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Daryl Lee

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Robida's Mormons

Daryl Lee

Introduction

- 1 Recensement [du pays des Mormons] : Anglais, Ecossais, Canadiens, Américains, Danois, Suédois, Norvégiens, Allemands, Suisses, Polonais, Russes, Italiens, Français, Nègres, Hindous, Australiens, Chinois [...] tous ces gens différant entre eux par le climat, le langage, les mœurs, les lois, la nationalité, les goûts, se sont rassemblés, se rassemblent tous les jours pour vivre mieux que des frères, dans une harmonie parfaite, au milieu du continent américain, où ils forment une nation nouvelle, indépendante, compacte, et par le fait tout aussi peu soumise au gouvernement des États-Unis qui l'héberge, qu'aux firmans du Grand Turc. Il y a là de quoi faire croire à la possibilité d'une fusion universelle, à l'unité future des peuples dans une seule et même république. (Rémy vol. 2 173-74)
- 2 *Frère Brigham*, c'est ainsi qu'on le désigne parmi les Saints, a un sérail de dix-sept femmes d'âges différents, et dont une, que le hasard nous a fait voir dans le jardin de son palais, est d'une surprenante beauté. (Rémy vol. 2 175)
- 3 Between 1869 and 1883, the illustrator-author Albert Robida (1848-1926) drew inspiration for caricatures and novels from widespread reports of Mormon activity in the American West. Robida's depictions of Mormons (or converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) thus bookend the formative period of the Third Republic. His most sustained treatment in two satirical novels, *Voyages très extraordinaires de Saturnin Farandoul* (1879) and *Le Vingtième siècle* (1883), alluded to an array of social, political and technological transformations shaping the early Third Republic. These foundational years of the "return of the republic" (Conklin et. al. 63) were the culmination of a long gestating ideological shift toward republicanism.¹ The "resurrection" of French civil society (Nord 9), the conversion of "peasants into Frenchmen" (Weber), and the construction of a republican culture and a parliamentary state, succeeded decades of civil unrest, revolution, and power grabbing. Change cut across "politics, society, art, and diplomacy, with important consequences for its

citizens and subjects—women and men; workers, peasants, and the bourgeoisie; Bretons, Corsicans, and Algerians, as well as Parisians” (Conklin et. al. 53). No wonder then that Robida incorporated signs of the changing times into his work.

- 4 One is left to wonder instead why Mormons—non-actors in this well-documented history—would feature at all in the national preoccupations of Robida’s novels. Against the backdrop of France’s colonial undertakings, Robida seized upon the graphic and narrative potential of the American religious group’s polygamous marriage system and its successive displacements and eventual establishment as a colonizing force throughout the Western United States. In *Le Vingtième siècle*—a futuristic satire set in the 1950s and the object of this analysis—we discover that Mormons have left North America to colonize England and intend to breach the continent through France. Mormons here are represented as Orientalized colonizers from the American West who evoke a racial, sexual and geographic conquest and a new patriarchal order. In its broadest strokes, Robida’s unexpected use of Mormons is reasoned. It engages anxieties and preoccupations in French national consciousness by transplanting the American sect into a European context, while also parodying Orientalism in salon painting in a manner that exposed gender dynamics in the civilizing mission. Even as Robida appropriates Mormonism as a counterweight to the emancipated world of women in its imaginary twentieth-century, it hints at French misogyny. Mormons stand in for France’s own fixations, including its colonial cupidity in the early Third Republic.
- 5 Nineteenth-century French observers were attuned to the peculiarities and reach of Mormonism. Across the Second Empire and early Third Republic, they keenly monitored how state and societal opposition had failed to stop the Mormons from thriving on the American frontier in Missouri, Illinois, and the Great Basin. Writers acknowledged Mormon eccentricity as they integrated the curious sect into their imaginary of the American West. Reports of violence abroad bristled at what a social order organized by Mormonism might impose at home. Hippolyte Taine and Elisée Reclus argued that polygyny “debased” (Taine 298) and “subjugated” (Reclus 899) women.² It was thought to produce moral and genetic defects in Mormon society—there was no future without the emancipation of women—“sans l’émancipation de la femme, cette âme qui a été donnée [...] pour alléger du poids de l’isolement” (vol. 2 144), the naturalist Jules Rémy prophesied. On the other hand, Reclus praised the immense service that Mormon colonization did to “humanity”—“l’immense service à la cause de l’humanité” (889). Henri Rochefort thought similarly: “Or, de ce pays, plus nu et plus aride que le sable d’une grève, l’incroyable intelligence et la miraculeuse activité du ‘Prophète’ ont fait le centre de commerce, d’industrie et d’agriculture le plus important du nouveau monde” (247). Rémy, citing Mormon industriousness, drew a comparison with French colons in Algeria: “Nos colons d’Algérie peuvent y voir aussi une leçon de courage bonne à suivre, s’ils veulent attirer vers eux les capitaux nécessaires au complet développement de la colonie” (2: 186). And in a similar comparative nod to France’s colonial designs in Algeria, New Caledonia, and Senegal, Collège de France professor Alfred Maury wrote in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that the polygamist sect had expanded throughout the West with such “perseverance” and unprecedented “colonizing energy,” that it made France’s own colonial enterprise look weak by comparison (994-95).³ The *Revue*’s express purpose, as noted in its inaugural issue, was to theorize how the “same principles” found abroad might be “understood in their diversity and applied on French soil” (*Advertissement* 1829, 3). This hypothetical

work appeared in literary and visual texts concerned with Mormonism, and Robida's work took the challenge to some of its most imaginative extremes.

- 6 A surge in historical and cultural attention to Mormonism has yet to fully turn its eyes on the transnational implications of the movement's early reception in France.⁴ In the United States Mormons played a vital nineteenth-century "heretical" foil (Givens 4) to the construction of "normative" American religious and political identity (Fluhman 3). American Protestantism framed Mormons as non-American and religiously as non-Christian, non-Republican and undemocratic (see Fluhman; Mason). And they were intrinsically, though problematically, linked to the American West: "Western narratives of mountain men, self-sufficient pioneers, and honest, hardworking cowboys (as well as suspect Chinese, lascivious Mormons, and savage Indians) provided the building blocks for a story of American exceptionalism and bolstered the immanence of a distinctly masculinist American Manifest Destiny" (Moos 2). American critics characterized Mormons as religiously, culturally, economically, and even racially different. They were not white, as historian Paul Reeve argues, but "conflated with nearly every other 'problem' group in the nineteenth century—blacks, Indians, immigrants, and Chinese" (Reeve 3). Despite their central role in populating, exploring, irrigating and evangelizing the Western United States, the frontier mythos of the American nineteenth-century excluded them from the heroic narrative of Western expansion.
- 7 French scholars have tracked French reactions to Mormonism without seizing the full significance of that transcultural exchange. In 1962 René Rémond noted the ridicule heaped by French observers on this "legendary" sect starting as early as 1832 and gaining momentum in 1848, the result of its "originality, the singularity of its revelation, [and] the oddity of its mores" (Rémond, vol. 1 175). Rémond claimed that by 1860 Mormons had gained a "place in the gallery of conventional representations of America" (vol.1 175), even to the point of becoming "symbolic types" (I:169) who represented *all* Americans. Jacques Portes implies the same in a recent essay entitled "from Mormons to Americanism." Fundamentally "other" for Anglo-American voices of the time, this isolated, marginalized and troublesome sect on the western frontier became in France, virtually to the contrary, a metonymic tool for critiquing America's worst impulses. Thus, French scholars have exposed how French perceptions of Mormonism conflate them with all American Protestantism, while leaving aside the possibility that French writers used Mormons to depict French preoccupations as well.
- 8 My focus here will be Robida, who stands as an exemplary contributor to depictions of Mormons in French popular culture.⁵ Studies of Robida are growing but remain limited with regards to the vast body of literature on art history and popular culture. Not surprisingly, these studies have devoted little attention to Mormonism in his oeuvre, as it seems so incidental to his prolific record.⁶ Scholars of late drawn to media, science and technology have illuminated Robida's literary and graphic intuitions about dystopian industrialism, consumerism and proto-cinematic or polyphonic inventions by situating Robida's imaginative schemes in relation to other futuristic fiction and the history of technology (Barel-Moisán; Boillat; Brehm; Willems, 1999; Willems, 2016). My analysis should set well with the methodological assumptions of recent scholarship, notably the insistence that Robida's work "involves both forward-looking and retrospective vision" (Brehm 194) but is very much grounded in the milieu of Third Republic France (Barel-Moisán; Letourneux). Letourneux's media-based approach

excavates “future war” novels, an overlooked generic staple of popular culture in Third Republic France. Evans tracks Robida’s comical registers in *Le Vingtième siècle*—parody, vaudevillian slapstick, wordplay, social satire, even black humor (203)—that satirize contemporary professional fields denied to women in the nineteenth century. Seillan includes *Le Vingtième siècle* in a wave of “experimental” Third Republic novelists who scrutinize public opinion of colonial expansion (39). Seillan does not delve into the actual story matter of Robida’s novel, yet his linkage of these novelists joining ranks with politicians to denigrate the “buffoonish monarchs” of colonized peoples (40) confirms the novel is part of a body of “paraliterature” meditating on French colonial endeavors. Here, the popular culture representation of Mormon treatment of women and colonization inevitably confirms Robida’s intuitions and recommends further study of his inexhaustible creativity that has for too long been overlooked.

