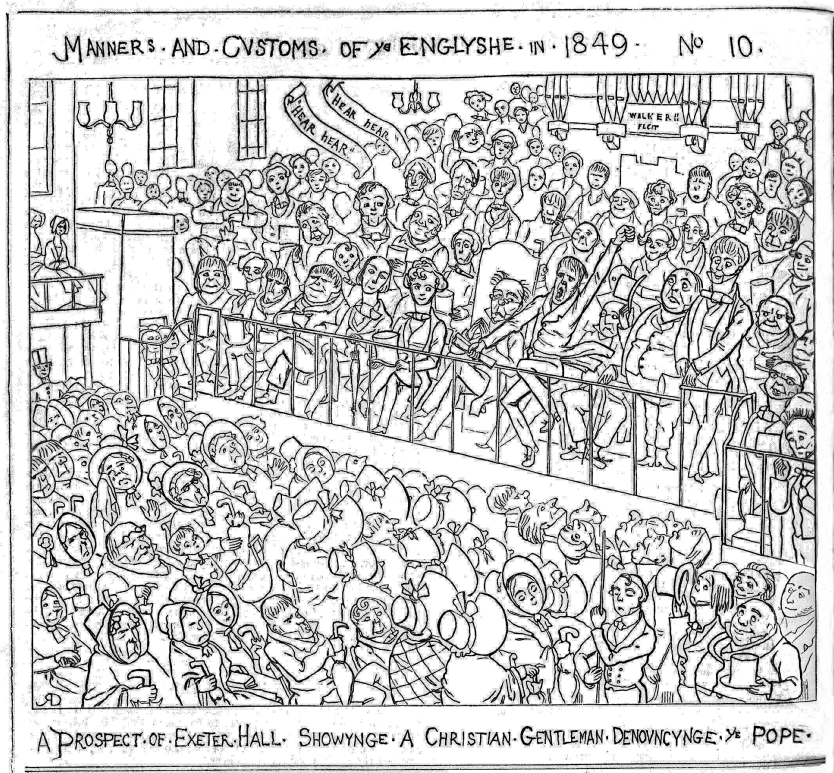


Figure 1. Richard Doyle, “Manners and Customs of Ye Englyshe in 1849, no. 10,” *Punch* 16 (May 19, 1849): 206.

encompassed most mid-Victorian periodicals, was the so-called “Papal Aggression.”<sup>17</sup> This was the phrase used by angry Protestants to denounce the unilateral declaration by Pope Pius IX calling for the re-establishment of the Episcopal hierarchy of Roman Catholic bishops which had been in abeyance since the Reformation. The Pope’s actions were prompted by the fact that Britain had finally repealed almost all of the legal impediments for Roman Catholics (even if this had not resulted in an end to religious prejudice). The result was a storm of anti-Catholic agitation and strident calls for legislation to declare the “Papal Aggression” illegal and to strip the Catholic Church in Britain of its resources.

It is important to stress that *Punch* did not start out as anti-Catholic. In 1847, it backed Pius IX as the new and apparently liberal Pope who supported the aims of the Risorgimento. However, after the revolutionary events of 1848, Pius was forced to flee Rome and, with French backing, re-established his rule on the basis of uncompromising opposition not only

to radical politics but also to Liberalism in general. This conservative turn sparked *Punch's* campaign against Catholicism as an ostentatiously visible site of humbug and hypocrisy. For several months between 1850 and 1851, over two-thirds of the full-page cartoons in *Punch* were anti-Catholic. The campaign was driven by Jerrold and illustrator John Leech, even though they were of different political persuasions. Jerrold saw Catholicism as a conservative social force whilst Leech viewed it with the political suspicion of a Tory who was supportive of the traditional Anglican establishment.<sup>18</sup> Leech had been recruited to work at *Punch* by a close friend, Percival Leigh, who also assumed a leading role in the ensuing bout of anti-Catholicism. Popular anti-Catholicism, both around the *Punch* dinner table and in the country as a whole, thus enabled Jerrold to resume his anticlerical crusade, albeit with a new target in his sights.

