



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS



COMICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Edited by
Zena Kamash · Katy Soar · Leen Van Broeck

palgrave
macmillan

Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels

Series Editor

Roger Sabin

University of the Arts London

London, UK

This series concerns Comics Studies—with a capital “c” and a capital “s.” It feels good to write it that way. From emerging as a fringe interest within Literature and Media/Cultural Studies departments, to becoming a minor field, to maturing into the fastest growing field in the Humanities, to becoming a nascent *discipline*, the journey has been a hard but spectacular one. Those capital letters have been earned.

Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels covers all aspects of the comic strip, comic book, and graphic novel, explored through clear and informative texts offering expansive coverage and theoretical sophistication. It is international in scope and provides a space in which scholars from all backgrounds can present new thinking about politics, history, aesthetics, production, distribution, and reception as well as the digital realm. Books appear in one of two forms: traditional monographs of 60,000 to 90,000 words and shorter works (Palgrave Pivots) of 20,000 to 50,000 words. All are rigorously peer-reviewed. Palgrave Pivots include new takes on theory, concise histories, and—not least—considered provocations. After all, Comics Studies may have come a long way, but it can’t progress without a little prodding.

Series Editor Roger Sabin is Professor of Popular Culture at the University of the Arts London, UK. His books include *Adult Comics: An Introduction* and *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*, and he is part of the team that put together the Marie Duval Archive. He serves on the boards of key academic journals in the field, reviews graphic novels for international media, and consults on comics-related projects for the BBC, Channel 4, Tate Gallery, The British Museum and The British Library. The ‘Sabin Award’ is given annually at the International Graphic Novels and Comics Conference.

Zena Kamash • Katy Soar
Leen Van Broeck
Editors

Comics and Archaeology

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Zena Kamash
Classics Department
Royal Holloway University of London
Egham, UK

Katy Soar
Archaeology, Anthropology and
Geography
University of Winchester
Winchester, UK

Leen Van Broeck
Classics Department
Royal Holloway University of London
Egham, UK

ISSN 2634-6370

ISSN 2634-6389 (electronic)

Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels

ISBN 978-3-030-98918-7

ISBN 978-3-030-98919-4 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98919-4>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Image courtesy of John G. Swogger

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Institute of Classical Studies, the Classical Association and the Centre for the Reception of Greece and Rome at Royal Holloway (University of London) in organising the conference which gave rise to this volume (details, graphic abstracts, and other archival materials of the conference can be accessed via <https://tinyurl.com/dotp2018>). Even more important than financial assistance were the contributions of those who attended the conference and fed into individual paper discussions as well as the general discussion at the end of the two days. Without them, the need for this volume would not have been made apparent. We thank them all. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the dozen anonymous reviewers whose constructive comments helped to make the chapters in this volume stronger and more focused still.

In a personal capacity, Zena would particularly like to thank her co-editors, who have made this process so much fun, in spite of some of the hard times we have faced over the period this book was written. Her deepest thanks also go to Pete Banks and to the medical professionals who have kept her ticking over. Katy would like to thank Leen and Zena for being the best co-editors, making the process as easy and fun as possible, and for being there through all our tribulations. And to Paul-Francois Tremlett, for all his support. Leen agrees that it must be rare for an editorial collaboration to run this goodhumouredly under such trying circumstances. Particular thanks from her are owed to Fraser Joyce and Mitch Goodrum, as well as the other co-convenors and attendees of the Oxford Comics Network at the University of Oxford.

CONTENTS

Introduction: Why Comics and Archaeology?	1
Zena Kamash, Katy Soar, and Leen Van Broeck	
‘The Aliens from 2,000 B.C.!’: Truth, Fiction and Pseudoarchaeology in American Comic Books	21
David S. Anderson	
Panels from the South Seas: Pacific Colonialism, Archaeology, and Pseudoscience in Francophone <i>Bande Dessinée</i>	49
Guillaume Molle	
Making Sargon Great Again: Reuse and Reappropriation of Ancient Mesopotamian Imagery in Fan-Art of the Online Right	75
Eva Miller	
Creating Comics for Public Engagement in Roman Aeclanum: Illustrating Ancient History	97
Zofia Guertin	

“Mix, Mould, Fire!”: Comic Art and Educational Outreach Inspired by Archaeology	123
Kristin Donner and Laura Harrison	
“They Do Things Differently There”: Articulating the Unfamiliar Past in Community Heritage Comics	155
John G. Swogger	
Index	173

