THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S CONTACTS:

ROBERT SEYMOUR AND THE HUMOROUS PERIODICAL PRESS IN THE 1830s.

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This essay offers some consideration of the periodical contributions published in the 1830s of the comic artist Robert Seymour,[1] whose *Humorous Sketches* was something of a Victorian bestseller, and who was, famously, the first illustrator of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* until his suicide in 1837. Seymour was celebrated enough in his day to become one of very few late Regency and early Victorian comic and satirical draughtsmen visible enough to be traced through the magazines of the 1830s. His periodical contributions are, therefore, of considerable significance in trying to establish the patterns of work and maps of interconnected activity that were necessary to sustain the career of a jobbing draughtsman at this time. Seymour's periodical illustrations, largely but nor exclusively, wood engravings, were largely published between 1828 and his death in 1837. Given that routine or down market periodical illustrations at this time seldom carried signatures, it remains extremely difficult to establish the full extent and variety of Seymour's output at this time. Such evidence as can be assembled, however, makes it clear that it required a prodigious output, all produced against pressing time limits, for a jobbing engraver to be able to earn a comfortable living.

Seymour, like several of his draughtsmen contemporaries, had abandoned early hopes of a career as painter to concentrate on a career as a jobbing illustrator. The early phase of his career (1823-1828) was spent as a 'house' artist for the publishing firm of Knight and Lacey, which offered a broad and innovative portfolio of cheap magazines, many of them illustrated, which sought to identify niche markets among the rapidly broadening range of potential magazine readers largely drawn from the artisan classes. Among Knight and Lacey's many periodicals, Seymour definitely produced illustrations for *The Pocket Magazine, The*

[1] A full listing of Seymour's published work is still to be produced. Brian Maidment's extremely incomplete annotated listing is available on line at www.nines.org/exhibits/Robert-Seymour. In many ways the most complete overview of Seymour's work is to be found in Stephen Jarvis's recently published novel *Death and Mr Pickwick* (2015), although Jarvis's undoubted scholarship is rather buried within his fictional strategies.

Economist and *The Housekeeper's Magazine* and may well have contributed to such significant periodicals as *The Mechanic's Magazine* (founded in 1823), *The Lancet* (1823) and *The Chemist* (1825), all of which carried unsigned wood engraved illustrations. He was thus entirely aware of the centrality of illustration to Knight and Lacey's attempts to democratise information through the introduction of mass circulation illustrated cheap periodicals. Although nearly all of Knight and Lacey's magazines used wood engraving as their reprographic medium, *The Pocket Magazine*, which the firm published between 1824 and 1826. undertook the unusual step of replacing the combination of wood engraved vignettes and full page illustrations of classic texts traditional to unpretentious miscellanies at this time with lithographed plates commissioned from Seymour by the publishers to illustrate the fiction that was being published in the magazine. **[fig. 1]**

None of Seymour's work for Knight and Lacey required him to work as a comic artist, and it was only in the late 1820s that he began to work substantially as a caricaturist and satirist, producing single plate images for Thomas McLean, the leading publisher of later Georgian graphic satire. Seymour's experience of magazine illustration in the immediate period after the failure of Knight and Lacey in 1828 was largely bound up with the audacious graphic innovations introduced by *Bell's Life in London*. *Bell's Life in London* introduced its 'Gallery of Comicalities' on the 9th. September 1828 (issue 289) by inserting a small wood engraved illustration re-drawn from one of George Cruikshank's engravings for *Illustrations of Time* into the top right hand corner of its vast broadsheet five column front page.[2] In such a manner the magazine maintained an autonomous or highly defended space for visual socio-political commentary within a large and complex type set page. The small scale and often rather muddy

[2] *Illustrations of Time* had appeared in May 1827 as six oblong folio sheets published by James Robins in paper wrappers. Each sheet comprised a number of small vignettes, and it is one of these that was re-drawn on wood for the 'Gallery of Comicalities' See A. M. Cohn, *George Cruikshank – A Catalogue Raisonne* (London: Bookman's Journal, 1924), p.57.