A central theme of this campaign was the depiction of the Catholic Church as grossly materialistic. The conveniently rotund form of Nicholas Wiseman, installed as Cardinal of Westminster by the Pope, was established as representative of the alleged greed of the Roman priesthood.<sup>19</sup> The moral pretensions of Catholicism were depicted as fraudulent through satirical representation of the Roman Church as a rapacious business that would soon be bankrupted by the actions of Parliament and the good sense of the British consumer. In "Selling off!!" (1851), the cardinal's rotund figure is replaced with a slimmed down physique, symbolically suggesting that his former gluttony has been punished with starvation and bankruptcy. Wiseman is depicted as a shop-keeper who is forced into disposing of his stock at knock-down prices (figure 2). But even simple-minded and emotional members of society are apparently not tempted since his "pretty little gimcracks for young ladies and children at astonishingly low prices" are piled high in the dump bins on the pavement.<sup>20</sup> Wiseman is, therefore, reduced to hawking his slippers to a Jewish second-hand clothes dealer. Catholicism is here reduced to a site of material exchange where Wiseman performs the role of the bankrupt capitalist—an image all too familiar to the commercial middle classes in England.<sup>21</sup> The depiction of Catholicism as nothing more than a materialist commercial enterprise informed Gilbert À Beckett's 1852 article, "Religious Puffing." À Beckett was inspired to write the article after seeing an advertisement for services at a "Roman Catholic concern" (Our Lady Star of the Sea, Greenwich, which had just been rebuilt), which offered high mass at 11:00 a.m. and vespers at 6:00 p.m. Such an advertisement, he noted, was "strongly suggestive of the tea-dealer's invitation to 'try our Black at 4s.,' or 'our Green at 5 s.'"<sup>22</sup> The complex liturgy and material culture of Catholicism facilitated its effective visual representation as an emporium of bric-a-brac.

The elaborate clerical attire of Catholic priests was ripe fodder for *Punch's* satirical pen. Their garments were easy targets for satire because



Figure 2. "Selling off!!" *Punch* 20 (February 22, 1851): 76.

they were so unlike those worn by Anglican Evangelicals and the Victorian middle classes. For many Victorians, the ornate costume worn by priests was associated with Gothic mystery and villainy. This fuelled suspicions that there was a Catholic conspiracy afoot aimed at confining heiresses in nunneries in order to commandeer their fortunes. For example, Charles Newdegate, an Evangelical squire and MP for North Warwickshire, convinced himself that convents were organisations designed to oppress vulnerable women and launched a prolonged campaign to have them either inspected or shut down.<sup>23</sup>

*Punch* fueled the rise of such paranoia through various depictions of Catholic priests and monks as sexual predators. For example, in "The Kidnapper.—A Case for the Police" (1851), a predatory-looking monk emerges from a darkened entranceway holding out a flimsy veil to a doll-like young girl, apparently attempting to exchange it for her giant sack of money (figure 3). This cartoon was created in response to a dispute over the installation of a rich heiress in a Roman Catholic nunnery. On one level, the illustration accuses the Catholic Church of greed by alluding to the criminal practice of kidnapping girls for their clothes, as occurs in Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, 1846–48.<sup>24</sup> However, for the girl in the illustration, as for Florence Dombey, the threat is not only to her clothes but also to her sexual innocence. The illustration invites readers to imagine the





THE KIDNAPPER.—A CASE FOR THE POLICE.

*Kidnapper.* "THERE'S A BE-AUTIFUL VEIL!!! GIVE ME YOUR PARCEL, MY DEAR, WHILE YOU PUT IT ON."

