Steal This History: Historiography, The Sixties and The Comic

Author name(s)

Louis Netter
Oliver Gruner

Abstract

A comic book, a graphic research paper, an experiment in image and text – “Steal This History” explores the 1960s (or “Sixties”) as it has appeared in various historical and commemorative discourses. For more than forty years, the Sixties has been discussed and debated in the US public sphere. Its political and cultural legacy continues to excite conflict and disagreement. The following pages provide a multi-perspective account of the Sixties that combines allusions to historical events with personal reflection, poetic imagery, symbol and metaphor. Influenced by the ideas of Hayden White, Alun Munslow, Robert A. Rosenstone and others, we became fascinated by the potential of the image as a conduit for innovative, challenging, self-conscious histories. Furthermore, scholars of the graphic novel have noted the complex ways in which they can engage with historical discourse (see, for example, the special edition of *Rethinking History* 6:3 (2002), devoted to the subject). “Steal This History” builds on these ideas and explores ways of developing a graphic philosophy of history. There is no attempt, here, to provide a comprehensive account of the Sixties, nor to cite every key event, person or movement. Rather, what follows is a partial collection of ideas. We hope readers will enjoy the piece, and that it might spark a dialogue on future directions for graphic historiography.

Keywords

The Sixties, Graphic Novels, Comic Books, Historiography, History, Comic Studies, Politics

Contact Information

Mr Louis Netter
Senior Lecturer in Illustration
University of Portsmouth
School of Art and Design
Eldon Building
Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth
PO1 2DJ

Telephone: 02392845618
Email: louis.netter@port.ac.uk

Dr Oliver Gruner
Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture
University of Portsmouth
School of Art and Design
Eldon Building
Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth
PO1 2DJ

Telephone: 02932843806
Email: oliver.gruner@port.ac.uk

Notes on Contributor(s)

Louis Netter is a Senior Lecturer in Illustration at the University of Portsmouth, UK. His PhD research looks at reportage drawing and experience. He is a practicing illustrator with his first graphic novel *Lizard World* released in September 2016. His research has been published in *Tracey*, Loughborough University's drawing research journal and the *Journal of Illustration* (Intellect).

Oliver Gruner is a Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture at the University of Portsmouth, UK. His research focuses on representations of the 1960s (or "Sixties") in US popular culture. He is the author of *Screening the Sixties: Hollywood Cinema and the Politics of Memory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and his work has been published in journals such as *Rethinking History* and the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*.

HISTORIOGRAPHY, THE SIXTIES AND THE COMIC

PROLOGUE

"STEAL THIS HISTORY" IS AN EXPERIMENTAL ACCOUNT OF THE 1960S (OR "SIXTIES") WHERE HISTORICAL EVENTS INTERSECT WITH, AND ARE INTERRUPTED BY, POETIC IMAGERY AND METAPHOR. WE APPROACHED THIS PROJECT FASCINATED BY BOTH THE PUBLIC DISAGREEMENTS OVER THE SIXTIES' POLITICAL LEGACY AND BY THE ALMOST-MYTHIC SYMBOLISM THAT SO OFTEN UNDERPINS DISCOURSES ON THE ERA. INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF PHILOSOPHERS AND HISTORIANS SUCH AS HAYDEN WHITE, ALUN MUNSLOW AND ROBERT A. ROSENSTONE, WE SAW IN THE COMIC FORM AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A SELF-CONSCIOUS HISTORY IN WHICH FRAGMENTS OF A "REALIST" CHRONICLE WOULD SIT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH THE MORE "LITERARY" ELEMENTS OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES. RATHER THAN SUBSUMING THEM BENEATH A VENEER OF OBJECTIVITY, ALL OF THE IMAGINARY ICONS AND FIGURATIVE DISCOURSES THAT GIVE SHAPE AND MEANING TO OUR HISTORY LITERALLY INVADE THE DIEGESIS. PLAYFUL AND REFLEXIVE IN ITS APPROACH, THE COMIC IS AN ATTEMPT AT WHAT MUNSLOW HAS CALLED "THE-PAST-AS-HISTORY-AS-ARTWORK."

FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, HISTORIES OF THE SIXTIES HAVE ASSESSED THE ERA'S TRANSFORMATIONS. RHETORICALLY SHAPED AND RESHAPED WITHIN A US CULTURE BURSTING WITH COMMEMORATIVE ZEAL, "THE SIXTIES" SERVES AS A PALIMPSEST UPON WHICH COMPETING IDEAS STRUGGLE FOR PROMINENCE. HOPE, OPTIMISM, OUTRAGE, EXCITEMENT, DESPAIR, DECLINE, IMPLOSION — ACCOUNTS OF THIS ERA CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN ITS URGENCY AND VIBRANCY WITHIN BROADER PUBLIC DISCOURSES. THE SIXTIES, AS STEPHEN PAUL MILLER PUTS IT, "RIPPLES INTO THE PRESENT". THROUGH MULTIPLE, FRAGMENTED NARRATIVES, METAPHORS AND SYMBOLIC NON-SEQUITURS, "STEAL THIS HISTORY" OFFERS AN ENGAGEMENT WITH SIXTIES HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE DIVERSE WAYS IN WHICH THE ERA HAS BEEN REIMAGINED. OUR FAITH IN THE COMIC BOOK'S POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATIVE HISTORIES IS BASED AT LEAST IN PART ON THE DEMANDS IT PLACES ON READERS TO "FILL IN THE BLANKS" AND COME TO THEIR OWN INTERPRETATIONS. WE HOPE READERS OF THIS COMIC WILL DO THE SAME. HOWEVER, WE HAVE ALSO INCLUDED EXTENSIVE NOTES AT THE END, WHICH EXPLAIN ALL OF OUR CREATIVE AND HISTORICAL CHOICES.

WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, THEN, IT'S BACK TO THE SIXTIES AND CHICAGO, 1968.
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING HERE

GRANT PARK, CHICAGO, 1968.

I'M NOT
ENTIRELY
CLEAR...

OLD BATTLES DIE HARD. A MONUMENT TO CIVIL WAR
HERO, AND SO-CALLED 'FATHER OF MEMORIAL DAY',
GENERAL JOHN LOGAN IS ABOUT TO BE INVADED.

HISTORY UNDER ATTACK?

OR THE PAST AND THE PRESENT IN GROOVY COMMUNION.

WE WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TO CALL THE SIXTIES AMERICA'S SECOND CIVIL WAR.

AND WE WON'T BE THE LAST

ACCORDING TO HAYDEN WHITE, METAPHORS ARE THE HISTORIAN'S STOCK-IN-TRADE. THEIR SYMBOLIC POTENCY INVESTS THE PAST WITH MEANING.

THE PALLID
SHADES OF
MEMORY...

GO HOME,
HIPPIES!!

DAMN KIDS,
NO RESPECT!

FESTIVAL OF
LIFE, MAN.

FUCK THE
DEATH
CONVENTION.

IN FACT, THE AIM OF THIS LITTLE COMIC BOOK IS MODEST.

IT IS TO SKETCH OUT SOME IDEAS FOR AN ILLUSTRATED SIXTIES HISTORY.

TOLD FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.

THAT IS SCEPTICAL TOWARD THE NOTION OF A SINGLE "OBJECTIVE" HISTORY.

THAT IS PLAYFUL AND IRONIC IN ITS NARRATIVE APPROACH.

THAT IS SELF-CONSCIOUS OF ITS STATUS AS A CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE PAST.

BUT THAT NONETHELESS TRIES TO SAY SOMETHING MEANINGFUL ABOUT THIS MOST CONTESTED OF EPOCHS.

IT ALL STARTED BACK IN 2009.

AND A RESEARCH TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY.

FORGET IT KID,
THE SIXTIES ARE
DEAD. WE CLEANED
UP AND GREW UP.

I WAS SEARCHING FOR FACTS.

WAVY GRAVY
WAS A PIG
FARMER?

CAN I
HELP
YOU?

AND NOT GETTING ANYWHERE FAST.

SOME
ASSISTANCE
PLEASE!

THE "FACTS" WERE ENDLESS. AND IT WAS...

THIS IS
AMERICA SON,
YOU GOTTA BE
PUSHY.

EXHAUSTING.

THAT NIGHT IN BROOKLYN.