printing of the illustrations set against the acres of columned print that constructed the front page of an issue of *Bell's Life* could easily have led to the images being overwhelmed and, perhaps, overlooked. Yet the importance of graphic content to the success of the magazine for nearly a decade was considerable. The 'Gallery of Comicalities' was published in this format reasonably consistently in each weekly issue until May 7th. 1837. The illustrations were, for the first few issues, copies taken from George Cruikshank's published work,[3] but fairly rapidly the magazine began commissioning illustrations from relatively young and little known artists such as Kenny Meadows and John Leech. Most of the illustrations were accompanied by short comic verses.

Seymour worked substantially for 'The Gallery of Comicalities' in *Bell's Life in London* in 1829, although it is difficult to be clear about the extent of his contributions, which were unsigned.[4] The commercial potential offered by the success of the 'Gallery of Comicalities' was quickly understood, and the magazine began to publish 'Recapitulations' or gatherings of the images used in the 'Gallery' as part of the front page of later issues. The popularity of such gatherings proved enough to justify separate publication of yearly *Galleries of Comicalities* made up of over fifty illustrations and their accompanying verses printed in a large broadsheet format and spread across four pages. Announced sales figures published in *Bell's Life* in 1838 in advance of the issue of the sixth *Gallery* claimed that 1,500,000 copies of the previous five compilations had been sold, and looked to the new issue to push the overall

[3] The use of Cruikshank's illustrations by *Bell's Life* is described in detail in Robert Patten's *George Cruikshank's Life, Times and Art* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 300-01. Originally offered a few illustrations by Cruikshank as a favour to its editor Vincent Dowling, the magazine continued to publish other Cruikshank illustrations, thereby evoking the artist's fury. Eventually, *Bell's* turned to commissioning less established artists. Patten notes that the introduction of the 'Gallery of Comicalities' increased the circulation of the magazine by 4000 copies.

[4] A selection from the *Gallery of Comicalities*, drawn from illustrations published between 1827 and 1829 was reprinted by Charles Hindley later in the century and firmly attributes the twelve designs of 'The Drunkard's Progress' and the nine 'steps' of 'The Pugilist's Progress' to Seymour. These images are unsigned, and there are no other images in Hindley's volume that bears Seymour's signature, so that the extent of his contributions to *Bell's Life* remains matter for conjecture.

total past 2,000,000. Thus Seymour's small scale comic wood engraved vignettes, usually organised into sub-Hogarthian series or 'progresses', were available to a mass readership of a completely unprecedented scale. Yet the illustrations were anonymous, and even if Seymour was well paid for his work (which the magazine certainly claimed)[5] his name can hardly have impinged far on public consciousness as a result.

It is only in the early 1830s that Seymour's presence as a prolific magazine illustrator can be properly identified. In addition to the three major magazines for which Seymour worked consistently in the early 1830s, and which form the focus of the rest of this discussion, - *The Looking Glass, Figaro in London* and *The Comic Magazine*, - he contributed to many other journals, often on a regular basis. In 1832 alone his work appeared in a weekly part issue songbook, *The Pegasus and Harmonic Guide*, in *The Literary Test; A Liberal, Moral, and Independent Review of Book, the Stage, and the Fine Arts;* in *The Friend of All; the Rich Man's Adviser, and the Poor Man's Advocate*, which ran for four weekly issues in January 1832; in *A Slap at the Church* (which was, despite its title, a periodical that, in order to disguise its true purpose, adopted the disingenuous title of the *Church Examiner and Ecclesiastical Record* in May 1832); in *The Schoolmaster at Home* (published by Benjamin Steill in June and July 1832 largely as an attack on Brougham); in *The Museum*; in *The Cabinet Songster* (where he illustrated a regular column) **[fig. 2]**; in *The Parent's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction* which was re-published in volume form in 1832 and formed the basis for a whole string of subsequent volumes using various illustrators and drawn from previous part publication **[fig. 3]**; in *The National Omnibus*; *The Halfpenny Magazine*; and, in collaboration with Horngold, in *Asmodeus or The Devil in London* which also used the title of *The Devil's Memorandum*

