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Historical ironies of Henri Julien (1852-1908): researching identity and graphic satire across languages in Québec

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Abstract

In Québec graphic satire, the institutions that help to circulate the power of identity markings, ironic or not, carry political and indeed ethnic affiliation. Graphic satire has been produced in Québec in the contexts of a majority French-speaking but traditionally bilingual French and English society for and by both dominant groups. A textual-visual hybrid, Québec graphic satire has operated in a multi-faceted international framework. Cultural transfers between Québec, France, Britain and America have often operated outside the regulated frameworks recuperated by institutions of memory. This article thus engages with relationships between text, narrative and image by investigating how specific visual artefacts are explicitly located in a given linguistic tradition in ways that belie tacit and covert readings in a second language. It examines a number of textual and visual crosscurrents that are particularly evident in the study of caricature and illustration in historical Québec print culture. The focus is the work Henri Julien (1852-1908), a caricaturist and illustrator responsible for many determining satiric and folkloric images that have marked the 'collective imaginary' of Québec in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Two of the more problematic images he created are assessed for their material, artistic and ideological aspects, echoing Tom Gretton's recent studies of late 19th century Mexican caricature and print culture (Gretton, 1994; 2005) by suggesting the fertile territory of Québec historical visual studies for an international research context. Earlier investigations (Hardy, 1998; 2006) have sought to establish frameworks for the development and theorizing of Québec caricature studies through two extensive monographs. The article concludes by addressing a need to go beyond notions of integrating a given national tradition to an international framework, by describing a subsequent project that tackles caricature studies as a transatlantic, European-North American multilingual phenomenon.

Introduction

This paper revisits two images made by the Québec illustrator, caricaturist and painter Henri Julien (1852-1908), images that are charged with sometimes inadmissible markers of French-Canadian identity. This relative 'admissibility' is key: it goes to the very parameters of visibility observed in Québec society for certain types of identity representations, ironic or essentializing. It also speaks to the possibility of constructing subjects in Québec print culture studies for a research community both inside and outside of Québec. Questions of sources, textual relationships, visual culture and the reconfigurations of meaning across language are enriched by the fact that these practices always occur in Québec against (at least) two languages. These questions become all the more productive through the contrasts that arise between imagery that is overtly satiric, playing on the specific ironies inherent to Québec society, and imagery used – with perhaps unintended irony – to overtly affirm a single, reductive identity.



Fig. 1 *Songs of the By-Town Coons*

The first image is drawn from one of Julien's most explicitly caricatural bodies of work, the *Songs of the By-Town Coons* [Fig. 1]. This 1899 series is a virtuoso depiction of the Liberal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1843-1919, the first francophone Prime Minister of Canada, serving 1896-1911), as a group of blackface minstrels. The *By-Town*



Coons are contextualised within specific subtexts and performative traditions, located through investigations into the commissioning of the cartoons, analysis of the formal choices made by Julien, and through comparison to similar cartoons and caricatures in North America and Europe (see for example, Banta, 2003; Fischer, 1996). But they became, from the 1960s onwards, almost illegible in Quebec and Canadian contexts as historical texts or artistic artefacts of any kind. As much was admitted in the sole survey history of Canadian political cartooning published to date (Desbarats and Mosher, 1979). As caricatural representations of denigrating blackness, they proved highly problematic in terms of recuperation to the projects of Canadian art history as it was codified after 1960 (beginning with Morrisset, 1960 and Harper, 1967). This was especially the case as Canada came to present itself as a model of integrative, tolerant post-war society in the age of the struggle for civil rights, with its attendant project to end stereotypical representational practices. In particular, the *By-Town Coons* series could only present complex and difficult associations in the 1960s, for it represented the excessive caricatural trading on black identity that was being comprehensively re-examined and rejected throughout Western societies. The extremes of these representations were often flashpoints, not least throughout the United States, for civil unrest and violent claims for ethnic and national emancipation. Most significantly for Québec and its emerging revolutionary movement, the representation of blackness was harnessed to a phenomenon that spoke eloquently of Québec's place within North American cross-border political and cultural spaces, namely the ascribed self-portrayal of French Canadians as a group oppressed and exploited by US-led international capitalism on lines equivalent to the treatment within the US of African-Americans. This was one meaning of the phrase coined by Pierre Vallières, theoretician of the terrorist organization *Front de Libération du Québec*, in his famous description of the French-Canadian working class as the 'Nègres Blancs d'Amérique' – the 'White Niggers of America' (Vallières, 1966).



