

**Comic Empires--  
Cartoons, Caricature, and  
Imperialism:  
A Symposium**

edited by Richard Scully

## Introduction

Richard Scully

In recent years, the cultural turn in the history of imperialism has shed much new light on how agents of empire, its opponents, and subject populations, functioned under its aegis. Yet despite ample attention being given to the role played by commercial advertising (McClintock, 1995; Ciarlo, 2011), print capitalism (MacKenzie, 1986; Kaul, 2003), travel and tourism (Clark, 1999; Pratt, 2007), and other cultural forms (e.g. film: Burns, 2013), there has been little considered analysis of the key function of cartoons, satirical art, and caricature in sustaining -- as well as challenging -- imperial systems. Aside from useful surveys by Roy Douglas (1994) and Mark Bryant (2008), there exists no thorough, scholarly interrogation of the relationship between cartoons and empire. This is a significant omission, for it is almost impossible to imagine the "New Imperialism" in Africa without picturing Linley Sambourne's "Rhodes Colossus" (*Punch*, Dec. 10, 1892: 266 -- **Fig. 1**) standing astride the continent from Cape to Cairo (Scully, 2012). Similarly, Thomas Theodor Heine's famous representation of the different Belgian, French, British, and German methods of colonialism (*Simplicissimus*, May 1904: 55 -- **Fig. 2**) continues to color our understandings of imperial exploitation, as do numerous similar works by American, Japanese, and cartoonists of other nationalities.

In the wake of some important groundwork on colonial contexts such as Ireland (de Nie, 2004), Cuba (Vaughan, 2003), Korea (Jung-Sun, 2006), Cyprus (Varnava, 2005), and the Philippines (Ignacio, De La Cruz, Emmanuel, and Toribio, 2004), the scholarly situation is changing for the better. A sense that satirical publications like *Punch* (1841-1992; 1996-2002) were themselves agents of empire -- or even the center of mini-empires of their own (Scully, 2013) -- is slowly emerging. We are now far better appraised of how cartoonists and satirical art played an important role in the resistance to imperial regimes, or in the local collaboration with such regimes --e.g. in India (Hasan, 2007; Khanduri, 2009; Hasan, 2012; Harder and Mittler, 2013)-- than we have ever been. The recovery of the voices of "subaltern" cartoonists is now an important aspect of the postcolonial enterprise, particularly as so much of today's African and Asian cartoon culture owes them an historical debt, the sheer extent of which is only just becoming apparent. So too, the reimagining of the imperial past by present-day cartoonists and comic artists -- for example in the context of France (McKinney, 2013) -- points to an emerging field of research with the potential to expand considerably our

understanding of various shared, imperial pasts.

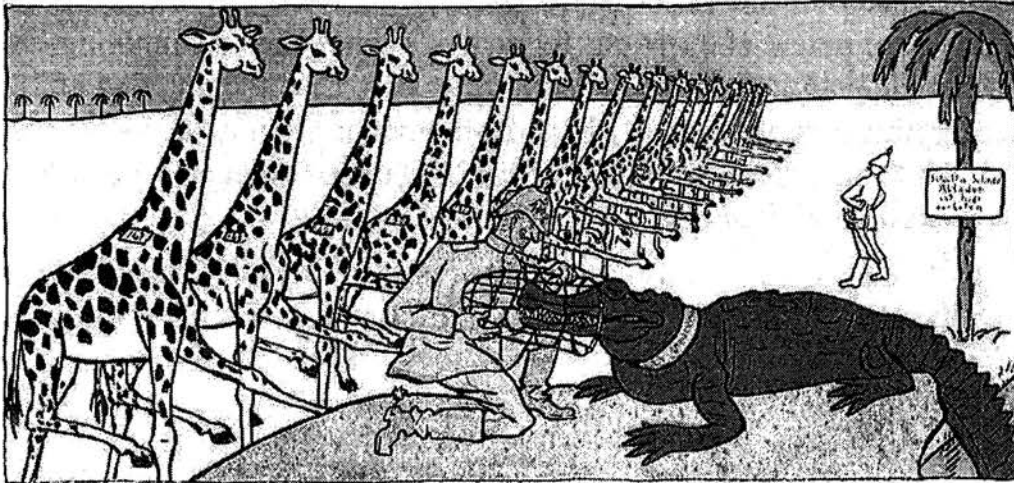
Perhaps to date the enormity of the task -- including the sheer wealth of source-material, the variety of linguistic and cultural contexts, and the multiplicity of potential questions for analysis -- has been a stumbling-block to a coherent analysis of imperialism in cartoons. Like the ongoing effort to explore political cartoons as a global phenomenon (Scully, 2014), it seems unlikely that one scholar would ever be able to take more than a cursory look at such a vast area of inquiry.



