

Being at home abroad: Londoners 'ong continong' (on the continent) in the 19th century comics of Marie Duval.

SLIDE 1: TITLE AND PRESENTERS

ROGER:

Introductory comment: Why are we doing this talk as a double-act? The paper is part of a bigger project about Duval, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which Simon and I and a third person, Dr Julian Waite, are currently working on. So we will present together. Today we're going to look at one aspect of her work, in line with the conference theme, and that is travel.

Who is MD? We don't know. Very little information; no picture of her. Original name is Isabelle de Tessier, born 1850. French family. A sometime actress. Joins *Judy*. Does hundreds of strips and cartoons – one of main artists. She does all sorts of things, and develops the character Ally Sloper, who was perhaps the first comics superstar, in terms of fame. Duval therefore vastly under-rated.

Judy is a rival to *Punch*. Its politics are conservative (pro-Disraeli, very imperialist). Readership is mostly men, mostly middle class – though with a significant working class readership and a growing female one. The working class is buying *Judy* as secondhand editions, or seeing it (for free) discarded in railway carriages, on platforms, in cafes, etc. The women are being courted by the editor, who reserves certain pages for them.

SLIDE 2: JUDY COVER 9 AND HOLD UP A COPY)

How to characterise MD's strips?

Context is all. She's there to provide light relief. Rest of *Judy* has old-fashioned, imperialist *Punch*-style strips; but she has a light, slapstick, dynamic, vibrant style that is untutored.

SLIDE 3: SLOPER STRIP AND EDITORIAL-STYLE CARTOON

The strips appear on 'women's pages'- evidence of an effort to reach this audience. The female characters have *agency*.

Travel is one of MD's topics. This is the era of working class and lower middle class travel – a new era of tourism typified by the cheap package tours of Thomas Cook. This was a version of the Grand Tour, an upper class pursuit aimed at improving one's cultural capital though seeing the (usually classical) sights.

MD will do page-long strips about particular countries. (Sometimes starring Ally Sloper, sometimes not.)

SLIDE 4: A HONEYMOON ONG CONTINONG

SLIDE 5: AT BOLONG

SLIDE 6: SLOPER IN 'SUNNY SPAIN'

There's a sense of laughing 'at' the working class as well as 'with' them.

So, MD's strips are about 'funny foreigners', but also about 'funny tourists'. Thus, the French speak weirdly ('ong continong', etc.), eat strange food and wear silly hats that look like night-caps i.e. 'liberty caps'...

SLIDE 7: FRENCH FAMILY IN FUNNY CAPS

...meanwhile, the tourists do all the things you're not supposed to do – misbehave, get drunk, lech, etc. Plus, don't really understand what they're looking at when they go on tour.

SLIDE 8: A WHILE AGO AT AIX

As ever, it's gendered – 'women abroad' is a big theme. For example, how hard it is to mountaineer in Switzerland wearing a long dress.

SLIDE 9: MOUNTAINEERING

How to use gondoliers in Italy. Etc. Plus Duval shows the darker side – you might have bad experiences on transport,...

SLIDE 10: RIGI-LECTIONS

... you might get ripped off by souvenir sellers...

SLIDE 11: SLOPER BUYS AN ALPENSTOCK

...you might get mugged...

SLIDE 12: THIEVES

... you might encounter beggars.

SLIDE 13: BEGGARS

But it is gentle humour – unlike Gillray or the print tradition. Seen as a step forward by some critics. We're entering into a new era of tolerance. (We should note that 'British national identity' had been built in contra-distinction to the 'dirty French', etc.)

In Duval's strips, French and other Europeans seen as 'different but equal'. The strips are never about British superiority.

On one level this is about 'civilised nations'. European nations share characteristics and attitudes, and happen to be 'white', as opposed to the 'uncivilised nations' of Africa, China, etc. This would fit with the general *Judy* world-view.

