

## **Colonialist Heroes and Monstrous Others: Stereotype and Narrative Form in British Adventure 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*<sup>1</sup>

This paper explores the continuing representation of colonialist stereotypes and the colonised ‘Other’ in British comic books. It argues that from the 1950s to their demise in the early 1990s traditional British weekly adventure comic books, such as the *Eagle*, *Hotspur* and *Victor*, contained stories that used exotic locations and representations of colonialist stereotypes, both visual and textual, to shape narrative structure. These comic books continued the traditions, and imperialist outlook, of the adventure stories contained in boy’s illustrated story papers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Colonialist values, most notably represented by dominant westerners and subjugated Orientals, were still evident in traditional British boy’s adventure comic books right up to the 1990s, long after the collapse of empire. It is remarkable that similar colonialist stereotypes and Orientalist mythologies are also central to narratives within more innovative British comic books from the 1990s to the present such as *Rogan Gosh* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. In these more adult comic books, colonialist stereotypes are conjoined with the concept of an erotic and highly sexualised ‘Other’, a factor which is also central to their narrative structure. In both cases this ‘Otherness’ is conceptualised as monstrous in contrast to Western moral codes of behaviour.

Using Edward Said's concept of the 'Other' and his analysis of Orientalist discourses within literature, this study will examine the ways in which outmoded representations of racial stereotypes and colonialist mythologies have been used to govern narrative structure in British comic books up to the present-day. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain had withdrawn from its colonial 'possessions' but these comic books, both traditional and innovative, still use representations of the 'Other', both visual and textual, to communicate concepts of 'Britishness' and national identity.

### **Orientalism, Stereotype and the 'Other'**

In his seminal text *Orientalism*, published in 1978, Edward Said explores the concept of a clearly definable colonised 'Other' that he regards as being Orientalised:

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other [...]. Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world.<sup>2</sup>

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 Britain's difficult relationship with its colonial past. From this perspective such representations of the Orient are constructs that use stereotypes to create and sustain mythical concepts such as the typical or archetypal Oriental and to maintain a political order closely

allied to Western colonialist discourses. Said had previously explored this point in “Shattered Myths” where he stated that:

According to Orientalism, Orientals can be observed as possessing certain habits of mind, traits of character, and idiosyncrasies of history and temperament [...]. As with all mythologies theirs (the Orientalists) is a structure built around a simple set of oppositions [...]. On the one hand there are Westerners and on the other there are Orientals: The former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion and distrust, and so forth. Orientals are none of these things.<sup>3</sup>

For Said these characteristics are related to behaviour rather than appearance but in comic book studies these two elements have been directly linked. Since the 1980s, several authors have examined similar cultural and ethnic stereotyping with a focus on the American superhero genre.<sup>4</sup> An explanation for the direct link between comic books as a medium and stereotypes in the superhero genre was provided by Singer who argued:

[...] comic books rely upon visually codified representations in which characters are continually reduced to their appearances [...]. This system of visual typology combines with the superhero genre’s long history of excluding, trivialising, or “tokenizing” minorities to create numerous minority superheroes who are marked purely for their race.<sup>5</sup>

Both Scott McCloud and Will Eisner have made the point that comic books rely on highly codified visual representations to engage with the viewer.<sup>6</sup> In his introduction to Joe Sacco's *Palestine* Edward Said notes:

‘...the comic draughtsman’s uncanny ability to catch the telling detail, a carefully sculpted moustache here, overly large teeth there, a drab suit here, Sacco manages to keep it all going with almost careless virtuosity.’<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to avoid using visual stereotyping in the comic book medium even when producing sympathetic representations of different ethnic groups, as with Sacco’s work. For this reason this study focuses on the ways in which the use of stereotype impacts on the narrative structure rather than caricature as a mode of representation.

### **Representing the ‘Other’ in Traditional British Boy’s Adventure Comic Books**

In his essay *Boy’s Weeklies* of 1940, George Orwell addressed issues of ideology and class, noting that many illustrated story papers, the precursors of adventure comic books, reflected outdated political attitudes throughout the inter-war period.

