HOW TO READ COMICS

DONALD DUCK

Writes Back

IMPERIALIST IDEOLOGY
IN THE post-colonial
COMIC

DONALD DUCK:

AN INTERVIEW

APOLOGY FOR DUCKOLOGY

"A HANDBOOK OF DE-COLONISATION"
Note to the reader

The form of the book is as much to do with our purpose as the arguments contained within it.

Sometimes in the pictorial essays no information at all is given about the images reproduced because it seemed to us that such information might distract from the points being made.

This book is about cartoon strips — and about political propaganda. Propaganda is the means by which a particular ideology is brought to life and comic strips are an ideal medium for the spreading of ideas and propaganda. Words or pictures on their own lack the direct impact of the two put together and illustrations will make the most theoretical text easier to understand.

Our principal aim has been to start a process of questioning.

Any writer may extend the ‘boundaries’ of a genre, but the writer who incorporates forms from other traditions articulates more clearly the constant adjustments we make to our perceptions of what is admitted to the category of ‘literature’.

What rules allow us to identify certain individuals as authors, to identify certain texts as ‘literature’?

What is the social meaning of these supermen, superwomen, super-lovers, super-boys, supergirls, super-ducks, super-mice, super-magicians, super-safecrackers? How did Nietzsche get into the nursery?

ONLY THE COMIC-BOOK CHARACTERS IN THIS BOOK ARE FICTITIOUS. ALL THE OTHERS ARE REAL.

LAS ENSEÑANZAS DE JESÚS APROPIADAS EN EL PRESENTE TEXTO, PERTENECEN AL EVANGELIO SEGÚN SAN MARCOS (7,30-33). EL RESTO DE LA HISTORIA ES FANTASÍA DEL AUTOR.

IN CONSIDERATION OF INNOCENT PEOPLE INVOLVED AND RELATIVES OF OTHERS, THE NAMES OF SOME CHARACTERS DEPICTED IN THIS TRUE MAGAZINE ARE FICTITIOUS.
So the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures. The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its post-colonial nature has not been generally recognized. But its relationship with the metropolitan centre as it evolved over the last two centuries has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literatures everywhere.

Britain, like the other dominant colonial powers of the nineteenth century, has been relegated to a relatively minor place in international affairs. In the spheres of politics and economics, and increasingly in the vital new area of the mass media, Britain and the other European imperial powers have been superseded by the emergent powers of the USA and the USSR.
XI MURDER IN DAWSON CREEK

The Comic Books Abroad

The Walt Disney World logo is a terrestrial globe wearing Mickey Mouse ears, enclosed in the letter D.

The factors which sent the comics trade into its commercial decline in the U.S. have not weighed to anything like the same extent in the less developed nations of the world. The "cultural lag," an expression of dominance of the metropolitan center over its colonized areas, is a familiar phenomenon; even in the U.S., Disney comics sell proportionately better in the Midwest and South.

From darkest Africa Time magazine reported the story of a district officer in the Belgian Congo, coming upon a group of terrified natives screaming "Mikimus." They were fleeing from a local witchdoctor, whose "usual voo had lost its do, and in the emergency, he had invoked, by making a few passes with needle and thread, the familiar spirit of that infinitely greater magician who has cast his spell upon the entire world—Walt Disney." The natives are here cast, by Time, in the same degraded role assigned to them by the comics themselves.

Recently a friend of mine from Uganda, who teaches at a trade union college near Kampala, overheard an interesting conversation between two of his students, one from Ghana, the other from Tanzania. The gist of it was that Americans, or white westerners in general, must be pretty naff if they are like Dagwood. When my friend, a Londoner, entered the discussion, he was assured that Africans really like Blondie and her family, but mainly because it showed them how far superior the African culture was to the Western!

At the end of 1953 the sale of American comic books which sow race hatred against Asiatic people was forbidden by law in Mexico. In Australia newspaper articles criticizing comic books have appeared with typical comic-book illustrations. The Australian Journalists Association has asked for a ban on the importation of American comics. In the Union of South Africa their importation has also been prohibited. The law there specifically includes old issues. Voices against comic books have also been raised in Brazil and Egypt, in Indonesia, in India and in South American countries. It is a chorus of dismay.

Since the introduction of television, research on comics and cartoons has been badly neglected in developing countries. Hence, by the example of Kenya, number two among the countries with a strong press in Black Africa, the author seeks to illustrate the propagation and the functions of comics—imported from the West or home-made—in the domestic mass media. Beyond that the author indicates what significant tasks in development policy comics may handle in the future.

Comics occupy in the Mexican culture industry the economically most significant position among the products of mass communication. Four large publication combines share 35 percent of the market and thus determine stereotype contents and messages of the commercial comics series. The lowest social strata account for most of the more than 14 million consumers even though the contents imparted by the comics products reflect a constantly recurrent pattern of middle class morality. The authors explain this phenomenon within the specific social structure of Mexico as a threshold country in which comics constitute an obstacle to the creation of a "national" culture.
According to the Agency, their "best seller" is a cartoon narrative dealing with the history of the United States, which was produced in twelve languages besides English (Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Burmese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Korean, Indonesian, Urdu, Portuguese, Chinese, Parsi, and Kurdish). The print run is now in the millions.

