

**Dominic Hardy, Annie Gérin, and Lora Senechal Carney, eds.,
*Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire
1840–1940*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University
Press, 2018, 304 pp. 9 colour and 88 b/w illus. \$ 120.00 (cloth)
ISBN 9780773553415**

Julia Skelly

Volume 44, numéro 1, 2019

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1062161ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1062161ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des
universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Skelly, J. (2019). Compte rendu de [Dominic Hardy, Annie Gérin, and Lora Senechal Carney, eds., *Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire 1840–1940*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018, 304 pp. 9 colour and 88 b/w illus. \$ 120.00 (cloth) ISBN 9780773553415]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 44(1), 113–115.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1062161ar>



Dominic Hardy, Annie Gérin, and Lora Senechal Carney, eds.
Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire 1840-1940
 Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018

304 pp. 9 colour and 88 b/w illus.
 \$120.00 (cloth) ISBN 9780773553415

Julia Skelly

1872-1939). L'étude a le mérite de faire ressortir les apories du panthéisme de Carr. Inspirée du vitalisme d'Henri Bergson et d'un syncrétisme spirituel issu du transcendantalisme américain, de l'hindouisme et de la Nouvelle Pensée, la rhétorique de l'artiste témoigne selon Huneault d'un désir d'union qui, en définitive, reste coincé dans un rapport au monde fondé sur l'idée de séparation chère au modèle lacanien. En comparaison, l'«animisme» chez Sewinchelwet serait fondamentalement inséparable des conditions de production et d'utilisation des paniers. L'analyse nuancée, et fondée sur les entrevues très instructives de l'auteure avec des créatrices salish contemporaines, n'échappe pourtant pas complètement à la posture dichotomique décriée d'entrée de jeu: «The energy of the two forms of cultural production is entirely different. In place of Carr's longing for an ecstasy of union with an unknown thing, baskets exude the calmness of their maker's acts of being in relation with the world» (287). Il n'en demeure pas moins que ce livre offre un modèle de décentrement épistémologique particulièrement novateur et inspirant. Il constitue une contribution importante aux études en histoire de l'art au Canada, tant du point de vue des approches féministes que de l'historiographie. ¶

Édith-Anne Pageot est professeure, Département d'histoire de l'art, Université du Québec à Montréal.
 —pageot.edith-anne@uqam.ca

In a 2012 special issue of *RACAR*, Dominic Hardy, one of the guest editors—along with Annie Gérin and Jean-Philippe Uzel—wrote: “We see, then, how the categories of art and art history are transformed by the humorous practices that at once undermine and extend the authority of specific images, subjects, genres, and stylistic practices, especially when these are held to be revealing of national characteristics.”¹ *RACAR*'s special issue on Humour in the Visual Arts and Visual Culture laid a strong foundation for scholarship on Canadian graphic satire. The fascinating volume *Sketches from an Unquiet Country: Canadian Graphic Satire 1840-1940*, edited by Hardy, Gérin, and Lora Senechal Carney, is an important step forward in this field, and in a perfect world, it would be read alongside canonical texts such as Diana Donald's *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (1996) and Mark Hallett's *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Art in the Age of Hogarth* (1999).

It is not a perfect world, however, as we realize anew on a daily basis if we watch Trump self-satirize and yet remain firmly ensconced in the White House or on the greens of Mar-a-Lago. As the authors in *Sketches* point out again and again, humorous images have a great deal of power, sometimes for “good” and sometimes for ill. This book makes a strong case, implicitly and explicitly, that graphic satire is a form of journalism and deserves to be rigorously examined as such. Indeed, in the Trump era, when there is increased violence towards

journalists, not only against graphic satirists (as Hardy notes in his introduction), this scholarship is more crucial than ever because it illuminates how graphic satire has been used for progressive ends as well as reactionary, racist ends. That is one of the major strengths of the book, in fact: it does not shy away from the racism of some Canadian graphic satire.

Two stand-out chapters in this respect are Josée Desforges's chapter, “Anti-Semitic Caricature in 1930s Montreal: Language and National Stereotypes in Adrien Arcand's *Le Goglu* (1929-1933),” and Lora Senechal Carney's, “*New Frontier* (1936-1937) and the Antifascist Press in Canada,” which serve as superb companion pieces. Desforges's chapter lays out the ways that Arcand employed both language and visual stereotypes based on nineteenth-century scientific racism to attack Montreal Jewish communities. The text convincingly demonstrates how graphic satire played a role in both exploiting and feeding “the anxiety of a possible linguistic and ‘racial’ hybridity” in early twentieth-century Montreal (209). In a chilling, but not surprising, passage, Desforges notes that *Le Goglu* “published misleading articles, false advertisements, [and] reworked photographs” (211) in its own particular brand of fascist fake news.