But on another level, there is a sense of working class solidarity. Of workers visiting other workers and discovering a shared cause. No longer enemies – instead bonded by socialism. Underlying this is the idea of 'complementarity'. The idea was that the wc tours should be educational – observing the best ideas from Europe/France. You compare them and think critically about them so that you can bring the best qualities home with you. In the words of one proponent: 'You learn to respect other nations and think modestly of your own.' Duval's strips both reflect this idea and parody it. (Her

characters are often comparing what they see abroad with home.) Interpreted in this way, the politics of Duval's strips go against the grain of *Judy*.

To conclude: Duval is keeping three readerships in play – the middle class (the traditional *Judy* readership); the working class (readership that is secondary but growing); and the female readership. A fascinating juggling act, which makes her strips multi-layered.

SIMON:

Both the opportunity for foreign travel and the idea of leisure travel, for working class Britons in the latter half of the nineteenth century, had their roots in two things. The pan-European infrastructure of roads, carriage companies, railways, boats and staging inns that was a major legacy of the French Imperial project combined with an increasing public familiarity with emerging types of behaviour in a burgeoning genre of travel writing, travel fiction and their parodies, such as these

SLIDE 14: LIST OF LITERATURE FEATURING TOURISM

Foreign and domestic tourist guide-books proliferated, focussing on both why and how to travel for pleasure. Aimed at exactly the type of person newly enfranchised or educated in the 60s and 70s, Switzerland, Italy, France and England, in particular, became the raw materials for established itineraries and both standardised expectations and responses. Marie Duval's comic pages both laud and satirise these people, and we must remember that she was one of them. It is an indication of just how familiar the ways and means of tourism had become by the time Duval was drawing

SLIDE 15: PROBABLE STATE OF THE ALPS...

(IMAGE 277: Nov 18 1874, p50).

She also satirises the guidebooks themselves: in one of her most popular stories, the character Ally Sloper is sent by *Judy* magazine to France to produce a *Guide to the Paris Exhibition* in 1878.

Different countries were given different spins. As historian Greg Thomas has noted, Switzerland's terrain offered the opportunity to consume sublimity with ease.

SLIDE 16: A FEW RECOLLECTIONS OF FOREIGN CLIMBS

(IMAGE 36: Nov 10 1869, p11)

That is, sublimity residing in a type of wilderness convenient to the inn, the casino and the awaiting public carriage.

SLIDE 17: HOTEL BLANKET

(Image 277)

In Italy, on the other hand, one could effortlessly progress through the past, in the form of recently-established tableaux of ruins, battle sites and past cultural glories, in which history, rather than the sublime, was made easily and cheaply available.

Being abroad also licensed types of behaviour more strictly prohibited, although still pursued, at home. The tourist could adopt the manners of Italy, such as they were

understood, or rather, behave as they'd really like to at home, at the same time as making free with its impressive historic past.

SLIDE 18: SAN MARCO – ROMANTIC, DANGEROUS

(IMAGE 240, April 1 1874, p246).

The tourist guide, travel memoir and travel in fiction underwrote saleable activities conjuring and, in some cases perhaps, fulfilling fantasies of experiences of abroad. In other words, the experience of travel, of other countries and other people was commodified, becoming a new type of activity distinct from other types of travel and other types of international interaction.

SLIDE 19: SIGNORE, IL BATONNE, SIGNORE!

(IMAGE 326, Aug 25 1875, p192).

As such, the development of tourism has been theorised by sociologists Emile Durkheim, Matt MacConnel and others as arising from and propagating a sense of social disconnection, discontinuity and inauthenticity. In particular, the emergence of tourism in the nineteenth century historically paralleled the creation of an urban, industrial working class. MacConnel described tourists as enacting ideas of social and cultural life imported from the middle classes. He theorises that they thereby succumb to social self-regulation through the mechanisms of commercial exchange that emerge to take account of a new desire – in this case, for an authentic experience of middle class life in the form of leisure abroad.