From Jiggs and little Jeff to Dennis and Charlie Brown, the world is truly the comics' oyster.

During the imperial period writing in the language of the imperial centre is inevitably, of course, produced by a literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonizing power. Thus the first texts produced in the colonies in the new language are frequently produced by 'representatives' of the imperial power.

*Red Wolf* by John Buscema. Marvel Comics had already introduced two Negro heroes into their comic strips and they followed this with an Indian super-hero. From *The Avengers* No. 80. © 1970 Marvel Comics Group
Although the Indian group attempted to solve singular problems, the Indian solution was rarely considered the right one by the non-Indian as intervention was consistently prevalent in the stories analyzed.

The dominant implicit theme presented within the comic story was the dependence of the Indian on the non-Indian to solve his problems.
Africa is the source for the most significant and catalytic images of the first two decades of the twentieth century. In one very significant way the 'discovery' of Africa was the dominant paradigm for the self-discovery of the twentieth-century European world in all its self-contradiction, self-doubt, and self-destruction, for the European journey out of the light of Reason into the Heart of Darkness.

For the early twentieth century, Africa was an image which offered either absolute horror (of the Kurtzian variety found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) or an abscission from the decayed and destructive fragments of a 'civilization' whose bloodthirsty hypocrisies and violent contradictions had been exposed on the battlefields of the Somme and Verdun.
It can be argued that the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other, both at the level of simple utility (as propaganda for instance) and at the unconscious level, where it leads to the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, establish 'savagery', 'native', 'primitive', as their antitheses and as the object of a reforming zeal.

On the other hand are the inferior people: natives, primitives, savages, "ape men," Negroes, Jews, Indians, Italians, Slavs, Chinese and Japanese, immigrants of every description, people with irregular features, swarthy skins, physical deformities, Oriental features.
He argues that there are three modes in which subjects are constructed.

The first mode is that of 'Good' subjects who result from 'Identification'; they 'freely consent' (in Althusser's terms) to the discursive formation which determines them.

The second mode produces 'Bad' subjects who result from 'counter-identification'; they refuse the image offered and turn it back on the offerer.

The third mode Pêcheux characterizes as 'dis-identification'; this is the product of political and discursive practices which work 'on and against' the dominant ideologies. Pêcheux's third modality, then, recognizes that dominant ideologies, whilst they are inescapable (to suggest otherwise is to embrace the political myth of the 'end of ideologies'), are transformable. 'Disidentification constitutes a working (transformation-displacement) of the subject form and not just its abolition' (169).
The danger in 'transcultural dialogues', such as those represented by some traditional anthropological texts, is that a new set of presuppositions, resulting from the interchange of cultures, is taken as the cultural reality of the Other. The described culture is therefore very much a product of the particular ethnographic encounter – the text creates the reality of the Other in the guise of describing it.

Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created.

Whether they are meant to be educational or whether they are intended for pure entertainment, all comic strips contain a certain measure of political bias or opinion, even if it is only a caricatured one. Cartoonists can't help reflecting the moral, political and cultural climate of their time.

The five most repetitive nouns used to identify the Indian in the 44 comic book stories were: Indian, heathen, brave, warrior, and Squaw. The five most repetitive nouns used to identify the non-Indian characters were: Paleface, Whiteman, Yellowstips, Boss, and Agent.

The five most repetitive adjectives used to describe the Indian were: aggressive, revengeful, cruel, treacherous, and cowardly. The five most repetitive adjectives used in describing the non-Indian were: persistent, alert, individualistic, industrious, and shrewd.

The five most repetitive violent verbs found in the comic books were: shoot, scalp, kill, attack, and revenge.

The direction of the violence in 75% of the comic book stories was initiated by the Indian against the non-Indian. The cursory overall explicit theme, noted by the coders after the first reading of the comics was one of power and dominance. Clearly and most significantly, the direction of the stories was negative towards Indians.
In 86.4% of the stories, the non-Indian emerged as the hero, as compared to 13.7% for the Indian.

The main personality traits which marked the Indian's actions were vengeance, hatred and revenge; for the non-Indian the main trait presented was the pursuit of justice.

The Indian appeared as having a grim expression in 100% of the stories analyzed.

For the most part the Indian had poor speech patterns. In 268 instances words were left out of sentences spoken by Indian characters rather than 10 instances by the non-Indian. Indians expressed more guttural sounds than the non-Indian; 206 compared with 52.
Synopsis
While searching for a fabulously rich gold diggings, Wild Bill and the frightened miners travel by Comanche Indians. Both are sentenced to be by the Old Chief, but the Chief's lovely daughter falls in love with Bill. As the story opens, we find Princess Ady swallowed talking to Wild Bill.

31st January 0000

If this gets out, I'll be fired as President of Harvard!

YOU'VE SEEN ENOUGH JOHN WAYNE MOVIES TO ANSWER THAT YOURSELF!

NO FINE DEAN OF ADMISSIONS YOU ARE--IF YOU HAVEN'T ADMITTED ANY INDIANS!

BUT PRESIDENT--IF NO INDIANS WANT TO GO TO HARVARD, WHAT WILL I DO?