- 9 This curious moment of transnational, cross-cultural exchange between Mormonism and France deserves fuller analysis. While my object is Robida, my purpose is to add to the cultural history of transatlantic encounters in Third Republic France. In this, my essay shares objectives with Benjamin Morgan’s subtle unpacking of a parallel transnational collision between Oscar Wilde and Mormonism; calling upon transnational literary studies to privilege “*resonance* rather than *influence*” (667) when using a “national framework of interpretation” (666), as I do for Robida’s Third Republic, Morgan calls attention to the “fungibility” of caricatured stereotypes that Wilde deployed (676), much as I perceive Robida encoding Mormon cultural malleability to meet the needs of his moment in the early 1880s. In a transnational context, the fungible possibilities of cultural perceptions of Mormonism permitted Robida to exploit its unstable identity as foil to normative racial, religious and sexual identities in France, as it had in the United States, but in culturally divergent or asymmetrical ways. This key “interruption” of transnational flow, as Morgan frames it for the Wilde-Mormon encounter (667), undergirds how Robida’s outward look towards the Americas reveals something about republican onlookers themselves rather than a mere fact of cultural reception. If I avail myself of semiotic theory to analyze text-image relations and art history to analyze popular culture against salon culture, my essay is in the service of cultural representations. For scholarship has yet to fully explain how Mormons were not simply the subject of blunt force “othering” in France as in America, despite how much that too occurred. French cultural responses to Mormonism were charged but ambivalent, falling somewhere between the “fascination” and “misgivings” that Portes sees in French reactions to American religious culture more broadly. In both places, Mormons were viewed as eccentric but also oppressive, violent and threatening to stable, civil society—but for different contextual reasons. Some French reports expressed sympathy for Mormons persecuted by mobs, acknowledged Mormon resiliency and successful conversion efforts, and praised their social cohesion, industriousness and the productivity of their colonial enterprise. This ambivalence—at times from the same critic, a quasi-schizophrenic divergence—is best explained by the fact that French observers used Mormons to work through their own anxieties and fantasies altogether different than Americans’. Mormons afforded French critics an indirect means for laboring through homegrown societal polemics. They were never solely villainous or a celebrated model simply because French fascination with Mormons equated to holding a hypothetical mirror to French society itself rather than positing a distanced objective view of an outside object.

Mormons and the Formation of the Third Republic, 1870-1884

- ¹⁰ Robida's novel resides in this immediate formative context of the Third Republic, despite the lie of displacing its action onto an imaginary future. The novel also draws from the myth of 1848 and Robida's personal involvement in the Terrible Year, as I detail below. After a final protracted battle under the Moral Order, the ultra-religious conservative ideology that sought to restore monarchical power, the *crise du 16 mai* (1877) resulted in a parliamentary republic. The crisis was also a conflict of ideas over the power of the Church (Mayeur and Rebérioux 37; Duclert 108). With scientism attacking the Church intellectually and left-wing coalitions repudiating its policies against universal suffrage and civil liberties politically, *laïcisation* found republicans diminishing the role of religion in public affairs (even if church-state separation was not fully realized until the law of 1905; Bauberot 31, 88). The 16 May crisis also revealed changing social dynamics. Gambetta had sensed the emergence of a "new democratic generation" (qtd in Duclert, 100), one that formed itself into "a citizenry respectful of the bourgeois republic [...]" and resistant to the siren calls of socialism" (Nord 2-3). The marginalization of religion for its threat to democracy and the Left's wariness of radical socialism for its own threat to the Republic's stability must have figured in Robida's calculations regarding Mormonism at this moment.⁷
- ¹¹ With the Republic secure, legislators set about advancing the primacy of the nation. In the brief span between 1877 and 1883, they reformed judiciary appointments (Duclert 184), suffrage and civil liberties, including freedom of the press (*loi du 29 juillet 1881*), the right to peaceful assembly (or "*liberté de réunion*," *loi du 30 juin 1881*), the legalization of divorce in the Naquet Law (*loi du 27 juillet 1884*), and amended the constitution to make the republican form inviolate (*loi du 14 août 1884*).⁸ At the same time—and this is pertinent to the novel's depiction of national festivity—a swell of state-driven initiatives celebrated the nation in symbol, ritual and festival. The Exposition universelle of 1878, a symbolic act of republicanism's victory, was soon followed by the declaration of the *fête nationale* on 14 July and the Marseillaise as the national hymn, while a Marianne coiffed with a Phrygian cap reappeared as the figure of the Republic. Other post-Commune gestures signaled moves toward the reconciliation of the Republic as well: the return of the Chambres to Paris (from Versailles) in 1879 and the amnesty of the Communards in 1880 linked the Paris Commune to 1789 and the Third Republic to the long republican story.
- ¹² All the aforementioned become themes in Robida's novel. But so do two other reference points, for which Mormons become useful. Though universalist in aspiration, the early Third Republic betrayed some of its grandest ambitions: its compromised commitment to colonialism, and its empty pretense to full democratic inclusion by leaving women out of the new civic arena (Conklin et. al. 63-65; Nord 246-47). Revanchism drove French colonial impulses in the 1870s. The humiliating defeat to the Prussians in 1870 sent the newly formed republic scurrying for territory and natural resources to the detriment of respect for self-determination. The astute anti-colonialist Georges Clemenceau argued in 1879 against the imposition of French interests on foreign peoples and pilloried the rise of racist theories for their political motivations (Duclert 182). For Gambetta, on the other hand, and especially Jules Ferry, imperial expansion

did not contradict republicanism; on the contrary, they championed colonial conquest as a natural means for spreading France's highest achievements—for fulfilling its *mission civilisatrice*. This debate animated the public sphere as Robida wrote and illustrated *Saturnin Farandoul* and *Le Vingtième siècle*. While faraway lands were the envy of colonialism, women were not extended full rights of inclusion in the Third Republic's new democratic arrangements. This sexist structural flaw in French republican ideology, defined “entirely masculine terms” (Conklin et. al., 63), spanned the century. Despite cautious efforts to “relaunch a campaign” of women's rights in republican terms (Offen 15-16), secular republican voices found cause to withhold suffrage; women were thought to be excessively emotional and frightfully subject to religious passions. Pro-republican feminists renewed their case at an international congress (1878) on women's rights but little would change for female civic participation for decades.

- 13 Robida absorbed the lessons of this formative moment: global colonial movement and geopolitical threats form a shady backdrop to *Le Vingtième siècle*, while female emancipation in professional and political terms becomes the structuring principle of its heroine's adventures. So, to return to my initial question, what inspired Robida to blend the religious fervor, suspicious socialism, and sexual license and sexual politics associated with Mormonism into this fanciful view of the Third Republic? I will show that Robida capitalized on Mormonism in two ways. First, as the return of a dual repressed: Mormonism could represent a return of religion in state affairs without having to name the Church; simultaneously, it could substitute for the return of the romantic or utopian socialisms that underwrote revolutionary agitation in 1830, 1848 and 1871 without having to accuse the most egregious recent insurgents, the Communards.⁹ Pro-republican leaders had no stomach for religion reasserting itself any more than for revolutionary violence. Mormonism encapsulated both a theocratic and utopian socialist state—and as Robida sensed, its utility as a malleable figure worked in inverse proportion to the virtual absence of actual Mormons in France at the time. Second, Mormonism presented itself as an international colonizing force whose alternative social model disrupted women's social roles. Robida deftly perceived in Mormonism a worthy cipher and malleable stereotype as it encoded these various strands into a single entity during this constructive phase of the early Third Republic.

