

Art and Archaeology in the American Funny Pages

Part X

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Frontispiece: Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 13 Oct., 1968.

Table of Contents

Preface	v
Part I. Setting the Stage.	1
A Test Case: A Comic Strip from Garry Trudeau's <i>Doonesbury</i>	2
A Comic Strip or a Political Cartoon?	2
Laughing at the Strip	3
Looking at the Strip	4
Contextualizing the Strip	10
Webcomics and Internet Memes	22
Pandemic Pastiches	64
Part II. Art in American Cartoons and Comic Strips	89
Introduction	89
Armory Show Pastiches and Parodies	108
The Armory Show in Newspaper Cartoons	109
Newspaper Comic Art Inspired by the Armory Show	123
Comic Art Inspired by the Armory Show in Humor Magazines	133
Illustrated Satirical Poems Inspired by the Armory Show	141
Cubist Fashion Inspired by the Armory Show	145
Attacking the Avant-Garde?	146
Comic Art in Museums and Museums in Comic Art	150
High Art Lowdown	150
Mocking Museums	186
Amusing Museum Visitors	210
Kidding Museums	223
Making Fun of Making Art	240
Amusing Metafictional Mashups	245
Cartooning Cartoonists	272
Silly Art Supplies	285
Poking Fun at Painters	291
Sculpting Humor	339
Kidding Art	350
Amusing Art	368
Humorous Art History 101	369
Miming the Masters	394
Mocking Modernism	523
Part III. Archaeology in American Cartoons and Comic Strips	579
Introduction	579
Cavemen and Dinosaurs	579
The Representation of Prehistory in Comics	627
Comics and Archaeology	639
"Humorous Uchronia" of Prehistory	651
Digging the Past	659
Archaeological Antics	659
The Funny Future of the Past	681
Nutty Stone Age	692

The Ascent of “homo hilarious”	692
Humorous “homo horribilus”	722
Humorous “homo inventus”	743
Campy Cavemen	761
Campy Cave Painting	813
Comical Cultures	866
Silly Stonehenge and Looney Easter Island	866
Entertaining Egyptians	897
Biblical Boffos	924
Comical Classics	953
Wacky Vikings	1024
Playful Pre-Columbians	1028
Conclusions	1041
Humor Theory and Comics Scholarship	1042
American Culture in Art and Archaeology Cartoons	1055
Indices	xxviii
List of Figures	xxviii

Comical Cultures

As I observed at the beginning of the “Nutty Stone Age” essay, the early prehistory of humanity is, for cartoonists and comics artists, a *tabula rasa* on which they can feel free to draw whatever might strike their funny bones—from “humorous uchronía” anachronistic projections onto the Paleolithic past, to factually inaccurate jokes about cavemen living with dinosaurs or inventing the wheel. The archaeology-themed cartoons and comic strips we will examine in this essay, in contrast, are more constrained by the “culturally bound background knowledge” viewers bring to them. But, just as was the case with the art-themed cartoons and comic strips we examined in the Part II essays, that “culturally bound background knowledge” is not necessarily historically accurate. Indeed, how ancient cultures are represented—and misrepresented—in the funny pages reveals a great deal about American cultural values.

Silly Stonehenge and Looney Easter Island

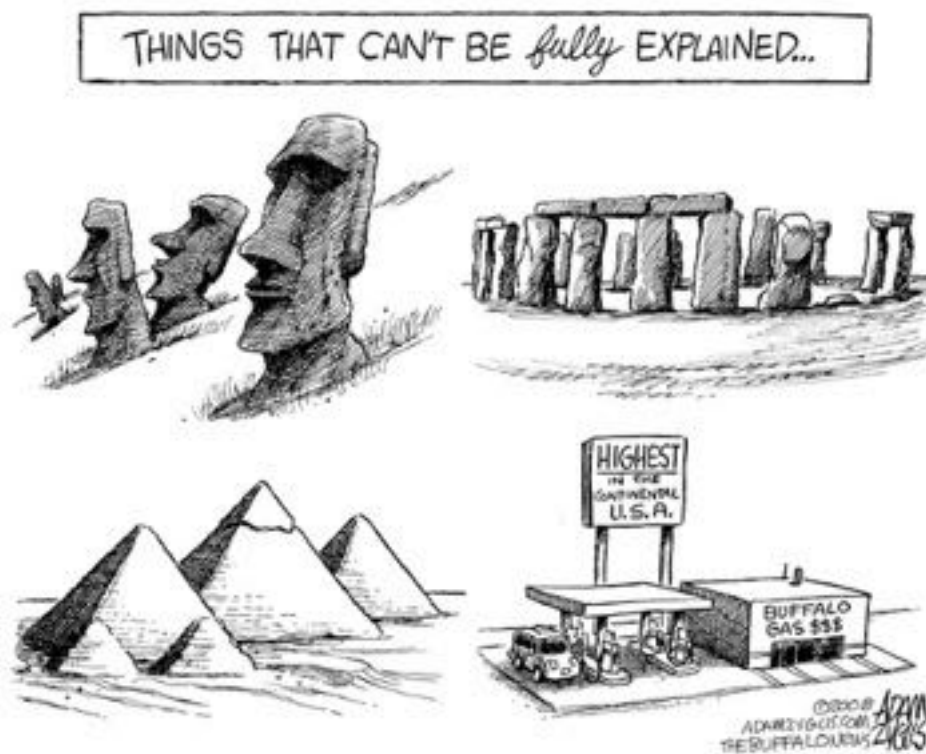


Fig. 1244. Adam Zyglis, *The Buffalo News*, 16 Nov., 2008.