YOU DON'T MEAN--IT'S USE FORCE!!

NOT--I MEAN AMERICAN INDIANS!!

NONE HAVE APPLIED!

THEN-GO OUT AND GET SOME!!

WE NEED YOU!! TO SHOW HOW LIBERAL WE ARE, WE'LL KICK A PALEFACE OUT TO MAKE SPACE FOR YOU!!

GLAD TO TAKE SPACE OF PALEFACE!! THEY TOOK US PLENTY FROM ME.

WHAT----NICE WARRIOR WILD BILL... WILL YOU MARRY CHIEF'S DAUGHTER IF SHE SETS YOU FREE!!

SHHSHH! HANDSOME WARRIOR WILD BILL...
Prospective freelancers for Disney receive from the Publications Division a sheaf of Comic Book Art Specifications, designed in the first instance for the Comic Book Overseas Program.

Above all, race and racial stereotyping is abolished: "Natives should never be depicted as negroes, Malayans, or singled out as belonging to any particular human race, and under no circumstances should they be characterized as dumb, ugly, inferior or criminal."

Walt took virgin territories of the U.S. and built upon them his Disneyland palaces, his magic kingdoms. His view of the world at large is framed by the same perspective; it is a world already colonized, with phantom inhabitants who have to conform to Disney’s notions of it. Each foreign country is used as a kind of model within the process of invasion by Disney-nature.

At that time, and if you look it up you can check this, Scrooge had “five billion quintuplatillion untuplatillion multuplatillion impossibidillion fantasticatillion dollars”,

I made it by digging gold and silver and tin and copper out of the mountains of the world!
simple statistic: out of the total of one hundred magazines we studied, very nearly half—47 percent—showed the heroes confronting beings from other continents and races.

something is said about the child/noble savage, it is really the Third World one is thinking about. The hegemony which we have detected between the child-adults who arrive with their civilization and technology, and the child-noble savages who accept this alien authority and surrender their riches, stands revealed as an exact replica of the relations between metropolis and satellite, between empire and colony, between master and slave. Thus we find the metropolitan not only searching for treasures, but also selling the native comics (like those of Disney), to teach them the role assigned to them by the dominant urban press.

Ever since 1935, when the League of Nations recognized Mickey Mouse as an "International Symbol of Good Will," Disney has been an outspoken political figure, and one who has always been able to count upon government help.

Here lies the novelty of Disney (a product of his historical period), which rejects the clumsy, overdrawn schematism of the adventure strips arising in the same era. The ideological background may be similar, but since he does not reveal the repressive forces openly, Disney is much more dangerous. To create a Batman out of Bruce Wayne is to project the imagination beyond the everyday world in order to redeem it. Disney colonizes reality and its problems with the anagelsic of the child's imagination.
The only relation the center (adult-city folk bourgeoisie) manages to establish with the periphery (child-noble savage-worker) is touristic and sensationalist. The primary resources sector (the Third World) becomes a source of playthings; gold, or the picturesque experiences with which one holds boredom at bay. The innocence of this marginal sector is what guarantees the Duck-burger his touristic salvation, his imaginative animal-ness, and his childish rejuvenation.

This seizure of marginal peoples and their transformation into a lost purity, which cannot be understood apart from the historic contradictions arising from an advanced capitalist society, are ideological manifestations of its economic-cultural system. For these peoples exist in reality, both in the dependent countries and as racial minorities ("Nature's" bottomless reservoir) within the U.S. itself.

Power to Donald Duck means the promotion of underdevelopment. The daily agony of Third World peoples is served up as a spectacle for permanent enjoyment in the utopia of bourgeois liberty.

Reading Disney is like having one's own exploited condition rammed with honey down one's throat.
A 'privileging norm' was enthroned at the heart of the formation of English Studies as a template for the denial of the value of the 'peripheral', the 'marginal', the 'uncanonized'. Literature was made as central to the cultural enterprise of Empire as the monarchy was to its political formation. So when elements of the periphery and margin threatened the exclusive claims of the centre they were rapidly incorporated. This was a process, in Edward Said's terms, of conscious affiliation proceeding under the guise of filiation (Said 1984), that is, a mimicry of the centre proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It caused those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become 'more English than the English'.
In practice the history of this distinction between English and English has been between the claims of a powerful 'centre' and a multitude of intersecting usages designated as 'peripheries'. The language of these 'peripheries' was shaped by an oppressive discourse of power.

Raymond C. Ewer, "Things as They Ought To Be." (1909)
THE ENEMY . . . The first thing a Klansman must learn is that the enemy is often very SUBTLE. He is often able, through Godless Scientific Miracles, to assume any number of HEINOUS DISGUISES in order to gain the unwitting Sympathy of the good and simple people of America.

In this example from a CASE STUDY, a Communist agitator from the North was able to assume the disguise of a CUTE PICKANINNY and enroll in a white school where he began to INDOCTRINATE the children in ONE-WORLDISM and unholy MISCEGENATION. He is now on display at the Klan Museum.

Camouflaged as a gentle old nigra man, this INSIDIOUS MEDDLER was brought before a JUST TRI- BUNAL. He was convicted of selling DOPE and HEROIN to children and was later sentenced to three years of swimming an Alabama river with 300 pounds of chains.