I MET THIS GUY OUTSIDE A BAR. WE STRUCK
UP A CONVERSATION.

YOU SEE, COMICS CAN PROVIDE A FORMALLY COMPLEX AND SELF-CONSCIOUS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PAST.

AS SCOTT MCCLOUD SAYS, THE COMIC CONSTRUCTS ITS "REALITY" OUT OF FRAGMENTS...

IS THAT A MAN OR A TREE BEHIND THE FENCE? DAMN THESE ILLUSTRATIONS.

... AND CAN FLEXIBLY SHIFT THE ORDER THAT WE SEE THINGS (AND DON'T SEE THINGS), THUS CULTIVATING AMBIGUITY.

THE SPECTATOR (OR READER) COLLABORATES IN FINDING MEANING.

DID YOU SEE...

AND "CLOSURE" (AS FAR AS THAT IS POSSIBLE) REQUIRES US TO ...

TRUST IN THE AUTHORITY OF THE ARTIST AND...

FILL IN THE GAPS.

THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION BLURRED.

THIS IS ALL STARTING TO SOUND A BIT OLIVER STONE.

CAN IT PATSY, YOU'RE NOT IN A MOVIE ANYMORE.

AND MORE SO THAN FILM, COMICS ALLOW PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE TO COEXIST IN THE SAME SPACE, ON THE SAME PAGE.

SO LET THE WORD GO FORTH...

THAT THE FUTURE OF THE "PAST-AS-HISTORY" CAN BE FOUND IN THE COMIC BOOK.

WE'RE TAKING THE SIXTIES OUT OF THE GUTTER AND BACK ONTO THE STREETS.

MEANWHILE...

ON AUGUST 28, 1968, THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION WAS IN ITS PENULTIMATE DAY. POLICE CLASHED WITH PROTESTERS ON THE STREETS OF CHICAGO.

IT WAS OSTENSIBLY A BATTLE OVER AMERICA'S ROLE IN VIETNAM.

BUT CAME TO MEAN MUCH MORE.

"THE BITTER REDNESS OF LOVE FERMENTS" (ARTHUR RIMBAUD)

A CHAOTIC ERUPTION OF POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DISCORD.

EVENTS IN CHICAGO, ACCORDING TO THE HISTORIAN DAVID FARBER, WERE SEEN BY MANY AS "A CRISIS IN THE NATION'S POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ORDER."

FOR SOME, IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END: OF HOPE, IDEALISM, EVEN "THE SIXTIES" ITSELF. FOR OTHERS, IT WAS JUST A BEGINNING...

HISTORIES OF CHICAGO '68. OR INDEED ANY HISTORY OF THE SIXTIES, ARE MORE THAN CATALOGUES OF RECORDED EVENTS.

THEIR POWER DERIVES FROM HOW THEY SYMBOLICALLY CONSTRUCT THE PAST.

POETIC IMAGERY, METAPHOR AND MYTH NEED NOT BE DISTRACTIONS FROM, OR DISTORTIONS OF, FACTS. SUCH FEATURES PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH THESE FACTS BECOME SIGNIFICANT, VITAL AND LIVING.

"THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF POETRY IN EVERY HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE WORLD" (HAYDEN WHITE)

BEAUTY VS. HONESTY — IT'S AN AGE OLD DEBATE

HISTORY AND LITERATURE DRAW FROM THE SAME IMAGINATIVE WELLSPRING.

WHEN IT COMES TO THE SIXTIES, IT'S HARD TO ESCAPE THE EXPRESSIVE RAZZMATAZZ UNDERPINNING SO MANY POPULAR ACCOUNTS OF THE ERA.

YOU CAN RUN...

BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE.

BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

LATE SPRING 1967: THE AUTHOR JOAN DIDION VISITS SAN FRANCISCO.

SHE TURNED A CRITICAL EYE ON THE HIPPIE COMMUNITY OF HAIGHT ASHBURY IN HER ESSAY (TITLED WITH A NOD TO W.B. YEATS) "SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM".

IT WAS ANOTHER DEATH KNEEL FOR THE AGE OF AQUARIUS.

THE SIXTIES HAS MANY ENDINGS.