Robida's First Images of Mormons

- 14 Robida's treatment of Mormons borrows from the wider ambivalence described above. However, the ironic thrust of caricature and satire complicates any interpretation of his work. Robida's illustrations of Mormon society in *Le Vingtième siècle* elaborate on a template he himself established more than a decade earlier. Two early illustrations situated Mormons in disparate geographic positions, either isolated in the Far-West or at the gates of Paris. This split betrays a fundamental French ambivalence toward Mormonism: on the one hand, as altogether different, distant, and dismissible; on the other, rather too much like European culture and too close for comfort (generally in England, where Mormonism had indeed acquired thousands of adepts). In July 1870, Robida inserted a drawing, “Nouvelles du Grand Lac Salé,” into an issue of *Le Journal Amusant*. [FIGURE 1] Unlike the usual crowded visual field and material excess of his aesthetic, a barren desert floor and vast open sky provide the compositional backdrop for this comical scene stolen from the Great Basin. Two dogs review a Mormon

polygamist whose patriarchal reserve is betrayed by his broom and his elegant wives outfitted for a military exercise. Hinting at the sexual economy of Mormon plural marriage, a subject deliciously ripe for caricature and innuendo, Robida evacuates its promiscuous possibilities by emasculating the bearded broom-holder and arming the wives who resemble bourgeois Parisians more than weary frontier wives with battle axes, rifles and bayonets.

Figure 1

Albert Robida. "Nouvelles du Grand Lac Salé." *Le Journal Amusant*, no. 759, July 16, 1870, p. 3. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/BnF

- 15 "Nouvelles" leaves one questioning what need there would have been for a militarized Mormon household to stand firm against an enemy absent from the image (and absent from any discussion in the journal). It had been some time since the violent expulsion of Mormons from Missouri (1838), their hastened flight from Illinois and trek across the plains after the death of Joseph Smith (1846-47), or their fight with federal authorities in the Utah War (1857-58), all of which had been followed in the French press. This female battalion, serialized and stretched *ad infinitum* in perspective, follows upon the Utah territorial legislature enfranchising the female vote in February of the same year (1870)—Mormon women were now armed with the vote. In addition, though the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act had been signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, the American President was obliged to leave it unenforced until after the Civil War. Reports that circulated in the French press in May and June of 1870 indicated Mormons were arming themselves in anticipation of American Federal action against polygamy.¹⁰ Robida's "Nouvelles" alludes to the politics of gender and female empowerment but it confines this innocuous Mormon female battalion to the Rocky Mountains.

Figure 2

Albert Robida. "Le Mormonisme à Paris." *Paris-Caprice*, vol. 66, March 13, 1869, p. 216, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BSB-ID 9314493, urn:nbn:de:bsb:12-bsb10498606-5.

- 16 "Nouvelles" was not the first use Robida made of the religious exiles. By this point in time, early in his career with the illustrated press in Paris, the young Robida was aware of Mormon polygamy at least through a French feminist, Olympe Audouard. The latter's 1869 travel account, *A travers l'Amérique, le Far-West*, and her lectures in Paris elevated plural marriage as a panacea to the slavery of conventional marriage—polygamy could create a community of mutually supporting women and regularly relieve a woman from conjugal duties.¹¹ Robida's response to Audouard was a full-page image for the journal *Paris-Caprice*, "Mormonism in Paris," that lightheartedly portrayed Mormonism overtaking the capital [FIGURE 2]. Robida's central vignette of Mormon life in Paris, framed in a heart-shaped border, shows a happily married polygamist surrounded by six doting wives in a luxurious bourgeois interior. Other vignettes reference Brigham Young and hint at the troubles encountered in Mormon domestic life, including bickering wives, paying onerous wardrobe debts to tailors, the logistical necessity of "matriculating" the many women. In this cheeky, topical rejoinder to Audouard's glowing reviews of Mormon polygamy—the author appears at a pulpit in the upper left vignette and the caption reads, "Audouard's lectures have produced an unexpected outcome [...] half of Paris is already converted to Mormonism,"—a Cupid or Mercury-like allegorical figure in the lower right corner plants a Mormon flag on the capital. Early on, then, Robida imagined Mormonism taking over Paris.
- 17 In these two early caricatures Robida either leaves the Mormons isolated from civilization in the American West or as an encroaching nation with the potential to implant in France. The former position was reiterated and amplified when Robida

turned to Mormons at the end of the 1870s through the mid 1880s. In *Saturnin Farandoul*, Robida's clever parody of Jules Verne's *Le Tour du monde en 80 jours*, he once again exploited the premise of polygamy to rather comic and misogynistic effect. The swashbuckling eponymous hero Farandoul and his crew convert to Mormonism and head to Salt Lake to become polygamists. Farandoul presents a view of domestic Mormonism as a diverse society, with women of all shapes, sizes, hairstyles, and the racial diversity of a proto-globalized Mormon household, including French, Mexican, Chinese, Irish, Russian, Peruvian and African women [FIGURE 3]. The tightly framed image of the wives's roll call claustrophobically bunches them into a domestic battalion (or chorus-line) on the right, somewhat reminiscent of the western women of "Nouvelles," here marshalled in ranks but relaxed in their collective feminine role in the domestic sphere.¹² A polygamist picaro, Farandoul happily takes his leave of Mormon westerners once the adventure is done.

Figure 3

Albert Robida. "Farandoul Mormon, L'appel des épouses." Albert Robida, *Voyages très extraordinaires de Saturnin Farandoul dans les cinq parties du monde et dans tous les pays connus et même inconnus de M. Jules Verne*. Paris: Librairie Illustrée and Dreyfous, 1879–80, p. 185. Source: gallica.bnf.fr/BnF.

- 18 Robida moves on too, to a novel with a female protagonist in a future world where women fill the sphere of the professions. In one sense, Robida's view of women in the professions in individualistic terms runs counter to the prevailing progressive view of women within the real socio-political unit of society, the family (Offen 18). Yet Robida's treatment of women in the novel ultimately proves ambivalent in other ways too. Robida spent a lifetime drawing women's fashions and lifestyle. In his *dessins de presse* and drawings for *Le Vingtième siècle*, "emancipated women" abound, even though we find a combination of traditional and liberated roles (Doré, 2002 20). So too the

illustrator's figuration of Mormon women casts them now in battalions, a collective of battlers, now as bubbly bourgeois sister-wives contented in their domestic role, now as orientalized harems awaiting purchase at the slave market.

Mormons in the Narrative (Text)

- ¹⁹ Robida increased the stakes of cultural transplantation when he returned to the original question of Mormonism in Paris—what happens when Mormons get too close?—in his most elaborated recourse to Mormons: *Le Vingtième siècle*. Robida published the novel in a lavish edition richly illustrated with 263 in-text “vignettes” and 50 *hors-texte* lithographic plates (Doré, 2001). The story follows its female protagonist, Hélène Colobry, the unmarried daughter of a government official, as she discovers a world open to women in the imaginary future of 1953. Hélène resides with a banking family, the Pontos, and ultimately marries the Pontos’ son, Philippe, only after saving him from certain doom at the hands of despotic Mormons. The Mormons, in Robida’s imaginative scheme, now live in England and intend to colonize Europe, beginning with France. The novel projects an egalitarian world in which women have achieved career status and political representation on equal footing with men. Women in 1953 work in fields that had been the strict province of men, medicine, law, and politics, even the military in this striking *hors-texte* plate of the Battalion of Female Supremacy. [FIGURE 4] In *Le Vingtième siècle*, by contrast, Mormon patriarchy threatens the enlightened space that allows Hélène’s rise.¹³ Hélène considers a career in government, medicine or higher education, tries her hand at law and journalism, and learns to fence. She observes women in all occupations, including those who run the own *Bourse des dames* where *mondaines*, bourgeois and small-time speculators, exchange agents, women bankers and female brokers (with male clerks) run the show. Robida’s future presents a world of seemingly endless possibilities for women.

Figure 4

Albert Robida. "Revolution de 1953. Le Bataillon de la suprématie féminine arrivant aux barricades."
 Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, plate 34 (insert between p. 264-65).
 Collection of the Author.

