
Reviews

Book Reviews

David Kunzle, *Rebirth of the English Comic Strip: A Kaleidoscope, 1847–1870* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021). 455 pp. ISBN: 9781496833990 (\$90)

David Kunzle's foundational contribution to comics scholarship is wide-ranging, deep, and longstanding. It includes his volume on the early history of the comic strip, another on nineteenth-century European comics (from England, France, Germany, and Switzerland), both unfortunately now long out of print, and more recently five volumes published by the University Press of Mississippi: his monograph on Swiss artist and author Rodolphe Töpffer, a bilingual anthology of Töpffer's novels in prints, a combined study and anthology of comics by French artist Gustave Doré, another volume (again bilingual) on the comics of Cham (Charles Henri Amédée de Noé), and now, finally, this study and anthology of nineteenth-century English comics. The analyses of the new volumes take up relevant portions of his earlier, nineteenth-century book, reworking and extending them considerably. The anthologised comics of Cham, Doré, and Töpffer are all in the original French, with Kunzle's beautiful translations into English.

Kunzle attributes the rebirth of the comic strip in England to several factors, including the model provided by William Hogarth, English translations of Töpffer's novels in prints (3–4), and a visit to London by Cham – Töpffer's early and prolific French collaborator and successor in comics creation in the nineteenth-century – that, Kunzle argues, 'spurred a new magazine [*The Man in the Moon*], in 1847, to venture comic strips in a new medium' (4; see also chap. 2, and 125). Many of the English comics published between the genre's rebirth in 1847 and

the volume's endpoint of 1870 have been significantly overlooked 'in part because they were widely scattered in obscure magazines found (virtually) only in the British Library' (x). In his prologue, Kunzle establishes his framework, whose beginning date corresponds to the rebirth of the form in England and ending date is that of the Franco-Prussian War. He there also clarifies formal terminology (xi–xii; see 112–113), considers the relationship between prose literature and comics in England at the time (xii–xiii), and briefly introduces main artists in his study, to whose comics one or more of the following (fourteen) chapters are partially or principally dedicated: George Cruikshank (chapter 1), Albert Smith (chapter 2), Richard Doyle (chapters 4 and 5), Watts Phillips (chapter 6), John Leech (chapter 7), John Tenniel (chapter 9), George Du Maurier (chapter 11), William McConnell (chapter 12), and Marie Duval (chapter 14). The remaining chapters focus on 'cultural francophilia and political francophobia' in *Punch* (chapter 3), a comic album by Thomas Onwhyn about a visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London (chapter 8), comic strips by Charles Keene set at home and abroad (chapter 10), and others by various artists in the *Illustrated London News* and other periodicals (chapter 13).

Each chapter's analysis is followed by five to twenty-seven pages of anthologised reproductions of comic strips, both complete and excerpted. In total, the volume contains 171 pages of analysis and 265 pages of anthologised comics. Kunzle's commentary is generously illustrated throughout, with cartoons and other comics pages. Two comic strips are reproduced entirely on colour plates: George Cruikshank's *The Tooth-ache* (33–40); and *Panorama of the Franco-Prussian War*, by his nephew Percy Cruikshank (425–432). The rest of the illustrations and anthologised images are in black and white (as in their original publication). Kunzle's volume concludes with epilogue, notes, bibliography, index, and presentation of the author, now Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History at the University of California. As in his previous studies of comics, Kunzle's art-historical approach rests on 'socio-political history as the chief route to understanding the phenomenon in this volume' (x). And as is the case in those other volumes, this one has many remarkable features that will richly reward its readers. The author's metaphor of a kaleidoscope suggests the diversity of themes, artistic or narrative approaches, and publication format among the comics studied. Rather than attempt to summarise the richly textured analysis of each chapter in sequence, I shall instead focus here on eight

overarching themes (and there are more) that structure the volume's kaleidoscopic survey and seem particularly representative.

First there is Kunzle's ongoing attention to the class positions and aspirations of comics artists and readers. Here again he argues convincingly that the comic strip generally had a middle-class readership, a socioeconomic position shared to some extent with its artists. John Leech and his *Mr. Briggs* strips in *Punch* exemplify social tensions engendered by an upwardly climbing position between lower and upper classes (or between fractions of the middle class), for example, with regard to fishing, riding and hunting as leisure activities (chapter 7; e.g., 203). Kunzle tracks the gentrifying trajectory of *Punch*, from a reformist position somewhat sympathetic to the poorer classes to a rather conservative one (74–76, 155, 203). He contrasts this with the more socially progressive position of *Diogenes* and its editor, the Anglo-Frenchman Watts Phillips (having 'socialist, radical sympathies'; 342), who nonetheless sharply critiqued radical French republicanism in *The Model Republic*, a comic strip (1848; 157).

