On the evening of Wednesday, 30 November 1892, the cartoonist Edward Linley Sambourne freshened himself up with a Turkish bath before departing as usual for his regular editorial dinner meeting at *Punch*. The permanent staff and proprietors of the *London Charivari* had held such meetings almost since the birth of the magazine in 1841, and around the mahogany table in the upstairs room, all manner of discussions were to be had, and decisions to be made, as to the content of the coming week’s issue. While key staff members were responsible for particular aspects of the magazine, the ebb and flow of conversation around the table meant that much of what appeared in *Punch* was a collective effort, by a group of men (and they were all men) of differing opinions and personalities. Sambourne – the junior cartoonist in a hierarchy headed by *Punch*’s great master, John Tenniel – was particularly conscious of this culture and, more often than not, had the subject matter of his weekly cut decided for him.

That evening was no exception, and at some time during the food service or after-dinner drinks, it was suggested that Sambourne take as his subject a recent speech by Cecil Rhodes, given at a reception at the City Terminus Hotel, and reported in a rather tongue-in-cheek fashion in that morning’s *Times*. Over the course of the next few days, Sambourne worked hard at his commission, sent his finished version off to be engraved and printed by other hands, and, in the number published for 10 December 1892, there appeared what can only be described as a masterpiece of comic art: ‘The Rhodes Colossus’ (Figure 1.1); as enduring an image of British imperialism as has ever been created by an artist or artists, serious or comic.

The image of Cecil Rhodes in his safari suit, bestriding the African continent from Cape to Cairo, is a fixture of innumerable textbooks,
Figure 1.1  Linley Sambourne, ‘The Rhodes Colossus’, Punch, 10 December 1892, p. 266.
atlases, encyclopaedias, and histories (scholarly and popular). And yet, very few such works have sought to employ the cartoon as anything other than a useful illustration (often a cover illustration), a visual affirmation of other evidence, or an attractive means of breaking up the dense text of a monograph. This has largely been the fate of cartoons when used (if at all) in historical scholarship; and this despite a long-held regard for cartoons and their creators as makers of history, perhaps best epitomised by Arthur Balfour, in his speech at the retirement dinner of Sir John Tenniel himself. The work of that ‘great artist and great gentleman’, Balfour asserted, was destined to be among ‘the great sources from which to judge of the trend and character of English thought and life in the latter half of the nineteenth century’.

Appearing on a weekly basis in magazines like Punch, and its chief rivals of the period – including Fun, Judy, and Moonshine – cartoons were a key means by which British readers encountered and engaged with issues of empire and imperialism. Across the Channel, the immense power of French satirical art also sustained a particular focus on matters imperial (via Le Charivari and its imitators); and in Germany, the cartoonists of Kladderadatsch, Die Fliegende Blätter, and Simplicissimus intervened regularly in the debates over overseas expansion that characterised the period of the ‘New Imperialism’. Indeed, in Thomas Theodor Heine’s ‘Kolonialmächte [Colonial Powers]’ from Simplicissimus’s special 1904 number on ‘the colonies’ (Figure 1.2), one finds perhaps the only rival to Sambourne’s comment on European imperialism in terms of visibility and enduring influence. So too, in the rising power that was urged to ‘take up the white man’s burden’ (and which perhaps survives today as the only imperial power left from the ‘Age of Empire’), the US cartoonists of Puck and Judge (and countless other magazines and newspapers) critiqued foreign imperialism, while also supporting their nation’s expansion into ‘the West’, the Pacific, and Asia (as well as hegemony over the Caribbean and Latin America made possible by American economic preponderance).

As the ubiquity of cartoons like ‘The Rhodes Colossus’ indicates, Balfour’s opinion (despite the context for his speech lending itself to exaggeration and overenthusiasm) has been paid lip service ever since. Kent Worcester noted recently – in his Preface to one of the more ground-breaking works of comics scholarship – that there exists a ‘compelling case for incorporating the study of comics and cartoons into the professional toolkit of the modern historian’. But regardless of appearances, and notwithstanding their visibility and accessibility, cartoons and caricature have not been accorded a ‘place in the sun’ among the traditional ‘great sources’ for historical inquiry; nor are they a prime choice among the new sources of evidence that have so enriched
Figure 1.2  Thomas Theodor Heine, ‘Kolonialmächte’, Simplicissimus, 9 (6), May 1904, p. 55.
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the cultural turn in the history of imperialism. As such, although there have been some valuable surveys by Roy Douglas and Mark Bryant, the scholarly appreciation for the function of graphic satire in sustaining – as well as challenging – imperialism, is haphazard at best. One can find excellent usage of cartoons in recent works by Bradley Deane, Neil Hultgren, and others, but in the main these are isolated. Other visual and material sources – commercial advertising, print capitalism, travel and tourist literature, and other cultural forms (such as film) – have been the basis for a wealth of insightful, dedicated analyses. But it remains the case that cartoons and comic images are still not taken seriously.