- 20 This world brimming with possibility for women tapped into decades of unease and debate regarding women's issues, a time of "gender relations in crisis" (McMillan 141) that resulted from separating the domestic/female and public/male "spheres" during the Industrial Revolution. In France in the decade and even months just prior to the novel's publication January 1883—and in the face of continued exclusion from work, education and basic rights—women and their advocates had renewed their claim to more decision-making power with regard to marriage, alongside economic and educational rights matching those accorded men. The First International Congress on Women's Rights was organized in 1878 by Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer, the latter the founder and editor of *Le Droit des Femmes* (1869-1891). In this journal and in his books, *La Femme libre* (1879) and *Le Code des femmes* (1883), Richer pressed Third Republic legislators to amend the Civil Code and proposed a variety of reforms in favor of women's rights (Bell 449). Still, Richer's incremental approach left many unsatisfied, notably his fellow partisan and outspoken critic Hubertine Auclert, who advocated against Richer for immediate woman suffrage (Conklin et. al. 65). The question of civil rights for women in a Republican context had existed at least since the radical, ill-fated demands of Olympe de Gouge for *Les Droits de la femme* during the Revolution; starting in 1830 they were given new impetus among romantic socialists and female leaders of *La Femme libre* (1832) and then particularly in the watershed year of 1848 and during the Second Republic with persistent, intelligent voices in venues such as *La Voix des Femmes* and *L'Opinion des Femmes* (Bell 239-44; Riot-Sarcey). By the late 1870s, and well into the Third Republic, Auclert engaged in a polemic with Richer in her pamphlet *Le Droit politique des femmes* (1878) and speeches (Bell 510-17).

- 21 Though largely forgotten today, Mormons filled a significant role in French debates of the moment, serving as cautionary tales or social alternatives. Consider the polemical brochure, *Les femmes qui tuent et les femmes qui votent* (1880), which Alexandre Dumas fils wrote regarding women's rights and role in society. Dumas's final point is that women deserve the right to vote and to hold public office, and he argues that it should come before it happens in the United States (214; woman suffrage had been granted in the Utah Territory in 1870, the second U.S. state to do so). Dumas refers directly to Hubertine Auclert's ideas about taxation and suffrage, published just prior to Dumas' work and Robida's novel. In the course of a rambling argument, Dumas conjectured what might be the "social and psychological" consequences (160) of the "femme nouvelle" taking over men's roles in the workplace, in science, education, business and elsewhere. Rather than women "declaring war on men" (159)—a suggestive metaphor when linked to Robida's imagery—women, Dumas perceived, by means of their intellect and natural right, were finally taking a seat at a table where men thought themselves alone. It's more than curious then that in the course of arguing that women might liberate themselves from regarding marriage and love as their "only objects and ideal" (161), the author cites Mormons as a positive, if asymmetrical, counterexample to an unequal marriage system: "Sautons de là chez les Mormons, c'est-à-dire aux antipodes" (167). Where society had used women's economic dependency on men to promote marriage, working women would no longer need to marry, and love would lose its luster (164-65). For Dumas fils, women in plural marriage enjoy the right to consent to further wives and frequently do so, even encouraging men to marry new wives (168) in order, paradoxically, to increase their individual liberty and presumably to share burdens in the harsh desert climate of the West (168).
- 22 It is in this intellectual climate that Robida wrote his novel about the new woman and, even more instinctively it would seem than for Dumas fils, included the Mormons in the scenario. Robida's novel reflects both sides of the debate surrounding women's rights in France. It gives vent throughout to the longstanding feminist battle for civil rights, education, a place in the workforce and equality for marriage and sexual politics. The illustrator was aware of both the long term and more immediate resonances for his novel's heroine. In a vignette of the Battalions of the Rights of Men and of the Rights of Women, a perfectly symmetrical composition, men and women shake hands and stand on a podium as equals in the public sphere [FIGURE 5]. As in France, Mormonism had allowed men to establish misogynistic norms; but at the same time, women (of the future, at least) have found a new freedom to work in sectors previously reserved for men, to pursue political office, to be educated, etc. Mormons figure in Part III of *Le Vingtième siècle*, primarily in chapter IV, but the setup begins chapter I with a furor at the Women's Stock Exchange (Bourse des dames). The scuttlebutt at the Exchange rests on "fears of an American invasion" of France (283) and of an eventual "Americanization of Europe" (309): "The great Mormon Republic of Salt-Lake City, composed of the former States of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, etc., has sent its legions of preachers to convert England to Mormonism" (290). Women are the capitalists and the banker Ponto ingeniously manipulates stockholders to revive his bank's shares through construction projects to protect the border.

Figure 5

Albert Robida. "Le Bataillon des Droits de l'homme et le bataillon des Droits de la femme." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 265. Collection of the Author.

- 23 During Philippe Ponto's visit to London on business, the young bachelor sends a letter describing the appalling state of the country that has implemented Mormon principles in their laws and politics. This letter constitutes Robida's exaggerated ethnographic take on a Mormon society. It contrasts the apparent libertinage of polygamy in Mormon England with the strictures of its misogynistic civil society. The men revel in taverns (315) while the women slave at home or in factories (316); insubordinate wives can be sent to a correctional house. The House of Lords is now the House of [Mormon] Bishops, and the electoral system of the House of Commons is based entirely on polygamy: to be a parish *électeur*, a man needs two wives; to represent an *arrondissement* requires four; six are needed for the upper chamber; and eight for higher office (316). Robida insists on the rigid hierarchy of Mormon patriarchy, a social system that incentivizes the accumulation of wealth and wives for status. When the unmarried Philippe is sent to England for banking business, the Mormons arrest and throw him into Bachelor's Prison, a hilarious invention of Robida's that shows the absurd ends of polygamy (318). Unbeknownst to Philippe, it is illegal to go about unaccompanied on Sundays: "maintenant que la perfide Albion est devenue extraordinairement shocking, le dimanche est le jour du péril!" (317). If the *réfractaire matrimonial* is not rehabilitated by the end of the week, he risks exile to a *colonie matrimoniale* for a forced marriage. So, the Pontos dispatch Hélène in a desperate attempt to save their son; she poses as his fiancée, they end up falling in love and marry. In a scenario worthy of screwball comedies of marriage, Robida's caricature exploits anxiety regarding a viral "*Mormonisation forcée*," but this leads to a happy monogamous marriage between the two French lovers.
- 24 In its narrative scope, *Le Vingtième siècle* characterizes Mormonism as oppressive to women against a context of female social liberation.¹⁴ In this, Robida exploits the perception of Mormons as oppressive to women to consider the perfectibility of the Third Republic, which "changed everything and nothing for women" (Conklin et. al.

63). Objections to polygamy were shaped by two translations of the same exposé of women's life in Utah, *Female Life Among the Mormons*, both appearing in 1856—*La Femme chez les Mormons* and *Les harems du nouveau monde*. Jules Rémy attempted to typologize the practice of the “pluralité des femmes” (vol. 2 72), with the objective distance of a naturalist who had traveled to Utah and wrote the most extensive study of Mormonism, but he and most writers deemed it inimical to civilization. Two positivists were profoundly affected by Rémy's study. Elisée Reclus believed that Mormonism “enslaved its people through the subservience of woman” (890), Hippolyte Taine that it “abased” women (297). Contesting this degrading “counterfeit” of love devoid of “reciprocity” or “equality” (vol. 2 77-78), Rémy himself wondered about its effects on women:

comment se l'imaginer dans la femme, de la part de ces âmes plus faibles et d'une nature plus délicate aussi. Les craintes, les jalousies, les noirs soupçons les assiègeront sans cesse, les tourmenteront sans cesse, et amèneront nécessairement à leur suite, avec les passions les plus mauvaises, avec les ressentiments et les haines, l'habitude du mensonge, les perfidies, les trahisons, tout ce qui, minant à la longue l'être moral, finit par le corrompre et l'anéantir. (vol. 2 77)

- 25 Needless to say, this critical view of Mormonism obscured positivist assumptions about the nature of women, those “weaker souls of a more delicate nature” who are genetically inclined to fits of “jealousy” and the “darkest suspicions.” Hortense du Faÿ, meanwhile, catalogued polygamy as a “loveless” form of marriage beckoning base animalistic urges: “un mariage sans amour; car l'amour est égoïste, il ne souffre pas le partage [...] ne voit-on pas là une création bestiale, purement matérielle?” (33) Parroting the American Republican Party's 1856 Convention rallying cry against the “twin relics of barbarism,” polygamy and slavery, critic Auguste Laugel assailed both as barbaric in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: “Les cases des nègres sont le théâtre de scènes aussi révoltantes que les harems d'Utah” (211). Olympe Audouard offered a counterintuitive argument in favor of polygamy, as I mentioned in my analysis of Robida's image “Nouvelles du Lac Salé.” But by far most French critics recoiled at polygamy, linking it to the excesses of romantic socialism and condemning it as deviant sexuality, slavery, and a violation of the marriage contract.