This theorisation reflects nineteenth century social concerns about the effects of a range of leisure activities becoming increasingly available to the working class. For MacConnel's notion of inauthentic, that is, commodified, experience, we might substitute any of a number of leisure activities that were seen as personally harmful and socially divisive in the nineteenth century: drinking, gambling, reading penny papers and sex. Roger has written at length on the battleground of good and bad reading, for example.

Good tourism was edifying rather than self-regulating and needed no restraints. Rather than pleasure, the workingmen's tours to the great foreign manufacturing exhibitions organised by Joseph Paxton and Thomas Cooke, through the 60s and 80s, provided authentic experiences: self-improvement, new skills and new ideas with which to return home and strengthen the state, rather than gimcrack souvenirs seemingly signifying nothing but wasted money, or worse – emptiness

SLIDE 20: MORE ARTFULNESS

(IMAGE 117, Sept 27 1871, p234)

But if we look at Duval's comedic visions of working class travel abroad, a more complex and perhaps richer social and cultural picture emerges. In particular, as Roger has mentioned, the reader's empathies are encouraged in a number of directions at once. Duval is rarely xenophobic (although her characters often are), and rather encourages her readers to empathise with the foreign tour operators, guides and waiters – those people in the service industries of tourism, than the British tourists unselfconsciously making fools of themselves or behaving as only tourists do, whilst spending money.

Witness Londoners' approach to speaking a hybrid French language, including hand signals,...

SLIDE 21: HAND SIGNALS

(IMAGE 25, Sept 1 1869, p192, fragment Ong Continong)

...the names of resort towns...

SLIDE 22: AT BOLONG

(IMAGE 20, Aug 4 1869, p150)

...imperatives...

SLIDE 23: 'COOCHEY'

(IMAGE 286, Jan 20 1875, p144)

...and taunts.

SLIDE 24: WATTAIRLOO!

(IMAGE 514, July 3 1878, p10).

Or the thoroughly xenophobic idea that it is safest to wash foreign money because, we suppose, one doesn't know where it's been or, rather, one knows that it has circulated, well,... abroad.

SLIDE 25: NOT A BAD IDEA

(IMAGE 156, Aug 14 1872, p 172)

And the sensible, mocking comparison between the reality of climbing in a bustle (women) or with someone in a bustle (men), and the ridiculous, aspirational, dare we say middle class idea that climbing is for pleasure.

SLIDE 26: EN SUISSE

(IMAGE 23, Sept 1 1869, p183)

Not to mention the opportunities for flirting...

SLIDE 27: THE SIGNORAS

(IMAGE 288, Feb 3 1875, p164)

...or even lechery.

SLIDE 28: CREAM DRINKERS' FEAST

(IMAGE 342, Oct 27 1875, p20).

Whilst understanding all the while that the tourism business is a scam perpetuated by rogues at home and abroad,...

SLIDE 29: LACHRIMAE CHRISTI

(IMAGE 326, Aug 25 1875, p192)

...foreign travel offers endless opportunities for letting go a little, with a new husband or wife...

SLIDE 30: THE DOVETURTLES' WEDDING TOUR

(IMAGE 344, Nov 10 1875, p38)

... or someone else.

SLIDE 31: SLOPER AT THE CRATER'S MOUTH

(IMAGE 326, Aug 25 1875, p192).

And all of these things are half or more of the fun of foreign travel, an attitude and experience that ultimately confirms and expands, rather than contradicts or diminishes, one's unique place in the world.

SLIDE 32: 'ARRY AT PARRY

(IMAGE514, July 10 1878,p10).

In Duval's pages we see a distinct culture of lower class tourism emerging, in which Moore's Fudge Family and the Dorrits are recognisable. Rather than a moribund 'desire for desire' as Susan Stewart calls it, or MacConnel's performance of middle class values, Duval's characters carry their domestic prejudices, predelictions and preferences with them, forging an international export culture that becomes a *de facto* home, but 'abroad'.

END