To begin with, there is no political development whatever. The world of the *Skipper* and the *Champion* is still the pre-1914 world of the *Magnet* and the *Gem* [...]. It is worth noting that in papers of this type it is always taken for granted that adventures only happen at the ends of the earth, in tropical forests, in Arctic wastes, in African deserts, on Western prairies, in Chinese opium dens – everywhere, in fact, except the places

where things really *do* happen. That is a belief dating from thirty or forty years ago, when the new continents were in process of being opened up<sup>8</sup>

Orwell's argument has been criticised because he fails to account for the way ideology might be conveyed through the specific medium of illustrated adventure story papers and comic books.<sup>9</sup> However, this does not invalidate his claim that these exotic locations act to structure narrative and reflect colonialist beliefs from an earlier expansionist age. As regards the direct representation of colonialist stereotypes in these story papers, Orwell identified the following patterns:

In reality their basic political assumptions are two: nothing ever changes, and foreigners are funny. In the *Gem* of 1939 Frenchmen are still Froggies and Italians are still Dagoes [...]. It is assumed that foreigners of any one race are all alike and will conform more or less exactly to the following patterns:

Frenchman: Excitable. Wears beard, gesticulates wildly.

Spaniard, Mexican, etc: Sinister, treacherous.

Arab, Afghan, etc: Sinister, treacherous.

Chinese: Sinister, treacherous. Wears pigtail.

Italian: Excitable. Grinds barrel organ or carries stiletto.

Swede, Dane, etc: Kind hearted, stupid.

Negro: Comic, very faithful.<sup>10</sup>

These stereotypes are explained in terms of visual elements, such as beards and pigtails, but for Orwell it is the behavioural characteristics and the impact they have on the stories that

matters. The archetypal colonialist locations and stereotypical characters noted by Orwell continued to structure the narrative in British boy's adventure comic books post-Second World War. After the war, some illustrated story papers such as *The Hotspur* (1933-59, story paper; 1959-81, comic book) were transformed into adventure comic books and many new titles were released. The shift from illustrated story papers, such as *The Rover* (1922-73) and *Champion* (1922-55), to comic books, such as *The Comet* (1946-59) and *Sun* (1948-59), is outlined by Sabin and Gravett.<sup>11</sup> They suggest that in the late 1940s the emergence of these boy's adventure comic books was influenced by three main factors: the popularity of adventure newspaper comic strips; film and later television; the stimulus of story magazines and comic books from America. A key reaction to this influence from America was the publication of the *Eagle* in 1950 by Hulton Press. This was:

[...] intended as wholesome boys' entertainment, and had a highly moral tone (with an overt Christian religious bent): it was also very 'British', and imperialist/coldwar overtones were never far from the surface.<sup>12</sup>

James Chapman's recent evaluation of the *Eagle's* cover feature comic strip *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future* expands on this issue and notes that most villains in this strip were foreign, being mainly of Asiatic descent.<sup>13</sup> He notes that the World Government in *Dan Dare* is multi-racial but the stories are '...at best patronizing, and at worst downright racist' and that 'The chief ideological strategy of *Dan Dare* is its promotion of Britishness'.<sup>14</sup>

The adventure comic books that followed the *Eagle* took the same imperialist formula but tended to be tougher and omit the Christian moralising. The first publisher to challenge the *Eagle* was Amalgamated Press with the release of *Lion* (1952 -74) and *Tiger* (1954 -85).

These were followed a decade later by *Valiant* (1962-76) and *Hurricane* (1964-65). The other major British comic book publisher D.C. Thompson followed with *The Victor* (1961-92) and *Hornet* (1963-76) to expand their own adventure comic book line.<sup>15</sup> When reviewing these post-war adventure comic books Sabin stated:

The war comics were undoubtedly the biggest sub-genre, re-fighting the Second World War in every issue with an unprecedented blood-lust and lurid xenophobic language (the Germans were ‘Krauts’, ‘jerries’ even ‘sausage eaters’; the Japanese, ‘nips’, ‘slant-eyes’, ‘yellow-skins’; and so on).<sup>16</sup>

The names given to Japanese characters are obviously directly based on racial features and the xenophobic tendencies present in these war stories certainly had a direct influence on adventure stories in terms of the Orientalist stereotypes and settings used.<sup>17</sup> This is evident if we examine in detail two issues of *The Victor*, one from its heyday in 1970 and the other from 1987 (before being rebranded as a sports comic book in the early 1990s).