Cartoons are sources that are ‘laden with clues to the social and political dynamics of any given time and culture’; and these clues and dynamics are often more revealing of what the past was ‘really like’ than the written word. In part because of their emotive nature, their relative immediacy, and their many-layered meanings, cartoons are an excellent way of accessing past attitudes: ‘With some lines and a few words, we are instantly back in the midst of the conflicts and personalities of the day.’ While some see in their form and content a devastating weapon that can sway public opinion, their true value for the historian lies in the way they reflect the ideas and prejudices of their creators and intended audiences. This extends to far deeper and richer appreciations of historical contexts available if one goes beyond the image, to explore cartoons as material culture; and, as pointed out so ably by Nicholas Hiley, there is an enormous amount to be gained by:

analysing the complex industries which created these images; the processes by which they were made and printed; the relationship between the cartoonist and the publication for which they worked; the circulation and readership of that publication; and the impact of those cartoons upon readers.

But as Hiley also implied, perhaps the sheer hard work involved in exploring all these rich contexts has actually been an impediment to the proper use of cartoons by historians. More therefore needs to be said about the value of cartoons, to justify their importance as sources (and to justify all that hard, scholarly work). To paraphrase one of the greatest scholars to have worked in this field – Lewis Perry Curtis, Jr – why do cartoons matter?

Cartoons were (and are) not ‘passive reflectors of reality’; nor were they (or are they) ‘passively received by readers’. Rather, they help to crystallise attitudes, and express in pithy and succinct fashion the thinking of a broad segment of society (past as well as present). It is this ability to simplify and essentialise that makes the cartoon so
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powerful an art form. Most importantly for the study of imperialisms is the way cartoonists have always ‘devoted much time and talent to mocking or laughing at people far beyond their own class and ethnicity – namely, the Other’. 20 Comic artists do not create such images anew, but they can give singular form to the multiple, more nebulous conceptions on which they draw for inspiration, and then disseminate those images to mass readerships.

While it is difficult to observe instances when cartoons have changed the political landscape, impacted voting patterns, or toppled governments, it is possible to point to a historical fear that cartoons might achieve such things. So dangerous did the cartoon seem to the regime of Napoleon III, for instance, that the Emperor of the French inaugurated a censorship apparatus directed specifically at curbing its influence. 21 Across the Atlantic, the Tammany-Hall politician William M. ‘Boss’ Tweed was so fearful of cartoonist Thomas Nast that he is famously said to have remarked:

Let’s stop them damned pictures. I don’t care so much what the papers write about me – my constituents can’t read, but damn it, they can see pictures.22

Despite resorting to bribery, Tweed failed to halt Nast’s caricaturing of him (for example) as a corrupt, Neronian Roman Emperor, taking pleasure in the ravishing of Columbia by the ‘Tammany Tiger’. 23 It is widely accepted by the scholarship that, yes, Nast did play a key role in the demolition of Tweed’s personal standing, and helped end his career. 24 In so doing (and via his later defence of incumbent Republican, Ulysses S. Grant, against the Democratic challenger, Horace Greeley; and his popularisation of the Democratic donkey and the Republican elephant), Nast helped to elevate the status of the cartoonist to that of an important political actor. 25 A recognition of the cartoonist as a serious artist was not to be far behind.

It was those arch-imperialists – the Victorians – who had first begun to appreciate the importance of cartoons and caricature as art forms and shapers of opinion. The death in 1864 of John Leech – Punch’s principal cartoonist since the 1840s – occasioned a significant outpouring of public grief, and a greater appreciation for his amusing little black-and-white sketches of everyday life as constituting real art. 26 A long-time admirer of Leech, John Ruskin linked the thriving Punch school of cartooning (epitomised by Leech’s successors, Tenniel and George Du Maurier) to the great masters of the past. 27 That same British tradition was celebrated by R. W. Buss in 1874, just as the ‘New Imperialism’ was germinating; and by the 1890s, Graham Everitt and Gleeson White had joined Ruskin and Buss in heaping praise on those cartoonists who
so skilfully combined the art of graphic humour with more serious book and periodical illustration.\textsuperscript{28} The recognition of black-and-white art – as such – gathered strength with the sponsorship of M. H. Spielmann, the powerful arbiter of late-Victorian taste, who championed it via his \textit{Magazine of Art}, and also wrote the first full-scale history of \textit{Punch}.\textsuperscript{29}

Where the art world was perhaps a little slow to pick up on the importance of cartoons and cartoonists, the same cannot be said for politicians. Benjamin Disraeli did his best to ingratiate himself with John Leech in the 1840s; while his great rival, W. E. Gladstone, was honoured to accept an invitation to dine at the \textit{Punch} table in 1889.\textsuperscript{30}

Indeed, it was eventually Gladstone who acted on his Tory predecessors’ recommendation that John Tenniel be granted a knighthood in 1893; and this underscored the importance of cartoonists in national life just as matters imperial reached their apogee.\textsuperscript{31} Knighthoods for his successors as the senior British cartoonists of the day – including Bernard Partridge in 1925 (a staunch imperialist) and David Low in 1962 (a fierce critic of empire) – could follow without occasioning much controversy. Via his wartime study of the British comic art tradition, and his later autobiography, Low did much to cement in place the importance of the cartoon as art form.\textsuperscript{32}