Many and nefarious are the schemes and PLOTS used to SUCK DRY the economy of the South while following the coughers of the JEW NIGRAS for the day when they move to take over the weakened country. The disguise above was found to be so realistic it could not be removed and the agitator had to be shot.

"Buster, Have You Ever Stomped a Nigra?"
The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective.

Paradoxically, however, imperial expansion has had a radically destabilizing effect on its own preoccupations and power. In pushing the colonial world to the margins of experience the 'centre' pushed consciousness beyond the point at which monocentrism in all spheres of thought could be accepted without question. In other words the alienating process which initially served to relegate the post-colonial world to the 'margin' turned upon itself and acted to push that world through a kind of mental barrier into a position from which all experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic, and multifarious. Marginality thus became an unprecedented source of creative energy.
Hello, Steve! What's new?

I'm black.

But before Lois can say another word...

Wh-what's happening?

I feel strange!

As if...as if I were shedding my skin!

Superman...look!

Yes, Lois! You're white again! The effect didn't last as long as I expected.

This disguise is a good idea, Tosh!

Well, cut a pretty figure, Tish!

It works, Tosh!

Hun-de-doo-la-ma-boo-la!

Heap big fella, my men!

Much welcome, O powerful ones! Bring many gifts quickly!

Okay, King!

When Bruce Wayne is crowned as chief, that officially makes him a paleface "Indian!"

The papers are sure to play that angle up... and that gives Bruce Wayne two races.

It's a long shot... but certainly worth trying!

But at that moment, attracted by the blaze below, two figures swing from one of the towering derricks...

Here we go, our first test as Indians!

Man-of-the-bats! Slay him!
A characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion, and a study of the subversive strategies employed by post-colonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative and creative responses to this condition. Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie’s phrase, the ‘Empire writes back’ to the imperial ‘centre’, not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place.
Place and displacement

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place.

The word is cari... bony, something like...
He means caribou, babe, what's that?
An Indian canoe.
No, the word is... cari... cari...
It must be CARIBBEAN, what's that?
That's a vegetable that grows in Mexico.

Actually, I was born on an Indian reservation.
The truth is I was born in Connecticut.
The youngest of four, I was the baby of the family.

The post-colonial text, by developing specific ways of both constituting cultural distance and at the same time bridging it, indicates that it is the 'gap' rather than the experience (or at least the concept of a gap between experiences) which is created by language. The absence of explanation is, therefore, first a sign of distinctiveness, though it merely makes explicit that alterity which is implicit in the gloss. More importantly, it is an endorsement of the facility of the discourse situation, a recognition that the message event, the 'scene of the Word', has full authority in the process of cultural and linguistic intersection.
Language variance, with its synecdochic function, is thus a feature of all post-colonial texts. The writer 'function' meets the reader 'function' in the writing itself which dwells at the intersection of a vast array of cultural conditions. Such writing neither represents culture nor gives rise to a world-view, but sets the scene of a constitution of meaning. The strategies which such writing employs to maintain distance and otherness while appropriating the language are therefore a constant demonstration of the dynamic possibilities available to writing within the tension of 'centre' and 'margin'.

At the same time, that is, as an English 'emerges' from English it establishes itself as distinct and separate. A considerable range of linguistic variance is generated, even though such variance is always attacked from the centre by the dismissive terms 'colloquialism' or 'idiom'.

In the late 1960s "counterculture," there was an explosion of underground comix. (They were called "comix" to distinguish them from the mainstream comics.) This stimulated the growing-up process of the medium and changed attitudes, so that it became acceptable for adults to be seen reading comic books.
Parenthetic translations of individual words, for example, ‘he took him into his obi (hut)’, are the most obvious and most common authorial intrusion in cross-cultural texts. Editorial intrusions, such as the footnote, the glossary, and the explanatory preface, where these are made by the author, are a good example of this. Situated outside the text, they represent a reading rather than a writing, primordial sorties into that interpretative territory in which the Other (as reader) stands.

Untranslated words

The technique of selective lexical fidelity which leaves some words untranslated in the text is a more widely used device for conveying the sense of cultural distinctiveness. Such a device not only acts to signify the difference between cultures, but also illustrates the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts.

The gradual discarding of glossing in the post-colonial text has, more than anything, released language from the myth of cultural authenticity, and demonstrated the fundamental importance of the situating context in according meaning. While the untranslated word remains metonymic and thus emphasizes the (postulated) experiential gap which lies at the heart of any cross-cultural text, it also demonstrates quite clearly that the use of the word, even in an English-language context, confers the meaning, rather than any culturally hermetic referentiality. Ultimately, the choice of leaving words untranslated in post-colonial texts is a political act, because while translation is not inadmissible in itself, glossing gives the translated word, and thus the ‘receptor’ culture, the higher status.
**Inter'language**

The use of untranslated words as interface signs seems a successful way to foreground cultural distinctions, so it would appear even more profitable to attempt to generate an 'inter-culture' by the fusion of the linguistic structures of two languages.

**Allusion and difference**

Allusion can perform the same function of registering cultural distance in the post-colonial text, according to the extent to which the text itself provides the necessary context for the allusion.