Fig. 2 Henri Julien, 'Vieux de '37'

The second image under review is Julien's 'Vieux de '37' (likely to have been made between 1900 and 1908), which has melded into Québec memory of another national stereotype, elaborating on the 'Habitant' figure prevalent in representations of French-Canadian identity since earliest post-Conquest times. Codifying as a characteristic national representation the image of an elder, ready-armed, pipe-smoking man striding purposefully, the 'Vieux de '37' evokes through its title the failed rebellion of 1837-38. At that time Lower Canadian [Québec] *patriotes* led an armed resistance against the occupying British régime, seeking the establishment of an independent French Canadian nation. Apparently in its origin a pen and watercolour drawing, its materiality can now



only be only be deduced through examination of its mechanical reproduction. Our earliest source is the posthumous *Album Julien* published as a memorial project by Julien's admirers in 1916. Although the image is not linked to any specific text, this 1916 publication followed some fifteen years of cultural artefacts in literature, visual art and folkloric research, the purpose of which was to establish a regionalist and pro-actively francophone nationalist body of references for French-Canadian society. It has subsequently acquired the volatility of an image re-circulated across many succeeding texts and contexts, including its usage by the aforementioned Front de Libération du Québec in 1970, and through a more recent proliferation of badges, t-shirts, hats and other sundry identity markers, alongside its use as cover imagery for recent historical books (Fournier, 1998, and Laporte, 2004) [Fig. 3] as well as Québec patriotic websites <www.patriotes.qc.ca>

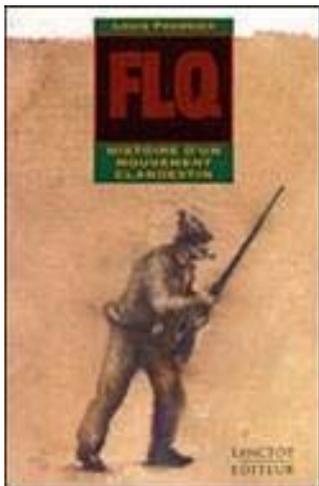


Fig. 3

These problems of interpretation are, finally, related to longstanding ambiguities about the proper status of caricature in Québec and Canadian society. The use of these images, as choices for cultural agendas, will be examined in the closing portion of this study. The Québec historical example, nourished by French and British traditions which are both absorbed and cast aside, appears to give us the model of a permanently post-colonial society which makes difficult choices about the acceptability of the recourse to caricatural or illustrative identity markings according to, by turn, visual and textual uses in the public sphere. The portrayal of francophone identity through the metaphors of African-



American or *Habitant* experience became, throughout the twentieth century, permissible insofar as it invested the allusive realm of textual, rather than visual, description and suggestion, one that was dependent on both public and private visualisations for the completion of its 'reading'.

Henri Julien and the traditions of graphic satire in Québec history

As a polity created through the history of conflicts between long-seated and opposing European powers, themselves representative of opposing national identities, Québec provides a rich forum for discussions of the problematics of representation. In Europe, especially in Britain and France of the years 1770-1820, the limits of this representation were constantly being reconfigured around the subversion, destruction and desecration of the represented figure, often in measure of his or her status in society. In the successively colonial, late Georgian and Victorian character of fledgling Québec society, the former New France now under British domination had a technological infrastructure that only appeared after the Conquest. As the institution of a polemical satirical print culture was only gradually permitted, there was a delay in the development of such modes of satirical and attacking discourses. In any case, it would take until the mid-nineteenth century for the metropolitan conditions which fostered the emergence of satirical print culture in London to emerge in Canadian cities.