If cartoons were appreciated as a form of art just as imperialism reached its high-water mark, then it was as the age of imperialism was ending that the first steps were taken to study comic art for its own sake. Scattered studies and appreciations of the power and importance of comic art had appeared earlier, but the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the beginnings of a scholarly appreciation of the myriad art forms that – in combining text and image in either single-frame, or sequential form – came to constitute the stuff of ‘comics studies’. Arguably, the foundational stage was the completion (by M. Dorothy George) of the British Library’s catalogue of prints (an undertaking begun as long ago as 1870).\textsuperscript{33} This gave the cartoonist and collector Draper Hill the basis for his ground-breaking study of the eighteenth-century master, James Gillray (which he dedicated to George herself).\textsuperscript{34} And this in turn attracted the attention of the great Austrian-born art historian E. H. Gombrich, who had recently given academic respectability to the study of cartoons in his essay ‘The Cartoonist’s Armory’ of 1963.\textsuperscript{35} Around the same time, French cultural theorist Roland Barthes was the first serious critic to even acknowledge the existence of the comic strip, when he mused on the function of the text-balloon in ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’ (1964).\textsuperscript{36} By then, Umberto Eco had also turned his attention to comic art (specifically \textit{Superman}, and Charles M. Schulz’s \textit{Peanuts}), lending enormous weight to the interrogation of the art forms at a time when American cultural imperialism seemed unstoppable.\textsuperscript{37}
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By the middle of the 1960s, L. H. Streicher was calling for a unified theoretical framework for cartoons as historical sources; and W. A. Coupe had commenced his long and distinguished career as a historian of German graphic satires. Then in 1970 – via a backhanded aside in his essay ‘The Third Meaning’ – Barthes reluctantly accepted the emergence of the comic strip as a new form of art, despite it having been ‘born in the lower depths of high culture’, and being largely a ‘derisory, vulgar, foolish, dialogical [form] of consumer subculture’. Matters then began to develop rather rapidly, as the California-based David Kunzle produced his first great volume of historical analysis (The Early Comic Strip); T. M. Kemnitz asserted the validity of ‘The Cartoon as a Historical Source’; and academic attention was drawn to cartoons and comics in several important special issues of scholarly journals. Institutional status was bestowed on cartoons, caricature, and comic art more generally, via the establishment of the British Cartoon Archive [University of Kent at Canterbury, 1973], the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum [State University of Ohio, 1977], and the Caroline and Erwin Swann Collection [Library of Congress, 1977]. The criticism of Eco and Barthes was translated (in part) into English around the same time, opening up new vistas for analysis and appreciation in the prime territories of modern comic art. But while teaching classes at the School of Visual Arts in New York City (from 1973), the cartoonist Will Eisner found a dearth of scholarly literature and critical appreciation, and so embarked on his own account. Published as Comics and Sequential Art in 1985, it joined Charles Press’s The Political Cartoon (1981) as the fundamental bases for a new scholarly field of ‘comics studies’. This kind of serious attention had significant appeal to the then-maturing ‘Generation X’, for whom comics were a major touchstone [especially males searching for new and subversive literatures]. This coincided with a noticeable shift towards the darker imagery and more serious storytelling that pervaded the comic book as a form of literature, and led to the rise of what is commonly called the ‘graphic novel’. Such a self-conscious transition towards serious literature prompted several promising starts in terms of a dedicated academic scholarship – including the journals Comics Anno: Jahrbuch der Forschung zu populär-visuellen Medien (1991–1995); Ridiculosa (1994–present); 9e Art: Les Cahiers du Musée de la bande dessinée (1996–present); and Inks: Cartoon and Comic Arts Studies (1994–1997); and Scott McCloud’s ground-breaking Understanding Comics (1994) – before the advent of the Internet forever altered the landscape, and led to an explosion in interest in cartoons and comic art. Although eschewing the online form, the most enduring and important scholarly venue has been John
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A. Lent’s *International Journal of Comic Art* (1999–present); and it has been joined by *Deutsche Comicforschung* (since 2005), *European Comic Art* (since 2008), as well as *Studies in Comics* (since 2010), and *Comi-calités: Études de culture graphique* (since 2013). In addition to reviving *Inks* in 2017, the Ohio State University Press has also launched a dedicated scholarly book series – ‘Studies in Comics and Cartoon’ (from 2013) – and the Australian Research Council, as well as the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK, have recently funded major multi-year research grants on comics and cartoons.  

While comics studies is therefore reaching a point of maturation in the early twenty-first century, the seeking of a broader relevance of the various comic art forms has a longer history. Already, by the end of the 1970s, some significant assertions were being made about the connection between a satirical comic press and the flourishing of democratic institutions. The long battle of the cartoonist against censorship became the *raison d’être* for much of the work of Robert Justin Goldstein and the community of likeminded scholars who have followed his lead (in the years since the bicentenary of the French Revolution first inspired him). Since the era of rapid decolonisation, such assertions have perhaps been less ground-breaking when applied to the metropolitan contexts of Britain, the United States, and Western Europe, than when they have been observed and championed in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Indeed, it has become something of a truism that in postcolonial Africa, the health or otherwise of democratic regimes can (in part) be measured by the cultures of political satire they sustain.  