Fig. 1245. Two Stonehenge/Easter Island internet memes.



Fig. 1246. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 25 July, 2012.



Fig. 1247. Dan Reynolds, 19 Sept., 2016.

We start our survey of cartoons and comic strips about antiquity with two of the most recognizable ancient monuments on the globe: Stonehenge and the moai statues of Easter Island. An editorial cartoon by Adam Zyglis (Fig. 1244), for instance, assumes viewers would recognize the Easter Island moai and Stonehenge (and the Egyptian pyramids, a topic which we will turn to in the next section of this essay), but to make his humorous comment about the price of gasoline in Buffalo, New York, Zyglis had to label the gas station. This cartoon reflects a common popular culture misunderstanding about these monuments, namely that there is something “mysterious” about them; Zyglis implies that because the moai and Stonehenge (and the pyramids) cannot be

“fully” explained they may have been created by some unknown forces—such as the space-alien ridiculously proposed by Erich von Däniken in his 1968 fantasy *Chariot of the Gods*. A popular internet meme (**Fig. 1245**) plays with this theme by suggesting that the Easter Island moai and Stonehenge are the head and toes of a giant statue which incongruously runs through the middle of the earth from the South Pacific Chilean island to the Salisbury Plain of England; a risqué variation adds, with a liberal dose of geo-repositioning, the Washington Monument to the giant statue’s anatomy. Other cartoonists couldn’t resist jumping on the Stonehenge/Easter Island comic bandwagon, again assuming that viewers would instantly recognize these monuments: Dave Whamond throws a superfluous Rodin *The Thinker* into a gag (**Fig. 1246**) that suggests Stonehenge was created when an incongruous Easter Island moai deliveryman left the the stones in a circle; a wordless Dan Reynold cartoon (**Fig. 1247**) more directly has over-sized moai constructing Stonehenge.



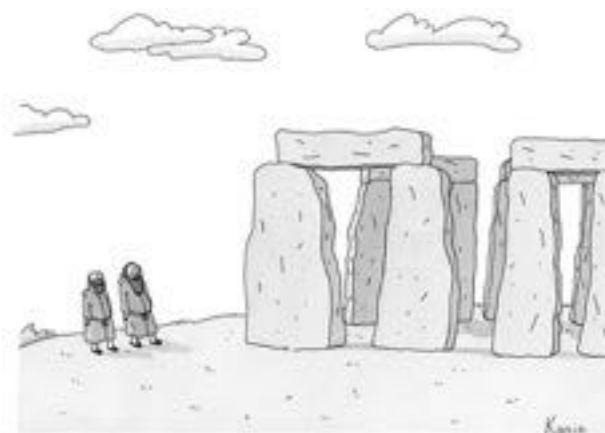
Fig. 1248. Mid-14th-century illustration from a manuscript of the *Roman de Brut* by Wace, showing a giant helping the wizard Merlin build Stonehenge, British Library (Egerton MS 3028).



Fig. 1249. William O'Brian, “Well we’ve done it, but don’t ask me how,” *The New Yorker*, 1950’s.

The fact of the matter is that there is nothing “mysterious” about when or how Stonehenge or the Easter Island statues (or the pyramids, for that matter) were constructed. Extensive research on these monuments has revealed their basic chronology: in the case of Stonehenge, from the earliest Neolithic (ca. 3000 B.C.E.) ditch and earthen bank enclosing cremation burials and a circle of timber posts (the Aubrey Holes), to the construction and series of modifications of the stone circles of sarcens and

bluestones in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (ca. 2500 B.C.E. to ca. 1800 B.C.E.); in the case of Easter Island, we now know that the Polynesian Rapanui people, who first arrived on Easter Island around 1200 C.E., erected more than 900 monolithic moai statues between their arrival and 1500 C.E. Another “mystery” about Stonehenge and the Easter Island moai that has long puzzled people is how pre-industrialized societies without wheeled carts or large domesticated animals were able to transport massive blocks of stone (the largest Stonehenge sarcens weigh up to 25 tons, while the largest Easter Island moai weigh in at nearly 90 tons) over the large distances from where they were quarried (the sarcen stones of Stonehenge come from sandstone deposits some 23 miles away while the Stonehenge bluestones come from quarries in Wales, some 140 miles away; the tufa moai come from the Rano Raraku volcanic stone quarry, some 11 miles from the *ahu* platforms on the coast). As early as 1136, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *History of the Kings of Britain* (**Fig. 1248**), suggested that Merlin had used his magic to construct Stonehenge—a supposition that was believed into the 16th century. A William O’Brian cartoon from the 1950’s (**Fig. 1249**) humorously suggests that even the people who built Stonehenge didn’t know how they did it. More recent attempts to reconstruct the methods that might have been used in transporting large stones in prehistory have shown that, using log rollers, ropes, and timber scaffolding, a relatively small number of people could have transported and erected these large stones. In the case of the Stonehenge bluestones, it is thought that they made part of the journey from Wales by boat; a recent suggestion for the transportation of the Easter Island moai is that they were “walked” from the quarry by groups of people who used ropes to rock them back and forth on log rollers.



*“I just hope people in the future are, like,
‘What the hell are these things?’ ”*

Fig. 1250. Zachary Kanin, *The New Yorker*, 24 Nov., 2014.