[5] In issue 481 the magazine boasted that, in putting together the fourth 'Recapitulation', it had spent two hundred and sixty five guineas on the fifty three illustrations that had been gathered together, thus ascribing a cost of five guineas to each illustration. It is not clear if this amount included production costs, or even if it was a truthful claim, but it does suggest the magazine's wish to stress its commitment to its comic illustrations.

Book. Other magazines that are noted as having Seymour illustrations include *The Wag* (1833) and *The Thief* (1832). He was also one of the illustrators of the extremely ephemeral undated *New Comic Magazine*, published by William Marshall perhaps in 1836. **[fig. 4]** And, given its significance in the narrative of Dickens's early career, it is impossible to ignore Seymour's illustrations for Dickens's article 'The Tuggs's at Ramsgate' in April 1836 in *The Library of Fiction*, a piece of work that is related to Seymour's subsequent complex relationship with Dickens.[6] **[fig. 5]** This piece was not reprinted in *Sketches by Boz* until the combined edition in parts from 1837-1839.

Even though an elaboration of the above list of jobbing work might produce some valuable insights into the nature of the market for periodical illustration in the decade before *Punch*, the remainder of this essay will concentrate Seymour's work for the three significant humorous periodicals noted above for a number of reasons. First, the complex and often uneasy relationships between illustrator, publisher and editor shown by the histories of these magazines suggests many of the difficulties faced by even a successful freelance comic draughtsman in maintaining a consistent flow of work. Second, the status of the artist was also acknowledged, or not acknowledged, differently in the three periodicals on a scale that ranged from total anonymity to the suggestion of a cosy intimacy and shared viewpoint between editor and draughtsman. These differing levels of acknowledgement raise the fundamental question of how far an illustrator was implicated in making, sustaining or extending the overall editorial policy and social perspective expressed by any periodical for which he worked. Such questions are complicated by the differing dynamics that existed in the ownership and management of

[6] *The Library of Fiction* vol. 1, no. 1 (Chapman and Hall March 31st. 1836). Seymour produced two illustrations for Dickens's *The Tuggs' at Ramsgate* which was issued on the same day as the first part of *Pickwick Papers*. Cruikshank provided the illustration for this story when it was republished in volume form as *Sketches by Boz, New Series*. See Michael Slater *Dickens's Journalism* (London: J.M.Dent 1994), I, pp. xxv and 327, and Joseph Grego *Pictorial Pickwickiana* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), 1, pp. 489-91.

the three magazines – the publisher of *The Looking Glass*, Thomas McLean, seems to have also been its de facto editor, while the relationship between the publisher of *Figaro in London*, William Strange, and its editor, Gilbert a Beckett, spread across a whole range of collaborative activities that additionally engaged a number of other publishers contributing to a shared project in spreading progressive and radical political opinion.

Third, these three magazines represented three significantly different approaches to ways in which comic images might be used to structure a periodical and speak to diverse readerships. In content and form *The Looking Glass* was the most conservative. The main intention of *The Looking Glass* was to sustain the increasingly outmoded graphic idiom and vocabulary of the eighteen century caricature tradition on into the eighteen thirties in periodical form largely to be accomplished by changing the medium of reproduction to the faster and more direct lithograph and allowing topical political images to stand alongside, or even give ground to, a more socio-cultural satirical analysis of human folly. McLean, for many years one of the major publishers of single plate caricatures, was in a strong position to make a commercially astute valuation of the potential for such a format, and for some years *The Looking Glass* (latterly called *McLean's Monthly Sheet of Caricatures*) enjoyed some success despite its high selling price and the unwieldy size of its pages. *Figaro in London*, although it contained theatrical reviews and a lot of society gossip, stayed closer to a satirical political agenda. The magazine clearly attempted to use Seymour's proven skill as a draughtsman for wood engraving to translate traditional caricature tropes and graphic vocabulary into a more demotic, and smaller scale, wood engraved vernacular mode without losing its satirical bite. *The Comic Magazine* gave a new role to comic wood engraving as a diversionary form, drawing on the Regency love of visual/verbal puns and fascination with the grotesque, but adapted for the more broadly formulated leisure occasions appropriate to an increasing consumer base for visual culture.