In states where liberal democracy has been a fundamental aspect of developing national identity and national life – for instance in the United States – the connection between cartoons, comics, and liberty has seemed straightforward. Yet at the same time as he himself was exploring such connections, Charles Press warned against too romantic a view of cartoonists ‘as staunch defenders of freedom’. Press was writing as the Cold War hotted up, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the election of Ronald Reagan. He was joined by Chris Lamb from around 1983 (in three articles for *Target: the Political Cartoon Quarterly*), who then continued his postgraduate work as the naivety of post-Cold War consensus was being exposed to the fallout from 9/11, and the Bush invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Lamb feared the decline of the once-mighty art that had challenged presidents and potentates in the new context of the twenty-first century: in which the controversies over the *Jyllands-Posten* ‘Muhammad’ caricatures (2005), and the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre (2015), have paradoxically reinforced the power and importance of the cartoon, but also begun to prompt some reflection on the limits of civility and freedom of expression in an
increasingly globalised world (and one which still relies on Orientalist stereotypes for the communication of political messages).\textsuperscript{54}

Yet even now, while even those most convinced of the way the cartoon can be seen as ‘the embodiment of … Democracy’ are willing to admit that cartoons and cartoonists have had negative impacts on minorities or subaltern groups at times, such instances have generally been subordinated to a Whiggish narrative of liberal-democratic progress [e.g. by the self-confessed ‘free-speech absolutist’ Victor Navasky].\textsuperscript{55}

While much attention has been given over to the function of cartoons as being subversive of empire, supportive of national self-determination, and inimical to tyranny, little has been said about the ways they have also supported and sustained forms of inequality and imperialism (and the various threads of gender, class, and other politics that have been essential components of imperial enterprises).\textsuperscript{56}

Rather than emphasising cartoons and comics as inherently democratic forms of art, it is perhaps more appropriate to view them as being inherently imperial. It is surely no coincidence that Ohio State’s first dedicated ‘Studies in Comics and Cartoon’ volume (mentioned above) focuses on matters imperial: Mark McKinney’s \textit{Redrawing French Empire in Comics}.\textsuperscript{57} For, at their genesis in Europe’s print revolution, caricatures and cartoons were mobilised as weapons in the struggles over imperial forms of authority in Central Europe, during the Renaissance and the Reformation.\textsuperscript{58} But – as is widely accepted in the scholarship – it was to be in the context of a rapidly expanding British Empire that the cartoon truly came into its own.\textsuperscript{59} As Richard Scully has shown recently, the traditions that have been the critical touchstone for global cartoons and comic art – the British and American (or even a single ‘Anglo-American’ tradition) – may have been based in the liberalising press cultures of the day, but, just as importantly, they were themselves born from an imperial, transatlantic relationship.\textsuperscript{60} William Hogarth’s ground-breaking \textit{Emblematical Print on the South Sea Scheme} (1721) dealt with matters of international trade and empire, and (arguably) helped establish English graphic satire in its modern form.\textsuperscript{61} A generation later, George Townshend (1724–1807) imported British-style caricature to the North American continent during the Seven Years War (1754–1763), but also adapted it. What had been an art form based on allegory (in the manner of Hogarth) was transformed into one which depicted actual people and political figures (in Townshend’s case, his original barbs were directed at his superior, General James Wolfe; his later works at a variety of political enemies).\textsuperscript{62} This helped lay the foundations for what was achieved subsequently by the likes of James Gillray (1756–1815) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827). This was the critical moment of development for E. H. Gombrich, but a Whiggish and nationalist
narrative of metropolitan British affinity with cartooning obscures a broader story. For at precisely the same time as Townshend first drew – and in the same imperial context – Benjamin Franklin published ‘Join, or Die’ in the 9 May 1754 edition of his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, urging the colonies of British America to unite and cooperate more closely in the face of pressure from Native Americans and French imperialism to their west and north. A decade later – during the furore over the Stamp Act (1765) – Franklin and Townshend were actually in direct competition with one another in the burgeoning marketplace for caricature in the imperial capital. Townshend’s comment may have sold around 2,000 copies, but it has been Franklin’s nightmare vision of imperial dismemberment – *Magna Britannia: Her Colonies Reduc’d* (1766) – that has lived longest in the popular and scholarly imagination.

Such a history of development underscores the decidedly imperial and transnational nature of eighteenth-century caricature. This is the best-studied and best-appreciated period in scholarly terms (not least for its scatological and sexual humour), and caricature and cartoons have been deployed as sources in some of the best studies of the period. Linda Colley drew on caricature for her classic study of British national identity and its imperial component; and Douglas Fordham noted the importance of satirical prints in the eighteenth century as underscoring a sense of an imperial, cartographic worldview. The public perception of Britain’s chief instrument of imperial control – the Royal Navy – was also mediated through caricature to a considerable degree (both at home and abroad). So too, Marcus Wood’s studies of the main economic driver of the ‘First’ British Empire – chattel slavery – have taken satirical imagery and comic art as their fundamental organising principal.

But despite the importance of the eighteenth century for the development of political cartoons as an art form, it was in the under-studied nineteenth century that the forces of imperialism and colonialism made it into the near-universal form of expression that characterised the twentieth century. The global reach of British-style humour magazines – both within the formal empire and via the informal empire of commerce and information-exchange – was a fundamental driver of the art form in the nineteenth century. In this, they formed an essential aspect of that globalising of the mass media that has been explored so ably by Simon Potter. As key nodes in that network, ‘Greater Britain’s’ imperial relationships were mediated, critiqued, and sustained in important ways via cartoons and cartoonists well into the twentieth century. Lewis Perry Curtis can almost have been said to have founded a whole new field with his studies of Ireland and the Irish in caricature and the periodical press: a field that still inspires debate in a decidedly
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The direct descendants of the British tradition found in Australasia, Canada, and South Africa, moreover, have gone from providing bastions of ‘Britishness’ for the aspirational settler societies they sustained, to assertive and world-leading traditions derived from and helping construct a variety of contested, postcolonial nationalisms. In Canada, the parallel importation of the French and British inheritances led to a flowering of comic art in Quebec, and this melding of the two major western traditions was also seen elsewhere. Although derived from Iberian traditions that were themselves under constant pressure from censorship regimes, the earliest examples of Spanish-American and Brazilian cartooning and comic art owed just as much to ‘informal’ French and British forebears and imperial influences. In the Brazilian case, the Regency established for Emperor Pedro II was targeted by Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, who collaborated on Niterói: Revista Brasileira from his base in Paris; while in the case of Argentina, criticism of the ‘informal’ relationship with Britain was a major focus for the French-style comic weekly Caras y caretas from 1898. Thereafter, the bulk of Latin American comment has been focused on postcolonial domestic affairs, or the ongoing neo-colonialism of the United States.