All this, of course, is *not* to say that everything about Stonehenge or the Easter Island moai (or the Egyptian pyramids) is “*fully*” explained. As is the case with trying to decipher the “meaning” of Paleolithic cave paintings, the absence of contemporary written references leaves us, like the bearded early Brits clad in medieval monks robes in Zachary Kanin cartoon predicted (**Fig. 1250**), wondering “what the hell are these things?” We can assume that the great amount of effort expended in their construction means that these monuments served an important ritual function (or functions) to the people who made them. From a detached anthropological perspective, we can also assert that they served important social functions as well, especially as a way to solidify social control in emerging chieftain-level cultures. But, without being able to hear from the people who made and used them, the exact ideological import of the Stonehenge circles or the Easter Island moai is unknowable. The famous astrological alignment of Stonehenge with the sunrise of the summer solstice and sunset of the winter solstice clearly indicates that seasonality played a part in how they functioned; we can discount reports from, hostile, Roman sources that Stonehenge was the site of Druid ritual murder and rape. [We can also discount ideas about the mystical “meaning” of Stonehenge attributed to it by the hoards of new-agey neo-Druids who annually descend upon the monument at the summer solstice.] Similarly, the accounts of the earliest European explorers of Easter Island and of the missionaries who followed them are of little value in understanding what the moai meant to the Rapanui people; analogies with other, related, Polynesian cultures suggest that they may have represented protective ancestors.

And there are many other aspects of Stonehenge and Easter Island that remain unknown, albeit hardly “mysterious.” One of the main outstanding questions for Stonehenge is the relationship of the Early Bronze Age people who first erected the sarsen and bluestone stone circles to the so-called Beaker Culture—a set of elite burial goods with European parallels that archaeologists used to associate with a supposed migration of Indo-European speakers. On Easter Island, the most pressing unanswered question is why the erection of moai suddenly stopped around 1500 C.E., more than two centuries before the arrival of European colonists; the prevailing hypothesis is that the Rapanui over-exploited the resources of the island, leading to a deforestation that halted the supply of logs needed in the transportation of the moai—a cautionary ecological tale that particularly resonates to us in this age of run-away climate change.

To elaborate a bit more on the general issue of archaeological “mysteries” before we return to Stonehenge and Easter Island cartoons:

There are, obviously, aspects of ancient cultures that we do not know today but that, when new evidence is uncovered, we can know. Similarly, when new evidence appears, we can modify our theories about the past accordingly. This is called the scientific method, the belief in which, distressingly, is increasingly being undermined in the America. Further, the distinction between what is knowable (like the chronological history of Stonehenge) and what is unknowable (like “why” Stonehenge was constructed) is being blurred. We can condescendingly smile at the unsophisticated Medieval British belief that Merlin had constructed Stonehenge, but we ourselves are credulous enough to make Erich von Däniken extremely wealthy by buying millions of copies of a book subtitled *Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* and by lining up to pay to go to his “Mystery Park” in Interlaken, Switzerland. [The accusation that von Däniken is guilty of the sin of profiting by intellectual dishonesty is buttressed by the fact that, before *Chariots of the Gods* was published, he had been convicted of embezzlement and fraud in a Swiss court.] Our credulity is also on display by the popularity of the History Channel’s television show *Ancient Aliens*, which is currently in its 15th season of promulgating von Däniken’s blatantly false theory that, because ancient peoples (supposedly) did not have the technological knowledge to build the Egyptian pyramids, Stonehenge, or the Easter Island moai., these monuments must have been built with the help of aliens who came to Earth from outer space.

[To be sure, von Däniken’s *Chariot of the Gods* has been roundly condemned by archaeologists and other scientists. In their 2003 book *The Enigmas of Easter Island*, for instance, John Fleney and Paul Bahn point out that von Däniken’s space-alien theory denigrates the amazing accomplishments that pre-industrialized humanity was actually able to achieve: “[von Däniken’s ideas] ignore the real achievements of our ancestors and constitute the ultimate in racism: they belittle the abilities and ingenuity of the human species as a whole.”]

The abysmal ignorance of the general American public about how archaeological science actually operates is not confined to the willingness to accept von Däniken’s crackpot ideas. It seems to have become *de rigueur* to add the word “mystery” to any television show or newspaper report about an archaeological subject, as if “what-is-not-yet-known” is the equivalent of “what-is-unknowable.” This confusion between a

“mystery”—which, by its nature, cannot be solved by science—and what we have not yet discovered about the past is perhaps not unexpected in a culture where a third of the population believes in the literal truth of the *Bible*.



Cartoonists and comic strip artists have had great fun in incorporating the “what the hell are these things?” question into a number of creative Stonehenge gags.



Fig. 1251. E.T. Reed, “Howzat Umpire?”, *Mr. Punch’s Prehistoric Peeps*, 1894.



Fig. 1252. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 1998.

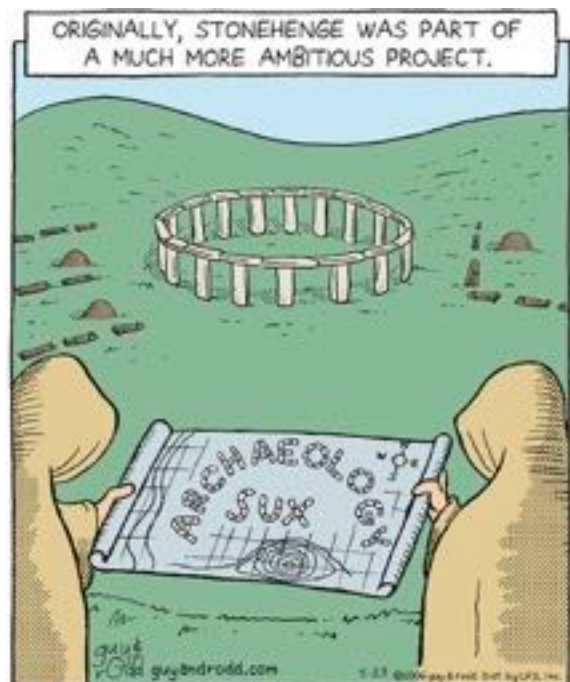


Fig. 1253. Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 23 May, 2006.