Fourth, these three magazines, taken together with the list of other work given above, show that Seymour had become a versatile enough artist to be able to produce work that was acceptable to an extraordinary range of differing readerships. By 1830 he had gained considerable experience of drawing for lithography from his time at Knight and Lacey, which was rare among jobbing illustrators. He had produced etched and engraved political caricatures as both book illustrations and separate single plate caricatures. His work for wood engraving had spanned a wide range of possible forms from highly finished complex title pages to the sketchiest of line drawings, and embraced such diverse print forms as song books, play texts and the simply illustrated travel guides beginning to be produced by William Kidd. He had gained an understanding of the demands required by a variety of publishers aiming at differing niche readerships across three distinct kinds of periodicals from this period - the diversionary miscellany (comprising occasional humorous journalism extensively derived from theatrical and supper room entertainment), the repository of useful miscellaneous or themed information related to technological, topographical, historical or scientific curiosity, and satirical magazines aimed at mocking politicians or contemporary manners. His early career may well have been obscure, but it was certainly varied enough to equip him well for the new challenges posed by the rapidly emerging and volatile market for illustrated periodicals in the early 1830s that depended for their success on the presence of various kinds of graphic comedy.

The Looking Glass (1830-1836) was a large sized lithographed four-page monthly magazine entirely comprising graphic images.[7] **[fig. 6]** William Heath, who had first tried to establish such a magazine with the *Glasgow Looking Glass* and its successor the *Northern Looking Glass* in 1825 and 1826, illustrated the first seven monthly issues of *The Looking Glass* under the powerful imprint of Thomas McLean. Seymour took over from issue 8 (August

[7] Richard Pound *Serial Journalism and the Transformation of English Graphic Satire 1830-1836* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 2002), pp. 126-140.

1st. 1830), and worked with the periodical until his death in April 1836. McLean may have turned to Seymour because, as Pound has suggested, he felt at home with the lithographic medium which Heath had quickly abandoned for etching in the *Glasgow Looking Glass*. *The Looking Glass* published nearly all its issues anonymously, although a few of Seymour's early contributions were signed. The prefatory page added in to volume republication named neither the editor nor the illustrator. The extent to which Seymour's presence as the magazine's sole artist was an open secret among its readers and the wider public can only be conjectured. Nonetheless, the scale of the artist's contribution was considerable, even spectacular. For a short time after his appointment Seymour made up pages from a mass of small images, and a typical issue would contain twenty or more separate images often organised into groups by shared subject matter, all enclosed in a ruled frame. As with C.J.Grant's contemporary caricature periodicals, it is interesting to speculate on the reasons for the traditionally imprecise borders displayed by the lithographic medium being so tightly enclosed in a linear structure in magazines. It may be that the susceptibility of such images to the depredations of readers in pursuit of scraps had something to do with it.

McLean, however, wanted to take the periodical in another direction closer to the old style of large satirical political images. He re-titled it *McLean's Monthly Sheet of Caricatures or the Looking Glass*, and may well have exercised closer control over Seymour's choice of subjects, perhaps drawing in amateurs to suggest topics. Seymour worked on at the magazine until 1836, having left *Figaro in London* acrimoniously in 1834. He combined political and social topics in constructing his multi-image pages, thereby acknowledging that McLean's substantial trade in single sheet caricatures was being increasingly overlaid with prints that depicted more diversionary socio/cultural subjects. Seymour's work often depended on the familiar structures of eighteenth century caricature, as in his image of 'Four Specimens of the Political Publick' which used a line of contrasting figures to represent differing aspects of a

political issue, in this case parliamentary reform.[8] Other images returned to traditional socio-political topics like 'The March of Intellect', and Seymour made frequent use of the Regency delight in visual/verbal puns particularly in self-referential allusions to the contemporary market place in print – one page of images offered punning comic analysis of well-known publishers' names.[9]