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

David Anderson Radford University in Virginia, Radford, VA, USA

Kristin Donner Independent illustrator, Glendale, CA, USA

Zofia Guertin University of St Andrews, Edinburgh, Scotland

Laura Harrison University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA

Zena Kamash Royal Holloway University of London, Egham UK

Eva Miller University College London, London, UK

Guillaume Molle Australian National University in Canberra, Canberra, ACT, Australia

Katy Soar University of Winchester, Winchester, UK

John G. Swogger Clwyd, Wales

Leen Van Broeck Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, UK

LIST OF FIGURES

‘The Aliens from 2,000 B.C.!’: Truth, Fiction and Pseudoarchaeology in American Comic Books

Fig. 1	<i>Show Case Presents</i> No. 26, featuring Rip Hunter’s arrival in ancient Egypt	23
Fig. 2	<i>Atlantis Chronicles</i> No. 1 allegedly tells the real history of the lost continent based on documents found in a secret archive	31
Fig. 3	<i>Marvel Preview Presents</i> No. 1, presents an ancient aliens-inspired comic book story along with an essay praising Erich von Däniken’s book <i>Chariots of the Gods?</i>	37
Fig. 4	<i>The Eternals: When Gods Walk The Earth</i> No. 1, the first issue of Jack Kirby’s ‘ancient alien’-themed saga	38

Panels from the South Seas: Pacific Colonialism, Archaeology, and Pseudoscience in Francophone *Bande Dessinée*

Fig. 1	Map of Oceania with regional divisions and names of islands discussed in the text; map ©NASA	56
Fig. 2	<i>Rapa Nui vol.1 Découverte</i> , Mikaël and Russo ©Clair de Lune; with the kind permission of the authors and Clair de Lune Editions	61
Fig. 3	<i>Pacifique Sud vol.1, Une aventure de Vic Voyage</i> , Sergio Macedo ©Editions Aedena; with the kind permission of the author	67
Fig. 4	<i>Wokbaot bakegen wetem olgeta blong V.C.H.S.S. Saet sevei mo akeoloji</i> . Yoringmal, Hoffmann and Shing ©VKKS; with the kind permission of the Vanuatu Cultural Center	69

Making Sargon Great Again: Reuse and Reappropriation of Ancient Mesopotamian Imagery in Fan-Art of the Online Right

Fig. 1 Copper Head of a ruler of the Old Akkadian Dynasty, c. twenty-third century BCE; excavated Nineveh, Iraq, 1931, photographed 1936. Copyright British Institute for the Study of Iraq, published by Cambridge University Press 76

Creating Comics for Public Engagement in Roman Aeclanum: Illustrating Ancient History

Fig. 1 Stratigraphy poster, Z. Guertin, 2017 101
 Fig. 2 Open day poster, Z. Guertin 107
 Fig. 3 Archaeological booklet with comic characters for kids 108
 Fig. 4 2018 voting options and results on the children’s feedback survey 109
 Fig. 5 Images of online progress shots 110
 Fig. 6 The Neratii household. Left: influenced by Pompeian Second and Third Style wall painting; right: the floor mosaic and wall paintings feature recent discoveries in Pompeii (2018) 112
 Fig. 7 Urban spaces of *Vita Romana* 112
 Fig. 8 Left: Myrtis and the Neratii women walking to the baths; right: Myrtis styles Neratia’s hair 114
 Fig. 9 Left: an Isis priestess is dressed by an enslaved woman; right: Aluia and Neratia go to the changing room where enslaved people perform tasks 115
 Fig. 10 ‘Caius and the missing ring’, illustration by Z. Guertin for *Neratia’s Lost Ring*, written by E. Johnston, translated into Italian by G.F. De Simone, 2018 115
 Fig. 11 Facebook analytics from the 2019 open day 116

“Mix, Mould, Fire!”: Comic Art and Educational Outreach Inspired by Archaeology

Fig. 1 Map of Anatolia, showing the location of Seyitömer Höyük, the Kütahya province, Syro-Cilicia and the Aegean Sea. Credit: Laura Harrison 125
 Fig. 2 Pottery Workshop Complex at Seyitömer Höyük, consisting of Rooms 38, 39a, 39b, 39c, 40a, 40b, and a corridor. This workshop contained four pottery kilns as well as built-in areas for clay mixing and shaping. Credit: A. Nejat Bilgen, Seyitömer Höyük Rescue Excavation Project 127