PART OF THE ERA'S RESONANCE TODAY STEMS FROM A SEARCH FOR ITS DRAMATIC DENOUEMENT.

THE PROBLEM WITH FINDING THAT NEAT CONCLUSION
IS IT ALWAYS LEAVES UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VIETNAM, NIXON,
WATERGATE - WE'RE
LOOKING AT 1974 AS
THE BIG IMPLOSION.

PERIODIZATION
EQUALS
OPPRESSION.
LET'S MOVE
FORWARD.

LISTEN UP, Y'ALL. THE SIXTIES ONLY
ENDED WHEN PERSONAL POLITICS WERE
REPLACED WITH MINDLESS NARCISSISM.
FROM THE BIG I AM TO THE BIG ME.

IT'S MOURNING
IN AMERICA.

"THE SIXTIES" IS
NOTHING BUT A
WHITE MAN'S
CONCEPT, ANYWAY.

SCREW YOUR
PATRIARCHAL
SIXTIES.

STONEWALL RIOTS, 1969

REALLY THE
SIXTIES IS A
VERY PERSONAL
TRIP.

SO BY THE 1980S, THE ERA, BY MANY ACCOUNTS, HAD BEEN IN A KIND OF EXTENDED DEATH DANCE FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

AND HISTORIES OF THE SIXTIES OFTEN REVERTED TO WHAT RICK PERLSTEIN CALLED THE "DECLENSION HYPOTHESIS", A TALE THAT BEGINS WITH HOPE BUT ENDS IN TERMINAL DECLINE.

IT WAS LIKE BEING IN NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY ALL OVER AGAIN. ONLY THIS TIME, I WASN'T FACING A MOUNTAIN OF FACTS, BUT A MONSTROUS PARADE OF SYMBOLS.

ERR, SOME ASSISTANCE, PLEASE.

THESE GUYS HAD ENLIVENED SIXTIES HISTORIES FOR GENERATIONS; THEY'D BROUGHT SHAPE AND SPIRIT TO MANY A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT.

OUT OF THE LIBRARY AND INTO THE STREET!

BUT I STARTED TO WONDER WHAT THE FUTURE HELD.

HISTORY IS NOT JUST A STORY. IT IS A MORAL, ETHICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE WORLD OUTSIDE. HISTORY, AS KEITH JENKINS PUTS IT "IS NEVER FOR ITSELF; IT IS ALWAYS FOR SOMEONE."

IT SEEMED APT TO ASK MYSELF FOR WHOM WAS I WRITING THIS HISTORY. IN THE WAKE OF ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED THESE PAST FEW YEARS, PERHAPS THE OLD WAYS OF SPEAKING ABOUT THE PAST JUST WOULDN'T CUT IT ANYMORE.

GRANT PARK, CHICAGO, 2016

CHARGE!

ARE YOU
READY TO
RIDE FORTH
ONCE MORE,
GENERAL?

WHAT DOES A "REAL" HISTORY OF THE SIXTIES
LOOK LIKE?

IF, AS ALUN MUNSLOW SUGGESTS, "ANY
'AESTHETIC JUDGEMENT' MAY BE CONSTRUED
AS BEING 'TRUE'..."

... THEN THE
"TRUTH"
OF HISTORY
LIES IN THE
CHOICES WE
MAKE.

IN A FOREST
OF FLOWERS
OR A HAIL
OF SHELLS, I
AWAIT YOUR
PENCIL, SIR.

THANKS,
GENERAL. TO
CONCLUDE,
THEN ...

AT THE
BEGINNING.

Look out,
Hayden, it's
real! :

Notes

Prologue. “Inspired by the work of ...” See, for example, Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 27-50, 81-100; Alun Munslow, *The Future of History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Munslow, *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) and Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History: Concepts, Theories and Practice* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006).

Prologue. “The Sixties, as Stephen Paul Miller puts it ...” See Stephen Paul Miller, *The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 17.

Page 1. The illustrations are based on a series of photographs taken by the photographer Peter Bullock in August 1968. They feature protestors clambering on the Logan Monument in Grant Park, Chicago, during one of the many demonstrations surrounding the Democratic National Convention of August 26-29. They can be found in the Chicago History Museum’s digital collections, [http://digital-collection.chicagohistory.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Democratic%20National%20Convention%20\(1968%20%20Chicago,%20Ill.\)/mode/exact](http://digital-collection.chicagohistory.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Democratic%20National%20Convention%20(1968%20%20Chicago,%20Ill.)/mode/exact) (accessed December 2015).