Fig. 1254. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 30 Jan., 2014.

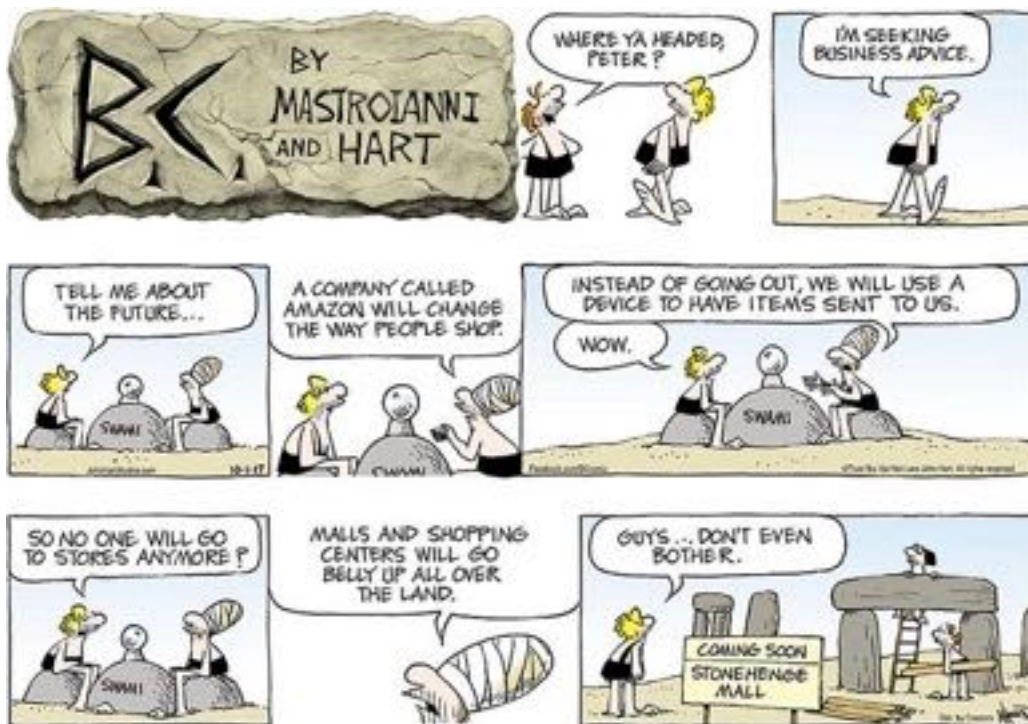


Fig. 1255. Mason Mastroianni, *B.C.*, 10 Jan, 2017.



Fig. 1256. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 25 June, 2017.

One of the earliest cartoons about Stonehenge appears in E. T. Reed's 1894 *Mr. Punch's Prehistoric Peeps* collection (**Fig. 1251**), where the trilithons are being used by cavemen as wickets in a cricket game interrupted by a Loch Ness-looking monster. Mark Parisi (**Fig. 1252**) also solves the "mystery" of Stonehenge by imagining the sarcens and trilithons as part of a game, this time as chess pieces being played by cloud-dwelling gods. A Wulff and Morgenthaler cartoon with a bearded archaeologist in an Indiana Jones hat (**Fig. 1254**) suggests that Stonehenge had been part of a prehistoric version of the "Angry Bird" gaming app. The Endore-Kaiser and Perry *Brevity* comic team proposed (**Fig. 1253**) that the Stonehenge circle was only part of a plan—seen in a blueprint held by builders clad in medieval hooded monks robes—to incongruously spell out "archaeology sux." A Mason Mastroianni *B.C.* "humorous uchronía" comic strip (**Fig. 1155**) similarly represents Stonehenge as an interrupted project—this time as a shopping mall whose construction was stopped when the turbaned swami tells Peter that, in the future, Amazon will cause shopping malls to go out of business. Dan Piraro give a more playful interpretation (**Fig. 1256**), representing Stonehenge as the building blocks of a prehistoric giant child.



Fig. 1257. Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories," *History Today*.



Fig. 1258. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 19 Feb., 2017.

In a gag reminiscent of Dave Whamond's cartoon (Fig. 1246), the British cartoonist Rob Murray (Fig. 1257) gives an accurate date for the construction of Stonehenge and accurately depicts the type of log rollers that would have been used to transport the stones. John McPherson (Fig. 1258), in contrast, presents a more implausible explanation for the current state of the Stonehenge monument, namely that it had been partially knocked down by rough-housing youngster tourists.



Fig. 1259. Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 12 April, 1999.

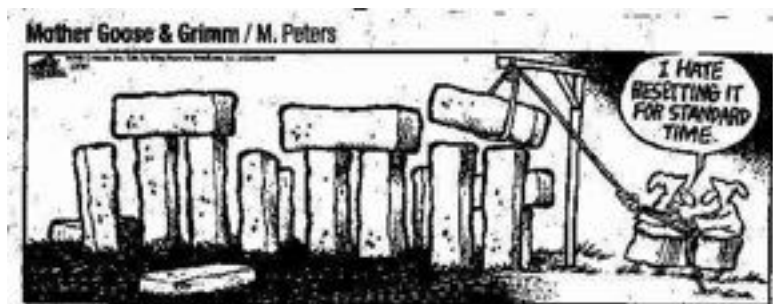


Fig. 1260. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 9 Oct., 2006.