Seymour worked for *Figaro in London* under the editorship of Gilbert a Beckett from its launch in December 1831 until August 1834, when he quarrelled with a Beckett. He re-joined the magazine at the end of January 1835 under its new editor Henry Mayhew and continued to work there until his death in 1836. All told, Seymour produced about 300 illustrations for *Figaro in London* including the magazine's famous masthead. **[fig. 7]** All the illustrations were small scale wood engravings of political subjects produced in a spontaneous, ebullient and relatively unsophisticated manner. While a single image was generally incorporated into the front page of each issue, the magazine occasionally gathered Seymour's illustrations into full page of small caricatures, which were widely publicised and celebrated by the magazine as a major selling point. In direct contrast to the anonymity of his work for *The Looking Glass*, Seymour's name and reputation formed a crucial element in the editorial and publicity strategy adopted by a Beckett and his publisher, William Strange, which sought to construct through and within the magazine something approaching a boisterous, slightly raffish, sceptical, satirical and politically progressive men's club. A Beckett's reputation as an editor has never been high, and yet *Figaro in London* remains one of the few successful exemplars of sustained political satire in periodical form from the Regency period.

It is interesting that Seymour, whose personal political views are difficult to decipher from the full range of his published work, and who was at this time working across a wide

8 *McLean's Monthly Sheet of Caricatures, or The Looking Glass,* vol. 2, no.20, August 1st. 1831.
9 *McLean's Monthly Sheet,* vol.2, no.24, December 1st. 1831

range of differing print genres that included a children's magazine and a sometimes bawdy serialised song-book, should have allowed himself to become so deeply implicated in the print culture of political satire and dissent. The collaborations with Strange and a Beckett certainly gave him access to an informal grouping of publishers that frequently operated together in supporting politically oppositional or progressive print culture of all kinds as well as exploiting the market for more down market and diverting popular literature more generally. This group included Benjamin Steill, George Cowie and Effingham Wilson as well as Strange, and Seymour was commissioned by both Wilson and Steill to draw frontispieces and illustrations for pamphlets and books, many of them in a revised idiom that brought the vocabulary of late eighteenth century caricature to a new generation of readers.[10] It was Effingham Wilson, too, that published Seymour's sustained masterpiece of small lithographs *New Readings of Old Authors*. In direct contrast to the publication of his other work, which was usually anonymous and frequently unsigned, publishers like Strange, Steill and Effingham Wilson celebrated and publicised Seymour's presence in their publications. Strange and a Beckett were also astute in recognising that Seymour's images, even detached from their original context within *Figaro in London*, were commodities with considerable market value. Ingenious modes for republishing the *Figaro* illustrations in new forms included broadsheet collections called *Figaro's Caricature Gallery*)[11] and six issues of *Seymour's Comic Scrapsheet* (January 1836 on), with each sheet containing around twenty of the *Figaro* images. Even more interesting is a Beckett's editorial policy of implicating Seymour in *Figaro's* political and satirical project. The editorial for December 14th. 1833 is not untypical: 'As every event arises, the pencil of Seymour is ready with a keenly satiric sketch; and even when there is almost nothing doing in the world of

[10] See , for example, the frontispieces to *Appendix to the Black Book* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1835) and Richard Hengist Horne's 'National tragi-comedy' *Spirit of Peers and People* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834).