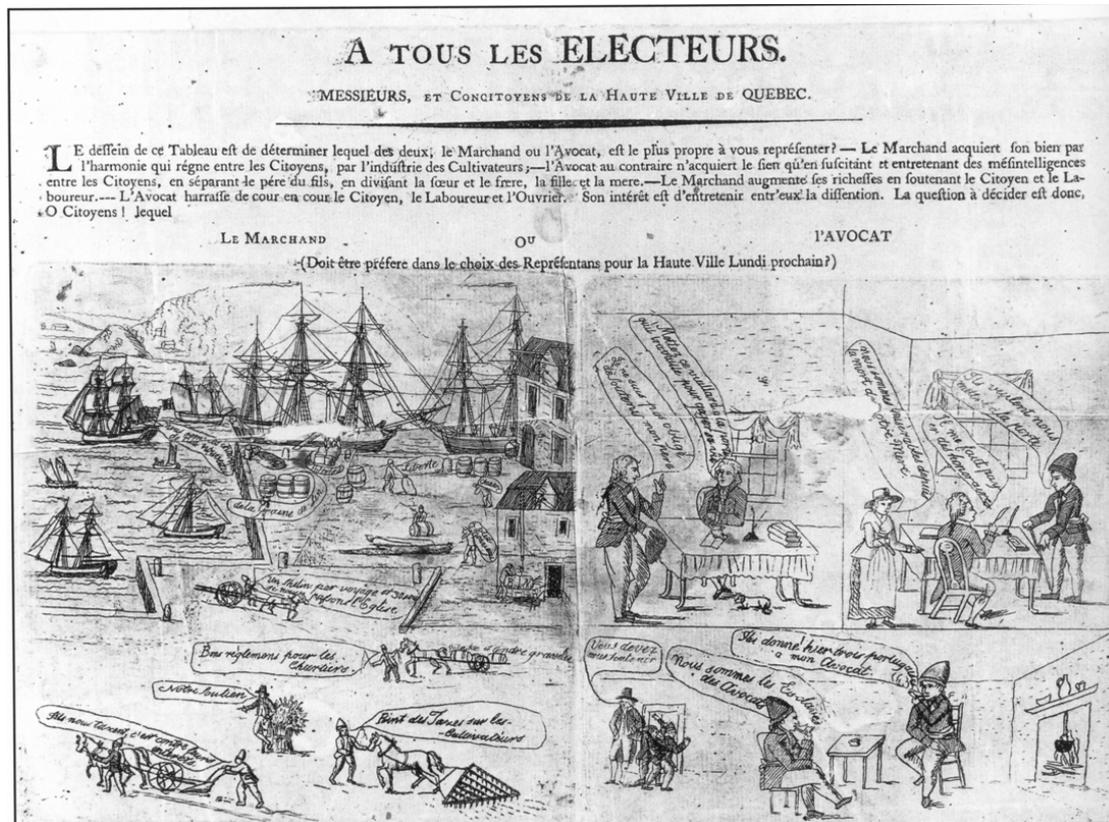


Fig. 4 *À tous les électeurs...*, Québec c. 1792

Very few traces of early graphic satire have survived from colonial post-Conquest Québec. A satirical electioneering broadside such as *À tous les électeurs...*, printed at Québec City about 1792, is mostly emblematic in character, though charged with a frank humour. [Fig. 4] It bears limited representational sophistication but attests to some expertise in printed image design. In the 1790s and 1800s we find records and some instances of caricature in the work of émigré French portrait painter and sometime caricaturist Louis Dulongpré (1759-1853), notably in a series of demonic satirical portraits executed around 1811 (Dérôme et al, 1988). These traces were more frequently visible from the 1840s, through exponents such as John Henry Walker at Montréal and Jean-Baptiste Côté at Québec City (Chèvrefils, 1985; Allard, 1996). Walker and Côté sustained a vibrant and trenchant political satire, Walker using the visual graphic codes of reproductive prints familiar to readers of the *London Illustrated News*, or *Punch* magazine. Côté exemplified the harsh woodcut image that was as old as pre-Gutenberg printmaking



in Europe and forcefully marked the debates surrounding the transition of Canada from colony to dominion with the advent of Confederation in 1867. Walker was supportive of the English elites at Montréal while Côté, in Québec City, was resolutely *canadien* and opposed to Confederation. Both operated as producers and merchants of their imagery. The populations of Montréal and Québec City were too small to provide a sufficient market for their work, and in this their fate was no different from that of most Canadian artists of their era. For the graphic artists, no less than for their journalist, editor and publisher colleagues, the support of and dependence on party-political affiliation and financing would prove a bedevilling necessity in the development of the 'autonomous' authorial position, the latter long posited as a critical standard for modernity.

These issues are fully present in the career of Henri Julien, who was born in Québec City in 1852. His father was employed by of the Queen's Printers firm of Desbarats and Co. From 1856, the family moved frequently with the succession of colonial capitals which, after 1849, marked the political life of what was then United Canada. The family definitively settled in Montréal in 1867 as the Desbarats relinquished government contracts to focus on magazine publishing in the then largest city and reading market in Canada. Julien was active as an artist from 1873 to his death in 1908, not least because he was at crucial junctures the employee of a publishing firm that provided a regular showcase for his work. Julien's work as a caricaturist followed on from training first as a reproductive engraver and then as an as an illustrator at the publications founded by George-Edouard Desbarats and William Leggo, the *Canadian Illustrated News* and its sister publication *L'Opinion Publique* (1869-83 and 1870-83, respectively). Julien's style was forged in consistent imitation of the codes of painting that had marked reproductive engraving since its inception in the late fifteenth century. But there was a distinctive twist attendant on supplying print culture to the relatively small market of a Canadian society attempting to give itself the same information and leisure institutions as its metropolitan model. The economics of European mass circulation of printed images in periodicals had given rise to armies of reproductive engravers whose labour-intensive work enabled the steady supply and consumption of printed images in news and opinion journals of the nineteenth century. Montréal's small market size and skill shortage at the time of Confederation could not support such manpower requirements in the manufacture and



circulation of images. But Desbarats's and Leggo's development of early photomechanical reproduction technology, which led directly to the establishment of daily photo-reproduction journalism in New York City in the 1880s, was tested out first at the *Canadian Illustrated News* and at *L'Opinion Publique*. While the reproduction of half-tone photographs was still prohibitive, their innovations, part of the international circulation of technological research, allowed for the easy reproduction of high-contrast black and white images.