In metropolitan Europe’s post-imperial period, comic artists have been key interpreters of the imperial legacy, in all manner of forms: from the ‘empire-as-charity-concern’ kind of ‘gutter patriotism’ that so irritated George Orwell; to an uneasy perpetuation of nationalist and imperialist ideologies found in ‘Dan Dare’ (in the Eagle, 1950–1967); down to much deeper critiques, more removed in time from the period itself [such as in Alan Moore’s League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, 1999–2007]. Images of empire and imperialism from the past have been a ready-made source of material for political cartoonists down to the present day, serving as a perfect means of critiquing neo-imperialist tendencies. Similarly, the desire to contest royal and imperial authority shaped the French form of satirical art from the outset. In subtle ways, cartoonists have often sought to appropriate and transfer that authority, rather than simply to abolish or weaken it. Just as has been the case in Britain, French comic artists and cartoonists have maintained an uneasy relationship with the colonial past, imagining imperialism as: tragedy, farce, or epic struggle; deeply flawed and doomed to failure from the start or potentially recuperable at key points; a heroic narrative of sacrifice and redemption or a grotesque descent into human depravity; and a closed chapter of history or a force that reaches into the present.

Countless other examples serve to reinforce the point [including Hergé’s Adventures of Tintin running the full gamut from the arch-imperialism
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of 1930s *Tintin au Congo*, through to the more enlightened attitudes of the postcolonial period). Another example is the French comic strip series *Asterix* (begun in October 1959), whose creators René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo rejected the idea of any encoded social or political significance in the strip and its characters; yet one cannot ignore the story of a small community trying to hold out against the might of the Roman Empire as being anything but an anti-imperial statement (and this at a time of acute colonial crisis for the French republic in the late 1950s and early 1960s). Cartoons and comics therefore serve as such useful sources for understanding imperialism because they themselves emerged from imperial contexts.

When indigenous traditions of comic art came into contact with western forms, local artists rapidly subverted the style, content, and form thereof, and began to utilise the imported methods and technologies to pursue anti-imperial [often proto-national] agendas. In part to battle corruption in his own government, but also to combat foreign infiltration, King Vajiravudh [Rama VI] of Siam [1910–1925] formalised the status of satirical cartoons as *phap lo* in the Thai language, and took the lead in drawing cartoons for his own royal gazettes and newspapers. The importation of western-style comic art to Meiji-era Japan has been perhaps one of the most important such cultural and artistic transfers. A great many aficionados and scholars have traced the origins of today’s *Manga* and *Anime* to this key moment of contact – to say nothing of the more specific origins of Japanese political cartooning occasioned by the merging of indigenous art forms with the ‘*Ponchi-e*’ picture [literally the ‘*Punch* picture’]. The intersection of indigenous art forms and western graphic satires in the multitude of African contexts is only now beginning to be appreciated. So too the crucibles of formal and informal empire have been critical to the forging of a distinct Chinese culture of comics and cartooning. The same can be said for the Middle Eastern, as well as the Russian, traditions of comic art, where the arrival of western cartoon styles played a transformative role in the merging of existing cultures of graphic satire with newer forms, and created a globalising convergence.

This (necessarily brief) summary of the development of comics studies – and of imperial contexts for cartooning – characterises a still-new groundswell of innovative scholarship that is beginning to change the intellectual landscape. The contents of the present volume aim to provide still further coherence to an otherwise disparate field [or set of fields and sub-fields], in part by building on excellent early work from only the last decade or so: on the Irish and other contexts noted above, as well as on Cuba, Korea, Cyprus, and the Philippines. Given the over-emphasis on the caricature and cartoons of the eighteenth
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century, Comic Empires is focused deliberately on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: when imperialism made the cartoon a global form, and when it was deployed so readily as a weapon of decolonisation.

The concentration on the chosen time period is just one means of combating the disparate nature of much of the scholarship; it also provides a useful comparative means of appreciating the connections between and across national contexts. The chapters that comprise Comic Empires are also divided up among three distinct parts. The chapters of Part I are grouped around the major theme of ‘High imperialism and colonialism’. In general terms, these studies deal with cartoons that were produced at the imperial centre, and which assisted in the dissemination of imperialism as an ideology. The metropole of the British Empire seems the logical place to commence such a collection. In ‘Courting the colonies’, Robert Dingley and Richard Scully begin the investigation of imperialism in British cartoons and caricature in the same place as this Introduction has done: with Linley Sambourne of Punch, and an appreciation of his use of imperial allegory (in particular related to colonial adventuring in Africa and the South Pacific).