Throughout the volume, Kunzle connects comic strips with important historical upheavals, whether primarily on the European continent, such as the French revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the reigns of Louis-Philippe as king of the French (1830–1848) and Napoléon III as emperor (1852–1870), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), as well as in the United Kingdom (Chartism and the Irish question), and in its colonial possessions abroad, notably British imperialism in India. So, for example, Kunzle discusses comic-strip representations of English disdain for, and fear of, French revolutionary violence, radical republicanism, and political authoritarianism, as in *The Flight of Louis-Philippe* (1848) in *Puppet Show*, about the end of the July Monarchy (154–157, 165–168), and *Louispetit and his Bird* (1855), a satire of Napoléon III's authoritarian trajectory by Watts Phillips and Matthew Sears in *Diogenes* (chapter 6: 158–163, 169–179).

As always, Kunzle also integrates into his sophisticated reading such relevant elements as authorial biography and the history of journalism. For example, in chapter 1 (13–18, 24–31) he connects George Cruikshank's familiarity with the damage inflicted by alcoholism, from which his father and other artistic acquaintances had suffered, and the artist's militant support for the abolition of drinking, to two of his Hogarth-inspired series of engravings, first *The Bottle* (1847) and then its sequel, *The Drunkard's Children* (1848). Kunzle deems the first, an eight-plate story, a landmark work: 'This is Hogarth reborn a century

later, truly a new age, as Cruikshank intended' (16). At this same historical juncture, he also locates a series of comics, including some formally inventive ones, published in the short-lived periodical *The Man in the Moon* (1847–1849; chapter 2).

The latter leads us to another motif in the volume, that of trans-European influences in comics, of which Kunzle examines many types and examples. For example, he remarks on Gustave Doré's 'close copy', in *L'Homme aux cent mille écus* [The man with one hundred thousand crowns] (published in *Le Journal pour Rire*, 1850), of Mr. Crindle's *Rapid Career Upon Town*, a formally inventive, nine-plate, foldout comic strip by Albert Smith and Henry G. Hine (42, 47–49, 57–65).¹ This burst of creativity in *The Man in the Moon* was sparked, Kunzle argues, by Cham's contribution of a two-plate story to the journal in February–March 1847: *The Foreign Gentleman in London; Or the Adventures of M. Vanille* (55–56). Such cross-fertilisation includes influences between artists in England, on the one hand, and in Switzerland (Töpffer), France (notably Cham and Doré, but also Crafty [Victor Gérusez], Paul Gavarni [Sulpice-Guillaume Chevallier], Honoré Daumier, Nadar [Gaspard-Félix Tournachon]) and Germany (especially Wilhelm Busch). It also involves transfers between European comic or satirical publications, such as *Le Charivari* (Paris) and *Punch, or The London Charivari* (London), or, as just mentioned, from *The Man in the Moon* (London) to *Le Journal pour Rire* (Paris). Types of influence and transfer range from outright copying of stories, usually with some adaptation, to inspiring a more general interest in the comics form.

The illuminating connections that Kunzle makes between comics and other literary and artistic forms, running from prose fiction to theatre and other forms of performance, constitute a fifth unifying motif across the volume. Particularly striking artistic cross-pollinations that he lays out include the movement of Albert Smith, whose 'colorful career embraced a kaleidoscope of expertise', from writing comic-strip scripts (and novels, etc.) to performing a one-man show that he invented, *The Ascent of the Mont Blanc*, which was thematically related to comics by Doré, including *Des-agréments d'un voyage d'agrément* [Displeasures of a pleasure trip] (42; see 279). We are also introduced to comic-strip stories revolving around visits by characters to a range of spectacle and performance, including theatrical plays, as in a 'major

1 It was reissued as a four-page narrative, *The Surprising Adventures and Rapid Career Upon Town of Mr. Crindle*; see <https://graphicarts.princeton.edu/2016/10/18/mr-crindle-and-the-man-in-the-moon/> (accessed 11 September 2022).

graphic serial' with, at '193 drawings, the heft of a graphic novel': William McConnell's *The Adventures of Mr. Wilderspin on His Journey through Life* (1858–1859) in *Town Talk*, one 'of the new comic magazines' (343–344; 352–353). Before that, Kunzle considers Richard Doyle's *Ye Foraye of the French*, or *Our Barry-eux Tapestry*, a six-panel comic strip in *Punch* (1848), that satirised contemporary fears that the French (and their poodles!) might invade the United Kingdom. Doyle does this formally through a parody of the eleventh-century Bayeux tapestry (chapter 4). The French are, of course, routed by the English, and 'the poodles scattered by Mr. Punch's dog Toby' (116).