[11] The advertisement in *Figaro in London* for one issue of the *Caricature Gallery* notes that 'comment is needless' (*Figaro in London* December 7th. 1833, 196.

politics, his inventive faculties are busy with success, so that in some instances the genius of our artist may be said like jealousy to "Make the food it lives upon"'.[12] A Beckett here acknowledges his draughtsman's contributions in a startlingly flattering way, stressing both the 'inventive' and the 'satiric' qualities of Seymour's vision and making him a partner in the collective endeavour that he hoped would characterise the production of the magazine.

Collaboration, however, proved fragile. In August 1834 Seymour and a Beckett quarrelled, ostensibly about payment, but more seriously over a Beckett's refusal to give the older and more celebrated Seymour control over what he drew, and, perhaps, disagreements about more fundamental temperamental and social differences. Seymour's work was absent from the magazine until issue 165 in January 31st. 1835 when he returned to work with the new editor Henry Mayhew. Seymour's contribution to the success of *Figaro in London* is considerable if ultimately incalculable. His masthead drawing of Figaro stropping his razor surrounded by wig stands inhabited by the heads of leading politicians forms one of the defining images of Regency radical intent. The volume gatherings of the magazine reconfigured the image through showing Figaro surveying through a quizzing glass the heads of politicians impaled on quills. **[fig. 8]** As well as their weekly appearance the magazine, Seymour's illustrations were re-packaged and distributed in various formats, many of them on large sheets adapted to public display, thus maintaining a satirical presence and intent even after their topical moment had passed. Together with his contemporaneous series *Humorous Sketches*, which was being published under Seymour's own name, by 1832 Seymour had become widely visible to a broad reading public. He had become a 'name', and the advanced advertising and branding policies of *Figaro in London* had been important in establishing his reputation.

[12] *Figaro in London* No. 106 (14 December 1833), 197.

Seymour's second extended collaboration with a Beckett comprised the four volumes of *The Comic Magazine* published between 1832 and 1834, initially by William Kidd but quickly taken over by James Gilbert. **[fig. 9]** In this instance the editor seemed less willing to celebrate the virtues of his illustrator even though it was what Graham Everitt called the 'amazing number of amusing cuts of the punning order'[13] that gave the magazine such distinction as it gained. The mass of Seymour's designs were published anonymously, with only the Preface to volume 2 acknowledging the artist's major contribution to the magazine:

> The name of SEYMOUR ought not to be omitted in the preface, for the Editor feels, and even the most clever of his contributors must agree with him, that, in the repast offered in this Magazine, the chief attraction is *in the plates*, and the very excellent CUT in which through his assistance every article has been served up to the public.[14]

Kidd's characteristically overblown advertising campaign for the magazine, however, gave Seymour a substantial billing - 'Literary Phenomenon! Several Comic Articles! Nineteen Humorous Engravings! Price Only One Shilling!!!' the headline of contemporary announcements in *The Athenaeum* bellowed, followed by a spirited declaration of 'the most racy and burlesque humour' shown by Seymour's illustrations. Despite being published without immediate acknowledgement, then, Seymour's presence as the sole artist used by *The Comic Magazine* was an open secret and widely used to market the magazine.[15]

The rationale for *The Comic Magazine* was based on applying the success of *Hood's Comic Annual,* which had been launched in 1830, to a monthly magazine format that brought

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13 Graham Everitt *English Caricaturists and Graphic Humourists of the Nineteenth Century* (London; S*wann Sonnenschein & Co., 2nd. Ed. 1893),* 229.

14 Preface to Second Series of the *Comic Magazine* (London: Penny National Library, 1833).

15 The cachet of Seymour's presence was such that he was clearly courted by other 'Comic Magazines' that enjoyed a brief moment of existence in the wake of a Beckett's periodical. The undated *New Comic Magazine* published by William Marshall, edited by 'The Author of *Lays for Light Hearts,* etc.' claimed to be 'illustrated with numerous comic engravings by R.Seymour'. John Duncombe's *The Original Comic Magazine,* also undated but clearly from a similar date also used crudely drawn wood engravings that sought to use the names of illustrators as a major selling point. Issue 17 of *Punch in London* published by John Duncombe on May 4 1832 is made up of images from *The Original Comic Magazine* and lists Seymour, Jones and Robert Cruikshank as contributors. It is impossible to know if such distinguished artists as the Cruikshanks and Seymour did draw for these magazines or whether the listing of contributors fraudulently pillaged their celebrity.