Julien's training involved *simulation* of codes of engraving, in images which were hand-drawn and photographed before transmission to metal plates for printing. This practice, soon a widespread standard, yielded in turn to the reproduction of the *autographic* illustration, that is, one which depended on aesthetic components more apparently indexical of the swift, hand-drawn image, whether in brush, pen and ink, pencil or charcoal.

The mass-reproduction of autographic drawing also led to the rise of the comic strip. In late 1890s and early 1900s Montréal, Racey, Raoul Barré (1874-1932) and Albéric Bourgeois (1876-1962) launched careers around the same satirical journals and broadsheet newspapers – the *Montréal Daily Star*, *La Patrie*, *La Presse* – that were operating according to standards shared with other major North American newspapers. Barré and Bourgeois worked in New York and Boston, respectively, in the years following 1900, and developed the first consistently published francophone comic strips to use speech balloons. Bourgeois's career at *La Presse* was launched in 1905. His mentor Henri Julien warned him to stay away from political caricature if he could help it because it was 'une sale affaire'. Bourgeois did in fact caricature the widest possible range of local, regional, national and international personalities, making him the first truly international *imagier* of caricature to provide a distinct French-Canadian satirical viewpoint on the world at large. Racey filled the same function at the *Star*. A selection of Bourgeois's caricatures leaves the reader with the impression that enough elements of resemblance to successfully connote the proposed satirized figure have been assembled to succeed – but that all the figures also fundamentally resemble one another. Bourgeois's outstanding and longest-lasting creations were the figures of Baptiste Ladébauche and his wife Catherine, whom



he deployed week after week over half a century to articulate a view of the follies and immense changes of modernity from the position of stereotypical Québec *habitants*. Baptiste and Catherine's long-running presence was the direct antecedent to the position occupied by the more malefic Maurice Duplessis, the Premier of the province of Québec in the years 1936-1939 and 1944-1959, especially vilified in the caricatures of Robert LaPalme (1908-1997) between 1943 and 1959. LaPalme's Duplessis came to represent no less of a stereotype (at once reviled and useful), both inside and outside francophone Québec.

The Songs of the By-Town Coons

The *Songs of the By-Town Coons* were presented between January and April 1899 in a serial format on Wednesday and Saturday editions of *The Montreal Daily Star*. Julien assumed a position of aesthetic leadership, especially through his pen, brush and ink political portraits of the 1890s and through the *By-Town Coons* series. In agreeing to depict Laurier and his cabinet in blackface makeup, singing ersatz minstrel songs that satirized Liberal policies, Julien, directed by a Conservative newspaper to satirize the first French-Canadian prime minister of Canada, articulated a resistance to this commission through his choice of codes of representation. On adopting codes of denigration associated with blackness in dominant Western culture, he retained codes of decorum in physiognomic representation that effectively argued a winking alliance rather than wholehearted satirical opprobrium.

After the series ended, a commemorative album was printed. Pages 4 or 12 of each edition were marked by a large display of four or five portrait caricature drawings by Henri Julien, organized around stanza-segmented texts, which purported to show the ministers of Laurier's government as blackface minstrels. The drawings used free hatching to indicate black skin-colour but did not transform the physiognomies of the subjects according to the coded stereotypes of the racial depiction of African features prevalent in Western caricatures of the period, for example in Edward Kemble's *Darkytown* series published in *Life* of the same year (Banta, 2003). Julien appears to be interested in the élan that he can accord to his deployment of the naturalistically-represented bodies of the ministerial team he had spent three years drawing from the



press gallery at the House of Commons. In this, his drawings are perfectly in keeping with the fundamental nature of minstrelsy, in that it is at its origins a travesty, an adoption of artificial African identity by white American performers whose own physiognomies prevail through the mask of applied burnt-cork makeup, often with an area of white skin demarcated around the lips to suggest the stereotypical thick lips of denigrating visual representations. As a performance and as a visual inscription of blackness on the white body, minstrelsy has its origins in cultural appropriations and ridicule of African slave culture in the Southern seaboard American colonies of the eighteenth century, codified through 'Jim Crow' performances of the 1820s and 1830s. Its migration from slave states to Northern cities such as New York and Philadelphia brought it into contact with the often violent upheavals of rapidly expanding urban culture under the impact of an industrializing economy absorbing large waves of European immigrants. The caricatural régime of body and voice markings that operated under minstrelsy served as exemplars of the systems of identity markings that prevailed in the hierarchies of American society (Toll, 1974; Bean et al, 1996).