The related theme of imperialist and colonial projects extending out from Europe to far beyond the continent, and the consequences of those acts of aggression, constitutes a sixth thread of Kunzle's volume and reaches from the transatlantic slave trade and the plantation system right up to the Windrush scandal in the United Kingdom and Black Lives Matter protests in the United States (50–52). Kunzle interprets, for example, the racist tropes of cannibalism and minstrelsy, widespread in comics, here appearing in *The Surprising Adventures of Mr. Touchango Jones, an Emigrant*, another strip by Albert Smith and Henry G. Hine in *The Man in the Moon* (52, 67–68). As indicated earlier, Thomas Onwhyn's short comic-strip narrative on the Great Exhibition of 1851, in London, is the subject of chapter 8. It revolves around a middle-class, white English family's encounter with imperialist spectacle at the Exhibition (it also includes a visit to a theatre). British imperialism in India features in several comics, including stories by John Tenniel, Ernest Griset, and others about wild-game hunting there (chapter 9; see 96–98, 101–102).

Women's places in and around comics also feature prominently in Kunzle's study, culminating in the final chapter. We find women as protagonists in, for example, Charles Keene's ten-panel strip *Miss Lavinia Brounjones* (*Punch*, 1866), another narrative about travel to an exoticised conquered land, this time to the Scottish Highlands by the titular character, a visual artist (281–282, 304–309). Kunzle connects the fictional character's stymied artistic activity with the success of real women artists such as Rosa Bonheur and members of the Society of Female Artists (281–282). Chapter 11, on George Du Maurier, another Englishman of French heritage, provides an even more remarkable depiction of women, in comics that feature the artist's 'taste for tall', including in women. Kunzle analyses and reproduces an untitled three-plate story in which the normal-sized male character Tom Tit seeks out and marries

an eight-foot-tall woman, which may be related to the author's interest in Darwinism. Much of the volume's final chapter (and a smaller part of the preceding one) is dedicated to Marie Duval (Isabella Emily Louisa Tessier), yet another cartoonist of French heritage. Duval, inducted in 2022 into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame, is also the subject of a recent study by Simon Grennan, Roger Sabin, and Julian Waite, but since the 1980s, Kunzle has been championing the artist and her Ally Sloper comics, whose titular character is a ne'er-do-well. Here, Kunzle concentrates especially on seven full-page plates in which Duval sends Sloper to the battlefield during the Franco-Prussian War, in a mock-heroic, farcical mode, as 'The English clown at the French funeral' (410).

The eighth of Kunzle's themes to mention here is the evolution of the comics form, already alluded to above. He begins with the Töpfferian model of novels in prints in album form, often with multiple panels per page (Intro.), and then George Cruikshank's Hogarth-inspired series of single narrative images (chapter 1). *The Model Republic* and the two-colour comics, including Cruikshank's *The Tooth-ache*, are 'roller pictures', that is, 'drawings arranged in an album continuously on a pullout ("roller") sheet' (425). There are also multi-panel comics with recurring characters in stories printed on folding plates, in *The Man in the Moon* (chapter 2). Kunzle later describes Marie Duval's Ally Sloper as 'Europe's first truly enduring continuing character' (398). Sloper appears mostly in self-contained episodes in *Judy* (a periodical) but also in the longer, serialised, war-time sequence mentioned above.

My only complaint, a minor one, is that the text and imagery of some reproduced pages are quite small, so readers of the paper or print edition, at least, may find a magnifying glass useful (by contrast, the reproductions in Kunzle's Töpffer anthology and Cham volume were of easily readable size). To conclude, then: Kunzle's retrieval, analysis, and republication of these English strips fill a major gap in our knowledge of the history of the form. His latest book is, alas, also his last one, as he informs us in the acknowledgements (436). Present and future generations of comics scholars are forever in David Kunzle's debt.