Figure 3. John Leech, "The Kidnapper.—A Case for the Police," *Punch* 20 (March 29, 1851): 129.

priest stripping the young girl of her worldly assets, including her dress, when she enters the convent.<sup>25</sup> In this way, artist John Leech draws on the hoary stereotype of the greedy, fat monk to suggest that Catholic priests have excessive and perverse sexual appetites.<sup>26</sup> As Henry J. Miller points out, Leech's illustration is an important indicator of *Punch's* move away from anti-Evangelical prejudice, feeding instead on popular anti-Catholic attitudes in order to achieve mainstream acceptance.<sup>27</sup> By this date, he argues, the magazine saw no contradiction between assuming a stance of moral respectability and "subjecting minorities and marginal groups such as the Irish, Catholics, Jews, and colonial native peoples to unpleasant and cruel treatment."<sup>28</sup>

### Anti-Ritualism

Given anti-Catholic paranoia in Britain at mid-century, it is not surprising that some of the sharpest attacks against religion in *Punch* were aimed at contemporary catholicising developments in the Church of England, which were labelled as "Ritualism" or "Puseyism" (after the Oxford theologian E. B. Pusey). A generation of young men who had studied under the Tractarian leaders at Oxford in the 1830s were making their mark in parochial work. For example, popular Ritualist priest W. J. E. Bennett presided over the parish of St. Paul, Knightsbridge, in west London. Over the course of the 1840s, Bennett established St. Paul's and the new church of St. Barnabas as centres of Ritualist practice.<sup>29</sup> His vision was to reform the city through the rediscovery of medieval piety. In 1850, the church of St. Barnabas was described by the *Ecclesiologist*, a High-Church architectural magazine, as the most "complete, and with completeness, the most sumptuous church which has been dedicated to the use of the Anglican Communion since the revival."<sup>30</sup> The church was part of an organisation referred to as "St. Barnabas's College," a "residential house" that housed four clergy living communally.<sup>31</sup> This was not a monastery since it had no monastic rule and hosted a co-educational school, but to outsiders it seemed rather like one. An admiring write-up in the *Illustrated London News* was accompanied by a drawing that clearly showed the church as the central building in an extensive walled and gated Gothic complex.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Priscilla Lydia Sellon, a pioneering Anglican nun, was responsible for the nearby establishment of a small community of "Sisters of Mercy."<sup>33</sup> All of this activity was seized upon by opponents of the Papal Aggression as evidence that there was a conspiracy at work within the Church of England to convert the social elite to Roman Catholicism.

*Punch* attacked these developments by seizing on the use of Gothic style in architecture and design as evidence of falsity, immorality, and self-indulgence. For example, a cartoon entitled "Convent of the Belgravians"

focuses on extreme fashion for rich women as a way of emphasizing the materialism of medievalist tastes (figure 4). The ladies in the illustration have merely added hoods to their normally luxurious attire and are vainly admiring the results in the mirror. The accompanying article by Percival Leigh directly spoofs the Ecclesiological cult of correctness in medievalist design by implying that it has nothing to do with spiritual devotion and everything to do with material extravagance: "Everybody who has a proper veneration for the reredos, and who, without holding extreme opinions on the subject of the dalmatic, feels correctly on that of the alb, who has a soul that can appreciate mediaeval art, particularly the beautiful foreshortening of our ancestors, and who would revive their ecclesiastical practices and institutions to an extent just tastefully Romanesque, will be 'ryghte gladde' that there is a proposal to found a Convent, under Anglican principles."<sup>34</sup> The abbess, the reader is assured, is a real countess. Fees will be £10 per month, and "it will be incumbent on the Nuns to appear in society, in order to display the beauty of sanctity. . . . They will thoroughly renounce the world, in the Belgravian sense."<sup>35</sup> In other words, such display is an exercise in social elitism centred on the ultra-privileged world of Belgravia where many of London's fashionable rich lived. Further, the implication is that such feminine display is a ploy to incite libidinousness, as is suggested in an illustration published the following year showing a man and a decidedly comely "nun" embracing enthusiastically (figure 5).