Mormons in the Visual Text

- 26 As sobering as the subject of female subjugation was to the aforementioned writers, satirists in their images of Mormons tacked toward sexual innuendo and frivolity. As caricature, the representational plasticity of Robida's illustrations of Mormons revels in the “unpleasant or laughable aspects of [their] subject [...] by accentuating certain characteristics,” most notably the Mormon household, a *ménage à plusieurs*. Sometimes Robida's caricature works as the genre's name implies, a “charge” or “outrageous attack intended to ridicule”; mostly, though, they incline toward the *dessin d'humour*, “detached enough from reality to extract pleasant, unusual or even absurd aspects through facetiousness or fantasy” (Tillier 16).
- 27 Compositionally, Robida's images of Mormons harp on the kinetic modernity of the future, including one with backwards Mormons in its midst. Several portray Mormons engaged in pluralistic social and political activity, such as marriage-making and electioneering where teeming throngs predominate. This is nothing new in Robida's typically congested aesthetic. The crowded field of a household marked by plural

marriage should fit naturally into that approach. But it does beg the question of treating too lightly the supposedly theocratic, anti-republican implications of Mormonism against the unspoken backdrop of political pluralism in the Third Republic. His novel, after all, is more than superficially concerned with France's history of riot, revolution, regime change, and the establishment of republicanism. It is not merely about marriage and gender politics but nineteenth-century French politics writ large. The Third Republic's stability afforded legal benefits to the press, whose newfound liberties in the Law of 1881 extended to openly derisive attacks on social foundations—property, religion, marriage—and social groups—foreigners, Jews, and clergy (Lethève 26). Robida and others in the illustrated press would not have needed to pass indirectly through Mormons to celebrate or deride French *mœurs*—they could address problem groups directly. And yet, he populated the political and social imaginary of *Le Vingtième siècle* with a Mormon society just across the English Channel. What motivated this gesture beyond poking fun at buffoonish bigamists?

- 28 Robida's vignettes of Mormons in *Le Vingtième siècle* create a visual system unto themselves. There are nine illustrations in total:
- 29 Le partage de l'Amérique (cartographic and representational) (309)
- 30 Les Docks du mariage à Londres (a.k.a., The Lighthouse in the novel, 311)
- 31 Grand arrivages d'épouses aux docks (313)
- 32 Docks du mariage—grand choix d'épouses en tout genre (315)
- 33 Maison de correction pour épouses mormonnes (317)
- 34 Les élections en Angleterre (319)
- 35 Un réfractaire matrimonial (321)
- 36 La prison des célibataires (323)
- 37 Les charmantes demoiselles Douglas (324)
- 38 Thematically speaking, the images and narrative text (the letter Philippe has penned for his parents) are mutually supportive, as with the reference to the mapped-out division of America in the first vignette of the set or the apprehension of the "réfractaire matrimonial" in the seventh. But Robida's illustrations of Mormons, especially when read with or against similar images in the novel, send mixed messages, adding to and changing the narrative and communicating other reasons for laughter—Robida the illustrator at times sidesteps Robida the novelist. The cross purposes of Robida's two media arise as much from the ambivalent semiotics of satire as they do from reflecting the different sides of issues in French politics of the 1880s, whether colonialism or marriage and divorce statutes. Significantly, when reading these images against others in the novel, a tension arises between the depiction of a dystopia in England that anticipates the "*mormonisation forcée*" of continental Europe, on the one hand, and the sublimated dream of a gentrified *European* polygamist social order on the other.

Figure 6

Albert Robida. "Les Élections en Angleterre." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 319. Collection of the Author.

- 39 As I have already stated, the two themes that overlap in Robida's caricatures of Mormons—colonization and women's roles and rights—absorb two central concerns of early third Republic in the 1870s and 1880s. The "Elections" vignette [FIGURE 6] tightly frames two opposing Mormon political groups on a stand before two onlooking voters. The two groups are not parties but rather two polygamous households of the competing candidates, Fitzgobblins and Harlepp. The two men, bearded and elegantly dressed—and quite self-satisfied—stand back while their plural wives hijack the debate and fight for their respective side. The women gesticulate and lean forward to plead their cause. They are clad in the latest fashions, contrasting polka dot fabrics or a checkered square pattern, with shorter, tighter skirts and hemlines showing stockings and ankles, a portent of Robida's imaginary future. Significantly, the wives have closed ranks around their candidate-husbands.
- 40 As much as the narrative announces a "forced mormonization" with authoritarian overtones, the image suggests a lively polemic in the public sphere (a placard accuses Fitzgobblins of being a "sophistical Mormon") and should be read in parallel with the vignette of the Battalions of the Rights of Men and of the Rights of Women. Here, polygamy doesn't hamper women from engaging in political activity, even if in the name of their husbands. In fact, "Elections" shares with the images of female military review—both Robida's 1870 "Nouvelles du Lac Salé" and those of female battalions—women in ranks in aggressive poses. In this, Robida seems to transition from satirizing Mormons to gently reimagining French attitudes toward women's rights (whether he is advocating for them or not). Conklin's analysis of the Third Republic's failure to grant female suffrage—"while the Third Republic's exclusion of women was not unusual from a comparative perspective—no nations in 1875 granted voting rights to women—it is unusual that a nation devoted to the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity excluded women until 1944" (Conklin et. al. 63)—becomes pertinent here. It may be factually correct in terms of the nation-state. But it ignores that the Utah Territory was among the earliest "states" to grant suffrage to women. This fact reopens our interpretation of

“Nouvelles du Lac Salé.” The caricature of a Mormon female battalion, serialized and stretched *ad infinitum* in perspective, may allude not (merely) to reports of armed conflict between federal authorities and Mormons. Rather, it may have to do with the Utah territorial legislature enfranchising the female vote in February of the same year (1870). Mormon women were now armed with the vote, and it was (wrongly) believed by some—such as the Fourierist *école sociétaire*—that the U.S. government had granted the vote on the assumption that it would sow rebellion among these oppressed women (Faneau 109). Others argued the contrary, that granting Mormon women the vote would allowed Mormon men to weaponize their vote.

Figure 7

Albert Robida. “Maison de Correction pour épouses mormonnes.” Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 317. Collection of the Author.

- 41 We must contrast the image of electoral activity and gender politics (in both senses of the phrase) to three others, the “Maison de correction” and two of the Mormon “Marriage Docks.” Where “Elections” overcrowds the podium with sparring plural wives, “Maison de correction” reduces the clutter [FIGURE 7]. Less a profusion of objects and activity, Robida’s busy hand applies itself to pattern, a tight cross-hatching that fills much of the composition and darkens the dank, cramped cell of a downtrodden, misbehaving Mormon wife. She sits on a stool leaning slightly forward, shoulders and arms drawn together, and head bowed and eyes closed in dejection—and yet still a little coy. The sign condemns “Mistress Smithson” as a “recidivist,” punishable by ten days of incarceration, without specifying her repeated crime. An empty bed on the left signals her guilt. She should be ensconced in the matrimonial sheets instead of sitting on a stool. Just as with Philippe, the miscreant bachelor, the solitary woman is worthy of condemnation for not performing her social duties.

Figure 8

Albert Robida. "Grand arrivage d'épouses aux Docks." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 313. Collection of the Author.

- 42 Colonialism and sex ground "Grand arrivage" [FIGURE 8]. The vignette is dominated by a three-tiered flying ship hovering above docks teeming with gawking Mormon men awaiting new spouses. Robida establishes a gendered and racial hierarchy by means of the ship's three decks: at the top are white Mormon males (with beards and top hats, in sober black dress); the middle, with open deck access, is for white females sporting fashionable dress and hairstyles; on the bottom, in smaller cramped quarters with small windows, are women of color, presumably from colonial sites. "Grand choix d'épouses" [FIGURE 9] changes scale from the arriving boat to emphasize one man whose profile recalls Brigham Young, a bearded Puritan with top hat and umbrella surveying potential wives from around the globe. ("Grand arrivage" and "Docks du marriage" recall the international wives and *foyers* of Robida's *Saturnin Farandoul*.) The women are seated in front of a bridal shop (right) or are demonstrating their cooking skills (left). Posters on the wall or clothing indicate they come from Europe, (South) Africa and perhaps Latin America, as well as Borneo, Java and Sumatra—wives "en tout genre." Sexual selection here borrows nothing from Darwin but perhaps the Beagle's itinerary across the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans: polygyny is a colonial affair.

Figure 9

Albert Robida. "Docks du mariage—grand choix d'épouses en tout genre." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 315. Collection of the Author.