Mark McKinney
Miami University (Ohio)

Katherine Kelp-Stebbins, *How Comics Travel: Publication, Translation, Radical Literacies* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2022), 238 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8142-5823-1 (\$34.95)

Katherine Kelp-Stebbins artfully explores the fault lines between travel, publication, and translation in comics production and circulation, taking an engaged, almost passionate approach to the works discussed. This is a welcome contribution to comics scholarship that, as the author underlines in the introduction, does not take for granted the place from which one is writing about comics. The volume consists of five chapters, each centred around a case study. The first chapter focuses on *Tintin*, which is seen as the ‘urtext of world comics’ (23) both because the comics series revolves around the protagonist travelling to foreign lands and because of its dissemination in translated editions. It brings together three readers of *Tintin*, comparing and contrasting their rather diverse readings of Hergé’s comics series and character. These three readings originate from quite different preoccupations: Scott McCloud’s description of the *ligne claire* style of drawing in his work on the semiotics of comics,² Congolese student Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo’s claim that the volume *Tintin au Congo* is in violation of Belgium’s antiracist legislation,³ and Charles Burns’s use of the Tintin mask in one of his works of graphic fiction.⁴

This chapter also aptly illustrates one of the senses of the last term in the subtitle, radical literacies, in that the author does not shy away from highlighting the contrasts between these different approaches. Thus, Kelp-Stebbins struggles to characterise McCloud’s analysis of the *ligne claire* (which is not, in fact, restricted to *Tintin*) as antithetical to Mondondo’s postcolonial reading and Burns’s postmodern reading. McCloud consequently emerges as a champion of ‘visual imperialism’, which may be seen more as the result of the author wanting to make a point rather than as clearly revealed from the short quotation from McCloud’s work that engenders the argument. The characterisation of McCloud’s analysis of *ligne claire* as representing a colonial, imperialistic view as opposed to postcolonial and postmodern contextualisations of Hergé’s stereotyped and racist representation of ‘foreigners’ and people living in other countries is certainly thought-provoking. However, the argument seems pushed to the extreme and is often highly

2 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (Northampton: MA: Tundra, 1993).

3 Hergé, *Tintin au Congo* (Tournai: Casterman, 1974).

4 Charles Burns, *X’ed Out / The Hive / Sugar Skull* (New York: Pantheon, 2010/2012/2014).

theoretical, connecting long citations from secondary sources rather than applying the analysis to actual examples from Hergé's work.

The second chapter discusses Magdy El Shafee's *Metro* graphic novel, published first in Egypt (where it was banned), then by Swiss, Italian, and US publishers.⁵ Kelp-Stebbins shows that the Arabic, German, Italian, and English language publications do not just differ because of their verbal content but primarily in visual terms, because of the choices made by the translators and publishers, and convincingly argues that these choices affect and are affected by the diachronic context of publication and the expectations attached to the readers in the different reception settings. The third chapter compares the French and US editions of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*,⁶ together with other graphic narratives and authors whose reception illuminates and at the same time is illuminated by the juxtaposition. Like in the other chapters, Kelp-Stebbins pays refreshing attention to the materialities of publication, which include page size and count as well as the paratexts accompanying the printing and distribution of the graphic narrative in the French and US cultural and commercial contexts.

The fourth and fifth chapters discuss less well-known works but serve to further illustrate Kelp-Stebbins's lines of reasoning, emphasising the central role played by translation in graphic world literature. While the works examined in the last two chapters may be seen as experimental comics forms, they are intriguingly put into a dialogue with the insights derived from the discussion of the more conventional graphic narratives considered in the first three chapters. Chapter 4 examines works by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaa, an artist of the Haida First Nations Indigenous Peoples and a Canadian national, whose 'manga' are produced both as murals and print publications.⁷ Kelp-Stebbins's analysis focuses on 'the relationships between terminology, form, and sites of productions' (161), showing that Yahgulanaa's Haida manga, which exist both as museum art installations and 'commodity objects', interrogate and shed light on understanding the very substance of graphic narratives. Finally, chapter 5 focuses on the Lebanese trilingual

5 Magdy El Shafee (مجدي الشافعي), *Metro* (مترو) (Cairo: Malamih للنش [دار ملامح للنش], 2008).

6 Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis, tome 1 / tome 2 / tome 3 / tome 4* (Paris: L'Association, 2000/2001/2002/2003).