Fig. 1261. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 12 March, 2017.

Another cartoon Stonehenge cliché is based on the erroneous assumption that the monument's astrological alignment to the summer and winter solstices means that it had functioned as a timepiece in antiquity. Tom Cheney plays with this misconception

in a “humorous uchronía” *New Yorker* gag (Fig. 1259) where a group of prehistoric people in medieval hooded robes incongruously discuss imposing deadlines; this joke would particularly resonate to other cartoonists, for whom deadlines are an occupational hazard! Mike Peters uses the Stonehenge-clock misconception for a joke (Fig. 1260) about daylight savings time, published in conjunction with the fall clock resetting. Wiley Miler later elaborated on this same cliché in a vertical comic strip (Fig. 1261), published in conjunction with the springtime clock resetting.



As with Stonehenge cartoons, many Easter Island moai cartoons play off of their supposed “mystery.” And as is the case with the Stonehenge cartoons, a number of Easter Island cartoon clichés have arisen that, for the most part, we can generously attribute to independent invention rather than to plagiarism.



Fig. 1262. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 10 Oct., 2012.



Fig. 1263. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 16 Dec., 2012.

Mike Peters seems especially drawn to the Easter Island moai. In addition to the Peters cartoons I discuss here, the online cartoon database the Cartoonist Group lists eight other *Mother Goose & Grimm* moai cartoons which Mike Peters published between

March, 2005 and September, 2016. In his October, 2012 cartoon (**Fig. 1162**), Peters has the tour guide Ernie propose the silly theory that the moai were used to display giant wigs. In his December 2012 offering (**Fig. 1263**), Peters presents us with two pith-helmeted archaeologists confronting a bobblehead moai. (Peters would repeat this bobblehead moai gag in September, 2016.)

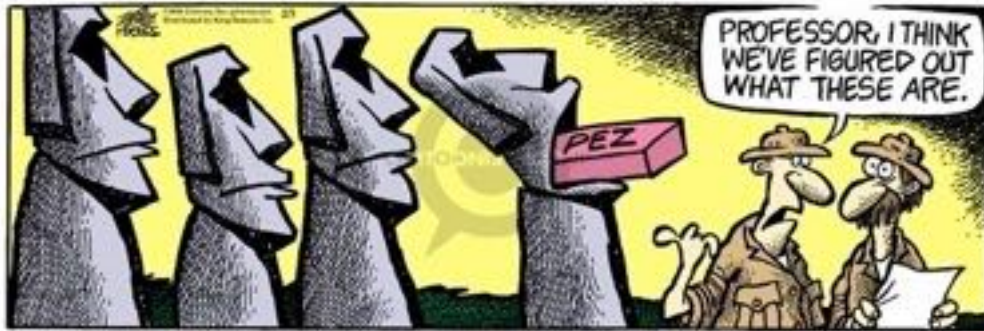


Fig. 1264. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 3 Feb., 2008.



Fig. 1265. Jeremy Kramer and Eric Vaughn, 2008.



Fig. 1266. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 17 April, 2017.

An earlier Mike Peters *Mother Goose & Grimm* moai cartoon, published in February, 2008 (Fig. 1264), also has two pith-helmeted archaeologists, this time pointing to a moai that is, incongruously, dispensing Pez candy—the Austrian confectionary whose iconic dispensers Peters assumes his American viewers would instantly recognize. The webcomic artists Jeremy Kramer and Eric Vaughn also made a moai/Pez-dispenser gag in 2008 (Fig. 1265), albeit one whose substantial formal differences with the Peters cartoon suggests independent invention. It is slightly harder to be so generous with a Dave Coverly Easter 2017 moai/Pez-dispenser cartoon (Fig. 1266) that is suspiciously similar to the final panel of the Kramer and Vaughn strip.



Fig. 1267. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 Nov., 2013.

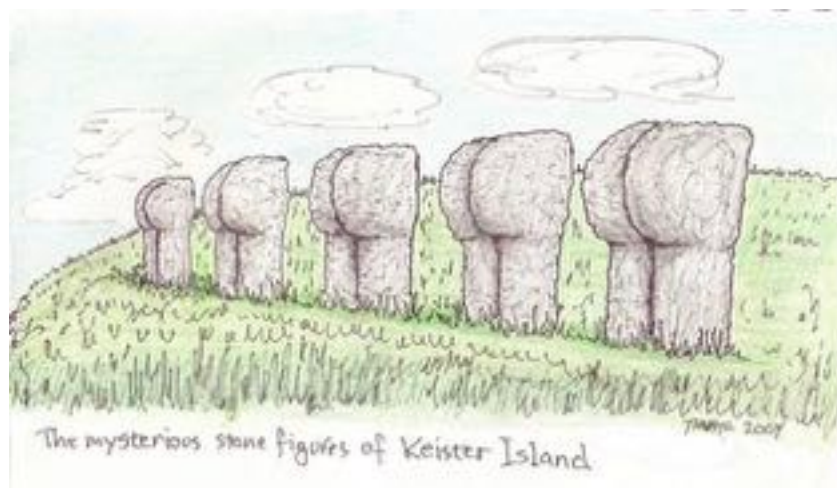


Fig. 1268. Tim White, *Back of the Class*, 2009.



the backside of Easter Island

Fig. 1269. Jamie Smith, *Ink & Snow*, 1 April, 2012.