together a variety of well-known Regency humorous writers to contribute verse, anecdotes, short narratives and comic observations of contemporary manners. Among the contributors were the comic playwrights and journalists John Poole and R.D.Peake, who later produced the text for a re-issue of Seymour's *Humorous Sketches*, and Louisa Henrietta Sheridan, the editor of *The Comic Offering*. The small sized page characteristic of the annuals was adopted with both full page and vignette illustrations which were vigorous rather than sophisticated and tended towards the grotesque. In many ways, *The Comic Magazine* formed a knowing pastiche of genteel annuals like *The Casquet, The Amulet* and *The Coronal* that had offered steel engravings and self-consciously 'literary' content to Christmas drawing room and boudoir tables. As well, as contributing to *The Comic Magazine* Seymour was simultaneously working for one of the most interesting of the annuals, *The Comic Offering* which in many ways formed a bridge between middle class respectability and the more robust humour suggested in *Hood's Comic Annual* and *The Comic Magazine*.[16] Like so many of a Beckett's projects, however, *The Comic Magazine* became involved in highly public contentiousness. A Beckett was a famously hyperactive but, with the possible exception of *Figaro in London*, seldom successful progenitor of periodicals of every kind. Although hardly fair or objective, Alfred Bunn's famous diatribe, the 1847 *A Word with Punch*, contains a withering critique of a Beckett's editorial career. Characterising a Beckett as 'Mr. Sleekhead' and citing his 1834 bankruptcy petition, Bunn concludes:

> Editor of thirteen periodicals and lessee of a theatre into the bargain! And all total failures! Poetry, prose, wit, humour, conceit, slander, sarcasm, and every order of ribaldry going for nothing! Where *has* been the public taste? – the people ought really to be ashamed of themselves of themselves for persisting in not buying so much genuine genius!...What? *The Wag! The Thief! The Ghost! The Lover!* Nay, even *The 'Terrific' Penny Magazine!* and *Poor Richard's Journal!* all passed over by the cold and disgraceful hand of neglect!![17]

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16 Tamara Hunt ' Louisa Henrietta Sheridan's 'Comic Offering' and the Critics: Gender and Humor in the Early Victorian Period' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 29 (1996), 95-115.

17 Alfred Bunn *A Word with Punch* (London: Published for the author 1847), p.6.

Bunn fails to mention *The Comic Magazine* here at all. Almost equally reticent was Arthur William a Beckett's biographical memoir *The a Becketts of "Punch"*, noting only that 'during the three years of my father's connection with *Figaro in London* he was continually starting other papers. He produced the *Wag* and the *Comic Magazine*.'[18] The success of *The Comic Magazine* had been further compromised by its original publisher William Kidd's over extravagant, if not downright dishonest, claims about his contributors, which had resulted in very public rows with both George Cruikshank and Thomas Hood.[19] As already noted a Beckett's connection with *Figaro in London* ended disastrously in 1834 when a Beckett fell into the financial difficulties that may well have been responsible for Seymour's withdrawal from the magazine's staff. Yet the draughtsman had managed to sustain his role by drawing over a dozen subjects for each monthly issue of the magazine over four volumes, many of them ingenious verbal/visual puns. In particular Seymour's work for *The Comic Magazine* brought alive a world of Regency personal encounters acted out largely on the street that sustained a frequently grotesque and sometimes gothic comic vision. To my mind, the illustrations far exceed the written content of the magazine in quality, vigour and comic invention.