Page 2. “We wouldn’t be the first to call the Sixties ...” Histories of the Sixties often mobilise dramatic metaphors of an America divided, a country in the throes of a “second civil war.” See, for example, Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mark Hamilton Lytle, *America’s Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); William L. O’Neill, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971).

Page 2. “According to Hayden White...” See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 27-50, 81-100.

Page 2. “Fuck the death convention...” Context and dialogue for Chicago ’68 was informed by David Farber’s book, *Chicago ’68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Page 2. “The pallid shades of memory...” This is a partial reference to G.W.F. Hegel’s assertion that the past is irretrievable. “Each period is involved in such peculiar circumstances, exhibits a condition of things so idiosyncratic, that its conduct must be regulated by considerations connected with itself, and itself alone ... The pallid shades of memory struggle in vain with the life and freedom of the present.” See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 6. It is also quoted by Hayden White at the end of his influential attack on the static, stagnant nature of mid-twentieth century historical discourse, “The Burden of History” (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 50). The reference is therefore both a literal statement on the action within this panel (Civil War general John Logan “struggling” against an onslaught of Sixties protestors) and, via White, a nod to the historiographical questions we will be addressing throughout.

Page 3. The images on this page have been inspired by Barry Schwartz’s work on collective memory, and in particular on how the meanings attached to Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address have been framed and reframed across the 20th century. A speech with many potential interpretations – a eulogy to those who had fallen, a call for national unity, a celebration of the “common man”, a palliative to North-South conflicts, an appeal for racial reconciliation – the Gettysburg Address, according to Schwartz, only became intrinsically bound up with broader debates on the African American civil rights struggle from the 1960s onward, with direct connections being made between Lincoln and civil rights leaders. This (re)interpretation of the past is both an example of the fluid nature of historical narratives – their writing as contingent on exigencies of the present as on documentary “fact” – and exemplifies the complex layers from which historical discourse is constructed. Fragments of the Civil War inform debates of the 1960s, and combine in the present to produce symbolic narratives of the American national experience. See Schwartz, “The New Gettysburg Address: Fusing History and

Memory”, *Poetics* 33 (2005), 63-79; Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Page 3. “The-past-as-history-as-artwork...” We are referring to Alun Munslow’s ideas in his book *The Future of History*. Munslow’s call for new forms of historical expression that are self-conscious, reflexive, ironic and sceptical toward the notion of “objectivity” has provided the theoretical underpinning for what follows. See Munslow, *The Future of History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Page 5. “Hold the front page!” For studies on the Sixties’ place in contemporary political and cultural discourse, see Daniel Marcus, *Happy Days and Wonder Years: The Fifties and the Sixties in Contemporary Cultural Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Bernard Von Bothmer, *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

Page 6. “As Scott McCloud says...” McCloud, speaking of the way that the comic, like our navigation of the world, relies on fragments says “our perception of ‘reality’ is an act of faith, based on mere fragments”. *Understanding Comics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 62-63. “The spectator (or reader) collaborates in finding meaning” is a paraphrase of McCloud who speaks of the audience being a “conscious collaborator”. *Understanding Comics*, p. 65. “Closure” is a central theme of McCloud’s theories about the many ways the comic constructs and is constructed to make meaning. “And more so than film, comics allow past, present and future to coexist in the same space, on the same page.” McCloud formally addresses the way the comic functions within time but also makes it clear that the presentation of time is highly flexible, as long as “the face it presents to the reader is one of simple normality”. *Understanding Comics*, pp. 115-117.

Page 6. “The boundaries between fact and fiction blurred...” Academic writing on Oliver Stone’s drama *JFK* has noted the extent to which the film mixes documentary footage, staged reconstruction, historical events and mythic narratives into what some have argued to be an assault on traditional historiography itself. See, for example, Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*, Revised Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 88-103; Robert A. Rosenstone, “JFK: Historical Fact, Historical Film”, *The American Historical Review*, 97: 2 (1992), pp. 506-511; Hayden White, “The Modernist Event”, in Vivian Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modernist Event* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 18-38.

