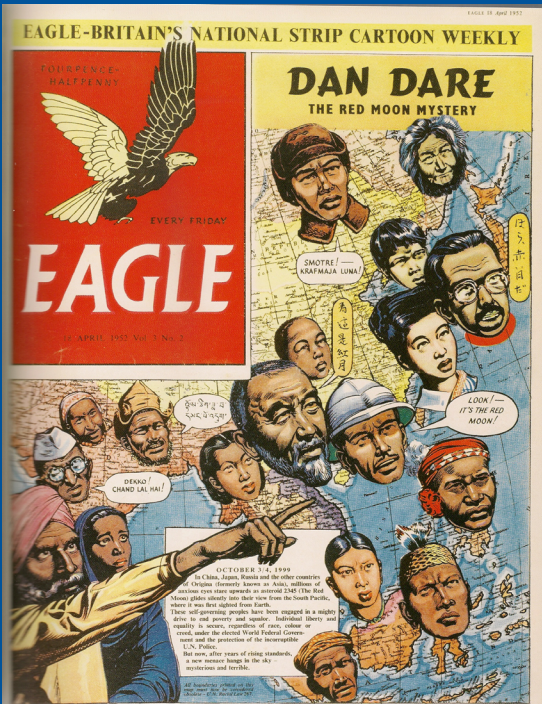


Colonialist Stereotypes and Narrative Form in European Comic Books

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'My basic point [is] that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world...'

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993.



Said's concept of the 'Other' has been challenged from a number of perspectives in the last 30 years but the idea that narrative is a key component in representing and reinforcing colonialist ideologies and mythologies remains important in the interpretation of visual culture. Throughout the 20th century stories appearing in mainstream British and French comic books relied on representations of the 'Other' to both locate and structure their narratives. In this paper these comic book narratives are interpreted in relation to concepts of stereotype and mythology as developed by Said in works such as *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). It is argued that in addition to providing the requisite 'exotic' locations and caricatured representations of the 'Other' these stereotypes and associated mythologies actually drove and shaped narrative structure. These works are innovative in

subverting traditional comic book genres and narrative structures but still employ stereotype and colonialist imagery.

Following Said's notion that these narratives tell us more about the coloniser than the colonised, it is suggested that the survival of these stereotypes and mythologies is indicative of Europe's difficult relationship with its colonial past. In the period covered by this study European powers had withdrawn from many of their colonial 'possessions' but these comic books still used representations of the 'Other' to communicate concepts of national identity.

Wednesday
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12:00 - 1:30 PM
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IAN HORTON co-ordinates Contextual and Theoretical Studies across the School of Design at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. In addition to research on architectural education he has published papers on national identity and architectural aesthetics, William Morris and the Artworkers Guild, oral history and text-based public art and colonialist stereotypes in European comic books. His present research is focused in two related areas: experimental typography and comic books.

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