Issue No. 473 of *The Victor* published in March 1970 contained eight comic strips. Three were based on war, three on sport and two were adventure stories.<sup>18</sup> Three of these eight comic strips, “The Man with the Brazen Mask”, “The Lost Warriors of Tartary” and “Three on the Terror Trail”, used Orientalist stereotypes to sustain the narrative. “The Man with the Brazen Mask” is a First World War story set in what is now Iraq, concerning a group of Australian soldiers and their mission to kill a German spy, Captain Huth, who is inciting the Arabs to join the Turks and fight against the British forces.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, there is a direct reference to the area being called Mesopotamia. This was not the region’s name during the First World War when under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The term Mesopotamia was

however used by the British following the war when the region became a British protectorate. The story contained visual elements such as be-fezed Turks, and stepped pyramids and other stereotypical features dominate the storyline. (see Figure 1) There is mutual distrust between Arabs and Turks and a mistrust of both groups by the Australian soldiers and by the German spy who is ostensibly their ally. Overall, the colonisers, German and Australians, are the dominant figures and drive the narrative forward whereas the Arabs and Turks serve only as a passive counter-point. More positively the Aboriginal Australian character Billie Tuesday is treated as an equal by his comrades and has a more active role, at one point coming out of the desert to rescue them. This, of course, relies on another form of stereotyping suggesting he is innately better equipped for survival in this environment.

**[Insert Figure 1 Here]**

The strip “Lost Warriors of Tartary”, set in Mongolia in 1932, follows the story of Iron Haig and Swat Lewis, two railway engineers.<sup>20</sup> Their nationality is not disclosed but the names seem Scottish in origin which suggests another colonialist stereotype that the British Empire was built on Scottish engineering achievements. They are working in the Tagh mountain range in Mongolia and encroach on the territory of Kaba Khan, a descendant of Genghis Khan. He plans to take over the world using an army of warriors in a drug-induced sleep beneath the mountains and a flamethrower called the Breath of Genghis Khan. Haig and Lewis, although pitted against an army of thousands destroy the flamethrower and defeat Kaba Khan through the use of modern technology. Kaba Khan is clearly depicted as sinister and his potential treachery is used as a plot device enabling the two engineers to defeat vastly superior forces.



In contrast to the other two stories “Three on the Terror Trail” is contemporaneous rather than historical and set in England, not an exotic location.<sup>21</sup> It concerns the last three surviving Dacoits, members of the Brethren of Death – a group of thieves and murderers. They have come to England to kill Sir Stanley Brand, who was responsible for the eradication of their group while Chief Commissioner of Police in Khandan, a fictional British Protectorate in the Himalayas. Even though the setting is contemporary England the references are to fictionalised colonialist settings. The focus of the story is the Dacoits attempts to kill Sir Stanley using a katroot, a fictional poison. The only true term used in the story is Dacoit, an anglicised version of a Hindu word meaning bandit and closely allied to the term Thuggee in Orientalist discourses. This particular narrative blends fact and fiction to bring the colonialist past firmly into the present.

When examining issue No. 1371 of *The Victor* from May 1987 one might expect the number of stories influenced by colonialist discourses to have declined in the intervening seventeen years. In fact they increased in number with eight of the nine stories in this issue using representations of Orientalist or colonialist stereotypes.<sup>22</sup> Four of these, “A True Story of Men at War”; “Spitfire!”; “The Ten Sacred Symbols of Buddha” and “Charge the Gun!” were Second World War stories and used supposed traits of Japanese and German national identity to drive the narrative. Discounting these war stories from the analysis leaves four stories using Orientalist or colonialist stereotypes. In “Crimebuster Craig”, set in contemporary Britain and “The White Samurai”, set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan, Orientalist representations of Chinese, Arabic and North African characters are notable but their ‘Otherness’ is secondary to the overall narrative.

In the remaining two strips in this issue of *The Victor* the ‘Otherness’ of key characters is central to the narrative. “Hallam’s Hardest Mission” is set post-Second World War in fictional war-torn Kalanistan. It concerns Sergeant Tom Hallam’s search for Doctor Batory, an American academic.<sup>23</sup> Batory has been captured by a Kalani army patrol and forced to lead them to ‘Eskanderia, the fabled lost city of Alexander the Great’. The Kalani soldiers are shown as sinister and treacherous with no ability to hold Western values. When they discover the lost city they are unable to understand that the treasure sought by Doctor Batory is not gold and gemstones but ancient Greek architecture and statuary. This cultural misunderstanding regarding treasure is illuminating. It is used to differentiate between cultured Westerners, even Sergeant Hallam can see the aesthetic and civilising worth of the statues, and heathen Kalani who are only concerned with material values.