In "A Dream of Whitefriars" (1850), Thackeray further supports the notion that medievalist visual and material culture could be used as a lure to ensnare women, either for sexual gratification or financial gain. Personifying Protestant British manliness, Thackeray's narrator claims that a friar represents greed, ignorance, superstition, and priestly "powers to separate wife and man, child and father."<sup>36</sup> He laments, "My daughter, *Fanny Peach*, who has just come home from a finishing school in Belgravia, fell down on her knees at the sight of this ragged old hermit and begged his blessing."<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, a Puseyite lady views the friar as a "symbol of piety, austerity, celibate purity, charity and self-denial" who is associated with "touching pictures of convent gates crowded by poor, and venerable fathers feeding them; sweet images of pale-faced nuns, in moonlit cloisters, marching to church, singing ravishing hymns; magnificent minsters, filled with kneeling faithful, and echoing with peeling organs; altars crowned with roses, and served by dear old bald-headed, venerable priests in gilt vestments, and little darlings of white-robed incense boys; confessionals, and O such dear, melancholy, wasted, consumptive clergymen, with such high foreheads, and such fine eyes, waiting within."<sup>38</sup> The insinuation here is that Ritualist clergy, as otherwise pathetic specimens of manhood, are feigning an interest in flowers, weavings, and medieval-style cloisters to win the attentions of wealthy women.<sup>39</sup> Just as Jerrold satirized

## CONVENT OF THE BELGRAVIANS.



only for so long as they may remain in the Convent, which they shall be at liberty to quit whenever they please, at a month's notice—or the equivalent alternative. Each Nun will be required to contribute to the necessities of the Convent at least £10 a week, that sum being the minimum at which it will be possible to defray the expenses of the establishment, and keep it select. She will be, also, expected to bring two silver forks, and all the usual requisites of the toilet.

Figure 4. "Convent of the Belgravians," *Punch* 19 (October 19, 1850): 163.

Evangelicals' plain dress as hypocritical disguise in the 1840s, Thackeray criticizes the gorgeous attire and wasted appearance of Ritualist priests as a bizarre mask that, for anyone but the perverse and the deluded, only serves to reveal prurient intentions. While Jerrold found it difficult to satirize the drab-costumed Evangelicals, Thackeray easily draws attention to the dramatic visual contrast between the appearance of Ritualists and ordinary middle-class Victorians.

The idea that Ritualists were posing as "wasted, consumptive clergymen" to give merely the *appearance* of holiness<sup>40</sup> is satirized in Percival Leigh's 1850 mock advertisement, "Puseyite Cosmetics": "PATENT ECCLESIASTIAL ACHROMATICON, or PALLIFACIENT FLUID, for blanching the COMPLEXION, and imparting to the FACE that delicate PALLOR which is the recognised indication of severe Thought and Study. Also his MACERATIVE ELIXIR, or ASCETIC SOLUTION, for the

VERYBODY who has a proper veneration for the reposed, and who, without holding extreme opinions on the subject of the dalmatic, feels correctly on that of the alb, who has a soul that can appreciate mediæval art, particularly the beautiful foreshortening of our ancestors, and who would revive their ecclesiastical practices and institutions to an extent just tastefully Romanesque, will be "ryghte gladde" to hear that it is proposed to found a Convent, on Anglican principles, under the above title. The vulgar, who think that a minority is necessarily a sect, will, of course, call it a Puseyite Nunnery: that cannot be helped.

The Convent will be under the superintendence of a Lady Abbess, who will be a real Countess, at the least. One principal object of the institution is to recall the good old times when the gentle BLANCHE or the high-born BRUNHILDA, taking the vows and the veil, connected the hallowed cell with the heraldic griffin, the coronet with the cloister.

The Nuns will all make an engagement of celibacy; but, to preclude them from contracting any rash obligation,

## NEWDEGATE ON NUNNERIES.

*To the Editor of the "Tablet."*



AER RATIONAL SIR,—Is not the ignorance of Protestants with respect to those holy institutions, nunneries, most lamentable? Take, for instance, the following passage (replete with ferocious hatred of the Catholic religion) in MR. NEWDEGATE'S speech on the debate of Wednesday week:—

“Let them quote an instance of a coroner's inquest in a convent. (*Hear, hear.*) Well, but would Hon. Members deny there were, or might be, sudden deaths in convents?”

My loyal, reasonable, constitutional Sir, here, you see, we have an English gentleman, a Member of Parliament, who actually believes that nuns die! Nay, he even conceives it possible that sudden death may sometimes occur in convents: as if death of any sort, sudden or lingering, ever took place in those abodes of sanctity. He talks as though he imagined that the austerities of discipline or penance could in some instances shorten human existence, and furnish ground for investigation. He evidently does not know that all nuns depart this life by translation; and that inquests do not take place in nunneries, simply

because perverse Protestants are well aware that the verdict of every coroner's jury would attest the miracle.