7 Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, *Carpe Fin: A Haida Manga* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2019); *A Lousy Tale* (N.p.: Rocking Raven Comix, 2000); *Red: A Haida Manga* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009); *A Tale of Two Shamans* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books and Haida Gwaii Museum at Qay'lnagaay, 2001); *War of the Blink: A Haida Manga* (N.p.: Locarno Press, 2017); *The Wave Haida Manga* (2014), <http://haidamanga.com/series/1/the-wave> (accessed 24 February 2023).

comics journal *Samandal*, whose publication formats, both as printed magazine and digital works, also elucidate the translational, transnational, transcultural, and transmedial nature of comics.

Kelp-Stebbins struggles to combine her stimulating observations in a coherent and all-around analysis, though this may work as well if seen as a postmodern fragmented exploration. In fact, the essays contained in the volume offer several fascinating insights, which are often generated by the language in which they are couched. Conversely, at other times the argument is rendered opaque by the very language in which the concepts are articulated, making it difficult to disentangle some of the author's intuitions.

From my vantage point, the volume is especially praiseworthy in that it highlights the centrality of translation processes in the analysis of comics. Through the attention paid to issues such as publication venues and reception contexts the author foregrounds the materiality of comics as cultural objects and shows that translation can be better understood not simply as related to verbal language. Comics are primarily visual – rather than verbal – artefacts and, as Kelp-Stebbins remarks, reading image-texts in translation highlights the importance of 'reading for difference' as opposed to 'reading for sameness'. In conclusion, this work is, in my opinion, an important contribution both to comics studies and to translation studies.

Federico Zanettin
Università di Perugia

Mark Heimermann and Brittany Tullis, eds., *Picturing Childhood: Youth in Transnational Comics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 264 pp. ISBN: 978-1477311622 (\$27.95)

Picturing Childhood is interested in childhood as a construction, how that construction changes across cultures and historical periods, and how it is received and manipulated by comics. It offers a chronological and transnational overview of American, Finnish, Argentinean, Japanese, Iranian, and French comics. The collection joins and successfully contributes to an important moment in comics studies, as multiple scholars have begun building a rich conversation about comics and childhood.⁸

As a collection, the book is clearly successful, with only a few blemishes significant enough to deserve mention. The chronological structure of the table of contents, for example, leads to some repetition (Wertham makes multiple appearances, for instance, each time as if that appearance were his first), but it also makes for easier browsing. The book claims to be the first volume to connect childhood and comics across significant periods of time and stretches of geographic region, but by the time *Picturing Childhood* had reached shelves, Michelle Ann Abate and Joe Sutliff Sanders' *Good Grief!: Children and Comics* and Elisabeth Wesseling's *The Child Savage* had probably taken that title. The editors' sense that they were laying a foundation rather than advancing a conversation probably also explains why the chapters rarely talk to each other, with important opportunities for crosspollination missed along the way. We wished, too, for a conclusion to draw out the major themes developed between the chapters, the paths that the field might continue based on the insights of the book. For example, chapters by Brittany Tullis and Clifford Marks offer valuable ideas on the 'adult-child', and chapters by Ian Blechschmidt and James G. Nobis offer frames for a continuing conversation about childhood and sexuality in comics. Readers who carefully comb through the entire book will discover these connections on their own, but readers who skim would

8 We are thinking of the 2017 edited volume *Graphic Novels for Children and Young Adults: A Collection of Critical Essays* by Michelle Ann Abate and Gwen Athene Tarbox; Vanessa Joosen's *Connecting Childhood and Old Age in Popular Media* (2018); Elisabeth Wesseling's *Reinventing Childhood Nostalgia: Books, Toys, and Contemporary Media Culture* (2018); Lara Saguisag's *Incorrigibles and Innocents: Constructing Childhood and Citizenship in Progressive Era Comics* (2019); Michelle Ann Abate's *Funny Girls: Guffaws, Guts, and Gender in Classic American Comics* (2019); or the 2020 edited volume *Strong Bonds* on child-animal relationships in comics by Maaheen Ahmed.

have been better served by a conclusion that directs them back to these important opportunities.

Rather than comment too briefly on every chapter, we will focus on especially successful chapters that also allow us to address major observations about the book as a whole.

