



«Punch» and Shakespeare in the Victorian Era

Alan Young

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The English humour magazine *Punch, or the London Charivari*, which first appeared in 1841, quickly became something of a national institution with a large and multi-layered readership. Though comic in tone, *Punch* was deeply serious about upholding high literary and artistic standards, about dealing with serious subject-matter, and about attempting to nurture its readers' appreciation of the national drama and of Shakespeare's plays in particular. The author's detailed examination of *Punch's* constant advocacy of Shakespeare reveals telling new evidence concerning the ubiquitous presence of Shakespeare within Victorian culture. New research in the *Punch* archives and elsewhere also reveals the identities of many of the *Punch* authors and artists. The author shows how those who worked for *Punch* often subsumed their collective identities within the single persona of Mr. Punch, a fictional creation who repeatedly presents himself in both texts and graphics as a close friend and admirer of Shakespeare, a man able to remind Victorian readers constantly of the supreme literary and moral values represented by Shakespeare's works.

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