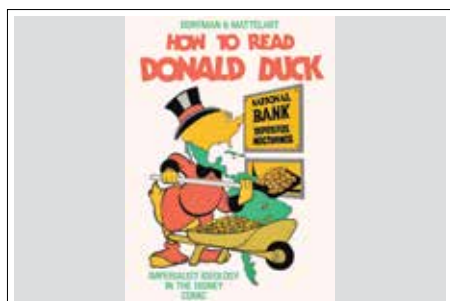


mediums (a scholarly exposition, for example, such as many passages in your book), which don't seem to be as effective a weapon. What's your take on that?

Very good point. Long-winded analyses of Others and negative imagery really don't achieve much. I see my role less as one of activism, and more about scholarly inquiry for its own sake. But the very real and necessary project of countering harmful imagery is being undertaken in other ways - thinking here about the fallout from #metoo, from the 'Rhodes Must Fall' and other statue controversies, and BlackLivesMatter. Effective countering can also be done by cartoons and cartoonists themselves, although this then risks escalating ideological conflicts - we've seen this most notably in the Charlie Hebdo tragedies (i.e. both the original cultural tragedy of Jyllands Posten and other magazines using outdated, privileged white (primarily masculine), mid-20th century methods to demonise Islam and the Prophet, but then the indescribably tragedy that flowed from extreme reactions to this - the murder of journalists and cartoonists in January, 2015). Public protest against negative imagery has resulted in the 'cancelling' of offenders against public decency: Michael Leunig has outlived his usefulness in many ways on Melbourne's Age newspaper, for his criticisms of vaccinations, parents (especially mothers), and Israel. The same is true for other controversies.

■ ■ In 'Pulp Empire' (University of Chicago Press, 2021), Paul Hirsch demonstrates that the US government turned comic books into a tool of its imperial foreign policy during WWII and Cold War, sometimes by circumventing the free speech associated with that genre through both overt and covert means. Have there been similar incidents in other imperial contexts of appropriating graphic satire by imperial governments?



'How to Read Donald Duck' by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart gives an introduction to reading the imperialist ideologies implied in Disney comics.

That Pulp Empire argument is a fascinating one, and radical comics studies scholars pointed out this sort of thing re. Disney comics in the mid-1970s (How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic, by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart; translation and introduction by David Kunzle). The line between an intentional exercise in cultural imperialism, and one that is driven by impersonal market forces is where I'd see some grey areas, though. The expansion of Punch as a model throughout the British Empire, 'British World', and beyond, c.1840s-1930s would be the closest comparison. In British India, the authorities kept a close eye on what was published in the Indian iterations of Punch, as they did in Egypt (to the extent that the Cairo Punch needed to be published out of Paris, and imported to its 'home' territory). I guess one could also see Japanese cultural imperialism through Manga accompanying the massive expansion of Japanese economic power and influence between the 1960s and the 2010s. The pressures associated with that would have been far less heavy-handed, though.

■ ■ Finally, I wonder if you have looked into the works of Naji Al-Ali, the Palestinian cartoonist who was assassinated in London in 1987. What's your impression of his works?



Naji al-Ali was a Palestinian cartoonist, renowned for his politically critical cartoons of the Arab regimes and Israel. He is best known for the character Handala, portrayed as a young witness in his cartoons. He was assassinated in 1987 in London.

Naji Al-Ali was an astonishingly talented cartoonist, and his murder was a huge loss to humanity and the world of caricature/cartooning. His non-conformist attitude to the Arab nationalist party line, his attachment to a worldview informed by Marxism, but not defined by it, and his skill as an artist, all make him a fascinating subject for study and appreciation. He's one of a very few cartoonists to be targeted for assassination, and also to be commemorated by a statue. We need more analysis and appreciation of his legacy.