- 43 "Grand choix" has companion pieces in other chapters of *Le Vingtième siècle*. It (along with "Grand arrivage") refers beyond the chapter on Mormons and demands to be read as part of a network of polygamous iconography. Earlier in the novel Robida infuses his story with two polygamist groups. One vignette is of the French colonial army capturing the North African tribal Lord, Abd-El-Razibus. (El-Razibus' capture may allude to the widely covered surrender of Emir Abdelkader to French forces in 1847.) Hélène's news organization covers the French victory over the fearsome Touareg as they seize El-Razibus' wives as war spoils. Robida illustrates the Telephonoscope broadcast of the capture of a "long line of Arabs" and a few "négresses" adorned in exotic clothing and jewelry [FIGURE 10] (205). The other images that invite comparison with or against the Mormon marriage market is a full-color plate of the seizure of a Turkish seraglio and a vignette of the gift of a seraglio. In Turkey, the Ponto family assists with an Ottoman bankruptcy, so the Sultan offers a harem of "fourteen superb Circassians." In the color plate [FIGURE 11] French clerks document the property seizure of the harem in Constantinople; the vignette, "Cadeau" (255), lacks the color and florid gestures of the plate, but both position seraglio women as passive objects—gifts or seized property. French writings on Mormonism frequently associated Mormons with Arabs and Turks by virtue of their desert-based ancient prophet-like religions. Polygamy, of course, had much to do with this association, a move entirely in line with Anglo-American connotations of Mormonism.¹⁵ Needless to say, the capture of African concubines and gift of the Turkish harem anticipate the sexism of Mormon polygamy later in the novel. Women from colonized or contested zones are on display in languorous poses, the objects of a lecherous European male gaze and quite unlike the military formations or political campaigning of the French—or Mormon—women in Robida's vignettes.

Figure 10

Albert Robida. "Les Femmes d'Abd-el-Razibus." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, p. 205. Collection of the Author.

Figure 11

Albert Robida, "Saisie mobilière et immobilière du sérail par le congrès d'huissiers réuni à Constantinople." Albert Robida, *Le Vingtième siècle*. Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883, plate 33 (insert between pp. 256-57). Collection of the Author.

- 44 This network of illustrations featuring wives in a market context visits the same "inspirational territory of Orientalism" (Nochlin 56) of contemporary salon paintings that betray similar power and gender dynamics. The manner in which these paintings foreground power—both European military colonial might and a sexualized gender superiority—has implications for Robida's appropriation of Mormons. Paintings across the century exploited eroticized scenes of female sexual passivity and often a male gaze examining women for purchase or negotiating price. Gustave Boulanger's *Le marché aux esclaves*, which appeared in 1882, the year Robida published *Le Vingtième siècle*, and especially Jean-Léon Gérôme's multiple slave market scenes (ca. 1857-1884) set in the North Africa or ancient Greece or Rome, were undoubtedly a basis for Robida's vignettes of the Mormon marriage market [FIGURE 12].¹⁶ The illustrator may be poking light fun at Mormons, but he's also positioning the spectator in a way that implicates his work in the sexualized power dynamics of the Gérôme's paintings, the most pervasive examples of the Académie's Orientalist predilections.

Figure 12

Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Slave Market*. 1871, oil on canvas. 74.9 x 59.7 cm., Cincinnati Art Museum, John J. Emery Fund, 1917.368.

- 45 No single work is more pertinent to this network of illustrations and Mormon marriage docks than *The Slave Market*. This stems in part from the historical debate over the painting opened by Linda Nochlin's essay, "The Imaginary Orient." This *Slave Market* painting figures a female slave on display in a Cairo courtyard for a buyer who inspects her teeth. The invasive gesture of the buyer's fingers penetrating her mouth is matched by the scopophilic structure of the framing: the woman is available to the view only of the buyer and the painting's spectator (Lees 359). She is therefore exposed to the European viewer who is absent from the frame but for whom the entire image is constructed. This gets to the problematic heart of Gérôme's approach. Nochlin brings to light the "satisfaction" achieved in his paintings by "the delicious humiliation of lovely slave girls" for a "moralistic voyeur" (44). In a stunning hypothetical, Nochlin dismantles Gérôme's "ideologizing" obfuscation by speaking in the painter's place: "Don't think that I or any other right-thinking Frenchman would ever be involved in this sort of thing. I am merely taking careful note of the fact that less enlightened races indulge in the trade of naked women—but isn't it arousing!" (45). This, Nochlin claims, explains the popularity of Gérôme's Orientalist erotica in its various guises. In such works, "the vague, distant location allowed nineteenth-century French viewers to censure the practice of slavery, which was outlawed in Europe, while enjoying a look at the female body" (Lees 359).
- 46 The spatial dynamic Nochlin uncovers in this scenario heightens our understanding of Robida's treatment of Mormons and returns us to the geographic spectrum along which the illustrator located the Mormons: either far away in the western American desert or at the gates of Paris. Mormons in *Le Vingtième siècle* originate in the West but occupy

England. However, Robida codes the Mormons as Western and white; the vignettes position Mormons as European in skin color, dress and technological prowess. He illustrates them as colonizers of England with an international reach and inter-racial society but they do not appear categorically different from the French. Thus, despite the fact that *Le Vingtième siècle* concocts an Orientalized world of international polygamy, in the spirit of Gérôme's structuring gaze, a male French reader even nominally cognizant of colonialism could savor by proxy the imaginary pleasures of many wives while still locating barbarity on the side of an inferior race or civilization, that of the mockable Mormons. To wit: Rémy literalized this precise viewing position in his eye-witness account of the Mormons: "*Frère Brigham, c'est ainsi qu'on le désigne parmi les Saints, a un sérail de dix-sept femmes d'âges différents, et dont une, que le hasard nous a fait voir dans le jardin de son palais, est d'une surprenante beauté*" (vol. 1 175). And Henri Rochefort, cut from a different cloth than the naturalist Rémy, still savored the same glimpse when he spent a month in Salt Lake City: "*Nous nous étions figuré, presque malgré nous, que les mormones devaient tenir de la bizarrerie de leur condition des allures et presque une physionomie spéciales [. . .] Une notable quantité d'entre elles étaient fort jolies, mais ce ne peut être là une circonstance aggravante*" (Rochefort 251-52).

- 47 I may be overplaying the actual erotic presentation of women in Robida's images. In "Grand arrivage" and "Grand choix" Robida doesn't depict a slave auction *per se*. Nor are the females nude. Yet the scenes smack of a selection and physical examination of female sexuality (not just domestic skills) made available for male consumption. And the novel's readers, familiar with Gérôme's salon images and their colonial implications, would likely have taken Robida's cues. Moreover, Robida's visual strategy requires comparison to Gérôme's own supposedly "pseudoscientific naturalism," another target of Nochlin's argument. Would a substantive difference in formal strategy between Gérôme's objective, transparent, photorealistic naturalism and Robida's caricature weaken this parallel or undermine an anti-colonial reading? There is no pretense to photographic documentation of Mormons in Robida; his images are self-consciously exaggerated, willfully detached from the real for the spectator's own conscious pleasure in outrageous ridicule. This facetious irony may even elevate Robida's middle-brow mass cultural form over Gérôme's "ostensibly realistic representations of the authentic customs of picturesque Near Easterners" (Nochlin 44)—satire has the potential to unmask what the presumed objectivity of Gérôme's orientalism obfuscates.
- 48 This is a vexing question born of visual irony. Pictorially, Robida's illustrations lack the gravity and painterly seriousness of salon painting. But in their satirical address, Robida's images colonize territory for caricature and encroach on the field of painting. Despite the two modes of seeing and representing the Other, cutting across this apparent dichotomy is the invitation to adopt the same spectator position. In Robida, a French reader/viewer may at once have distanced himself from the Mormon westerner—not through a mythical objective transparency, but rather through the exaggeration of caricature—and yet also identified with the stand-in colonizer. The end result is to confirm the idea that the Mormons are oppressive (to women) but also energetic colonizing moderns—just as Alfred Maury had predicated in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Robida's satirical ambiguity affords the same "fantasy of absolute possession of women's naked bodies [that] lies at the heart of such typical subjects of Orientalist imagery as Gérôme's various *Slave Markets*" (Nochlin 43-44). I would argue that in the

ambiguity of satire—is this mockery or wish-fulfilment?—Robida's images still betray the imagination of a European society hypothesizing the pleasures of polygamy—French bankers receiving a harem and Mormon polygamists looking far more English than Arab, picking their lot of colonial women.

- 49 In other words, Robida's Mormons are French. In essence, Robida's presentation of Mormons amounts to a sexualized dream of French colonial conquest every bit in line with Alfred Maury's assessment of Mormon "colonizing energy." At the same time, amid images of female emancipation, Robida seems to be exploiting the strange mores of the Mormons to offset a more traditional view of women in social life (wives, mothers). The dialectic nudges the reader/viewer beyond the binary bourgeois family/Orientalized harem toward the dream of a gentrified French harem.