In trying to draw broader conclusions about comic illustration and the development of Regency and early Victorian periodicals from this necessarily truncated account of Seymour's work it is important to acknowledge that Seymour's mild celebrity as an illustrator, largely connected to his involvement with Dickens and *Pickwick* but also to the continued Victorian popularity of *Sketches by Seymour*, is unusual. His visible presence was the consequence of his work across a range of print forms - single plate caricature, comic sporting prints, book illustration (elaborate title pages and etched and engraved frontispieces as well as more

[18] Arthur William a Beckett *The a Becketts of "Punch" Memories of Father and Sons* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1903) p. 46.

[19] See Patten 2, 368-370 for an accounts of the row with Hood, and the exchange of letters between A Beckett, Hood and Poole in the *Athenaeum* begun on July 7th. 1832.

traditional forms of illustrations), and series of urban and sporting sketches. But a number of tentative conclusions about the nature of illustrated comic periodicals in the late Regency period can be drawn from a consideration of Seymour's work.

First, it had become obvious by the late 1830s that the project of a magazine structured entirely out of political caricatures was unlikely to succeed, and that graphic satire of current events would need to be wrapped within a more hybridized periodical structure. Despite the innovations of *The Looking Glass* and C.J.Grant's contemporary *Everybody's Album*, the future of caricature magazines would depend on the satirical image being located within or alongside textual elements some of which looked beyond the topical and the explicitly political. Seymour's presence in *Figaro in London*, which looked forward to *Punch* and its many imitators in the deployment of relatively discrete single joke wood engraved vignettes, was in the end more forward looking than his re-enactment of the caricature tradition for *The Looking Glass.*

Second, the centrality of illustration to the success of periodicals, and especially humorous and satirical magazines, consequent on the widespread use of lithography and wood engraving was beginning to be acknowledged by editors and publishers. One outcome of this acknowledgement was that a few illustrators were beginning to be named and, certainly in the case of *Figaro in London*, given personalities and engaged in the editorial process in ways that contributed to the identity and brand image of the periodicals for which they worked. Seymour was one of few draughtsmen well enough known to be part of these practices. Such processes of 'naming' were often informal, depending on word of mouth, volume title pages, advertisements or the use of a draughtsman's initials rather than on the unequivocal naming of the artist in the text of the magazine. The volumes of *Bell's Life in London* from later in the 1830s tended to print the illustrator's signature or initials, and by the time of the emergence of *Punch* in the early 1840s the value of naming (in however coded or informal ways) at least

some of the artists contributing to comic periodicals had become commonplace. By the 1840s several of Seymour's contemporaries, John Leech, Kenny Meadows and 'Crowquill' (Alfred Forrester) among them, had become well enough known for their named contributions to be seen as major assets to the periodicals they illustrated. Seymour's death in 1836 came at a moment just before his name might have been expected to be widely apparent in the pages of periodicals. A further outcome of the emerging sense of the importance of magazine illustration in the 1820s and 1830s was the increasing willingness of publishers to re-publish collections of periodical illustrations in separate form, thus underlining their status as marketable commodities. The vivid afterlife of Seymour's *Figaro in London* wood engravings forms an obvious example of such a process of commodification and commercial opportunism.

Third, the workload carried by jobbing engravers at this time was astonishing and must have created relentless pressure on the inventiveness, speed of execution and eyesight of the draughtsman/engraver, especially when committed to responding to topical political events, as Seymour was for both *The Looking Glass* and *Figaro in London.* In 1832, as well as his mass of work in other print forms, Seymour was drawing something like twenty images a month for *The Looking Glass*, another monthly twenty for *The Comic Magazine*, at least one topical vignette each week for *Figaro in London* and, even using the almost certainly incomplete listing given above, additionally contributing to another nine magazines. Given the predisposition of editors, publishers and contributors towards dissatisfaction, their illustrators must have been driven to distraction by the demands made on them. Overwork, as well as the incessant demands of higher status authors, was a likely contributory factor in Seymour's suicide, an event that offers chilling testimony to the commercial instability, entrepreneurial mismanagement and personal cost of bringing the pleasures of visual comedy to the reading public in the Regency period.