Fig. 3	Semi-spherical mould from the Early Bronze III level at Seyitömer Höyük. Credit: A. Nejat Bilgen, Seyitömer Höyük Rescue Excavation Project	128
Fig. 4	EBIII spouted pitcher, split at the joining line, reveals its construction with two moulded semi-spheres. Credit: A. Nejat Bilgen, Seyitömer Höyük Rescue Excavation Project	128
Fig. 5	(1–8) Comic: <i>Abby the Apprentice</i> in “Mix, Mold, Fire!” Original, American English language version. Copyright 2018 by Kristin Donner. All rights reserved	130
Fig. 6	Artefact sketching activity: Student Sebastian Hernandez illustrated a clay cylinder seal featuring zoomorphic carvings. George K. Porter Middle School, Los Angeles, California. Credit: Kristin Donner	136
Fig. 7	Artefact sketching activity: Student Emily Munoz illustrated a moulded clay bowl and a cylinder seal, applying shading techniques to indicate dimension. George K. Porter Middle School, Los Angeles, California. Credit: Kristin Donner	137
Fig. 8	A question and answer session about archaeology was grounded with digital visualisations of the Pottery Workshop Complex at Seyitömer Höyük, including interactive 3D models of features and artefacts. Credit: University of South Florida Preschool for Creative Learning	139
Fig. 9	Tritiya’s Comic. Credit: University of South Florida Preschool for Creative Learning	142
Fig. 10	Anna’s Comic. Credit: University of South Florida Preschool for Creative Learning	143



Introduction: Why Comics and Archaeology?

Zena Kamash, Katy Soar, and Leen Van Broeck

Abstract The introduction to this volume situates its content in the current postcolonial global environment, both political and societal, macro and micro, academic and popular. It provides brief overviews of each of the subsequent six chapters (three reception studies by archaeologists or anthropologists focusing on the way archaeological information is conveyed in specific bodies of material and three reflections by archaeologist creators of didactic comics) and connects these to a wider nexus which also contains the Covid-19 global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, the destruction of archaeological monuments in Syria or Iraq by Da'esh, social media and the internet, and misinformation. We critically frame the volume's contributions against this backdrop's impact on current attitudes towards science and science communication and current debates around inclusivity and allyship: who gets to speak and to be heard?

Z. Kamash • L. Van Broeck (✉)

Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, UK

e-mail: zena.kamash@rhul.ac.uk; leen.vanbroeck.2014@alumni.rhul.ac.uk

K. Soar

University of Winchester, Winchester, UK

e-mail: katy.soar@winchester.ac.uk

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2022

Z. Kamash et al. (eds.), *Comics and Archaeology*, Palgrave Studies in
Comics and Graphic Novels,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98919-4_1

How do we know who can be trusted when they speak? What consequences has our historic lack of care about these issues in the production and consumption of seemingly harmless comics had for the present day lived experience of historically minoritised others, and what should archaeology as a highly visual discipline be doing about it now?

Keywords Science communication • Black Lives Matter • Covid-19 • Misinformation • Responsibility • Trust • Representation

[W]hether consciously political or not, comics can be used to engage with the acts of both representation and consumption, and to deepen our understanding of how this resonates with the societies and cultures in which they are read. (del Rey Cabero, E., Goodrum, M. & Morlesin, J. (2021), *How to study Comics & Graphic Novels: A Graphic Introduction to Comics Studies*, p. 29)

We submitted the proposal for this volume to the publisher in May 2019, six months after a successful two-day conference in London on the pre-modern past in comics. The general sense of the conference coalesced so much around the same themes that we felt able to state confidently, in our proposal, that ‘[t]he volume will be a timely addition to current debates around how we should position ourselves in relation to tangible and intangible aspects of the world in which we live, which no longer fit with modern and progressive values.’ In fact, we started the proposal with the bold statement that what we envisaged this book to be, ‘will add to the so far relatively scant academic literature on the general question of how comics transmit knowledge of the past and how this refraction of the past shapes our understanding of society and politics, both past and present, in sometimes damaging ways.’ A contract followed in October 2019. Between then and our mutually agreed initial deadline of September 2020 for submitting the final manuscript, various global events changed the world completely.