Mormons and the mission dé-civilisatrice

- 50 Robida's visual use of Mormons moves from a map of the Americas in geopolitical conflict between a Chinese dynasty and a German empire—with Mormons pushed out—to the marriage docks—Mormons bringing female subjects in from around the globe (their colonies). This cartographic displacement invites us to read not only concerns regarding Mormon evangelization (itself linked to American Protestantism), but against France's own colonial practices and debates at the time.
- 51 The Third Republic's commitment to colonial expansion is one of its most contradictory republican legacies (Blancel et al. 11; Costantini 67-70). The 1880s were the formative decade and Robida's novel (1883) is clearly marked by concurrent events and the polemical zeitgeist. France's annexation of Tahiti (1880) and seizure of Tunisia and reorganization of Algeria (both in 1881) came on the cusp of the "scramble for Africa" inaugurated with the Berlin Conference (1884-1885). Though France had quelled most indigenous resistance in Algeria by 1848, the book *France, Algérie et colonies* (1880) by Onésime Reclus, a brother of Elisée and the one who coined the term *francophonie*, expounded France's universal values of liberty, equality, fraternity for application abroad. Aided and abetted by intellectuals and public sentiment,¹⁷ Jules Ferry codified France's less-than-universal colonial interests during the parliamentary session of July 1885. Ferry advanced the economic and geopolitical rationale of "extension"—raw materials, competition for new markets with other European nations, desire to reclaim national grandeur after the *Année Terrible*—and articulated the Third Republic's "civilizing mission," its "official ideology of empire" (Conklin 14). Founded on the notion of the West's "races supérieures," the Third Republic's duty was to "civilize the inferior races" ("devoir de civiliser les races inférieures," Ferry 1885).
- 52 But the Third Republic's "colonial idea" wasn't monolithic or single-minded, and it belonged to "no single group or political family" (Girardet 43). As much the official ideology of the empire, the civilizing mission was very much the subject of "rich discussions and heated arguments between Frenchmen deeply divided over *what France stood for in the world*" (Daughton 261). In the July 1885 debate, Georges Clemenceau rebuked the racial foundation of Ferry's colonial ideology:

Races inférieures, races supérieures, c'est bientôt dit. Pour ma part j'en rabats singulièrement depuis que j'ai vu des savants allemands démontrer scientifiquement que la France devait être vaincue dans la guerre franco-allemande parce que le Français est d'une race inférieure à l'Allemand. Depuis ce temps, je

l'avoue, j'y regarde à deux fois avant de me retourner vers un homme et vers une civilisation et de prononcer: homme ou race inférieure. (Clemenceau)

- 53 The actual implementation of this ideology in localities scattered across the globe from Tonkin and Madagascar to Tahiti required accommodation on religious and cultural grounds and produced wildly different results that obscured disagreement. For example, J.P. Daughton has argued in his work on the interplay of religion, republicanism and colonialism that the presence of French missionary work in tension with, but sanctioned by, the civilizing mission made the latter something more than a “fundamentally secular ideology” (262). The civilizing mission had a religiously political zeal as well as actual religious missionaries.
- 54 Robida mirrors these dissensions and divergent views toward colonialism through the prism of Mormonism. *Le Vingtième siècle* anticipates the scramble for Africa with a scramble for American territory by Chinese and German imperial expansion too. Robida's first vignette in the chapter on Mormons, “le partage de l'Amérique,” consists of a cartographic depiction of North America in the year 1953, divided by three powers: the Chinese, based in San Francisco, the German Empire based in New York, and the Mormon Republic in the Rocky Mountains. The narrative explains that the two major powers are expanding East and West, respectively, which results in forcing the Mormons to leave the Rocky Mountains to decamp to England (after the English themselves have left their island for their colonial jewel, India).¹⁸ Thus, colonial pressures bring the Mormons to an abandoned England looking to expand their own republic and pursue their own civilizing mission. Judging by the dystopian description of Mormon England, Robida implies this would amount to a regression—a *mission dé-civilisatrice*. Nevertheless, Robida simultaneously puts into play a system that inverts the centrifugal/centripetal colonial economy of sending out universal values, superior culture, and colonists, while bringing back resources, economic gain and imperial grandeur. France's colonial approach had a heavy demographic component, with the resettlement of expropriated (agricultural) lands by hundreds of thousands of colonists overseen by a complex bureaucracy and infrastructure. Conversely, as the marriage docks receive foreign wives, so Robida's Mormon world pulls the colonized into the center of the new nation. Where France had refused to naturalize mostly Muslim subjects without renunciation of their religion, and under Ferry had preached the inequality of the races and even advanced conflict among them, the Mormon way implied by Robida is to populate through polygyny, strengthening the empire through an inter-racial society. As Alice Conklin reminds us, “although in earlier colonies (dating from the Old Régime/pre-Revolution) intermarriage was not only tolerated, but viewed by some as a viable means for bringing civilization to ‘barbarians’—a rather non-racist approach—the later nineteenth century developed a discourse against such racial mixing” (21). Yes, an oppressive, gendered and racist social hierarchy prevails, as the three tiers of the flying boat of “Grand Arrivage” suggests. Robida's hypothetical society trades the incompatibility of inter-racial mixing for the salacious pleasures of polygamy, and with it imagines a more universal France than France itself.
- 55 Robida concretizes the strained, failed utopianism of a “République coloniale” through Mormons. He may be directly alluding to the analysis two decades prior by Jules Rémy. There, Rémy imagined a new Mormon “nation,” ethnically and racially diverse: “une fusion universelle, à l'unité future des peuples dans une seule et même république” (2:

173-174). Robida's Mormonism presents a cosmopolitan paradox, an industrious, law-abiding, misogynistic, multi-ethnic, inter-racial, inter-national society.

Robida's Third, An Emancipated Mormon Republic?

- 56 If we take a cue from Daughton—that “competing concerns about race and gender were central to discussions of French colonial objectives” (261)—then crucially Robida intuits that women's roles and racial components of colonialism are not merely concomitant in the Third Republic. In Robida's novel they are structurally and integrally related in the secularizing dynamics of the Third Republic. As religion is being ushered out the door in the highly anticlerical Third Republic, in Robida's imagination an evangelizing religion stands at its doorstep ready to colonize France and impose a social order based in polygamy. Robida doesn't address the religious so much as social aspects of a Mormon society; there's no mention of Mormon dogma or scripture. For French critics, Mormonism is not first a church but an alternate civilization—a state, a society, an entity more complex than merely a church could be, in its social (family, polygamy), demographic (inter-racial, international, at least in French eyes), economic (communitarian), and political (theo-democracy) ramifications.
- 57 Regardless, as we push through this reading of Robida, we realize the interpretive layering or contradictory impulses inherent in Robida's enterprise. It's something of a double-helix. Robida is able to tap into fear over the colonial expansion of Mormons into England and eventually France—Mormons are that scary, non-catholic-*culte non reconnu* other; they are also oppressive to women; but at the same time, Robida caresses a critique of French colonial ideology and method—bring the colonized masses here! intermarry!—just as he acknowledges male anxiety regarding women being in the public sphere and worthy of equality (Conklin 63)—by displacing it onto the Mormons.
- 58 For all of *Le Vingtième siècle*'s gendered *légèreté* and progressive female utopianism, it frequently bends toward the conventional. Such is the case with M. Ponto's motive for pushing Hélène to become a lawyer early in the novel. He claims that women in general have a “natural disposition” for criminal cases and that Hélène's “tender physiognomy” and innate capacity for crying is a sure recipe for success (Robida, 1883 89). Hélène, “les larmes dans la voix” (107), gets a murderer acquitted. As a journalist, Hélène finds herself in a duel with the wife of a politician after revealing his infidelity. Though she fails miserably in combat training, she wins by accident, cutting the chest of her adversary, “la poitrine . . . blindée heureusement par un fort corset” (237). With regard to the supposedly unconventional world of working women presented in *Le Vingtième siècle*, Robida rights the ship and restores the proper balance of gender power and social order when Hélène's itinerary ends quite conventionally with her marriage to Philippe Ponto and their honeymoon voyage around the world.
- 59 Mormonism had been instrumentalized largely by conservative French critics to allegorize a host of domestic issues that were viewed through the prism of an imagined Mormon society transplanted to France. Robida understood the utility of this religious sect from the American West that also presented analogies to Orientalized societies of North Africa and the Middle East. Robida can be painted both as a sexist and a prophetic celebrator of women's rights, or maybe as both or neither—this is the challenge of working in satire and visual irony (not to mention futuristic utopias that make little commitment to reality). He delivers an imaginary future of embattled and

battling women, women as consumer objects, women investing the professional sphere, women reserved in battalions and bubbly in a chorus line, women dejected in solitude. He imagines a society with inter-racial and inter-national complexity during the drawn-out era of *revanchisme*. What is certain is that despite the little narrative space the Mormons take up, this marginalized movement from the American West nevertheless features in the story as the primary foil and social alternative to bourgeois, republican and colonial France—a group to be mocked but also one that exposes French contradictions and blind spots.