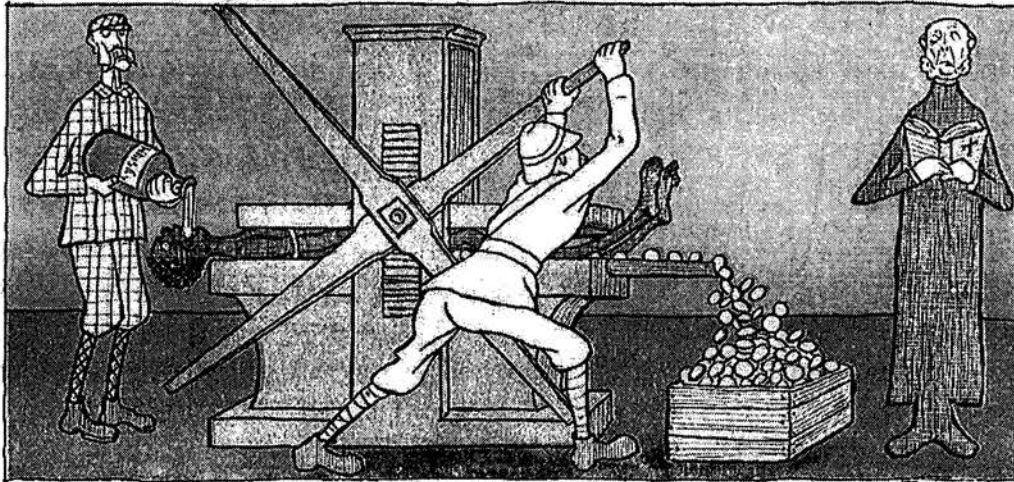
Fig. 1. Linley Sambourne. 1892. "The Rhodes Colossus." *Punch*. Dec. 10: 266.

# Kolonialmächte

Zeichnungen von Th. Th. Heine



So kolonialisiert der Deutsche.



So kolonialisiert der Engländer.



So der Italiener



und so der Belgier.

Fig. 2. Thomas Theodor Heine. 1904. "Kolonialmächte [Colonial Powers]." *Simplicissimus*. 9 (6, May): 55.

As such, taking a collaborative approach promises to be most profitable, and already, an international network of scholars is taking shape, taking cartoons and empire as their chief field of research. The construction of important scholarly bridges between individuals, fields, disciplines, and institutions is best undertaken in this collaborative fashion, and this short symposium of papers is representative of the first stages of a new collaboration. Just as in previous collaborations in the field of political cartoon and comic studies (Phiddian and Manning, 2009; Scully and Quartly, 2009; Harder and Mittler, 2013), the approach taken can often seem very broad, with a wide range of chosen subject-matter, and an often disparate set of approaches from overlapping disciplines and fields. But as with the building of any bridge (literally as well as metaphorically), the first stage is often simply to throw in as much foundational material as possible, creating a causeway; allowing later work to construct a more purposeful, imposing and refined superstructure, via which a freer flow of scholarly ideas and practices can occur in the future. Without testing the waters first, via a controlled but open-minded editorial approach, progress is unlikely to be made at all.