For a Québec/Canadian audience, these phenomena could both be imported and assimilated, legible as part of a closely-knit North American territorial circulation of cultural products, and consumed both to articulate local anxieties and to posit the conflicts between white European and African Americans as both excessive and contained within American political space. And yet the adoption of this strategy in Montreal in 1899 reflects two realities. As we have suggested, the black/white conflict is implicitly reconfigured as both French/English and Liberal/Conservative conflicts. But with the sense of containment comes also a capacity to imaginatively resist another transformation taking place in Canadian identity, and that is its enrichment by emigrant African-Americans. Indeed a whole erased history of African-Canadian people is at stake, if only through certain key historical occurrences: Québec and English Canada both had histories of slavery; African-American loyalists settled in Nova Scotia following the Revolutionary War; and Canada's image of itself as a harbour for escaped slaves through the Underground Railroad network that led from the South through Ohio to Ontario had marked its own consciousness in the years around Confederation. Montreal, as the leading economic city of the country, was the hub of the national rail network that was



the Confederation's first project and which also linked Canada to the US. By the 1890s, a semi-permanent community of African-American male railway porters had established roots in the Little Burgundy area around Montreal's main depot, Windsor Station. Although these men were at first not allowed by Canadian National Railways to bring wives and children to settle with them, they did succeed in doing so by 1910, founding an important English-language African-Canadian community in Montreal. In 1899, however, this presence was perhaps considered as spectacular, wholly redolent of the performative, as not only white minstrels in blackface but also black troupes re-appropriating blackface practices had developed extensive performance networks throughout the Northeastern United States and in both English and French Canadian centres.

Indeed, the depiction of the ministers is faithful both to Julien's other, non-caricatural renditions and to the prevailing structure of Blackface minstrelsy performance, which is a structure like any other, including that of leader-and-followers in Parliament.

A contrasting strategy is apparent in the verses (probably not composed by Julien but by the *Star's* literary editor) around which the drawings are grouped. The parodic forms of lyric expression, each one theatrical, fictitious and caricatural in its own way, are closely allied to specific identity markings that conflate racial origin and translate it through a codified, stereotypical 'voice' which is rendered semi-phonetically. Despite the ridicule invested in the satirical lyric texts that accompanied Julien's drawings, the violent symbolic compromising of face and body that was typically operated on African-Americans through caricature such as Edward Kemble's was set aside in this body of work. Nevertheless, the fact that Julien resumed a caricatural role through the satirical depictions of the *By-Town Coons* shows us the easy conflation that could be made in the public mind between the different orders of decorum that marked the realms of public discourse in Canadian life. The institution of parliament is seen, under the governance of a francophone-led Liberal government, as little more than the production of a minstrel troupe, as a parody of true (English-speaking, British-Canadian, Conservative) governance. The structure of performance is an important link. The minstrel troupe usually consists of a dozen or fourteen players, arranged on stage in a hemicycle. Each performer's actions, songs and skits, is governed by the *interlocutor* who calls forth each of



the minstrels in turn, all sporting different instruments, strings, brass or woodwinds. At the tips of the hemicycle are the End-Men, usually known as Tambo and Brudder Bones; their percussive instruments hearken to the African roots imagined by the minstrel show, with allusions to cannibalism and the percussive use of human remains – hence 'Brudder Bones'. Each of the minstrel's turns is a burlesqued version of a 'higher' style. The Minister of Finance, W. S. Fielding, is Tambo:

Dis coon don' lef a happy home
 Fo' to go to de Capital
 W'en I j'ined de By-Town minstrel troupe
 I felt quite natural
 I quit a good job at Halifax; but
 Now, ma fren's I feel
 Dat dere's gwine t'be a heap
 O'trouble fo't'keep
 Finances on an eben keel.

Opposite him, Laurier's Quebec lieutenant, J. Israel Tarte, Minister for Public Works. The ensemble - title, drawing, voice of song - afford several overlapping winks to simultaneous ethnic issues for English-speaking Empire boosters. Tarte's name is used to signal confusion with Jewish identity; while his 'promise' alludes to his role as one of the chief channels of money into massive infrastructure projects, notably around ports and canals, which secured the fidelity of the country's business leadership located at Montreal. His French-Canadian identity is fused with that identified in his time as 'the negro' or 'the coon' by blacking up and through the adoption of a mock *Habitant* voice that functions as a replacement for the caricatured 'negro' voice exemplified by Fielding's song – a parodic approximation of a French Canadian accent that had lately become very popular in Montreal.

[...] I spen' Bapteme! More money was
 never spen' before
 An' when de nex year come, Hooraw!
 I spen' few million more
 [...] De parties she can't get along widout
 de Tarte and' Blair
 Becos for w'y? Well! 'lection don't
 Be never mak' wit' prayer.