Page 6. “The past-as-history...” Again, this is a reference to Alun Munslow’s work. There is, as Munslow notes, an important distinction to be made between the “past”, which is irretrievable in its entirety, and “history”, which is a meaning-making endeavour. We suggest that the ironic detachment and temporal malleability allowed in the comic form offers interesting potential in which this distinction can be explored. See Munslow, *Narrative and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 127.

Page 7. “Phil Ochs.” The image ostensibly refers to musician Phil Ochs’ album cover *Rehearsals for Retirement* (1969). Ochs himself was involved in the protests in Chicago in August 1968. He would lament these events, and their subsequent fallout, as the swansong of an energised optimistic movement for social change. For Ochs, as for many later popular historians, 1968 served as a death of optimism, a symbolic end to the Sixties.

Page 7. “In Lincoln Park the dark ...” A quote from Ochs’ song “William Butler Yeats Visits Lincoln Park and Escapes Unscathed” (1969), from the album *Rehearsals for Retirement*. As the following pages attest, Yeats’ poetry has been invoked time and again in accounts of the Sixties. His poem “The Second Coming” provides a metaphorical wellspring from which authors, artists, journalists, politicians and historians have drawn.

Page 7. “The bitter redness of love ferments”. This is a quote from Arthur Rimbaud’s poem “The Drunken Boat” (1871). The image itself refers to Theodore Gericault’s celebrated painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-1819). While ostensibly unrelated to events in Chicago, these nautical-themed images are an allusion to the “literary” aspect of Sixties histories, whereby dramatic metaphors are used to explain the impact and legacy of these events. As Hayden White puts it, “The metaphor does not image the thing it seeks to characterize, it gives directions for finding the set of images that are

intended to be associated with the thing.” See White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”, in White, *Tropics of Discourse*, p. 91.

Page 7. “Events in Chicago, according to David Farber”. See Farber, *Chicago '68*, p. xiii.

Page 8. “There is an element of poetry...”. Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”, in White, *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 97-98.

Page 8. “Beauty vs. honesty ...” The image here is an adaptation of John Everett Millais’ painting Ophelia (1851-52), but with Ophelia presented as a hippie. There are obvious metaphorical connections to be drawn between the image and a symbolic “death” of the counterculture, something often argued to have occurred in the late 1960s/early 1970s (see notes below). For us, it was also, by way of the character of Ophelia – and her treatment at the hands of men in Hamlet – a nod to the misogyny existing within countercultural groups in the Sixties. Beauty vs. honesty, fiction vs. fact, the literary imagination vs. scientific objectivity – the line is also a gentle allusion to long-running debates on the nature of history.

Page 9. The beast, here, is Yeats’ “rough beast ... [slouching] toward Bethlehem to be born.” Whether present in the writings of Joan Didion, the pronouncements of Richard Nixon or the films of Oliver Stone, such imagery consistently imbues written, verbal and visual accounts of the Sixties.

Page 10. “The Author Joan Didion visits San Francisco”. See Didion, “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”, in Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), pp. 78-110.

Page 11. The images in panels 1-6 and text here are informed by those who have questioned the “declensionist” narrative of the Sixties, which often posits an “end” to the era in the late 1960s or early 1970s. For scholars of the feminist, gay rights and Black Power movements, for example, this search for a neat conclusion ends up erasing or eliding the significant contributions such movements made to US society in the 1970s and beyond. See, for example, Sara Evans, “Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s”, in Van Gosse and Richard Moser (eds), *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), pp. 52-66; Alice Echols, “Nothing Distant About It: Women’s Liberation and Sixties Radicalism”, in David Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 149-174; Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Page 12. “J’accuse ...” As Barbara Epstein has demonstrated, grassroots political activism did not suddenly collapse in the 1970s and 1980s. Groups devoted to women’s rights, anti-nuclear policies, gay rights and a host of other causes continued to fight for progressive social change. The text and images are, however, also a playful nod to Todd Gitlin’s memorable description of media accounts of post-Sixties America suggesting that it was “as if a whole generation had moved en masse from j’accuse to Jacuzzi.” See Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 433.