Figure 5. “Newdegate on Nunneries,” *Punch* 20 (June 7, 1851): 209.

ATTENUATION of the FRAME, warranted to reduce the stoutest proportions to the most interesting slenderness, and produce, in the space of a few days, a personal appearance not to be distinguished from the results of years of Abstinence.”<sup>41</sup> By implication, *Punch* asks: What kind of man wants to use cosmetics in order to appear unhealthy? At first glance, this appears to be another claim that peculiar ecclesiastical disguise is being employed in order to cover up generalised moral failings. But, bearing in mind that cosmetics were particularly associated with female prostitutes who wished to disguise their advancing age, this text also implicates Ritualists in a perverse project of sexual expression and gender transgression.

*Punch* repeatedly and with varying degrees of seriousness implied that various forms of Ritualist dress were worn for sexually fetishistic pur-

poses. Of course, since the Reformation, Protestants had associated same-sex communities with peculiar sexual practices and desires. It seems that such forms of kinkiness were not considered too dangerously transgressive when they took place in the context of heterosexual desire. As was noted in “Convent of the Belgravians” (1850), the “inordinate indulgence in maceration, encouraged by Rome, will be disallowed; and the only means sanctioned for the restraint of the flesh will be the gentle and moderate compression of stays.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, there is “no fear that the convent will lead to ‘perversions’ for they are simply playing at being Roman Catholics.”<sup>43</sup> At this time the word “perversion” primarily referred to conversion to Rome, but this use emphasises that it was beginning to gain its modern associations of sexual deviance.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in “The Monastery of Pimlico” (1850), Leigh explained that “in winter the friars will be clad in a black serge gown with a cowl, over the ordinary clerical attire. They will also wear a partial hair-shirt—not next to the skin, however, but only under the waistcoat. The gown will sometimes be worn open, so as to exhibit this penitential dickey.”<sup>45</sup> But there still remained, of course, the further possibility that Puseyites might actually want to wear hair-shirts next to the skin as suggested by “Trimmings for Tractarians; or, Roman ‘Noses’ in Belgravia” (1850): “If your Puseyite wants under-clothing that hurts, / He had best go to NOSES AND SON for hair-shirts.”<sup>46</sup>

Herbert Sussman has argued that the “intensity with which male writers and artists fixed on the monk and monasticism[,] . . . the disproportionate energy expended on an anachronistic or, in its contemporary manifestation, a socially marginal topic[,] provides insight into the male anxieties of the time” concerning constructions of gender and sexual roles.<sup>47</sup> The image of the predatory and perverse Ritualist monk was effective as the basis for satirical representation because it drew not merely on anti-Catholic prejudice propagated in Britain since the Reformation but also on sexual stereotypes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic literature such as Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796).<sup>48</sup> Since women were assumed to be the primary consumers of Gothic literature, it is understandable that *Punch*, with its stable of male contributors and readers, would be a natural vehicle for the expression of contemporary male insecurities.<sup>49</sup>

Those insecurities focussed not only on the supposedly capricious behaviour of rich women and the parasitic priests who might prey upon them both financially and sexually but also on the desires that clergy might have for one another. Focussing on the circle of unmarried male friends of Horace Walpole as the generative focus of a novel synthesis of Gothic literature and architecture, George Haggerty has argued for the potential queerness of Gothic style and literature in the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Because Gothic was associated with Roman Catholicism and thus with the priestly celibacy that most Protestants, and not just Evangelicals, considered abnormal, it

thus became associated with peculiar forms of sexual morality. Those who wished to live in same-sex communities within the Church of England in the early nineteenth century may have been forced to confront popular attitudes that interpreted their behaviour as dangerously indeterminate or culturally, even if not sexually, queer.<sup>51</sup> The visual signs of Catholicism as deployed on Anglican bodies offered a convenient target for satirical attacks on the adoption of supposedly perverse foreign customs by educated Britons who ought to know better.