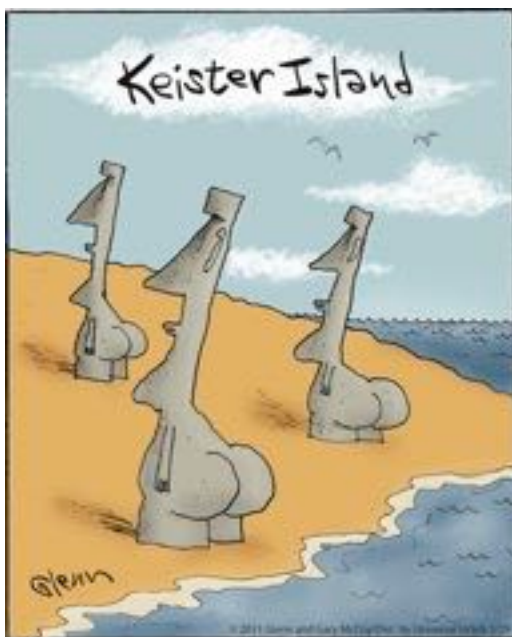


Fig. 1270. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoy's*, 29 March, 2011.



Fig. 1271. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 3 April, 2013.



Fig. 1272. Pat Byrnes, 2007.

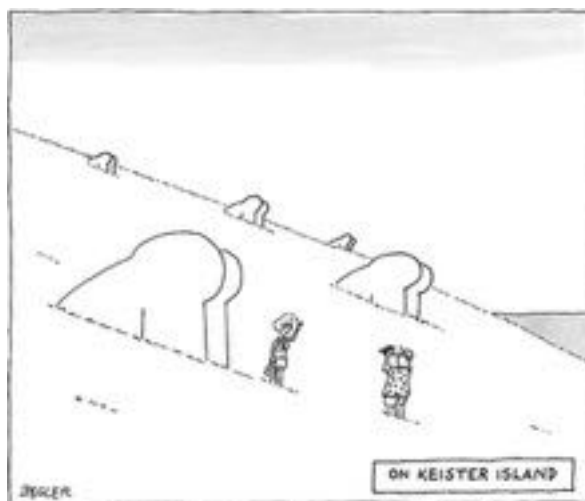


Fig. 1273. Jack Ziegler, *The New Yorker*, 16 March, 2016.

The gag in another Mike Peters Easter Island moai cartoon (**Fig. 1267**) is a silly wordplay with the North American slang term for buttocks—a gag that, apparently, many other cartoonists have independently come up with. On his *Ink & Snow* blog, the Alaskan cartoonist Jamie Smith noted that Tim White had chided him for the similarities between White’s “Keister Island” cartoon (**Fig. 1268**) and the “Wester Island” version White had drawn (**Fig. 1269**). In noting “just how challenging it is to generate original material, especially with clichéd topics that have become almost as well-worn over the centuries as the subject matter,” Smith praised White’s cartoon as having a superior caption; Smith noted the similarities in composition, but added: “to clarify for the record I had not in fact ever seen his take on the topic: these accidental overlaps do happen.” [One might want to disagree with Smith’s assessment of the merit of his own cartoon—his clever east/west wordplay is, to my mind, funnier because it makes the viewer work a little harder to get the gag.] Given Smith’s disavowal of having copied White’s cartoon, we may also generously ascribe the remarkably similar Glenn McCoy (**Fig. 1270**) and Dave Coverly (**Fig. 1271**) cartoons to independent invention. Ironically, Pat Byrnes submitted what may have been the first “Keister Island” cartoon (**Fig. 1272**) to the *New Yorker* magazine, but it was rejected by the cartoon editor Bob Mankoff. (It was published in the 2007 collection of rejected *New Yorker* cartoons, *The Rejection Collection Vol. 2, The Cream of the Crap*.) Why Mankoff would have rejected Byrnes cartoon but then, a decade later, accept Jack Ziegler’s nearly identical version (**Fig. 1273**) is unclear; the more realistic buttocks in Brynes’ version may have been a factor.

Given his propensity to draw cavemen cartoons, it is not surprising that Dan Piraro would have also have been drawn to the Easter Island moai for his cartoon gags.

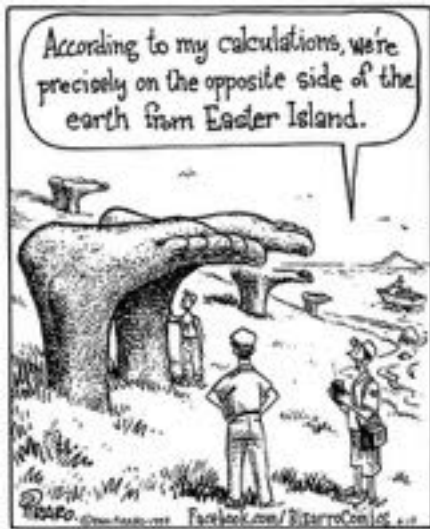


Fig. 1274. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 17 June, 1997.

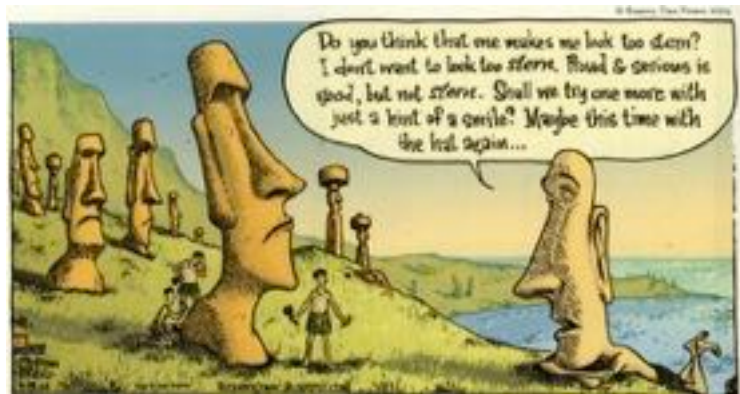


Fig. 1275. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 19 Sept., 2004.