Page 12. “And histories of the Sixties often reverted ...” See Rick Perlstein, “Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap”, *Linguafranca*, 6: 4 (1996), <http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sixties.html> . (Accessed March 2016).

Page 13. “History, as Keith Jenkins puts it ...” See Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 21.

Page 14. “If, as Alun Munslow suggests ...” See Munslow, *The Future of History*, p. 139.

Page 14. “Look out, Hayden, it’s real.” This line directly alludes to a similar utterance, “Look out, Haskell, it’s real”, present in *Medium Cool* (1969), a filmic account of events in Chicago ’68. Written and directed by Haskell Wexler, this independent production blended a fictional narrative with real documentary footage of the protests. Wexler and his crew actually joined and shot the demonstrations. The line is spoken by a crewmember warning Wexler of the tear gas being used by police on

protestors. The people behind the camera puncture the film's diegesis (as the illustrator's hand punctures our final panel). And yet, by some criteria, the line is not "real" at all – it was not uttered during the protests, but added in post-production. The "reality" here is therefore a creative choice, not a documented "fact". Does this mean the threat of tear gas was not real for Wexler and his crew? Is the line any less truthful because it was added later? Was the decision to disrupt the narrative with a moment of self-reflexivity a distortion of events or a poignant reference to their magnitude?

For a detailed discussion of the making of *Medium Cool*, see the documentary *Look Out Haskell, It's Real: The Making of Medium Cool* (2001).

Reference List

- Burgoyne, Robert. 2010. *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*, Revised Edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Didion, Joan. 1968. *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Eaglestone, Robert. 2002. Madness or Modernity?: The Holocaust in Two Anglo-American Comics. *Rethinking History* 6:3, 319-330.
- Echols, Alice. 1994. Nothing Distant About It: Women's Liberation and Sixties Radicalism. In David Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, pp. 149-174.
- Echols, Alice. 2002. *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and Its Aftershocks*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Epstein, Barbara. 1993. *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Evans, Sara. 2003. Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s. In Van Gosse and Richard Moser (eds), *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 52-66.
- Farber, David. 1988. *Chicago '68*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Frey, Hugo and Noyes, Benjamin. 2002. Editorial: History in the Graphic Novel. *Rethinking History* 6:3, 255-260.
- Frey, Hugo. 2002. History and Memory in Franco-Belgian Bande Dessinée. *Rethinking History* 6:3, 293-304.
- Gitlin, Todd. 1987. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Hegel, G.W.F. [1837] 1956. *The Philosophy of History*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Isserman, Maurice and Michael Kazin. 2000. *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lytle, Mark Hamilton. 2006. *America's Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era to the Fall of Richard Nixon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marcus, Daniel. 2004. *Happy Days and Wonder Years: The Fifties and the Sixties in Contemporary Cultural Politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- McCloud, Scott. 1993. *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Miller, Stephen Paul. 1999. *The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mills, Alice. 2002. The Paradoxes of History in Crew and Woolman's Tagged and Crew and Tan's Memorial. *Rethinking History*, 6:3, 331-343.
- Munslow, Alun. 2007. *Narrative and History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Munslow, Alun. 2010. *The Future of History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Neill, William L. 1971. *Coming Apart: An Informal History in the 1960's*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.
- Noys, Benjamin. 2002. Fascinating (British) Fascism: David Britton's Lord Horror. *Rethinking History*, 6:3, 305-318.

Perlstein, Rick. Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap. *Lingua Franca* 6:4 (1996), <http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sixties.html> (Accessed March 2016).

Rosenstone, Robert A. 1992. JFK: Historical Fact, Historical Film. *The American Historical Review*, 97:2 (1992), 506-511.

Rosenstone, Robert A. 1995. *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rosenstone, Robert A. 2006. *History on Film/Film on History: Concepts, Theories and Practice*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Schwartz, Barry. 2003. *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schwartz, Barry. 2005. The New Gettysburg Address: Fusing History and Memory. *Poetics* 33 (2005), 63-79.

Von Bothmer, Bernard. 2010. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, Hayden. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, Hayden. 1996. The Modernist Event. In Vivian Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modernist Event*. London: Routledge, pp. 18-38.