### Display as Concealment

*Punch* interpreted ostentatious and unusual forms of religious visual culture as disguise, thus suggesting that Catholics and Ritualists had something to hide. This anxiety is exemplified in Leigh's "Crystal Nunneries" (1853), which advocated the abandonment of (literary) Gothic secrecy and the employment of Paxton's innovative glazing system in the construction of convents:

There all sisters are doves—without mates—of one feather,  
 In holy tranquillity living together,  
 Whose dovecote the bigots have found a mare nest in,  
 Because its arrangements are somewhat clandestine  
 .....  
 Transparent and open, inquiry not shirking  
 Like bees you might watch the good nuns in it, working.<sup>52</sup>

Whilst Evangelicals sought safety from accusations of materialism through sobriety of appearance, Roman Catholics and Anglican Ritualists struggled to find a way of fostering popular acceptance of the liturgical magnificence demanded by their doctrinal beliefs. Lavish spending on buildings and other aspects of visual and material display on the part of clergy, both High and Low Church, made them vulnerable to accusations of self-aggrandizement. The evidence of the *Punch* satires that have been explored in this article suggests that, for an important segment of British public opinion, Evangelicals who sermonised in drab clothing amid classical splendour were harder to attack in terms of visual self-presentation than Roman or Anglican Catholics who preached in bright vestments. Richard Doyle may have done his best to attack what he saw as clerical extremism at Exeter Hall, but he was hobbled by the fact that Evangelical clergy did not dress in ways that clearly distinguished them from the laity. Gothic medievalism, however, in both its Roman and Anglican forms, was interpreted through the lens of Gothic sensational entertainment.<sup>53</sup> As a result, opposition to Catholicism and Catholic revivalism at mid-century was less concerned

with theological doctrine than with the perceived moral indeterminacy of medievalising material contexts.

*Punch* satires of the early 1850s insistently associated Gothic material culture with the foolish performances of rich women and of their foppish and hypocritical male counterparts in the pulpit. These caricatures drew considerable energy from attitudes toward the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival (ones shared by the Ecclesiologists) that associated it with dilettante tastes.<sup>54</sup> The early Victorian Ecclesiological campaign to ensure the artistic and moral purity of the Gothic style in architecture and design is best understood within the context of contemporary popular perceptions of moral indeterminacy, or, one might say, of the cultural queerness of certain aspects of the Gothic Revival. *Punch* did not create these associations and connections, but it presented them in ways that rendered them clearly visible. The medievalist architects' obsessions with ostentatious correctness of form and self-discipline failed to prevent the continuing valence of these cultural tropes as aspects of the visual imagination in early Victorian Britain. Attempts to present Roman Catholic and Anglican Ritualist worship as ascetic and precise disciplines were instead viewed as thinly veiled attempts to conceal moral turpitude, as the stereotype of the sinister, fat monk was replaced by that of the queerly emaciated priest in later *Punch* cartoons.<sup>55</sup> *Punch's* movement from satirizing Evangelicals to spoofing Catholics and Ritualists was partly the result of a shift in opinion amongst its writers as they slowly brought it in line with the mainstream of British middle-class opinion. This transition was powerfully facilitated by the precise forms of visual appearance deployed by Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and Ritualists as well as by the widespread assumption amongst the reading public that visual appearance provided essential evidence of a person's moral probity.

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## NOTES

1. Conybeare, *Church Parties* (first published in 1853). See also Van Reyk, "Christian Ideals," 1059.
2. Altick, "*Punch*," 274.
3. Healey, "Lemon," and Palmeri, "Cruikshank," 765.
4. Johnson, "The Changing Representation," 283–88, and Sen, "Radical Satire."
5. Jerrold, "Politics," 1841; see also White, "Douglas Jerrold's 'Q' Papers," and Slater, *Douglas Jerrold*.
6. Finnegan, "Exeter-Hall Science," 47, and Altick, "*Punch*," 213.
7. Partington, *The British Cyclopaedia*, 725.