Subtitled 'With Apologies to the Author of *The Habitant*', this song borrows the voice developed by William Henry Drummond (1854-1907), Canadian doctor and poet, who celebrated the loyalty of French Canadians towards Empire, and their famous courage exemplified at the time of their assistance in Gordon's assault on Khartoum, in a first-person/third person epic called 'The Nile Expedition':

Victoriaw : she have beeg war, E-gyp's de nam' de place –
An' neeger peep dat's leev 'im dere, got very black de face.
An's so she's write Joseph Mercier, he's stop on Trois-Rivières
« Please come right off, and bring wit' you t'ree honder voyageurs ».

Transferring the physiognomies of the ministers without distortion to the very well observed movements of one of the many Coon shows appearing throughout this era and beyond in Montreal – a city which was a fixture in the infrastructure of circulating shows controlled by the theatre producer trusts of New York, rather as a forerunner of the American control of Canadian cinema screens - Julien renewed a longstanding correspondence between the caricatural space of representation and that of the theatre, with which the form was intimately allied in both Britain and France.

This great outburst of caricatures was followed by twice-weekly or weekly political and satirical caricatures against the Liberal government throughout the ensuing spring and summer. In the autumn, with the Boer War in South Africa underway and with Canadian public opinion generally indifferent or inclined to let Britain sort out for itself what Canada saw as a little local difficulty for the Mother country, the *Star*'s publisher Hugh Graham (1848-1938) resolved to fabricate a public demand for Canadian participation – a demand sure to divide the governing Liberal Party in whose Québec, French-speaking power base such demand faced a guaranteed opposition. This was, indeed, one of the turning points in the launching of 20th century Québec nationalism and, eventually, separatism. Québec's French-speaking population and its political élite sympathised readily with a small, non-English, agrarian society seeking self-determination and autonomy from British imperialism. At the height of his campaign, Graham had Julien draw Laurier in an accusation of hypocritical cowardice that set aside the procedures of

caricature and depended instead on the codes of reportage. A few weeks later, Julien abandoned the caricaturist's role for the *Star*, ceding this place to Arthur George Racey (1873-1941), who in a cartoon published shortly afterwards did not hesitate to use the stereotypical depictions of African-Americans prevalent in drawings such as Kemble's.



Fig. 5

From the time of Henri Julien's very sudden death in September 1908 onwards, his undoubted achievements as caricaturist were devalued in relation to his position as a folkloric illustrator and as a painter. Indeed his watercolours and, increasingly, his oil paintings on 'old-time Québec life' gained currency throughout the 1899-1908 period, and he began to exhibit at the Spring Salons of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, held at the Art Association of Montreal (today the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts). The subjects were either genre scenes of rural life, idyllic winter journeys in horse drawn sleighs through the snow, or interpretations of folkloric legends. Interestingly, much of this work was again very much a codification of Québec identity, in good part assembled



by writers such as Honoré Beaugrand and Louis Fréchette whose free-masonic affiliations placed them, and presumably Julien as well, outside the core cultural projects of French Catholic renewal that gained ascendance in Québec from 1900, under the example of the Action française movement in France. Nevertheless, Julien's hundreds of folkloric illustrations became emblematic of a rural, traditional French Canada quite at odds with the one struggling, in common with other Western societies, with the impact of modernist urban transformations and industrialisation of economic life.

The 'Vieux de '37'

Sometime in the last decade of his life, Julien created the 'Vieux de '37' [Fig 2] Image and title were given a new impetus between 1938 and 1941 through materials published by Canadian anthropologist and Québec folk culture collector Marius Barbeau (1883-1969). Barbeau, great friend to the members of the Group of Seven who wished to forge a modernist 'art for Canada' (Hill, 1975), tireless promoter of Northwest Coast Haida art and 'discoverer' of Emily Carr (1871-1945), who is today one of the foremost icons of Canadian art (Hill, Thom and Lamoureux, 2006). Barbeau organized the only monographic exhibition ever devoted to Henri Julien, at the National Gallery of Canada in 1938 (*Henri Julien*, 1938). Barbeau also included Julien in a series of short monographs on Canadian artists published by Ryerson Press, Toronto, in the 1940s (Barbeau, 1941), so that Julien became part of the first wave of literature aimed at codifying Canadian art history. Finally, Barbeau specifically turned to this image as the basis of propaganda articles written in support of French-Canadian participation in the Second World War, a highly controversial and difficult objective when Québec was bitterly divided between Pétainist and Free-French sympathies and tenaciously resisted the introduction of conscription in 1942 (Amyot, 1999). For his 1941 monograph and for these articles, Barbeau turned to a second version of the same subject. The whereabouts of the original drawing for this second version are equally unknown. Julien's 'Vieux de '37' functioned as an easily-circulated, highly adaptable illustration. It is difficult to know if he is meant to be an old man loyally defending the cause of the failed 1837-38 Rebellion whose leadership first sought independence for French Canada from the British colonial yoke, or if he is an elder at the turn of the 20th century, still dreaming of lost youthful battles some sixty years after the event. The fascinating dualities of youth and experience were