Senechal Carney's chapter is a welcome foil to Desforges's chapter, discussing as it does the Toronto magazine *New Frontier*'s appearance in April 1936. Senechal Carney points directly to Hitler's rise to power in 1933 as fuel for the creation of *New Frontier*, which was a monthly literary and political magazine intended to “attract teachers, social workers, writers, artists, and other middle-class intellectuals to a united front against fascism” (233). Senechal Carney discusses both satirical and non-satirical visual material, and she makes a crucial point that brilliantly refutes the argument that Trump cannot be satirized, although she does not ever mention Trump by name (nor does anyone in the book):

"The satires [in *New Frontier*] make the case against fascism by doing what satire does so well: putting often-caricatured figures into simplified metaphorical contexts to drive home a specific point. They combine effective condemnation—here, of fascism in its various contemporary forms—with the hope for change, for a stop to fascism's international escalation" (236). That is a mic drop sentence if I ever read one.

There are two points of concern for the volume, but they do not detract in a major way from the importance and success of the book as a whole. The first is the minimal attention to Indigenous peoples as subjects, not to mention as consumers and creators, of graphic satire. This issue is overshadowed by attention to Anglophone and Francophone subjects and, while Hardy briefly attends to Fergus Kyle's 1903 representation of an elderly Indigenous man, entitled *Before He Expires* (13), it would be a less glaring omission if Indigenous scholars' work was cited and discussed. Although Hardy cites Jean-Philippe Uzel's scholarship on humour and the trickster in contemporary Indigenous art,² he could have also referenced, for example, Allan Ryan's *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (1999) and the exhibition catalogue for *Carrying on "Irregardless": Humour in Contemporary Northwest Coast Art* (2012). Ideally, *Sketches from an Unquiet Country* will be followed by texts by Indigenous scholars concerned with looking critically at representations of Indigenous individuals in Canadian graphic satire, as well as scholarship examining Indigenous caricaturists producing graphic satire in Canada after 1940.

The second point of concern brings us back to my genuine hope that this book will be read alongside books by Diana Donald, Mark Hallett, and other well-known scholars working on graphic satire. Although Hardy sets out in the introduction

to position the volume in a global world, a great deal of Canadian history is glossed (6), which may limit its readership to scholars familiar with Canadian history, Canadian art history, and Canadian visual culture.

In an effort to contextualize Canadian graphic satire against US graphic satire, Christian Vachon illuminates how Canadian satirists such as John Henry Walker (who was actually born in Northern Ireland and was influenced by British satirist George Cruikshank³) created some of the iconography now associated with the allegorical figure Uncle Sam. In looking closely at a large number of representations of Uncle Sam and identifying who used which symbol or article of clothing first, Vachon has written a groundbreaking study that locates Canadian graphic satirists as crucial innovators in US patriotic imagery. Hardy undertakes a related project in his chapter "Frankenstein's Tory: Graphic Satire in 1840s Montreal, from *Le Charivari canadien* to *Punch in Canada*," in which he traces a Frankenstein's monster figure from an image entitled "The Irish Frankenstein," published in British *Punch* in early November 1843, to an issue of *Le Charivari canadien* in May 1844.

There is a nice mix of early career scholars and established scholars in the book, and all of the chapters in the volume are elegantly written, with three excellent translations by Ery Contogouris. Feminist scholars concerned with graphic satire will find three chapters of particular interest. As Hardy observes in his introduction: "Much work needs to be done to establish women's roles as practitioners, producers, and consumers of graphic satire in Canada" (35). The chapters by Robyn Fowler, Pierre Chemartin and Louis Pelletier, and Jaleen Grove begin to fill this gap in the scholarship. Fowler discusses the allegorical figure of Miss Canada who served a variety of purposes for graphic satirists. Chemartin and Pelletier examine representations of suffragettes in Montreal graphic

satire produced between 1910 and 1914. This chapter in particular would be productively read against scholarship on British suffrage. While they cite Lisa Tickner's book *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14* (1988), they do not reference Rosemary Betterton's text "A Perfect Woman: The Political Body of Suffrage" from her book *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (1996). Betterton discusses negative graphic representations of suffragettes, and it would be a productive comparative study to look at both Canadian and British visual culture.

Jaleen Grove's excellent chapter on the "Pretty Girl" demonstrates some of the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred across the 49th Parallel. Grove's chapter is strong in formalist analysis, showing how "the use of Miss Canada faded by the 1920s as the Pretty Girl became ubiquitous" (171). Grove's chapter is also valuable in the study of graphic satire because it illuminates the importance of using the "period eye" when possible. She notes, for example, that while the attenuated bodies of Russell Patterson's "pretty girl caricatures" may appear to us to be ideal, thin women, in fact he intended them to be humorous in a misogynistic way. As Grove notes, censure of female sexuality "made the transgressive Patterson Girl an object of humour" (186). I applaud Grove for calling a spade a spade and explicitly identifying these kinds of images as misogynist (189).