“Tough at the Top” is a story from the “Tough of the Track” series that appeared regularly in *The Victor* throughout its entire run. The series focuses on Alf Tupper, a working-class middle distance runner, often featuring his travails against an elitist athletics establishment.<sup>24</sup> In this episode Alf has moved to Tanzania to work as an engineer on the Kilimanjaro Mountain Railway in order to be able to search for a witch doctor, Meru, who can cure his injured leg. Meru is a clichéd representation of the African witch doctor but this is a subterfuge. He is in fact a fellow runner, Serapho Kibo, who is helping Alf to recover by setting him difficult running challenges in search of ingredients for a magic potion. The representation of Meru/Serapho Kibo is central to the narrative and breaks with conventional of the superstitious ‘Other’. He has no intention of making a magic potion and believes the exercise itself will allow Alf to recover. Other aspects of the story are more problematic. Most of the black workers are depicted in Orwell’s ‘comic, very faithful’ mode and even

working class Alf Tupper is seen as superior to the African workers because of his abilities as an engineer.

Very little changed in the way the 'Other' was represented in *The Victor* between 1970 and 1987. Chapman noted this sense of continuity in relation to "The Wolf of Kabul" which started as an illustrated story in the *Wizard* in 1930 and was still running in comic strip form in both *Hotspur* and *The Victor* in the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> He explains this continuity of Orientalist and colonialist representations in two ways. Firstly, he notes the parallels with similar representations in Hollywood and British cinema of this period. Secondly, he suggests that both cinematic and comic book forms focus on policing and maintaining the empire rather than empire building. This may well be the case but the key features of using exotic locations and Orientalist or colonialist stereotypes still remain relatively unchanged.

### **Representing the 'Other' in Innovative Contemporary Comic Books**

In the 1970s sales of British weekly adventure comics rapidly declined. In a bid to appeal to a changing marketplace grittier and more realistic comics such as D.C. Thompson's *Warlord* (1974-86) and IPC's *Battle* (1975-88) emerged. The key publication for this changing landscape was IPC's *Action* (1976-7) which has been described by Sabin as '...cynical, anti-authoritarian and very violent – and an instant success'.<sup>26</sup> *Action* was the direct precursor of *2000AD*, released in 1977, which itself led to the emergence of a range of innovative comic books in the 1980s and into the 1990s such as *Warrior* (1982-5), *Escape* (1983-9), *Deadline* (1988-95), *Crisis* (1988-91), *Revolver* (1990-1) and *Toxic* (1991). At one level they were innovative because they engaged with subject matter such as sex and politics and were aimed at adult audiences.<sup>27</sup> They were also innovative in their visual treatment, with the narrative

more directly explained through the drawings in contrast to traditional British comics where the drawings tended to illustrate the story.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1980s Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill worked for *2000AD* amongst other titles in this developing innovative comic book scene. Their series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-ongoing) is a prime example of the use of Orientalist and colonialist constructs to underpin the narrative in innovative contemporary comic books.<sup>29</sup> The first volume of the series is set in late Victorian England, at the culminating point of British colonialist expansion. Some covers and full pages are executed in the fin-de siècle style of Aubrey Beardsley and the credits are presented in the style of Victorian music-hall advertisements. In a throwback to the pre-comic form it also includes illustrated adventure stories relating to the main narrative. The frontispiece of this volume is an image of Britannia, stressing its nationalist and colonialist content from the outset. The narrative opens with a full-page illustration of Champion Bond, an English Intelligence Officer, at the foot of the white cliffs of Dover. This is accompanied by a quotation, supposedly taken from his memoirs, that reads 'The British Empire has always encountered difficulty in distinguishing between its heroes and its monsters', a narrative theme that is explored throughout this comic book. Bond has been tasked with forming a superhero team, comprised of such monsters, to investigate the theft of the government's Cavorite, a fictional anti-gravity material originally appearing in H. G. Wells' *The First Men on the Moon*.