rekindled when the image re-emerged in 1968. [Fig. 6] Printed in negative on a black background, suffused with violent red, Julien's armed *Habitant* adorned the cover of *L'esprit révolutionnaire dans la littérature canadienne-française*, a study of calls-to-arms across literary modes in Québec since the 1760 Conquest of New France by the British (Costisella, 1968). By this time, the image was but one element in a visual arsenal easily available to the book's publishers, Beauchemin, publishers also of the 1916 Julien commemorative volume. The image would proliferate in increasingly unpredictable ways in the next few years.



Fig. 6



front de libération du québec

communiqué

Numéro 5

8 octobre 1970; 12 heures (midi); délai : 12 heures.

Le Front de Libération du Québec tient, une dernière fois, à mettre en garde les autorités en place. Si d'ici douze heures (minuit), les autorités en place n'ont pas :

1. Prouvé leur bonne foi en diffusant sur les ondes de Radio-Canada notre manifeste politique, tel que stipulé dans le communiqué 4;
2. Ordonné aux forces policières fascistes d'arrêter sur-le-champ leurs fouilles, perquisitions, arrestations ou tortures;

Le Front de Libération du Québec se verra dans l'obligation de supprimer le diplomate J. Cross.

Une fois ces conditions satisfaites, le Front de Libération du Québec demande aux autorités en place de spécifier concrètement ce qu'elles qualifient de demandes "irraisonnables".

Quant aux garanties que demandent les autorités en place, elles doivent exister selon la bonne foi des deux parties en cause. Nous le répétons, nous ne mettrons pas la vie de J. Cross en jeu pour une question de "piastres". Nous libérerons le diplomate Cross dans les vingt-quatre heures qui suivront la réalisation d'une autre condition ayant trait à la libération des prisonniers politiques "consentant".

NOUS VAINCRONS

Front de Libération du Québec

Remarque: Nous rejetons l'idée d'un médiateur. Nous continuerons d'établir nos communications selon nos normes, en évitant les pièges tendus par la police fasciste.

Fig. 7 Front de Libération du Québec

The 'old man' was most notoriously used in 1970 by the Front de Libération du Québec in their manifesto, ransom demands and communiqués. Issued following their kidnapping of British Trade Commissioner James Cross, and the kidnapping and murder



of Québec Labour Minister Pierre Laporte, these documents were printed on a Gestetner machine with a crude drawing of Julien's image as their 'logo'. [Fig. 7] As a result, the 'Vieux de '37' became an international media icon for the season of the October Crisis of October-December 1970, a period which has cast profound shadows on subsequent Québec history. Even before the end of the crisis, the image was adapted for the purposes of tragic political commentary in graphic satire. And like many revolutionary symbols of the era whose idealism and violence was followed by disillusionment, this new icon quickly became the subject of derision, parody and pop art manipulation. Most notably, the instigating use of the image for *L'Esprit révolutionnaire*... in 1968 was echoed most directly on the cover of the 1972 *Esprit révolutionnaire dans l'art québécois* and more humorously on the cover of the 1976 *Théâtre québécois: instrument de contestation sociale et politique*; here the 'old man' with a pipe strides across a stage with a clown's mask hiding his face. [Fig. 8] The image soon settled into a humorous life in fiction. Among several films made on this period in Québec history, the most internationally-known may well be Robert Lepage's 'Nô' (1998), which serio-comically portrays a fictitious terrorist cell at the time of the October Crisis, and lovingly gives pride of place to the Gestetner machine emblematic which reproduces the 'Vieux' into samizdat memory. Some thirty years after 1968, Julien's image is now a commercial icon, widely available in Québec on t-shirts and badges as it is regularly made to signify the divisive and lost rebellions of Québec in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The St-Jean celebrations are particularly productive annual sites for its re-circulation, as the 'Vieux' frequently joins with the colour-schemes of Jamaican reggae paraphernalia in a twenty-something blend of renewed separatist sentiment fused with eco-friendly concerns. The late 1990s-early 2000s G8-summit culture of youthful political engagement inherits a vast array of identity markers which it recombines as necessary.



Fig. 8

Detached from adherence to any original, prescriptive textual context, ambiguous in their meanings from the moment of first public appearances and readings after 1916, Julien's image and its fate, in Québec historiography, tell us much about the status of illustration and caricature and their practitioners in Québec society. When one considers the absences and presences in the historical record, questions can be asked about the agendas of twentieth century Canadian art history studies which were emerging even as the life and work of Henri Julien were selectively being woven in to their fabric. Other questions can also be opened up about the persistently self-marginalizing status of the cultural productions of Québec which is, after all, a hybrid society emerging out of aboriginal, colonial, French and English and North American traditions, each of which signals major strands of twentieth-century cultural academic investigations.