Where the book is at its most successful, it explores a constructivist understanding of childhood in nuanced ways that reveal noteworthy information about the period under study. Pamela Robertson Wojcik's chapter on *Little Orphan Annie* in the 1930s untangles Annie's positioning at the intersection of two different discourses about childhood (the new girl and the fallen woman). Wojcik demonstrates the limitations of both views separately and adds a layer to intersecting trends that a lesser article would simply have celebrated. She further suggests that Annie's remarkable freedom stems from her potential to queer families. Wojcik's approach is useful for any scholar eager to offer a complicated, nuanced historical inquiry.

Qiana Whitted's chapter, 'Comics and Emmitt Till', is a strong contribution that provides a good example of how to choose texts that will reward careful reading with complicated answers. These multiple cartoon representations of the slain Till across decades cannot all mean the same thing, so from the beginning, Whitted's project is one of nuance, of teasing out subtlety. The resulting analysis not only avoids broadly drawn conclusions but even watches for contradictions within single texts (74). The chapter explores multiple ways in which 'Till functions discursively as one of the most urgent points of reference for how race, gender, and sexuality are learned' (81), and that carefully positioned thesis allows Whitted to demonstrate how representations of Emmett Till in multiple comic formats illuminate a healthy debate within the cultures and communities that produced them. It is a robust insight on a representation full of meaning that avoids presenting an overly tidy interpretation or a binding of the multiple instances into a simple meaning, leaving us with a clear sense of some major points as well as an understanding that these texts will reward more readings in the years to come.

Lara Saguisag's chapter on *RAW* and *Little Lit* is a promising example of a piece that reads a text against the grain. As Saguisag demonstrates, Mouly and Spiegelman have emphasised a split between their counter-cultural adult comics on the one hand and kid-friendly *Little Lit* comics on the other, but this chapter resists that easy split, looking instead for ways that the two are in dialogue with one another. The

chapter addresses the lack of agency *Little Lit* allowed to child readers as Spiegelman and Mouly fail to communicate with their audiences, for example, and questions the material choices made to turn disposable comics into quality hardcovers. Closer to picturebooks than to comic books, Saguisag explains, *Little Lit* effectively reinstalls adult intervention into child consumption. Simultaneously, *Raw*'s disdain of childishness is balanced by a programmatic choice for pedagogic or alternative children's comics that removes the bond between comics and consumer culture.

Annick Pellegrin's chapter, 'Vehlmann, or the End of Innocence: Lessons in Cruelty in *Seuls* and *Jolies Ténèbres*', will be of special interest to readers of *ECA* as it focuses specifically on Francophone comics, namely two works by Fabien Vehlmann. The chapter offers a refreshing perspective: it compares a stand-alone comic (*Jolies Ténèbres*) and a series (*Seuls*), both stories of children in a world without grownups, but the former is primarily a text for adults, and the latter is primarily for children. The strategy is promising, as Pellegrin is able to explore significant differences that are all the more dramatic because so many other aspects of the books remain similar. The chapter also skilfully brings to bear a history specific to the texts in question, using the history of Franco-Belgian comics for young readers to provide historical background that advances the argument. Some of the conclusions made evident through this deft handling of history and strikingly similar texts include insights on technique (such as amounts and aims of explanation) and, provocatively, how play and cruelty intermingle.

Tamryn Bennett's chapter, 'Dancing with Demons: Consciousness and Identity in the Comics of Lynda Barry', engages with Barry's later work in ways that would escape most academic approaches to comics. One of the challenges for literary scholarship of Barry's recent work is that she openly, one might say didactically, explains how her readers can make comics in the Barry way and how they can benefit from making comics as she does. That frank, pragmatic approach to comics is difficult to engage with for an academic tradition known for its fascination with ambiguity. Bennett's decision to engage directly with Barry's 'praxical activities' (220) is therefore not only useful but liberating, with implications for studies far beyond her own. The chapter also takes methodological risks that we sometimes found ourselves wishing had been taken in other chapters. For instance, it contains one of the very few times the book pays any attention to the material alongside the discursive (228). Too, the chapter is one of the few that focuses on

the creative potential associated with childhood, though the Foreword implies that such creativity will be a major concern of the collection (x).

Picturing Childhood begins a number of useful conversations and provides a footing for further transnational studies of childhood in comics. In it, readers find methodologies including single-author studies, studies of motifs and themes across periods, examinations of the representation of childhood, and explorations of what cultural work childhood can be leveraged to achieve. For readers of *European Comic Art*, it suggests strategies and texts that are especially useful, as we consider childhood across the European project.

Eva Van de Wiele
University of Ghent

Joe Sutliff Sanders
University of Cambridge