Fig. 1276. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 28 June, 2012.



Fig. 1277. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 14 Nov., 2017.



Fig. 1278. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 25 Dec., 2017.

In an early *Bizarro* strip (**Fig. 1274**), Piraro makes the same moai gag that would later be taken up by the Stonehenge/Easter Island internet meme we looked at above (cf. **Fig. 1245**). Seven years later, Piraro returned to the moai theme with an elongated cartoon (**Fig. 1275**) where the Easter Island statues are incongruously depicted as being realistic portraits; the concern of the huge-headed model sprawled on the beach about whether his portrait makes him look too stern mirrors our modern interpretations of the Easter Island moai has being the epitome of sober and serious faces. Piraro played with this stereotype eight years later in a *Bizarro* cartoon (**Fig. 1276**) with an “inverse humorous uchronía” “A moai walks into a bar . . .” joke. It seems that the Easter Island moai were particularly on Dan Piraro’s creative mind at the end of 2017, which saw him draw another “inverse humorous uchronía” gag about an incongruously moai-headed man on a date (**Fig. 1277**) and a Christmas-Day cartoon (**Fig. 1278**) about snowmen moai.

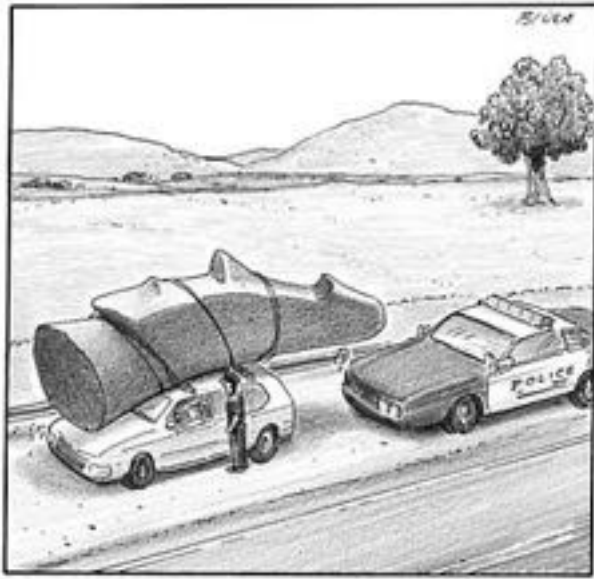
And, of course, many other cartoonists and comic strip artists have tried their hands at coming up with a funny moai visual joke.



Fig. 1279. Arnie Levin, *The New Yorker*, 20 April, 1992.



Fig. 1280. Joe Dator, *The New Yorker*, 16 Jan., 2012.



"Do you know why I pulled you over?"

Fig. 1281. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 5 Aug., 2013.



"Yes, he's still out there—and he looks serious."

Fig. 1282. Joseph Farris, *The New Yorker*, 23 Sept., 2013.

Pat Byrnes' rejected cartoon notwithstanding, it seems that the editors at the *New Yorker* are particularly fond of Easter Island moai cartoon gags. Arnie Levin put yarmulkes on some moai for his Easter/Passover joke (**Fig. 1278**); two decades later, Joe Dator adorned them with fedoras and retro eyeglasses for his "Hipster Island" gag (**Fig. 1280**). Harry Bliss used the cartoon cliché of a police car pulling over a driver for his joke (**Fig. 1281**) about a moai incongruously strapped to a luggage rack. In a "caption-that-cartoon" contest (**Fig. 1282**), Joseph Farris incongruously transported a moai to an American suburban front lawn; the winning caption plays with our stereotype of moai as "looking serious."

Another Easter Island moai cartoon cliché is that the moai were turned to stone by the incongruous appearance of Medusa from ancient Greek mythology (for more on Medusa cartoons, cf. **Figs. 1466–1482**). Jon Carter has a Medusa wearing a bikini and carrying a boom-box as she passes by a group of huge-headed sunbathers (**Fig. 1283**), while Dave Whamond gives us a group of talking moai realizing that they all had had a date with Medusa (**Fig. 1284**); Whamond's trademark talking squirrel Ralph adds a crack about the moai being "stone-faced."

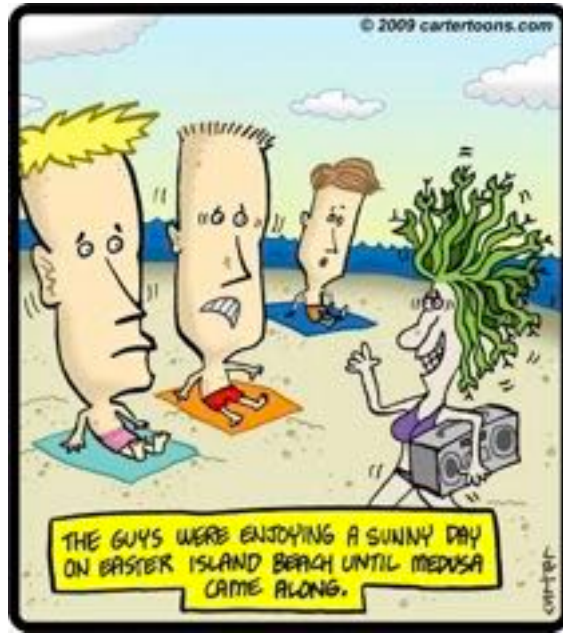


Fig. 1283. Jon Carter, *Cartertoons*, 2009.