8. Jerrold, "A Hint," 156.
9. Jerrold, "Exeter Hall Pets," 210.
10. Jerrold, "Exeter Hall," 203.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. "A Word," 258.
14. Harvey, *Men in Black*, 24.
15. W. M. Thackeray to Reverend John Allen, February 18, 1847. Quoted and discussed in Palmeri, "Cruikshank," 768.
16. Jerrold, "Exeter Hall Pets," 210.
17. See Ralls, "The Papal Aggression"; Klaus, *The Pope*; and Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism*.
18. Leary, *Punch Brotherhood*, 23–24.
19. McNees, "Punch and the Pope," 21–30, and Altick, "Punch," 476–92.
20. "Selling off!" 76.
21. For discussion of middle-class fears of financial failure, see Weiss, *The Hell of the English*. The bankruptcy of Exeter Hall had been a potential fate that *Punch*, led on by Jerrold, had gloated over in 1845 when it commented, "We shall not be sorry to see an execution put into their hall, and their platform and other properties sold up." "Exeter Hall Insolvent," 83.
22. À Beckett, "Religious Puffing," 78.
23. "Newdegate on Nunneries" and Arnstein, *Protestant versus Catholic*.
24. See Altick, "Punch," 487.
25. McDonald, "The Preservation of Innocence," 3.
26. Attribution to Leech in Casteras, "Virgin Vows," 163. Compare this to the cartoon of a wolf in priest's clothing confronting Little Red Riding Hood in *Punch* 20 (1851): 139. See also the eighteenth-century case study in Janes, "Unnatural Appetites." In the later nineteenth century, Wilde's overweight body was presented as evidence of his generally excessive bodily appetites. See Schaffer, "Fashioning Aestheticism," 47.
27. Miller, "John Leech," 282.
28. Ibid.
29. Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 54–72.
30. "Church Plate," 112.
31. Ibid.
32. "Consecration," 428.
33. For background on Anglican monasticism in the nineteenth century, see Sellon, *Miss Sellon*; Anson, *The Call of the Cloister and Building up the Waste Places*; Williams, *Priscilla Lydia Sellon*; and Mumm, *Stolen Daughters*.
34. Leigh, "Convent of the Belgravians," 163.
35. Ibid.
36. Thackeray, "A Dream of Whitefriars," 184.
37. Ibid.

38. It was widely believed at this time that high foreheads indicated the larger brains supposedly possessed by the middle and upper classes. Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist*, 42.
39. Janes, "The Catholic Florist."
40. Related concerns have been identified by Casteras in her study, "Pre-Raphaelite Challenges to Victorian Canons of Beauty" (1992). Charles Allston Collins's depiction of an emaciated and apparently morose nun in *Convent Thoughts* (1851) was parodied in "Punch among the Painters" (1851).
41. Leigh, "Puseyite Cosmetics," 199.
42. Leigh, "Convent of the Belgravians," 163.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Janes, "When 'Perverts' Were Religious."
45. Leigh, "The Monastery of Pimlico," 189.
46. "Trimmings for Tractarians," 264. This is also an anti-Semitic skit on Moses and Son, a Jewish tailoring outfit. See Altick, "Punch," 473.
47. Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, 2.
48. Tuite, "Cloistered Closets."
49. Gothic writers Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis were associated with aspects of same-sex desire. See Haggerty, "Literature and Homosexuality"; Mowl, *Horace Walpole*; Rogers, "Getting Horace Walpole"; and Reeve, "Gothic Architecture."
50. See Williams, "Horace in Italy"; Haggerty, "Walpoliana," *Queer Gothic*, and "Queering Horace Walpole."
51. For issues of same-sex desire in early Victorian Anglican monasticism, see Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 22–34, and Dalgairns, *Life of St. Aelred*.
52. Leigh, "Crystal Nunneries," 2.
53. Janes, *Victorian Reformation*, 146–61.
54. On the "*ne plus ultra* of wretchedness, the Georgian style," see Neale and Webb, "Introductory Essay," cxxvii, and White, *The Cambridge Movement*, 89–91. But also note the comments of Addleshaw, Review.
55. In "Asses and Aesthetes," Horrocks argues that by the mid- to late nineteenth century, the ascetically emaciated Ritualist priest had become defined as a visually queer "type" which played a foundational role in the satirical codes that were later applied to aesthetes and decadents.

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