And we thought, “If we could just tell those stories somehow...” But we figured that nobody white could understand this. We were naive.
So, I was still fishing for my ideas, and I was looking at some films that were being shown at a film course up there that included a lot of early animated cartoons. I was really struck by the cat and mouse cartoons. I saw that the mice in those cartoons were very similar to the negroes in the other cartoons that were being shown in the same days, and realized that this cat and mouse thing was just a metaphor for some kind of oppression. I wanted to do a comic strip in which the mice were blacks and the cats were the whites, using funny-animal style, and so I started trying to research things about black history. And then just short-circuited there, realizing that I was never going to be able to give this any authenticity, because I just didn't know the material, and I'd just be some kind of white liberal simp. On the other hand, there was an involvement with oppression that was much closer to my own life: my father's and mother's experiences in concentration camps, and my own awareness of myself as a Jew.

To use these ciphers, the cats and mice, is actually a way to allow you past the cipher at the people who are experiencing it. So it's really a much more direct way of dealing with the material.

Hitler disapproved (Nazi propaganda considered all kinds of mice, even Disney's, to be dirty creatures) — "Well," scolded Walt, "Mickey is going to save Mr. A. Hitler from drowning or something one day. Just wait and see if he doesn't. Then won't Mr. A. Hitler be ashamed!" Come the war, however, Disney was using the Mouse not to save Hitler, but to damn him. Mickey became a favorite armed forces mascot; fittingly, the climactic event of the European war, the Normandy landings, were code-named Mickey Mouse.
Harris sees imaginative escape as the ancient and only refuge of oppressed peoples, but the imagination also offers possibilities of escape from the politics of dominance and subservience. One of his most important images for this process is provided by the folk character of Anancy, the spider man, from Akan folklore.

The trickster character of the spider man, like the limbo 'gateway' of the Middle Passage, offers a narrow psychic space through which radical transformation may occur.

Given his anti-social attitudes and introspective insecurities, Spider-Man belongs to the trickster tradition among folk heroes. Even, as with Spider-Man, when the trickster's activities result in "benefits to the whole group, his actions can not be interpreted as providing a model for future conduct. He is a projection of desires generally thwarted by society." It is interesting to note that the trickster figure in African folklore is often a spider.

'Neo-Tarzanism: the poetics of pseudo-tradition' (1975). Here, Soyinka highlights the reductionism implicit in Chinweizu and the others' view of 'African reality' and 'African traditional literature'.
The Canadian 'victim position' is occasioned not just by the obvious political circumstances of domination by the USA or, earlier, by Britain and France, but by the radical problem of the 'word'. Canadians in Lee's terms do not have their own language, but are forced to use the language of others, in a position closer to that of the Africans brought to the Caribbean once their ancestral languages were no longer recuperable, or, as feminist theorists have frequently pointed out, to that of the position of women.

Pairing the two strange notions of “Canadian” and “comic book” within the context of one volume brings up some interesting and bizarre observations. I had never realized until this time just how many similarities there are between Canadians and comic book people.

As a kid growing up on Disney duck comics and Classics Illustrated in the fifties, and DC and Marvel comics in the sixties, the medium was, by definition, American. Not only were all superhero stories set in the U.S., but even the enticing ads for sea monkeys and toy soldiers were American.

Comics, like TV, reinforced the notion that Canada was a backwater. In fact, comics were a welcome escape from our own culture's seeming dullness. Life in America, we just knew, was more exciting. Superman might visit his Fortress of Solitude in our Arctic from time to time, but never Toronto or Montreal, let alone Halifax where I lived.

Try to speak the words of your home and you will discover—if you are a colonial—that you do not know them... To speak unreflectingly in a colony then, is to use words that speak only alien space. To reflect is to fall silent, discovering that your authentic space does not have words. And to reflect further is to recognise that you and your people do not in fact have a privileged authentic space just waiting for words; you are, among other things, the people who have made an alien inauthenticity their own.

After the Fulton bill became law, a committee representing publishers, distributors and printers decided that comic books affected by the definition of the new law should be discontinued.

Canadian parents lost nothing in the way of freedom of speech. Their children were protected from one of the influences which had made it harder for them to grow up decently.
A comic book has a picture of a white girl held with her arms seized from behind by a dark-skinned man. A picture like this stands out in a child's mind quite independent of the story. The picture alone becomes the starting point for fantasy.

When the girls are white, there is always some covering of the breasts. Only colored girls have their breasts fully exposed.
Feminism and post-colonialism

Women in many societies have been relegated to the position of 'Other', marginalized and, in a metaphorical sense, 'colonized', forced to pursue guerrilla warfare against imperial domination from positions deeply imbedded in, yet fundamentally alienated from, that imperium (Spivak 1987). They share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression, and like them they have been forced to articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors. Women, like post-colonial peoples, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available 'tools' are those of the 'colonizer'.

The Disney organization excludes women from positions of importance. Disney freely admitted "Girls bored me. They still do..."

The subversion of patriarchal literary forms themselves has also been an important part of the feminist project. As in the post-colonial texts this subversion may not be a conscious aim of the authors. It may be generated, inescapably, by the ideological conflict that inevitably takes place in the text.

the sexuality of dialectics

You've been doing such a good job, we've decided to promote you. We believe in women's lib. You know!