In laying the groundwork for what promises to be a whole series of scholarly bridges, my chief collaborator -- Andrekos Varnava (the Flinders University of South Australia) -- deserves special thanks. It was his idea to pursue the question of cartoons and empire, and in the years since, he has piqued the interest of not a few scholars and publishers with the idea. Professor John A. Lent has also been of immeasurable assistance, not least for having offered the pages of a fully-fledged *IJOCA* symposium as a supportive, but academically-rigorous, forum for the exploration of new ideas. Emeritus Professor John M. MacKenzie, the doyen of imperialism studies, also offered his support at a critical stage, and has suggested a number of means by which our new scholarly focus might be best disseminated (not least via a volume in the Manchester *Studies in Imperialism* series, which he found; a decision is currently pending). In addition, I think it only right to offer thanks to all those scholars who have expressed an interest in being part of ongoing collaboration: Robert Dingley (Independent), Funie Hsu (UC Berkeley), Jean-Claude Gardes (Western Brittany), Fiona Halloran (Rowland Hall-St Mark's), Alison Hulme (London), Samuel Hyde (Edge Hill), Ursula Koch (Independent), Robert Phiddian (Flinders), Albert Pionke (Alabama), Charlotte Riley (London), Leslie Rogne Schumacher (State University of New York), Shaoquin Zhang (Oklahoma), Stephen Tufnell (Oxford), Fred Whiting (Alabama), Stefanie Wichhart (Niagara), and Keren Zdaffe (Tel-Aviv). Others who expressed interest, but have been unable to contribute as yet -- including Mark Bryant (Independent); Hans Harder (Heidelberg); Reto Hoffman (Monash); Chris Holdridge (Monash); Ritu Khanduri (Texas, Arlington); Barbara Mittler (Heidelberg); Christopher Rea (UBC); and Margaret A. Rose (Cambridge) -- can rest assured that I will continue to

hound them for their input and their insights (!).

The scholars whose work appears in the following pages – László Kurti (Miskolc), John R. Moores (York), and Annick Pellegrin (Sydney) -- also deserve thanks for their contribution of some incisive and multi-faceted work.

László Kurti offers a fascinating insight into a single moment of scandal, and the impact of caricature and illustrated journalism on the international reputation of Imperial Austria and one of its chief paladins: Field Marshal Julius Jacob von Haynau (1786-1853). Though Haynau gained his reputation for infamy in Central Europe -- during the revolutionary disturbances in Hungary and Italy during 1848-1849 -- his international standing was mediated largely by a transatlantic readership of periodicals such as *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*. That these images only made their way back to Hungary after the loosening of Austrian Habsburg power after 1867, points to how important unspoken regimes of imperial censorship were destabilized.

Like Kurti, John Moores takes as his focus the powerful imagery of mid-19<sup>th</sup>-Century *Punch*, exploring John Leech's famous cartoon, "General Février' Turned Traitor" (March 10, 1855: 95), which commemorated the death of the Russian Tsar Nicholas I at the height of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Despite the brutal clash of empires then occurring in the Black Sea region (and mirrored in today's tensions over Ukraine), Leech's cartoon was singled-out for criticism as well as spirited defense, by a British population ever struggling to reconcile its much-vaunted national and imperial magnanimity, with the unsavory realities of war and imperialism.

Annick Pellegrin transports us to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but maintains a clear sense of the persistence of past imperialisms in Latin America. She shows how two Franco-Belgian *bandes dessinée* -- *Les Brigades du temps* and *Helldorado* -- offer a critique of the violence and cruelty of the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century, Iberian conquest of the Americas, at the same time as presenting this historical process as being inevitable and necessary. Despite differences in approach (the former being time-travelling science-fiction; the later more historically-themed), both these works outline and reveal the inequities at the core of European modernity; the modernity from which the comic artists and writers have themselves sprung. Ambivalent feelings -- of regret for what was done to advance Western civilization, and yet feeling indebted to the violent foundations civilization -- speak to our relationship with imperialism, and sum up much of the driving reason behind this symposium, as well as the need for ongoing scholarly investigation of the relationship between cartoons and empire.

Overall, they not only deal with three disparate, and uniquely-fascinating contexts for the interplay of imperialism and cartoons, but together they underscore perhaps the great, unspoken, imperial nature of modern comic art itself: the importance and persistence of the Anglo-American, or Western tradition. The global expansion of that Western form of art -- that merged and

interacted with existing traditions across the globe, producing dialectically the transnational, universal form known today -- has been immeasurably enriched by artists and styles that it once sought to colonize, but which now finds itself colonized (and rightly so). As Annick Pellegrin perhaps reminds us, though, it is by no means certain that the age of imperialism is ended.

More than anything, it is perhaps to be hoped that the work of these three scholars -- and the work of those others mentioned above -- will open up more questions (like those above) than provide straightforward answers. I commend the following papers to the readership of *IJOCA*.

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