 Appropriately – given the importance of the American tradition to the development of comic art and the cartoon in particular – imperialism in US contexts also gives a strong showing in the following pages. Albert Pionke and Fred Whiting build on recent interest in cartoons of US involvement in Cuba (where new American imperialism clashed with the older, Spanish regime), and advance a compelling case for the way the American self-image was fostered in that context. Similarly, Stephen Tuffnell observes how the image of an ‘imperial’ United States was inherently bound up with its iconographical relationship with imperial Britain. In focusing on the prime sites for the United States’ expression of colonial-imperial ‘Manifest Destiny’, Fiona Halloran builds on her comprehensive work on US cartoonist Thomas Nast by exploring the interplay of race and empire in images of the American West.

In Part II, the focus is on the ‘Critique of empire and the context of decolonisation’, and therein, Shaoqian Zhang adds to our knowledge of China’s struggle with Imperial Japan in the twentieth century. David Lockwood’s chapter then engages with one of the most important contexts for analysis of cartoons and empire characterising the current scholarship. The cartoons and cartoonists of the Indian subcontinent have provided a logical ‘way in’ for those seeking to explore the representation of colonial cultures in metropolitan contexts, but also the way subaltern cartoonists appropriated and subverted the metropolitan original for their own purposes. As Partha Mitter, Mushirul Hasan, and Ritu Khanduri have shown in recent years, in India this ranged from something as simple as the tracing of the contents of Punch,
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Judy, or Fun, and altering the captions and meanings, down to the more sophisticated productions that helped found India’s flourishing tradition of comic art. In the broader subcontinent, similar patterns characterised Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan developments (although these were somewhat delayed when compared with the key context of India and Pakistan). Lockwood explores how the New Zealand-born cartoonist David Low critiqued Britain’s delayed exit from India, and engages with some of the key issues addressed in this Introduction: what was the effect of such cartoons on the intended readership? And what do they reveal about broader knowledge of, and support for, the empire in British society?

The context of Egypt (and, particularly, Egyptian cartoons and cartoonists) is of particular note also in the chapters in Part II, just as it has been in the broader scholarship. Herein, major contributions will be found in Keren Zdafee’s examination of Sarukhan’s al-Masri Effendi cartoons of the 1930s, and Stefanie Wichhart’s engagement with the iconography of decolonisation in the Suez Crisis. In this, they add to the sterling early work of Tim Benson and Anthony Gorst, whose 2006 volume Suezcide shed much new light on the cartoonists’ response to that flashpoint of decolonisation in Egypt. They also tap into the important recent work of Marilyn Booth, and Eliane Ursula Ettermueller, whose focus on the hitherto-neglected Punches of Egypt is taking the field in new directions. Intimately linked to the turmoil of Suez, the Cyprus Emergency of 1955–1959 is the focus of Andrekos Varnava and Casey Raeside’s chapter; they build on earlier work that observes the subtle, yet multifaceted attitude of the London Punch to Britain’s ‘inconsequential possession’.

The chapters of Part III explore contexts where the distinction between support for, or opposition to, empire are not so clear-cut. Leslie Rogne Schumacher’s chapter deals with the way in which one imperial power critiqued the imperialism of another. Connected to the Middle Eastern context by more than one layer of imperialism, his examination of the way a pro-imperial Punch engaged with the Armenian massacres in the Ottoman Empire sheds light on a number of tensions, as well as contributing to the sense of timeliness of this volume as a whole (just as in the case of Egypt – noted above – Ottoman cartooning has also been a feature of the recent scholarship).

In their chapters, both Jean-Claude Gardes and Charlotte Riley engage with key left-wing critiques of empire and imperialism: from the perspective of Germany’s supposedly anti-imperialist, socialist paper Der Wahre Jacob; and the ambivalence towards empire displayed during the Attlee years in Britain (1945–1951). Then, rounding out the collection, David Olds and Robert Phiddian explore the Australia of the 1960s, when the
cartoonists of the Commonwealth sought to move away from their British roots and towards a newer form of national identity (often expressed consciously in opposition to imperial ties).

The contents of *Comic Empires* is therefore representative of a multitude of different historical and geographical contexts, penned by scholars from all manner of backgrounds. In this, the volume takes a collaborative approach to the subject matter that is developing as a model of best practice in the field. Such an approach has many merits, not the least of which is that it engages simultaneously with several general scholarly literatures (including history, literary studies, comics studies, and art history), at the same time as with the particular imperial contexts that have so fascinated each of the contributors. Other aspects of this ongoing collaborative project – published as a symposium in the *International Journal of Comic Art* – have laid important foundations already. As was noted therein, the construction of important scholarly bridges between individuals, fields, disciplines, and institutions is best undertaken in this collaborative fashion. 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.

Despite its variegated contents, therefore – being divided into three parts, and each chapter taking a different case study as its focus – *Comic Empires* also serves to synthesise and bring together various contextual strands and major themes that are common across the study of cartoons and imperialism. Most notable (and as has been perhaps the most persistent reason for studying these important sources since the 1960s), is the function of the cartoon in creating and disseminating an image of ‘the Other’, and its inevitable fostering of an auto-image by contrast. This is not only a function of the stereotyping of subaltern, colonised peoples (as in the case of Sambourne’s ‘Samoa’; Nast’s Chinese railroad workers in the American West; or the Irish apes so expertly dissected by Curtis) as inferiors to an imperial norm or superior type. It is also bound up with the construction of images of imperial competitors or opponents. Scully and Dingley explore this in literal form via the cartoons of Linley Sambourne, who imagined John Bull, Uncle Sam, and other great powers as suitors courting and competing for the affections of feminised colonial characters. Leslie Rogne Schumacher sees in *Punch*’s critique of Ottoman policies towards their Armenian subjects an indirect
but inherent endorsement of Britain’s [supposedly] different attitude to subject peoples. So too, Stephen Tuffnell locates the growth of an imperial self-image in the United States in long-standing imaginings of Britain (John Bull in particular) as a competitor, but also as a model and fellow traveller. In this, the contents of this volume converge with the most recent work that highlights the importance of cartoons and caricature in particular as a means of mass-dissemination of auto-imagery: Maren Jung-Diestelmeier’s examination of German images of Britain.  