Québec is a cultural entity in which the collective memory is marked by many instances of visual and textual translation, across languages, and reading traditions as well as image domains that reify the status of a given image. In such a situation the challenges and complexities met by researchers in visual print culture are especially meaningful, for images then come to occupy the very ground of translation. In this instance, translation is a conceptual space in which passages from one language to another can be occupied, as it were, in mid-journey; with the closing of a first enunciation undone, and the beginning of the reformulation only just begun. It becomes the work of the visual image to negotiate the attendant contingencies between reading groups.



The dominant language traditions, French foremost and English a distant second, are the reserved sites of official expression in an increasingly multicultural and multivocal state. They often yield sets of conflicted readings, of which some are parallel from one language to another, while others are markedly divergent, suggesting powerful ironic relationships. The language that accompanies an image is always a choice, an embedding of interpretation into the image and through it, into its context of public reception. But with reception taking place within (at least) two linguistic communities, an ironic dimension is created because the chosen accompanying language is immediately subject to re-interpretation. This ironic force marks the study of historical Québec graphic satire and emblematic illustration in which the national is nearly always engaged by positing one or the other of these two dominant reading communities as its principal 'audience', while the second is tacitly acknowledged.

Conclusion

How an engagement might be made with historical visual artefacts in order to see this process at work has been the focus of this paper. It is an engagement that remains to be theorized, although the tantalizing starting point that has been established for contemporary art through what has been described as 'seeing in tongues' (Lamoureux 1995) might be usefully adapted. Québec and Canadian contemporary art, however, circulate within international institutional frameworks of exhibition and discourse. Historical productions, especially at the level of print culture, have yet to be integrated into wider narratives – because they have to be made as constituent narratives in the first place. The archival and interpretive work necessary to constitute the subject of Québec historical visual print culture is underway, but there is much scope for additional work. Institutions such as Library and Archives Canada, the Bibliothèque et Archives nationale du Québec and the McCord Museum of Canadian History have extensive holdings which would repay consideration in concert with counterpart institutions in the United Kingdom, France, the United States. The long-questioned modernist values that have tended to universalize artistic choices have perhaps helped in placing, for its own historians, the creation and reception of Québec culture along the relatively narrow problematic of access to universal art narratives or within self-referential envelopes in which influence is always from outside.



The *By-Town Coons* and the 'Vieux de '37' can rapidly be attached to much wider phenomena in 19th and 20th- century representational and ideologically-loaded imagery, satiric or not. The *By-Town Coons* belong firmly in discussions of the representations of blackness and accounts of minstrelsy in North America and Europe, which have until now mostly focused on the American and British experience without registering the possibilities afforded by Canadian readings of this popular culture. Yet Montréal, at the confluence of American, French and British cultural and economic empire zones, is nevertheless a key site for the study of the appropriation of this imagery across contexts. The 'Vieux de '37' made notorious in 1970, had rapidly been satirized in Québec visual culture. The behaviour that authorized this satiric impulse was hugely prevalent. The reader of *Théâtre québécois...* could easily pick up, in Montreal, the celebrated issue of the *National Lampoon* that presented on its front cover the pie-covered face of Che Guevara, memorialized darling of the Western radical left.

The research dimensions that are available for Québec's visual art traditions have enormous potential because they are in effect an important staging ground for the international movement of style and ideas. At the time of writing, one new project provides a way of tapping this potential. This problematic of the research and integration of Québec historical visual studies has been advanced, for the field of graphic satire, by the development of a project of a history of caricature, at the Université de Montréal. I am now engaged in the way forward from nationally-delimited monographic studies, and I am writing about this history as a manifestation of territorial constructions of satiric identity across British North America, New Spain, Mexico, the United States and Canada. The very earliest findings show that the circulation of satiric imagery according to artistic means, technological innovation and print culture infrastructure has much to say about the constitution of cross-territorial readerships, and about the behaviours of audiences who read and producers who make and commission caricature. The idea of a 'Québec' tradition of satire is enlarged on one hand to rejoin a North American-European arena of print culture. More importantly perhaps, it is also reconfigured to its most important economic centre. Montréal is then seen as one of a series of cities such as Mexico, New York, Paris and London across which visual satire is a lively part of a



political culture of ironic discourse common to a wider, perhaps supra-national, metropolitan 'state'. In this structure, questions of identity such as the ones we have reviewed here, become all the more interesting, for they become part of an arsenal in which metropolitan power seeks to satirize the 'national' in order to represent itself as nation.

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