Champion Bond references Margery Allingham's detective Albert Campion and Ian Fleming's spy James Bond. There are direct references to literature of the late-Victorian period in the main characters of the comic book. The team formed by Bond consists of Mina Murray, Jonathan Hawker's fiancée in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; Alan Quatermain from H. Rider

Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*; the title characters from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; Hawley Griffin from H. G. Well's *The Invisible Man* and Captain Nemo from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and its prequel *The Mysterious Island*.

These characters allow Moore to play with the conventions of the superhero team, the members having the outsider status, superpowers and psychological flaws that have become stereotypes within the genre. Invisibility is a commonplace superpower and the Jekyll/Hyde combination has many superhero equivalents such as The Incredible Hulk. Moore also subverts the stereotype of the superhero team by having a female, Mina Murray, as its leader.

As colonialist stereotypes the most important characters are Captain Nemo and Alan Quatermain. Captain Nemo stresses the tension between them when he suggests to Quatermain that one is 'the great colonialist and the other the great colonial rebel'. Quatermain's character is the prototype for the colonialist 'Great White Hunter' that that is evident in earlier British adventure comics.<sup>30</sup> *King's Solomon's Mines* is an example of the lost race/world genre of fiction, a genre that links directly to Orwell's comments concerning exotic locations. Quatermain's character has also been noted as the archetype of 'muscular Christianity' a point that contrasts well with representations of Captain Nemo.<sup>31</sup>

In the comic book Captain Nemo is depicted as a Sikh, a racial identity he was only given in *The Mysterious Island*, the character having Polish origins that were suppressed in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* due to commercial concerns.<sup>32</sup> In several scenes Captain Nemo is juxtaposed with representations of multiple-limbed Hindu gods which is at odds with the monotheism of Sikhism. Several scenes show him as a worshipper of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and the cosmic dance.<sup>33</sup> The most dramatic image in relation to his religious

beliefs is when Captain Nemo is framed against an aggressive looking wall-hanging depicting Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction and motherhood and delivers the line 'I fear he collects monsters' when referring to the actions of Campion Bond. Partha Mitter in *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* outlined 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist reactions to such multiple-limbed Hindu gods and suggested that 'the Western world still has to find a way to appreciate the values of Indian art in its own context and in its own right'.<sup>34</sup>

This Orientalist approach reveals other dichotomies in the portrayal of Nemo's character such as the fact that a self-professed colonial rebel is working for the British secret service. The tensions in Nemo's character both colonialist and religious are also evident in relation to the negative representation of Arabian characters in the first volume of the series. Mina Murray is sent to find Alan Quatermain, who has become addicted to opium, and enlist him as a member of the group. This takes her to Cairo, depicted as an archetypal labyrinthine Islamic city where two sinister and treacherous Arab characters attempt to rape her. The narrative justification for this attempted rape is to rouse Quatermain from his opium induced stupor to rescue her and establish his credentials as a viable heroic character. Both are rescued from an Arab mob by Captain Nemo and his submarine the Nautilus at the waterfront. At this point he directly refers to the pursuing Arabs as a Mohammedan rabble. Now Nemo has become the heroic lead and takes an Orientalist perspective towards the Arab characters thus allowing colonialist conventions to be subverted.

Other forms of Orientalist discourse, focused on supposedly Chinese characteristics, develop the narrative surrounding the theft of the Cavorite by one of two underworld crimelords. One is in fact Professor Moriarty, the arch-enemy of Sherlock Holmes, who is head of British

Intelligence and Campion Bond's boss. The other is a Chinese character known only as 'The Doctor', a reference to Dr Fu Manchu.<sup>35</sup> The 'Otherness' of this character is emphasised in several ways. Although central to the narrative he only makes three fleeting appearances and has no dialogue, factors that shroud him in mystery and support notions of Chinese inscrutability. In two scenes the Chinese kowtow to 'The Doctor', clearly displaying their pigtailed, forming a rather caricatured representation of their 'Otherness'. In the remaining scene, set in an opium den in Limehouse in London, Quatermain sees 'The Doctor' torturing a man by writing on his body in Chinese characters using red-hot brands heated in a ting, a Chinese ornamented ritual bronze vessel. Other characters in the scene speak to 'The Doctor' in Mandarin Chinese without translation, so heightening their 'Otherness', a point visually reinforced by the ritualistic writing on the man's body. It has been argued that in this scene a close-up of 'The Doctor's eye:

[...] seems entirely alien and not at all human [...] extending their (Moore and O'Neill's) satire of Victorian British attitudes towards the Chinese by portraying Fu Manchu as exaggeratedly non-human in appearance.<sup>36</sup>

As they leave the Chinese quarter Quatermain describes this scene to Jekyll in the following terms, 'I say "man" but... Jekyll, he turned to look at me. His eyes were... very much like hell ... and he ('The Doctor') was very much like Satan', a point that stresses the monstrous qualities of this character.

In using Victorian sources, both textual and visual, to structure the narrative of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* Moore and O'Neill knowingly engage with the Orientalist discourses of the period, both textually and visually, and play with its moral and cultural

value system. Even though this series of the comic book highlights these problematic issues its critical intent is less certain and it perhaps replicates these values in its treatment of colonial subjects as much as it might subvert notions of the 'Other'.

### **The Sexualised 'Other'**

Some of the innovative comic books that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s started to deal with more adult themes including sex. This impacted on representations of the 'Other' by introducing another stereotype, the erotic and highly sexualised Oriental. Edward Said, when examining the writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist Edward William Lane, considered the sexualised 'Other' in some detail.

In most cases, the Orient seems to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient – or at least Lane's Orient-in-Egypt – exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive "freedom of intercourse" as Lane put it more irrepressibly than usual.<sup>37</sup>

Said continues his analysis of the sexualised 'Other' with a detailed examination of the work of two French 19<sup>th</sup> century writers: Flaubert and Nerval. He addresses issues of sexual hygiene and homosexuality while emphasising these authors' reactions to what they perceived as the unbounded fecundity and sexuality of the archetypal Oriental woman.<sup>38</sup>

This archetypal Oriental woman is also evident in two recent volumes of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series, *Century: 1910* and *Nemo: The Roses of Berlin*.<sup>39</sup> Both narratives focus on Janni Dakkar the daughter of Captain Nemo. In the opening title splash page of *Century: 1910* she dives naked into the sea framed by a full moon, which emphasises



her sexuality. After visiting her father on his deathbed she escapes to London where she works as a cleaner in a hotel-cum-brothel at the docks. The piratical crew of the Nautilus track her down, tell her that Captain Nemo is dead and request that she now becomes their captain. Initially she refuses, but after being raped by a group of men in the brothel she takes up the mantle as the new Captain Nemo. She then takes on the role of Shiva/Kali as a vengeful goddess and lays waste to the docks. Here Jenni is central to the narrative and the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen merely react to her story in trying to prevent a predicted disaster, which is in fact her destruction of the docks. Her naked dive into the sea on the opening pages can be interpreted as an origin or rebirth story setting up her transformation into the new Captain Nemo. Her sexuality and outsider status as an Oriental drive the narrative and she is cast as a monstrous and ultimately destructive 'Other' through her act of vengeance.

The idea of vengeance is also central to *Nemo: The Roses of Berlin* where the narrative has moved on to the 1940s. Captain Nemo is now a mother herself, her young daughter is married to a French aerial pirate Armand Robur and together they are fighting the German forces in a re-envisioned Second World War. Jenni's lover Broad Arrow Jack is killed while rescuing their captured son-in-law in Berlin and both mother and daughter gain revenge by laying waste to the city. The idea of sexualised vengeance is here most evident in a German pseudo-propaganda poster that acts as a frontispiece to the volume. In this image Captain Nemo is represented as a bare-breasted Kali-inspired sea-monster, with tentacles in addition to arms, and the title 'Captain Nemo: Scientific-Pirate and Butcher'.