Our movement is so strong that they have to recognize us! We've been promoted to manager.

Bullshit! The only equality you'll achieve is equality in bondage.

My company and I want to get rid of all bosses!

Yes, boss.

Boss, she doesn't understand how nicely you exploit us.

This will cost me a profitable friendship... it'll cost you your job, Daisy!

I deserve it! I sure goofed!
Superwoman (Wonder Woman) is always a horror type. She is physically very powerful, tortures men, has her own female following, is the cruel, "phallic" woman. While she is a frightening figure for boys, she is an undesirable ideal for girls, being the exact opposite of what girls are supposed to want to be.

There was no question but that this girl lived under difficult social circumstances. But she was prevented from rising above them by the specific corruption of her character development by comic-book seduction. The woman in her had succumbed to Wonder Woman. By reading many comic books the decent but tempted child has the moral props taken from under him.
Thus, the history and concerns of feminist theory have strong parallels with post-colonial theory. Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, sought to invert the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions in place of a male-dominated canon. But like post-colonial criticism, feminist criticism has now turned away from such simple inversions towards a questioning of forms and modes, to unmasking the assumptions upon which such canonical constructions are founded, moving first to make their cryptic bases visible and then to destabilize them.

In addition, both feminist and post-colonial critics have reread the classical texts (Jones 1985), demonstrating clearly that a canon is produced by the intersection of a number of readings and reading assumptions legitimized in the privileging hierarchy of a 'patriarchal' or 'metropolitan' concept of literature. This offers the possibility of reconstructing the canon, and not simply replacing it in an 'exchange of texts', since both discourses recognize that to change the canon is to do more than change the legitimized texts. It is to change the conditions of reading for all texts.

Other women attempted to inject a strain of feminism into comix. A handful penetrated the club and wrote and illustrated beside the boys. Many of these women appeared in the first all-woman comix book, It Ain't Me, Babe, published by California's first feminist newspaper, of the same name in 1970. Sales of the publication were respectable enough for some of the women to start up Wimmen's Comix in 1972. With a five-year interruption between 1978 and 1983, Wimmen's Comix now comes out roughly annually with a different theme in each issue (#12 Fashion, #13 Occult, #14 Dinosaurs, Relationships, #15 Little Girls). For female comix artists and readers, the emergence of Wimmen's Comix and, in 1972, Tut and Chits marked a time of recognition, and an exploration of their own stories.

There were difficulties inherent in working in comix and the exclusion of women by male cartoonists was only one hurdle. There were production problems when Chin Lyvvy and Joyce Farley formed Na-nugot Productions to publish Wet Satin, a comic book of women's erotic fantasies, the printer refused to print it, even though he had printed the male Screwere Ser. His reason: male sex comics were salable, but Wet Satin was "serious, and therefore pornographic."

Remember, sister, don't let all the bosses, cops, priests, teachers, and militants fuck you. Make love with revolutionaries!
The exploitation of brutality and terror is blatantly apparent. The homosexual element lies somewhat deeper. It is not— at least, not importantly—in the obvious faggotry of men kissing one another and saying 'I love you,' and then flying off through space against orgasm backgrounds of red and purple, not in the transvestite scenes in every kind of comic-book from floppity-rabbits to horror-squinkies, not in the long-haired western killers with tight pants (for choice). Neither is it in the explicit Samurai subservience of the inevitable little-boy helpers—theoretically identification shoe-horns for children not quite bold enough to identify themselves with Superprig himself—nor in the fainting adulation of thick necks, ham fists, and well-filled jockstraps; the draggy capes and costumes, the shamanistic talismans and superstitions that turn a jissified clerk into a one-man flying lynch-mob with biceps bigger than his brain. It is not even in the two comic-book companies staffed entirely by homosexuals and operating out of our most phallic form: skyscraper.

The really important homosexuality of the Superman theme—as deep in the hub of the formula as the clothes and kisses are at the periphery—is in the lynching pattern itself, in the weak and fearful righteousness with which it achieves its wrong.

Mes gestes et mes manières se sont très vite féminisées.

Ah! quelle langue!
Several years ago a California psychiatrist pointed out that the Batman stories are psychologically homosexual. Our researches confirm this entirely.

In many adolescents the homoerotic, anti-feminist trend unconsciously aroused or fostered by these stories is demonstrable. We have inquired about Batman from overt homosexuals treated at the Readjustment Center, to find out what they thought the influence of these Batman stories was on children and adolescents. A number of them knew these stories very well and spoke of them as their favorite reading.

One young homosexual during psychotherapy brought in a copy of Detective Comics, with a Batman story. He pointed out a picture of "The Home of Bruce and Dick" a house beautifully landscaped, warmly lighted and showing the devoted pair side by side, looking out a picture window. When he was eight this boy had realized from fantasies about comic-book pictures that he was aroused by men. At the age of ten or eleven, "I found my liking, my sexual desires, in comic books. I think I put myself in the position of Robin. I did want to have relations with Batman.

The Lesbian counterpart of Batman may be found in the stories of Wonder Woman and Black Cat. The homosexual connotation of the Wonder Woman type of story is psychologically unmistakable.

