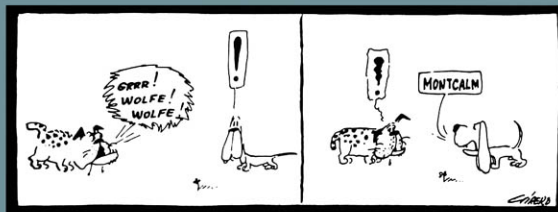


THE CARNIVAL- IZATION OF POLITICS



QUEBEC CARTOONS ON
RELATIONS WITH CANADA,
ENGLAND, AND FRANCE,
1960-1979

RAYMOND N. MORRIS

The Carnivalization of Politics
Quebec Cartoons on Relations with Canada, England,
and France, 1960–1979

Focusing on English-French relations and attitudes towards the United Kingdom, France, and the rest of Canada, Raymond Morris explores recurrent themes in the works of Quebec's most popular francophone and anglophone political cartoonists – Aislin (Terry Mosher), Berthio (Roland Berthiaume), Pierre Dupras, and Jean-Pierre Girerd.

Examining cartoons published between 1960 and 1979, Morris shows how the artists dealt with particular aspects of Quebec's political experience. He looks at Berthio's drawings on the Queen's visit and Dupras's on President de Gaulle's, Girerd's and Berthio's on Quebec-Ottawa relations, Girerd's on the referendum campaign, and Girerd's and Aislin's on the English minority in Quebec. He points out recurring tensions, makes oppositions and associations, and analyses the relationships from a sociological perspective.

One of Morris's major objectives is to better understand the framework through which cartoon ideas are filtered and presented to their audience, focusing on the metaphors that underlie the frame, message, content, and form of the cartoons. Morris argues that the carnivalization of political figures and events, whereby the social structure is mockingly inverted and society's values and taboos are exaggerated until they become ridiculous, is a central metaphor governing Quebec cartoons of this period. He also explores another important metaphor, that of the family, with England and France as grandparents, Canada and Quebec as parents, and the official language minorities as children.

RAYMOND N. MORRIS is professor of sociology, Glendon College, York University.

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The Carnivalization of Politics

*Quebec Cartoons on Relations
with Canada, England, and France
1960–1979*

RAYMOND N. MORRIS

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To Douglas and Joy Morris

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Contents

Figures ix

Acknowledgments xi

- 1 Editorial Cartoons as Social Documents 3
 - 2 Relations with In-Laws: Berthio Greets the Queen 13
 - 3 Relations with Parents: Dupras Welcomes President de Gaulle 37
 - 4 Quebec and Ottawa as Spouses: Can They Live Together? 60
 - 5 Ottawa and Quebec: Can They Live Apart? 83
 - 6 Between Parent and Child: Quebec and its Language Minority 107
 - 7 Conclusions 126
- References 137
- Index 143

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Figures

- 1 Advertising and cartooning in relation to behaviour 11
- 2 The structure of the ceremony and the carnival 17
- 3 "Help, Help" (Berthio) 19
- 4 The crowd gets ready to greet Her Majesty (Berthio) 26
- 5 Relationships among the main characters in Dupras' work 40
- 6 "What does he say?" (Dupras) 45
- 7 The two solitudes (Dupras) 54
- 8 Interactions among Dupras' principal characters 55
- 9 Sociogram of Dupras' central characters 56
- 10 Twin semiotic squares: Dupras' French-English relations 57
- 11 Those two are inseparable (Girerd) 66
- 12 The two dogs (Girerd) 73
- 13 "Pretend it hurts, Lester!" (Berthio) 78
- 14 "I can't move back any further" (Berthio) 80

x Figures

- 15 The question (Girerd) 92
- 16 And if the answer should be “No”? (Girerd) 99
- 17 Size and position according to role in Girerd’s referendum drawings 104
- 18 “No cause for panic, old chap!” (Girerd) 112
- 19 “Speak French, English dogs!” (Aislin) 117
- 20 Happy St. Patrick’s Day (Aislin) 119
- 21 “But moving our head office?” (Aislin) 123

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Finally, my family has once again been very important for their support and their critical interest. This time I will focus on Douglas Morris, who has offered many incisive comments on social science and its practices and provoked many stimulating discussions, and on Joy Morris, whose enthusiasm, curiosity, and logical mind add much to my life.