So too, the development of an auto-image in contrast to the imperial oppressor – and its dissemination via mass print media – was fundamental to emerging national consciousnesses from China to the Middle East and beyond. As Keren Zdafee shows, Egypt’s al-Masri Effendi character fulfilled this important function in ‘his’ later-colonial context; Stefanie Wichhart shows how something similar was done in Egypt’s postcolonial/ decolonising period. Where Wichhart [as well as Varnava and Raeside, Lockwood, Zhang, and others] is most innovative for the field, however, is in showing how the critique of empire also facilitated or tapped into a shift in national identity in the imperial metropoles themselves.

But of course, the way in which a positive auto-image was dependent on negative stereotyping of the ‘Other’ [whether subject or oppressor; partner or competitor] has always underscored how fluid and nebulous are the dividing lines between the one and the other. Suffusing many of the chapters – but especially those in Part III – one is shown again and again that the simple distinction between being anti-imperial or pro-imperial falls down when ambiguity and ambivalence are uncovered.  

Gardes sees this in a German context; Riley in a British one; and then – in the final chapter of the collection – David Olds and Robert Phiddian explore a context that was paradoxically both characteristic of an imperial metropole, as well as being a venue for decolonisation: the settler-colonial self-image of white, ‘British’, Australia in the 1960s.

Beyond these ‘big picture’ themes, the collection also seeks to highlight the importance of key publications in providing important venues for debates around empire in the public sphere. Of all the publications examined and dissected in this volume, one stands head-and-shoulders above the others: Punch, or the London Charivari. The key venue for British graphic satire and comic art for more than a century and a half, Punch has been a ‘go-to’ source for historians looking for useful illustrative material for the 1841–1992 period (as well as for the period of its brief revivification by Mohammed Al-Fayed between 1996 and 2002). While Balfour’s prediction of it being one of the ‘great sources’ has not quite been fulfilled [for the reasons outlined above], the London Charivari is better understood as a publication than almost any other; and its contributors better understood than perhaps any other cohort of
humorists. Certainly, too singular a focus on Punch alone can be counterproductive [as Henry J. Miller and Richard Scully have emphasised recently]. Miller in particular cautioned against making too close a link between the opinions of Punch and ‘public opinion’ in Britain [in particular opinion outside the metropolis of London, where there were Tory and Liberal counterparts to Punch in Judy and Fun], but recent research by Patrick Leary has shown quite convincingly that – in the middle decades of the nineteenth century – the staff sought to tailor their weekly comment to the assumed sensibilities and shared culture of their target, middle-class readership. At that stage of its long life, Punch was gravitating away from the radical stance it had maintained in its first decade (so memorably chronicled by Richard D. Altick), and was adopting a more ‘respectable’ position. While increasingly aligning itself with the politics of the emergent Liberal Party [as noted above, Gladstone himself was pleased to dine at the editorial dinner table in 1889], the very nature of Punch meant that it could express support for more conservative positions (or even out-and-out Conservatives), particularly as the nineteenth century waned. And what is more fascinating is that the kind of ‘cartoon-by-committee’ editorial approach to graphic satire [detailed at the beginning of this chapter] meant that often, multiple different positions might be discernible in a single cartoon.

The master of the double meaning was John Tenniel, who served an outspokenly Liberal editor in Tom Taylor between 1874 and 1880, but managed to celebrate the Conservative Disraeli as a sympathetic and loveable rogue. In 1889, he asserted that:

As for political opinions, I have none; at least, if I have my own little politics, I keep them to myself, and profess only those of my paper.

But precisely what Punch’s politics were at any given moment is a matter for continued debate; and indeed its often variegated attitude towards empire and imperialism is illuminated in many of the following chapters. As noted above, the self-professed Liberal Unionist [and therefore imperialist] Linley Sambourne seems to have been able to poke fun at Rhodes’s notion of ‘Cape to Cairo’ in 1892, but treated John Bull as the natural suitor for Samoa by the end of the century [see Chapter 2]. John Leech [an early social radical, but who supported British rule in India in the most brutal terms] imagined American attempts at empire-building as patently ridiculous in the 1850s [see Chapter 3]. But by the 1950s it was British imperialism that often seemed foolish to the likes of Leslie Illingworth, Norman Mansbridge, and Ronald Searle [see Chapters 9 and 10 in particular]. In the mid-to-late
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1870s, Disraeli’s new imperialism was something to be satirised by Tenniel at the height of his powers; but Britain’s imperial, civilising mission was an article of faith to *Punch* in the latter stages of the same cartoonist’s 50-year career [see Chapter 11]. Yet this was not without qualification. To a great extent, it would appear that *Punch’s* readiness to comment on matters imperial did much to domesticate imperialism: to make it familiar and inoffensive to a broad spectrum of political opinion, and even perhaps to trivialise it.