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NOTES

1. See Furet (1988), Agulhon (1990), and Nord (1995) on the ideological shift, and Sawyer (2018) on France's theoretical incubation of the democratic state between 1840-1880.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.
3. Between 1848 and 1879, Mormons built over 350 new settlements in the Western United States (Arrington 215), more than 100 outside of Utah between 1876 and 1879 alone, all under centralized control (Arrington 354).
4. Allen provides a useful parallel in her study of Danish perceptions of Mormonism between 1850 and 1920, as she attends to "provocative portrayals of Mormonism in Danish popular culture" (130). Allen shows how Mormonism became entangled in "a complex web of contemporary Danish cultural identity constructions" (182), inflecting Danish anxieties regarding emigration, monogamy, and Lutheranism. Mormonism never implanted itself in France to the same degree as in Denmark, nor did conversions or emigration pose a similar problem.
5. My analysis is part of a co-authored work in progress with Heather Belnap and Corry Cropper, tentatively titled *Marianne Meets the Mormons: Mormonism in the French Imaginary, 1830-1914*. A related work in progress by Cropper is a translation, *Mormons in Paris: French Mormon Musical Comedies, 1874-1892*. Cropper's introduction links four Mormon-inspired musical comedies to the Naquet divorce law and the commerce of marriage.
6. See Compère (2006a; 2006b) for literary accounts of Robida; see also Doré's critically expansive art historical volume that accompanied two Robida exhibits, a watershed for Robida studies; *Le Téléphonoscope* (Bulletin of the Association des Amis d'Albert Robida) for ongoing treatments of a variety of Robida subjects; and Willems' deft translation and introduction to *The Twentieth*

Century, a critical work in itself. Robida has scarcely figured in treatments of French perceptions of Mormonism: Rémond; Decoo; Portes; Euvrard, 2008; the exceptions are Francaviglia; Homer; and Introvigne.

7. Mormonism was viewed as utopian socialism starting in the 1840s; Reybaud devotes a substantial chapter to Mormons in his influential book on socialist “reformers.”

8. In a sign of growing church-state enmity, the freedom of association remained prohibited out of fear it would favor political foment through religious associations; gatherings of more than 20 people required prefect authorization.

9. I only deal with the first of this dual repressed here. I trace the Mormons-Communards conflation in *Le Vingtième siècle* in an unpublished manuscript, “Robida’s Mormon Dystopia.”

10. Several reports (“Nouvelles du jour”; “Faits divers”; “Nouvelles étrangères”) repeated a dispatch from Washington, D.C., first picked up by *Le Constitutionnel* in May: “Le bruit court que les Mormons font des préparatifs secrets pour résister par la force armée à l’application dans le territoire d’Utah des lois des États-Unis contre la polygamie” (“Service de nuit”).

11. See Homer’s excellent introduction to Audouard’s sympathetic view of Mormon polygamy. Advertising published in *Le Temps*, March 30, 1870, announced a public lecture on Friday, April 1, 1870 by Mme Olympe Audouard: “La Femme, en Russie, en Pologne, en Allemagne, en Angleterre, en Turquie, chez les Mormons, chez les Indiens et en Amérique.”

12. See Ulrich’s study of nineteenth-century Mormon women and civil rights. Joseph Smith created the Latter-Day Saint Relief Society, a women’s organization to which he had promised autonomy and a central role in church operations. After Smith’s assassination, the leader of the Relief Society, Smith’s widow Emma, broke with his successor, Brigham Young, and remained in Illinois as Mormon pioneers trekked across the central plains to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Ulrich’s analysis sheds light on the paradoxical political activity of LDS women in polygamy, as they militated for political agency and civil rights, eventually obtaining suffrage in 1870, all while defending the social structure to outsiders. *Le Vingtième siècle* brings female political emancipation to life—women in France on equal footing with men, women in military ranks of their own, while Mormon patriarchy threatens this enlightened future France.

13. Robida drew a female army battalion ready for a female coup d’état in *La Caricature*, vol. 42, October 16, 1880 (Doré, 2002 21).

14. McMillan links the new woman’s morality and new technology, citing the novel Robida wrote as a follow-up to *Le Vingtième siècle*: “alarmed commentators—usually male—saw technological change as the harbinger of a world in which sexual difference would be eliminated. At the popular level of science fiction, Robida, author of the widely read *Le XX^e siècle: la vie électrique*, conjured up images of a new race of superwomen who, dressed as men and technologically expert, gained control of the universe” (143).

15. The Mormon as Oriental is a fecund trope in French and Anglophone writing. My interest here is not with Orientalized Mormons in Robida *per se*, which demands its own ample treatment, but rather the way it points to a persistent desire to construct Mormon alterity. For Robida, Mormons needed to be a threat all French could dislike—or at least laugh at without *arrière-pensées* (Francaviglia).

16. Gérôme drew often from this thematic well: *For Sale (Le Marché d’esclaves)*, 1871; *Vente d’esclaves à Rome* (Salon of 1884); *Vente d’esclaves à Rome*; *Achat d’une esclave* (1857); *Phryné devant l’Aéropage* (1861, Salon of 1861). Another example is Edwin Long’s *The Slave Market of Babylon* (1875).

17. Girardet cites economists, “professors,” missionaries and geographers (24-42). Publications such as the *Revue des Deux Mondes* developed a framework for French imperialism; it published nearly a half dozen lengthy articles on Mormonism between 1850 and 1880, including an analysis by Onesime’s geographer brother, Elisée.

18. Mormons were both a displaced and a colonizing people. Early in their history they were driven out of successive “zion” establishments in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. Each was increasingly populous and ambitious in its communitarian structures. To escape repression, an exodus across the United States beginning in 1847 led the group into territory the United States would soon claim as a result of winning the Mexican-American War. As noted above, the group colonized the intermountain west.

ABSTRACTS

Nineteenth-century French observers fascinated with the American West appropriated cultural aspects of the region in a variety of ways. This transnational exchange included “Mormons,” members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who migrated progressively west from the Missouri and Illinois frontiers in the 1830s and 40s to the Great Basin after 1847, where they established an extensive network of colonies. Author-illustrator Albert Robida depicted the “polygamist sect” in venues such as *Le Journal amusant* and *La Caricature*, and in two novels, his Jules Verne-inspired *Voyages très extraordinaires de Saturnin Farandoul* (1879) and the futuristic satire *Le Vingtième siècle* (1883) set in 1953. In the latter, Robida conflated orientalist stereotypes abounding in accounts of Mormon polygamy and in French salon painting, by removing the Mormons from the Rocky Mountains and transplanting them to Europe in order to think through French preoccupations with geopolitics, colonization, and the role of women in society.

La France du dix-neuvième siècle, fascinée par le Far West américain, s'est emparée de l'image des « Mormons », souvent dépeints comme des colons polygames ayant migré du Missouri et de l'Illinois dans les années 1830-1840 jusqu'au Grand Bassin après 1847, où ils établirent un réseau de colonies. Le dessinateur et écrivain Albert Robida, plus que tout autre, les a représentés dans ses croquis pour *Le Journal amusant* et *La Caricature*, ainsi que dans ses œuvres de fiction satiriques, *Voyages très extraordinaires de Saturnin Farandoul* (1879), texte inspiré de Jules Verne, et le roman d'anticipation *Le Vingtième siècle* (1883). Dans ce dernier, Robida combine les stéréotypes orientalistes de la polygamie mormone et ceux de la peinture française du Salon. En transplantant les Mormons des Montagnes Rocheuses jusqu'en Europe, en l'an 1953, Robida se sert du mormonisme pour penser les angoisses et les désirs des Français des débuts de la Troisième République, touchant les questions géopolitiques, le rôle des femmes dans la société, le colonialisme.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Robida, mormonisme, caricature, roman d'anticipation, Troisième République, rôle des femmes, polygamie, colonialisme, orientalisme, transnationalisme

Keywords: Robida, Mormonism, caricature, futurism, Third Republic, the woman question, polygamy, colonialism, orientalism, transnationalism

AUTHOR

DARYL LEE

Brigham Young University
dlee@byu.edu