I regret that I have been unable to provide references for many of the cartoons discussed in this book. (The Girerd cartoons, for example, are scattered through seven years of *La Presse*, and only some copies are catalogued in the National Archives.) However, I shall be glad to help interested readers find particular cartoons that they may wish to see.

The Carnivalization of Politics

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I Editorial Cartoons as Social Documents

INTRODUCTION

Semiotic analysis and sociology have recently begun converging in several important ways, with the promise of considerable benefits to both disciplines (McCannell 1983; Harman 1986). Initially semiotics remained within linguistics, concentrating on units no larger than the sentence and excavating their basic grammar. More recently it has expanded its scope, linking with work in other fields on the structure of literary works, buildings, scientific diagrams, and paintings. Its interests now include communication among animals, across language barriers, and over physical handicaps. Semiotics seeks to build an anatomy of discourse in all its forms by exposing the underlying structure of concepts on which communication is built.

At first semiotics relied on the success of linguistics and argued that any cultural product is a text that communicates through a language based on a grammar. Art, television, cooking, and even surgery were seen as codes, each with its own syntax and deep structure. The ubiquity of this analogy is now being reexamined and challenged, for two reasons. First, it obscures central aspects of visual communication by insisting that all characteristics have verbal equivalents (Carani 1992; Saint Martin 1987). Second, it has sometimes encouraged semiotics to focus on sentences and to neglect larger units of communication (Ricoeur 1975) and the social settings in which discourse is produced.

At the same time, sociology has gradually moved away from its traditional focus on social surveys toward a much greater emphasis on analysing texts of all kinds. Documents were once a minor adjunct to the sociologist's survey data, useful only as tools for generating hypotheses, or as second-rate data, when no more representative samples of opinion were available; they received scant attention in research methods courses and were always suspect. But now they are recognised as central sources of data, and their value for hypothesis testing is slowly becoming apparent. Sociologists are giving more thought to appropriate frameworks for the analysis of documents, and this, in turn, is leading them to closer linkages with researchers in the humanities and to a new appreciation of literary theory.

The new emphasis on texts has been accompanied by the emergence of a "social construction of reality" perspective within the disciplines (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Green 1983,1988; Holzner 1968; Smith 1974,1978,1987; Tuchman 1978). This perspective draws on Marxist humanism and symbolic interactionism, and views the production, distribution, and consumption of texts as social processes acting within and upon a range of structural constraints (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1987,1989; Hall, et al. 1980; Smith 1987). The cartoonist, for example, negotiates with him or herself and the editor in creating a final public version of the cartoon that is subsequently reproduced and distributed through further negotiations. The traces of these interactions are kept private, however, and all that survives is the drawing as printed. It is then skimmed by a glancer who seeks to negotiate its meaning in the light of certain social expectations and conventions (Mailloux 1982; Twer 1972).¹

While it is clearly desirable to study this entire process, the necessary field data are often simply unavailable, and they cannot be reconstructed. Fortunately, work such as Smith's (1987), Green's (1983,1988), and Dorfman and Mattelart's (1975) has demonstrated that few texts are

1 The words "skimmer" and "glancer" are used interchangeably, as they convey better than "reader" or "viewer" the almost instantaneous manner in which readers seek to "get the point" of a cartoon. Essentially, the drawing presents the skimmer with a daily puzzle: what is funny about this picture? The cartoonist assumes that the reader is willing to spend about three seconds looking for the answer. The puzzle must be soluble within this time, or skimmers will turn their attention elsewhere.