It is now January 2022, and we are drafting this introduction while an astonishing array of global news outlets batter us with misinformation that the Covid-19 virus is a hoax,¹ that vaccines are designed by sinister governments to harm rather than protect,² and that anything from waving

crystals³ to eating turmeric can cure the disease.⁴ Lives have been lost not just to the virus, but as a result of the stances adopted by individuals around the world on all of these matters. Not for a long time have the matters which we intended to foreground against a backdrop of “archaeology in comics” been so prominent *and* consequential: scientific literacy amongst the global population, critical engagement with sources, who can be trusted as qualified and allowed to speak on particular issues, how to distinguish fact from fiction. In addition, the summer of 2020 was convulsed by the aftermath of the murder of African-American US citizen George Floyd, by means of violent restraint by a policeman following arrest for an alleged extremely minor misdemeanour. Rightly perceived as a dramatic extreme of the much more common police brutality which is disproportionately deployed against Black people in the US, we along with the rest of the world were reminded of the systemically damaging consequences of centuries of oppression, othering, and stereotyping, and the continuing need for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Regrettable grist to our mill, these destabilising global events since our book proposal was accepted only intensified our commitment to start addressing these issues in our own backyard: how is archaeological material in mainstream comics represented, and are communities othered and damaged as a result of this? Should there be more “comic literacy”? How does archaeological *science* (as opposed to material culture itself) appear in mainstream comics, and have these representations contributed to or—even if unintentionally—detracted from the public understanding of science more broadly? Who has been, and who should be, involved in the production of comics *about* archaeology, especially in cases where the material culture of historically colonised, misrepresented, or otherwise oppressed communities is being represented? Should archaeologists take a more involved role in combating negative stereotypes in comics about communities that are not like “us” (archaeology is a very white profession),⁵ in addressing scientific misconceptions, bogus claims about historical events, or in pushing back against objects or symbols being appropriated for the purpose of hate and othering?

On the face of it, it seems impossible to disagree with the claim that harmful misrepresentations in past material which is still in circulation should be openly recognised, discussed and then disavowed. It also seems straightforwardly desirable that, with a view to the future, comics literacy and scientific literacy should increase amongst the general population, amongst whom we include ourselves as co-editors of this volume. These

simple words, of course, hide mammoth tasks on both fronts. *Tintin in the Congo* remains a popular and easily available comic album (at the time of writing, Amazon offers a hardcover “collector’s edition” published in 2016 for £9.25), even though multiple scholarly dissections of its racism exist.⁶ As recently as 2017, the popular Flemish comic album series *Suske & Wiske*, going since 1945, published a new album, *Mami Wata*, in which a black man was caricatured in an obviously ape-like manner.⁷ Indeed, the whiteness at the centre of comics theory itself in Scott McCloud’s seminal work—*Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*—and his “blank slate” approach has been questioned and critiqued for making major assumptions about the embodied and lived experiences of comic readers.⁸ In this volume, Guillaume Molle’s gathered corpus of representations of the Pacific Islands—included as an appendix at the end of his chapter in this volume—goes up to 2021 and the chapter makes clear that recent publication does not automatically equal fair representation. We are, therefore, faced with two problems: first, that scholarly analysis of harmful past misrepresentations is not reaching the general audiences they need to reach in order to combat representations which, we argue in this volume, have subtle but real societal impact. This means that new, and often young, readers of such old material may consume it uncritically. Secondly, as we have seen, new and damaging material continues to be published.

Neither archaeology as a profession nor comic book creators and theorists nor this book alone can fix the complex, global, long-standing problematics referred to in the paragraphs above. Indeed, we are conscious that the contributors to this volume are predominantly not from minoritised backgrounds—only Zena Kamash, one of the co-editors, is a woman of colour. We feel, however, that this volume demonstrates in numerous ways the value and need for allies, for people who will speak up for those whose voices are often not heard, including minoritised groups in the past as well as the present, and to share the burden of work that is required to move forward in inclusive action. We hope that readers of this book may engage in the kinds of dialogic and collaborative readings that have the potential to disrupt accepted understandings of comics (and by extension archaeology), in the manner of Flowers’ call for a deliberate ‘misunderstanding’ of comics that comes from creating a critical space for readers to examine their disidentification with the experiences of the people about whom they read.⁹ The focus in many of the contributions is on anti-racist action, but many of the tropes exposed in this volume and the suggestions for transformative action can equally be applied to other minoritised