The volume ends with a meditation on humour, wit, and satire in Canada by Annie Gérin, who provides a useful overview of various theories of humour, including superiority theory, release theory, and incongruity theory (288). She argues that it is important for today's scholars to examine graphic satire produced in past eras, "since it may afford them deeper, broader, or more nuanced understandings of history" (293). It may also help us to examine more critically the graphic satire of the present day in order to unveil the

ideological work that it is doing. Gérin reminds us to “remain cautious; comic images are often duplicitous and call for a skeptical attitude with regard to representations—all representations—as active constructors of knowledge” (293).

In this important and well-illus-



trated volume, contributors use a range of methods, including the social history of art, iconography, feminism, formalism, and even psychoanalysis, as in Laurier Lacroix's chapter on the iconic Québécois figure Baptiste Ladébauche, revealing the extent to which graphic satire is inextricably linked with anxiety. The authors critically examine a range of visual material from many different archives in order to continue building on previous scholarship concerned with humour, irony, and caricature in Canadian visual culture. On a minor note, a list of illustrations would be helpful at the beginning of the volume. This absence notwithstanding, *Sketches from an Unquiet Country* should absolutely be read beyond Canadian borders so that these images and arguments will circulate globally for further study and debate. ¶

Julia Skelly teaches in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University.
—julia.skelly@mcgill.ca

1. Dominic Hardy, “Editorial Introduction: Humour in the Visual Arts and Visual Culture: Practices, Theories, and Histories,” *RACAR*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2012), 2.

2. Jean-Philippe Uzel, “Les objets trickster

dans l'art contemporain autochtone au Canada,” *Histoire de l'art et anthropologie*: Musée du quai Branly / actes de colloque, 2009, <https://actesbranly.revues.org/241>.

3. In Walker's fonds at the McCord Museum in Montreal, there is an engraving of Cruikshank cut from an unknown periodical with several holes at the top of the clipping, suggesting that Walker had pinned the photograph to his wall at various points in his life.

Melissa Berry

The Société des Trois in the Nineteenth Century: The Translocal Artistic Union of Whistler, Fantin-Latour, and Legros
New York: Routledge, 2018

152 pp. 37 b/w and 10 colour illus.

\$150 US (Hardcover) ISBN 9781138503151

Alison Syme

Melissa Berry offers the first book-length study of the *Société des Trois* and its role in the artistic development of its members, Henri Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Legros, and James McNeill Whistler. She argues that this group, formed by the three in their early professional lives, was “far more than a footnote” in their careers (131). The *Société* has been touched upon in monographs and elsewhere; for instance, it is briefly mentioned in Michael Fried's 1996 book *Manet's Modernism: or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* and Bridget Alsdorf's *Fellow Men: Fantin-Latour and the Problem of the Group in Nineteenth-Century French Painting* (2013). It was the subject of an exhibition (The Society of Three) at the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1998, the catalogue for which contains an important essay by Paul Sturton and Jane Munro. Berry's book, however, offers the most in-depth examination of the group's formation and function. She uses sociological and psychological understandings of small group dynamics to analyse the role of the *Société* in the artists' professionalization and cultivation of distinct artistic identities, which she explores through their works, correspondence,

peer networks, exhibition venues, patrons, dealers, and cross-Channel activities.

Berry's introduction to the book stresses the artists' differences. Whistler, inspired by Realism, became drawn to Aestheticism. Fantin painted portraits, still lifes, and fantasy scenes throughout his career. And Legros concentrated on religious images. What, then, drew them together in the late 1850s in Paris, what commonalities may be found in their oeuvres, and what made their belonging to this group—rather than the others with which the artists were associated during their student days and later (societies of etchers, lovers of Japanese art, etc.)—so formative? The answer, Berry suggests, was its “translocal” character, for Whistler and Legros worked, over much of the ten-year period in which the *Société* existed (ca. 1858–1868), in London, corresponding with and visiting Fantin in Paris with different degrees of intensity during this time. The term translocal, as opposed to transnational, “avoids the traps of tidy cultural and geographic categories both for the artists as well as the cosmopolitan cities in which they worked” (7), and Berry stresses the cross-Channel traffic of artists, collectors, dealers, materials, and reviews in this period, contributing to a growing literature concerned with breaking down narrowly nation-focused understandings of “French” or “British” art of the period.

In her first chapter, “The Importance of Unity: Parisian Students in the Early Second Empire,” Berry describes the transformations of Paris in the 1850s as Fantin and Legros began their studies there. Berry's focus, though, is on the desire for small artistic groupings, and she examines an initial alliance of artist friends including Charles Cuisin, Guillaume Régamey, Léon-Auguste Ottin, Adolphe-Auguste Férlet, and Marc-Louis Emmanuel Solon, as well as Fantin and Legros, who trained, socialised, and compiled albums together in the mid-to-late 1850s.