Late that night, as Flash tosses in troubled slumber, the witch queen teaches Dale---obedience!}

Next week: "War in the Caves"
NOW HE'S PUBLISHING COMIC STRIPS ABOUT GAY LIBERATION...

YES, THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL IT?

WOW!!...THE DOORS TO HIS MIND'S EYES WERE SHUT THE OTHER EVENING AS PENS AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER IT'S ALL OVER...NO HARD AND QUICK...NO EMOTIONS...A 'MASTURBATION MACHINE MIGHT DO IT BETTER'..."ALL HAVE THIS IN COMMON: THE PRIMARY INSTRUMENT IS THE PENS, NOT THE PERSON."

"THEY HAVE A COMMISSION TO PLANT IT THEIR SOIL IN PUBLIC...THE FRUIT THAT THE SHRUBBERY IS SURE TO BE A PECULIAR, AN ATTRACTION OR A SYMPATHS MIGHT SEEM TO OCCUR TO THEM...THIS IS THE GOSPEL OF HOMOSEXUALITY!"

"FUCKING...CREDO!

THIS GUY SETS PSYCHOLOGIC Baims/ 50 YEARS!

LEWD CONDUCT IN PUBLIC?? ALL I DID WAS KISS HER!

"YOU HUGGED HER, TOO, BEATEN GENERALLY STRAIGHT, HINT?"

WE'RE GONNA GET YOU FOR THIS, OBSCENITY, IN THE PRESENCE OF A WOMAN, TOO!

THAT'S RIDICULOUS!

"IN THE PRESENCE OF A LADY...

WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM?"

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, YOU DYE?

YOU'RE REALLY ASKING FOR IT. GREAT SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC..OBSCENITY...WEARING HER CLOTHES...

I WAS PAINTING HER BOOBS. (A LOOK) IN SPAS...IT'S MY UNIFORM!

MEANWHILE, THE LADY CUP SPANS HERE...

LIGHT!

NORMAL GERMANS WEARING HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE!

DON'T BE GLAD THAT I'M AN HOMOSEXUAL. I'M SAD, YOU DIRTY FASCIST!

HEY HONEY! ARE YOU MARRIED YET? HAVING A BALLOON?

NEVER MIND, MELLY!

EVERYTHING AM REVERSED IN MY BIZARRO WORLD!
Post-colonialism as a reading strategy

The subversion of a canon is not simply a matter of replacing one set of texts with another. This would be radically to simplify what is implicit in the idea of canonicity itself. A canon is not a body of texts per se, but rather a set of reading practices (the enactment of innumerable individual and community assumptions, for example about genre, about literature, and even about writing). These reading practices, in their turn, are resident in institutional structures, such as education curricula and publishing networks. So the subversion of a canon involves the bringing-to-consciousness and articulation of these practices and institutions, and will result not only in the replacement of some texts by others, or the redeployment of some hierarchy of value within them, but equally crucially by the reconstruction of the so-called canonical texts through alternative reading practices.
I don't think they make the colored people right. The way they make them I never seen before—their hair and big nose and the English they use. They never have an English like we have. They put them so dark—for real I've never seen anybody before like that. White kids would think all colored people look like that, and really they aren't. Some of those children in my school don't like no white people. One girl's face was scratched up. I seen the girl, but not the fight.

They need, that is, to escape from the implicit body of assumptions to which English was attached, its aesthetic and social values, the formal and historically limited constraints of genre, and the oppressive political and cultural assertion of metropolitan dominance, of centre over margin.
But in post-colonial societies, the participants are frozen into a hierarchical relationship in which the oppressed is locked into position by the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group, a superiority which is reinforced when necessary by the use of physical force.
Jameson provides post-colonial critics seeking to develop Fanon's analysis of Manichean duality with the necessary model of a reflexive relationship between social process and text, a model which emphasizes that the text's relationship with 'the historical subtext' is an active one. It is the text which transforms the historical subtext which it draws upon itself and this transformation constitutes what Jameson characterizes as the 'symbolic act' of the narrative. So the text, paradoxically, 'brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction' (Jameson 1981: 81–2).

What Is A Spick?

Back in 1937 Paco "The Taco" Spick was considered the most Baddest Dude this Side of the Ganges.

So fond was Paco of robbing and killing and sniping people his name "Spick" soon became synonymous with the rest of his race, also into robbing, killing, sniping people (and doing the cha-cha).
These critics have sought to offer ways of dismantling colonialism's signifying system and exposing its operation in the silencing and oppressing of the colonial subject.

THE F.L.Q. IS MENACING THE POPULATION!
(IT'S BEEN SAID, THUS IT MUST BE TRUE . . .)
BUT IS IT REALLY THE ONLY MENACE WHICH IS HANGING OVER QUEBEC?

PRESENTING
SUPERMAN

YOU THINK THE GINAL AND MANY USEFUL THINGS TO OFFER TO THE AMERICANS:

I'M STILL WAITING FOR A "WHITE KID!"

AND??

WELL... I STARTED A PLACEMENT PROGRAM TWO YEARS AGO IN WHICH WE'D TAKE WHITE CHILDREN TO LIVE WITH INDIAN FOSTER PARENTS

BUT WE DON'T WANT PART!