groups or people with protected characteristics, for example those from LGBTQ+ communities. In addition, the growth in critical scholarly publications about comics, linked to the growth in comics modules available to those taking university degrees in many disciplines (from history to literature to sociology and politics), and the continued popularity of the medium must surely offer hope that new directions can be taken and old ones abandoned in the consumption, analysis, and production of comics.¹⁰ The contributions to this volume show that the archaeological community is willing to face uncomfortable truths, call them out and take action.¹¹ Specifically, the contributors to this book have all used comics as a way into saying things about archaeology and receptions of archaeology that we can't necessarily say in other forms.¹² Like comics, archaeology is political.¹³ The narratives that both create cannot be separated from the backdrop of social power in which they are created and so both also have responsibilities to reflect on how and why they legitimise particular narratives.

Alongside these political links between comics and archaeology, it would be perverse not to note here that archaeology is in itself also a highly visual discipline and so one that is perhaps particularly fitting for the medium of comics. While the focus of archaeological study is on material culture, these artefacts, as well as the sites and landscapes in which they are found, are most often documented and studied in the form of visual media.¹⁴ Representations of archaeological landscapes and sites are represented in site plans, in cross-section drawings, or in Geographical Information Systems maps. As such, understanding archaeological knowledge and the past is rooted in the visual, which allows the data to move beyond the site, and to be reproduced into manageable forms.¹⁵ And yet, this inherently leads to questions regarding the translation of the past into new media; as Shanks and Webmoor write, the archaeological process 'is less about "discovering" the past and more about crafting what remains of the past into "deliverables"'.¹⁶ Thus, the act of translating archaeological data into a constructed narrative of the past is both scientific and creative.¹⁷ However, visual representations of archaeology are not just utilised in scholarly discourse but offer a medium through which the general public can also access narratives of the past, and in turn aid in the popular construction of archaeological knowledge. From Renaissance paintings to twenty-first century video games, the visual representation of the past has been instrumental in disseminating ideas about the past through society, and of fixing them in popular culture.¹⁸ These translations, however, come

with their own baggage; representations of archaeological narratives use a range of conventions which reduce information to its essentials and effectively create a shorthand, so that the past becomes instantly recognisable and familiar.¹⁹ Similarly, studies into visual narrative comprehension in comics have demonstrated that the more exposure readers have to the visual language of comics, the more they are able to make inferences about this visual language.²⁰ As in archaeology, objectivity is a mirage: the lived experience of a reader has the potential to frame how they read a comic, making it open to multiple interpretations.²¹ It is unsurprising, then, to find that different cultures handle visual narratives differently in comics, so we cannot assume that everyone will consume comics (or archaeological visuals) in similar ways.²² These visual shorthands of both archaeology and comics, therefore, have the potential to define the way a particular group, culture or place is understood, and encourage particular interpretations, while neglecting or obscuring others.²³ The representation of the past or that of archaeology within the medium of comics therefore sits within well-established archaeological practice, but is also heir to the issues that popular representations in both archaeology and comics are prey to; these are issues which the contributions to this volume aim to address in a range of ways.

The first half of *Comics and Archaeology* consists of three reception studies. In the first, anthropologist David Anderson offers an extensive analysis of how US comics of the twentieth century grounded their fictional adventures in a variety of pseudoscientific non-comic publications which were popular at the same time. He concludes that such (potentially) harmlessly conceived, commercially inspired choices implicated comics in a wider societal blurring of truth and fiction fostered by the attention received by such publications.²⁴ By the end of Anderson's chapter, the reader is able to make more sense of the astonishing finding from the 2018 Chapman University 'survey of American fears' that 57% of Americans that year professed some level of belief that Atlantis was real. Of course, cause and effect are as difficult to disentangle here as the Fortean truth-fiction Anderson describes, and isolating the role of comics in contributing to such a statistic is impossible. But without following in the footsteps of psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, who famously connected children's consumption of comics to incidence of juvenile delinquency,²⁵ Anderson's tracing of the archaeology of a number of popular pseudohistorical and pseudoscientific tropes in comics leaves no doubt that comics are dismissed as an inconsequential medium to our collective peril.