The example of *Punch* also illustrates well a factor often unnoticed by past scholarship, but becoming much more prominent in analyses of the cartoon [e.g. in the work of Nicholas Hiley and Richard Scully]. This is the noticeable shift in the genre of publications carrying comic art in the period under discussion. If it was on the back of the *Punch* model of the satirical weekly magazine that the political cartoon colonised the globe, then it was the newspaper that did most of the decolonising and nationalising. So, *Punch, Der Wahre Jacob,* and *Puck* can be seen as publications where typically, the attitude towards empire and imperialism was bound up with nineteenth-century sensibilities; whereas *The Australian, Eshi jingwen, Ruz al-Yusuf,* and the *Evening Standard* arguably exhibited more of a twentieth-century attitude. But there were formats that transcended the great shift from the satire magazines to the newspapers that also feature in *Comic Empires*: notably, the persistence of the single-page broadsheet or poster as a medium for disseminating ideas and messages to a mass audience in public space (epitomised perhaps by Zhang’s exploration of Chinese posters during the struggle with Japan; and something that is exercising the broader scholarship).

All of the chapters comprising *Comic Empires* underscore the particular importance of individuals as shapers of their times. This includes – first and foremost – artists and cartoonists. Certainly the great names of Tenniel and Nast, Low and Lindsay, appear prominently; but also the lesser-known and under-appreciated geniuses of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Australasian cartooning are highlighted in the following pages. These artists were dependent on personal and professional relationships with editors, prose writers, and other adjuncts to their art. It seems that the ‘biographical model’ remains a key means of engaging in cartoons scholarship and comics studies, just as it was nearly a decade ago. Where the scholars who have contributed to this present volume have been unable to identify major cartoonists, editors, or other contributors, this points all the more insistently to the potential for new avenues of research to be opened up. Ultimately, of course [and as noted above], *Comic Empires* is not intended to be a
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definitive ‘last word’ on the importance of cartoons and imperialism, but rather a starting point for ever-fuller, and more complex engagements with its main themes and content.

At its fundamental level, this volume and the cases in it show how comic art featured across the story of imperialism and transcended periods of history, imperial traditions, and imperial/colonial spaces. At a more specific level the chapters show how comic art reflected the various ideas, developments, and moods of supporters and critics of empire, as well as more ambiguous perspectives, whether from the imperial metropole or the periphery. Comic art was not a static source that represented one idea or voice, but encompassed the entire fabric of imperialism. Whether studying the canon of one artist or one journal, or comparing across many, comic art offers a unique and largely untapped perspective, blending the humorous with the very serious commentary on imperialism in all its forms and manifestations and across its high and low points. This volume offers the most comprehensive exploration of comic art and imperialism to date, and yet this is just a first foray into what we hope is the start of a wider exploration into the subject.

Notes

1 Linley Sambourne, Diary entry, 30 November 1892 [p. 83].
3 The Times, 30 November 1892, pp. 9 and 12.
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19 Scully and Quartly, ‘Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence’, p. 01.1.


26 ‘Death of Mr John Leech’, *The Times*, 31 October 1864, p. 10.


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31 Lucy, Sixty Years in the Wilderness, pp. 327–329.


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44 It has been argued – convincingly – that comics and comic art have been a foundational cultural determinant for delineating ‘Generation X’, even beyond the original, American context: Evi Sampanikou, ‘Generation X in Greek Comics’, in Christine Henseler [ed.], *Generation X Goes Global: Mapping a Youth Culture in Motion*, New York and London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 130–155.


49 See the essays in: *Ridiculosa*, Hors série – La presse satirique dans le monde, 2013.


56 See, for instance, the good mix of essays in: *Ridiculosa*, 4 – Tyrannie, dictature et caricature, 1997.
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59 Coupe, *German Political Satires*, p. xi.


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73 Ana Pedrazzini and Maria Ximena Ávila, ‘Bref parcours à travers l’histoire de la presse satirique argentine de ses débuts au XIXe siècle jusqu’à nos jours’ and Isabel Lustosa, ‘La caricature Brésilienne: aspects notables de son histoire’, in ridiculousa, Hors série – La presse satirique dans le monde, 2013, pp. 303 and 322.


75 jean-claude gardes, Jackie houdré, and alban poirer, introduction, ridiculousa 18, November 2011, pp. 9–12; press, The political cartoon, pp. 120–128; Goldstein, censorship of political caricature, pp. 87ff.

76 McKinney, Redrawing French empire in comics, p. 10.


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81 Mason, What’s So Funny? See the essays in: Ridículosa, Hors série – La presse satirique dans le monde, 2013.


90 Scully and Quarty, Drawing the Line; Manning and Phiddian [eds], Comic Commentators; Harder and Mittler, Asian Punches; Chapman, Hoyles, Kerr, and Sherif, Comics and the World Wars.


94 Ambiguity and ambivalence is something inherent in Jung-Diestelmeier’s work [see above], but also more explicit and intrinsic to: Richard Scully, British Images of Germany: Admiration, Antagonism & Ambivalence, 1860–1914, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
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100 John Tenniel, April 1889, quoted in Spielmann, *History of ‘Punch’*, p. 463.


104 Scully and Quartly, ‘Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence’, p. 01.5.