I SAW THAT IT'S RIGHTER, WE SHOULD NOT...

YOU ASK THAT OF ME... SUPERMAN? AN ALIEN FROM KRYPTON, ANOTHER PLANET? A UNIVERSAL OUTSIDER?

I DON'T EVEN HAVE HUMAN SKIN? IT'S TOUGHER THAN STEEL!

BUT... YOUR SKIN IS THE RIGHT COLOR!

YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU... YOU HELPED OUT THE GREMLIN GUY . . .

AND YOU DON'T CONSIDER ME FOR THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT. ONLY THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEVER BOTHERED WITH . . .

THE BLACK SKIN! I WANT TO KNOW, JOHN COVES?

AVOIDING ME? I'M BLACK EVERYDAY!

I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT YOU...
Strips rarely attack individuals, but focus on characters representing whole groups or classes. By using the subversive power of humour, comics can attack the establishment, and express criticism of institutions which would remain unassailable by any other means. This type of humour is often the only opening for criticism in totalitarian states.

Meanwhile...

"GAUGH!"

TASTE THE SWEETNESS OF DESTINY, RACIST PIG!!

...TASTE CANADIAN LEAD... BLOATED YANKEE POLLUTION MONGER!!!

BLAM!

Let MacArthur advance. Counterattack manned by infiltrated trained fanatics. Has to quickly identify the VC. Confront, cleverly disguise, treacherously destroy.

"These they are, here, the ones with the blanket kicks!"

Let North Vietnamese lead the attack!

Let's all join in! We've got the Enemy now. Keep it up and enjoy its sufferings!!!

Let's return and see what peace to the troubled village, and as they return to their base, tired but happy, they are already looking forward to... THE CHALLENGE OF TOMORROW!

MADAME KY'S PURJCLE PAGE!

TRY THESE ON FOR SIZE, YANKEE PIG!

Mysteries of the East
Featuring Riddles, Puzzles, Brain Teasers, & Conundrums!

1. Two Green Berets interrogators are hovering in a helicopter eleven thousand feet over Thuong Duc with a number of suspected Vietcong prisoners. The first interrogator can throw five suspected Vietcong prisoners from the helicopter in five seconds. The second interrogator can throw six suspected Vietcong prisoners from the helicopter in ten seconds. Which interrogator can throw twelve suspected Vietcong prisoners from the helicopter in the shortest time?

2. On July 3, 1966, the New York Times reported: "United States Air Force lawyers made condolence payments of $350,000 (about 30 cents) this weekend to each of the families of seven children killed accidentally by an Air Force plane..." At this rate, how many payments would the lawyers have to make if a B-52 inexplicably sank a South Vietnamese orphanage and wiped out 116 children?
Political comic strips also played an important propagandist role during and after the Chinese cultural revolution. Hundreds of comics were issued and distributed among millions to spread "correct" political ideas. Similarly, in Allende's Chile many strips were published with the aim of instilling a revolutionary consciousness in the people. Comic strips equally played an important role in Angola. The struggle between the Angolan liberation movements and the Portuguese colonial army escalated towards the end of the sixties, and the battle was fought not only with bullets; propaganda was used extensively by both sides. In the areas they had liberated the MPLA distributed an alphabet book which read like an anti-colonialist comic strip, and the Portuguese army retaliated with pamphlets in which simple strips exhorted the people not to collaborate with the guerrillas.
Hence it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourse and discursive strategies from its position within and between two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in its colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. Thus the rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the post-colonial enterprise. These subversive manoeuvres, rather than the construction of essentially national or regional alternatives, are the characteristic features of the post-colonial text. Post-colonial literatures/cultures are constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices.

"In Disneyland (the happiest place on earth)," says Public Relations, "you can encounter ‘wild’ animals and native ‘savages’ who often display their hostility to your invasion of their jungle privacy ... From stockades in Adventureland, you can actually shoot at Indians."

Meanwhile, out there in the real real world, the “savages” are fighting back.

Mr. Disney, we are returning your Duck. Feathers plucked and well-roasted. Look inside, you can see the handwriting on the wall, our hands still writing on the wall:

Donald, Go Home!
EL MATRIMONIO SE REGENERA GRACIAS A LA PALA-
SER DIVINA DE JESUCRISTO. A PARTIR DE ENTON-
CES, VIVIERON EN UN CLIMA AMOROSO Y LLENO DE
PEÑO, Y TODOS FUERON FELICES.

Shortly-

OH, ONE LAST
BIT OF ADVICE,
FOLKLY FOLK...NEXT
TIME YOU'RE LOOKING
AT SOMETHING, TRY
AYE
AHE.
LOOKING AT THE
CENTER!

ANOTHER
JOB WELL
DONE!

WITH ALL THEIR
HONEYMOONERS
THE IS NO PLACE
FOR US, LOTIAN.

CUPID, HIM DID
BIG BUSINESS
HERE.

GOODBYE, GOOD WISH
AND HAPPINESS TO
ALL OF YOU--HEE HEE,
MANDRAG.

AS--ME,
TOO.
Texts Appropriated


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