

***Punch* in Heidelberg and Beyond.**

The connection between research on Victorian Periodicals and the ‘Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows’ Cluster of Excellence at Heidelberg University is not immediately obvious, but it is, nonetheless, an extremely close one. A three day Workshop held in Heidelberg between November 13th. and 15th. 2009 took as its subject ‘The British *Punch* Magazine as a Transcultural Format of Satire and Caricature’, and brought together the Cluster’s staff and students with widely published experts from many parts of the world to consider the impact of *Punch* on satirical journalism in India, Egypt, Turkey, China and Japan. The use of the *Punch* name was apparent in all these cultures in the nineteenth and early twentieth century both as a generalised cultural presence that licensed various kinds of satirical magazines and as, in many instances, a precise source of images, ideas, and precedents for localised journalistic ventures, some of which were directed at expatriate communities. The Workshop, building on the Research Cluster’s collaborative work on the presence of *Punch*, thus considered both the cultural and historical specificity of the various ‘*Punches*’ and crypto-*Punches* published in such diverse places as Yokohama, Shanghai, Maharashtra and Cairo, and broader issues to do with the transmigration of satirical literary forms, visual tropes and periodical genres between cultures. In particular the Workshop was asked to consider, to quote from its organiser, Hans Harder, the significance of satire as a ‘particularly apt literary means of tackling cultural asymmetries inherent in colonial and imperial power constellations’ and the ways in which *Punch* was recontextualised in, or re-appropriated by, the particular cultural moment of its re-making.

As a participant, I found the Workshop both eye opening and immensely invigorating, with all the discussions challenging narrowly national approaches to scholarly debate. Although some of *Punch*’s imitators are fairly well known to specialists, I had little understanding of the extent to which *Punch*, (or perhaps more accurately the idea of *Punch*) informed satirical cultures elsewhere than western Europe, and Hans Harder and his colleagues worked hard to bring together a team of speakers that could encompass such geographical, historical and cultural diversity and richness. The Cluster staff are now working on developing a scholarly publication that will represent both the detailed individual knowledge of the participants and the more

general debates that preoccupied the Workshop over literary genealogies, cultural asymmetries, and the localised functions served by satirical journalism. Clearly research on the imperial and colonial presence, in however recontextualised a form, of magazines and journals is central to an understanding of periodicals from the nineteenth century, but I suspect little work in Britain and America has been undertaken on the presence in many countries of satirical and comic journals that were in some kind of complex relationship with British sources. The comparative work of the Heidelberg team is an extremely interesting and potentially highly productive way of approaching this topic. More details of their activities can be found at www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/research/areas/b/projects/b1-gauging-cultural-asymmetries.

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