**[Insert Figure 2 Here]**

The highly sexualised 'Other' was also evident in Peter Milligan and Brendan McCarthy's *Rogan Gosh* first published in 1990.<sup>40</sup> By Milligan's own admission as writer this is a complex and virtually incomprehensible narrative with four interwoven strands. These strands are: 1) Rudyard Kipling in colonial India discovered sleeping with a servant boy, subsequently being blackmailed and the boy then committing suicide. Kipling visits a holy house to be rid of the bad karma, takes narcotics and has visions of the other three strands of the story. 2) Rogan Gosh a Karmanaut who is tricked by Soma Swami, in the guise of Kipling, into taking the bad karma of Swami's evildoing. To escape this bad karma he is reborn as Raju Dahwan. 3) A boy in a bedsit mourning the loss of his girlfriend Mazzy and eventually committing suicide. 4) The story of Dean Cripps and a waiter Raju Dahwan who meet in the Star of the East Tandoori restaurant; they enter a dream world and make love.<sup>41</sup>

There are numerous sexual references in this story and two specifically homosexual. In the first example it is implied that Kipling just could not resist the servant and in the second Raju is seen as the dominant partner in his homosexual union with Dean. Both instances stress the role of the highly sexualised Oriental within the narrative in leading to moral corruption.<sup>42</sup> As with *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* Kali is used as a key figure, in this case seen at her most destructive in pursuing Raju and Dene through different time spheres. The Kali type figure seems to have become a significant cultural trope in other innovative comics. An alien science-fiction version of Kali appeared in the 2000AD story *Torquemada's Second Honeymoon*.<sup>43</sup> More recently a character titled Kalifornication appeared in a graphic novel about a punk band titled *Raygun Roads*. Kalifornication is the guitarist in the band and as the character's name implies she is highly sexed and fecund and stands as an iconographic representation of Orientalist 'Otherness'.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

This study set out to explore the representations of Orientalist mythologies and colonialist stereotypes used to govern narrative structure in British comic books from the 1950s to the present-day. These stereotypes continue to be a powerful device in telling stories even though the field of comic books has transformed over the past sixty years. Comic books have become more innovative in terms of the subject matter and the forms of representation used but the 'Other' is still a powerful cultural trope within the medium and continues to be used to represent an outmoded view of Britain and its imperial past.

When discussing the shift from illustrated story papers to comic books in the 1950s and 60s Chapman used Raymond William's concept that cultural shifts contain both residual and emergent forms.<sup>45</sup> This concept is useful to explain the persistence of residual forms because the process of transformation is slow but from this Chapman concludes that most residual forms in comic books do eventually disappear. Yet the study of *The Victor* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* presented here shows this is not always the case, as exemplified by the survival of Orientalist and colonialist stereotypes in these adventure comic books. These stereotypes did then transform as comic books dealt with more adult themes such as sex. Both male and female representations of the eroticised Oriental emerged as new forms of representations of the 'Other' in British comic books. These did not completely replace previous versions of colonialist and Orientalist stereotypes but rather supplemented and reinforced them.

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- <sup>4</sup> For the issue of race and the representation of superheroes in comics see Martin Barker (1989): *Comics, Ideology, Power and the Critics*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.; Ian Gordon (1998): *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture 1890-1945*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute press.; M. Thomas Inge (1990): *Comics as Culture*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.; Cornel Perewardy (May 2002): 'From Subhuman to Superhuman: Images of First Nations Peoples in Comic Books', in *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education*, Volume 2, Issue 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 86-93.
- <sup>5</sup> Marc Singer (Spring 2002) 'Black Skins' and White Masks: Comic Books and the Secret of Race', in: *African American Review*, Volume 36. St Louis: St Louis University, pp. 107-26.
- <sup>6</sup> See Scott McCloud (1993) 'Chapter 2 - The Vocabulary of Comics' in *Understanding Comics: the invisible art*. London: Knockabout Comics. Will Eisner (2008) Ch 5 Expressive Anatomy in Comics and Sequential Art, New York: W. W. Norton and Company (Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).
- <sup>7</sup> Edward Said (2003) 'Homage to Joe Sacco' in Joe Sacco (2003) *Palestine*. London: Jonathan Cape. p. iv.
- <sup>8</sup> George Orwell (1940) 'Boys Weeklies' in Peter Davison (2001) *Orwell and the Dispossessed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. p. 258.
- <sup>9</sup> Martin Barker (1989) *Comics, Ideology, Power and the Critics*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. p. 13.
- <sup>10</sup> George Orwell (1940) 'Boys Weeklies'. p. 251.
- <sup>11</sup> Roger Sabin (1996) *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels*. London: Phaidon. Paul Gravett and Peter Stansbury (2006) *Great British Comics*. London: Aurum Press. The best source on this transition from illustrated story paper to comic book in relation to the war comic genre is Adam Riches, (2009) *When the Comics Went to War*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.
- <sup>12</sup> Roger Sabin (1993) *Adult Comics: an introduction*. London: Routledge. p.25.
- <sup>13</sup> James Chapman (2011) *British Comics: A Cultural History*. London: Reaktion Press. p. 60.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 65-9.
- <sup>15</sup> Roger Sabin (1996) *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels*. P. 46.

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<sup>16</sup> Roger Sabin (1993) *Adult Comics: an introduction*. London: Routledge. p.26.

<sup>17</sup> Note for the purpose of this study adventure is seen as the dominant genre with, war, sport, sci-fi, etc. seen as significant sub genres.

<sup>18</sup> The Victor, 'No.473', 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1970. DC Thomson & Co. Ltd.

<sup>19</sup> This story was drawn by Harry Farrugia and ran from issue No.466 through 474.

<sup>20</sup> This story was drawn by Matias Alonso and ran from issue No.464 through 480.

<sup>21</sup> This story was drawn by Tony Colman and ran from issue No.467 through 480.

<sup>22</sup> The Victor, 'No.1371', 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1987. DC Thomson & Co. Ltd.

<sup>23</sup> This is a similar use of fictional Middle-Eastern place names as in *The Victor* of 1970 examined earlier.

<sup>24</sup> His character first started in the *Rover* as an illustrated story before transferring to *The Victor* as a comic strip in 1961.

<sup>25</sup> James Chapman (2011) *British Comics: A Cultural History*. pp. 86-9.

<sup>26</sup> Roger Sabin (1993) *Adult Comics: an introduction*. P. 52. For a detailed account of the controversy surrounding *Action* see Martin Barker (1990) *Action: The Story of a Violet Comic*. London: Titan Books.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of this development see Chapters 4 and 6 in Roger Sabin (1993) *Adult Comics: an introduction*.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Hatfield (2005) *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson: University of Mississippi and Charles Hatfield (2011) *Hand of Fire: The comics art of Jack Kirby*. Jackson: University of Mississippi. The idea of narrative drawing is developed in these two works by Hatfield.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill (2000) *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Volume One*. America's Best Comics, La Jolla California. The entire series now includes the following: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Volume 2*. America's Best Comics (2004); *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Black Dossier*. (2007) America's Best Comics; *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Century: 1910*. (2009) Top Shelf Productions and Knockabout Comics; *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Century: 1969*. (2011) Top Shelf Productions and Knockabout Comics; *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Century: 2009*. (2012) Top Shelf Productions and Knockabout Comics; *Nemo: Heart of Ice* (2013) Top Shelf Productions and Knockabout Comics; *Nemo: The Roses of Berlin* (2014) Top Shelf Productions and Knockabout Comics.

<sup>30</sup> Jess Nevins (2003) *Heroes & Monsters. The Unofficial Companion to the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. London: Titan Books. p.153

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*. P.155.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. P.35.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. P.42.

<sup>34</sup> Partha Mitter (1977) *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. viii.

<sup>35</sup> Jess Nevins (2003) *Heroes & Monsters. The Unofficial Companion to the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. p. 187.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism*. p. 167.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. pp. 162-90.

<sup>39</sup> *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Century: 1910*. (2009) and *Nemo: The Roses of Berlin* (2014).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Milligan and Brendan McCarthy (1990) 'Rogon Gosh' first published in *Revolver*. Fleetway. And reprinted in graphic novel form by DC Comics Vertigo in 1994)

<sup>41</sup> Peter Milligan(1994) 'Afterword: Karmachanics for Beginners' in *Rogon Gosh*. New York: Vertigo.

<sup>42</sup> Lena Roos (Spring 2010) 'Religion, Sexuality and the Image of the Other in 300', *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*. Volume 22:1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. This article examines homosexuality and the 'Other' in the graphic novel *300* and raises similar issues regarding power.

<sup>43</sup> Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill (1988) 'Torquemada's Second Honeymoon' *2000 AD Annual 1988*. London: IPC Magazines.

<sup>44</sup> Owen Michael Johnson and Indio (2013) *Raygun Roads*. Changling Studios.

<sup>45</sup> James Chapman (2011) *British Comics: A Cultural History*. p. 84