Fig. 1284. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 8 May, 2011.



Fig. 1285. Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 10 Oct., 2012.

Fig. 1286. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 13 Sept., 2015.

Like Dan Piraro (Fig. 1276) and Joseph Farris (Fig. 1282), other cartoonists have used the Easter Island moai as “re-presenting” stone-faced seriousness and stoicism. Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman put a moai head on Jeremy in a *Zits* comic strip (Fig. 1285) to “re-present” the stoney silence that often greets parents when they ask

their teenage children how their day has been (cf. a similar *Stone Soup* cartoon, **Fig. 868**). Wiley Miller visualizes for us the stoic coping strategy the student Charlie employs in “the running of the bullies,” as he imagines his larger harassers to be immobile, mute, moai hulks (**Fig. 1286**).



"C'mon, my nose isn't that big... and look at those ears! Let's try it again!"

Fig. 1287. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.



Fig. 1288. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 1 Dec., 2013.



Fig. 1289. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 30 March, 2014.



Fig. 1290. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 9 Feb., 2014.



Fig. 1291. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 6 Jan., 2017.

As should be self-evident by now, the Easter Island moai are, as Jamie Smith put it, one of those “clichéd topics that have become almost as well-worn over the centuries as the subject matter.” And, as is the case of other cartoon clichés such as two people marooned on a tiny speck of an island or a man dying of thirst in a desert or a caveman in front of a Stone Age cave painting, it seems that sooner or later every cartoonist is going to have a go at coming up with an Easter Island moai gag. The Australian Mark Godfrey has given us a cartoon (**Fig. 1287**) suggesting, again, that the statues are realistic portraits; John McPherson has used the moai in a silly Santa Claus rant about the Easter Bunny (**Fig. 1288**); and a Wulff and Morgenthaler *Wumo* gag (**Fig. 1289**) incongruously juxtaposes the stern moai faces against a smiley-face emoji. And just as was the case with Mike Peters and Dan Piraro, Easter Island moai have become part of Dave Coverly’s *repertoire* to which he returns time and time again (cf. **Figs. 1266** and **1271**): a 2014 Coverly cartoon (**Fig. 1290**) transports a “humorous *uchronía*” critique of obsessive cell-phone usage onto the moai; and a 2017 “humorous *uchronía*” Coverly cartoon (**Fig. 1291**) transports our modern concern with social anxiety back onto the earlier Rapanui.



We close out our discussion of Easter Island moai cartoons with a brief look at how moai have been represented in the related popular culture medium of comic books.



Fig. 1292. Daan Jippes, Cover art, *Walt Disney’s Uncle Scrooge Adventures* #3, Gladstone, Jan. 1988.

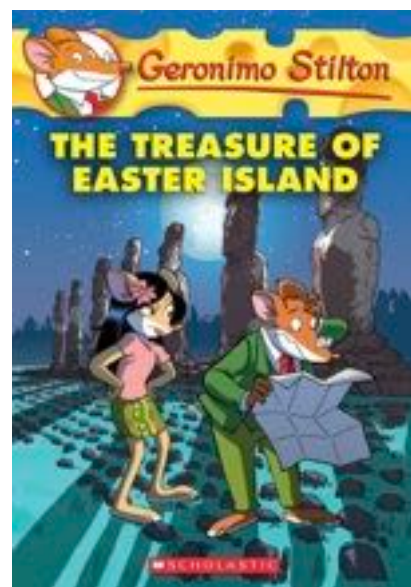


Fig. 1293. Geronimo Stilton (Elisabetta Dami), #60, *The Treasure of Easter Island*, Scholastic, June 2015.

The Easter Island moai have on occasion served as a backdrop for children’s comic books adventure stories. A 1988 Walt Disney *Uncle Scrooge Adventures* comic book (**Fig. 1292**), for example, has the money-grubbing Scrooge, joined by Donald Duck and his nephews, using a map to find hidden treasure on Easter Island. The Italian writer Elisabetta Dami, who publishes her children stories under the name Geronimo Stilton, also has her anthropomorphic title character mouse use a map to help his sister find hidden treasure on Easter Island (**Fig. 1293**). In his 2014 blog post “Easter Island: A Journey through Comics,” Philip Sites notes:

There is only mystery with Easter Island, no absolute truths. Anyone can take the setting and run with it, spinning the tale any which way they please. It’s just all too convenient. . . . Any way you cut it, the comic book is almost as American as apple pie and baseball. The wondrous characterizations of the famous stone men coming alive on a faraway island have assuredly influenced many children throughout the years.



Fig. 1294. Gil Kane, Cover art for *Strange Adventures* #16, D.C. Comics, Jan., 1952.



Fig. 1295. Jack Kirby, Cover art for *House of Mystery*, Vol 1, #85, D.C. Comics April, 1959.

Although moai make occasional guest appearances in children’s comic books, they only become menacing monsters in the genre of superhero comic books. In a 1952 D.C. Comics *Strange Adventures* (**Fig. 1294**), Gil Kane’s cover depicts the moai as having red faces like the red-faced super villain—an echo of the American Cold War “better dead than red” jingoistic slogan. Jack Kirby’s 1959 D.C. Comics *House of Mystery* cover

(Fig. 1295) has full-bodied moai emerge from the ground to threaten adventurers who had stumbled onto “Giant Island.”

Jack “The King” Kirby, the highly influential comic book artist and author who worked at both D.C. Comics and Marvel Comics and who created such comic book characters as Captain America and the Fantastic Four, continued to bring moai monsters to life when he worked with Stan Lee at Atlas Comics.

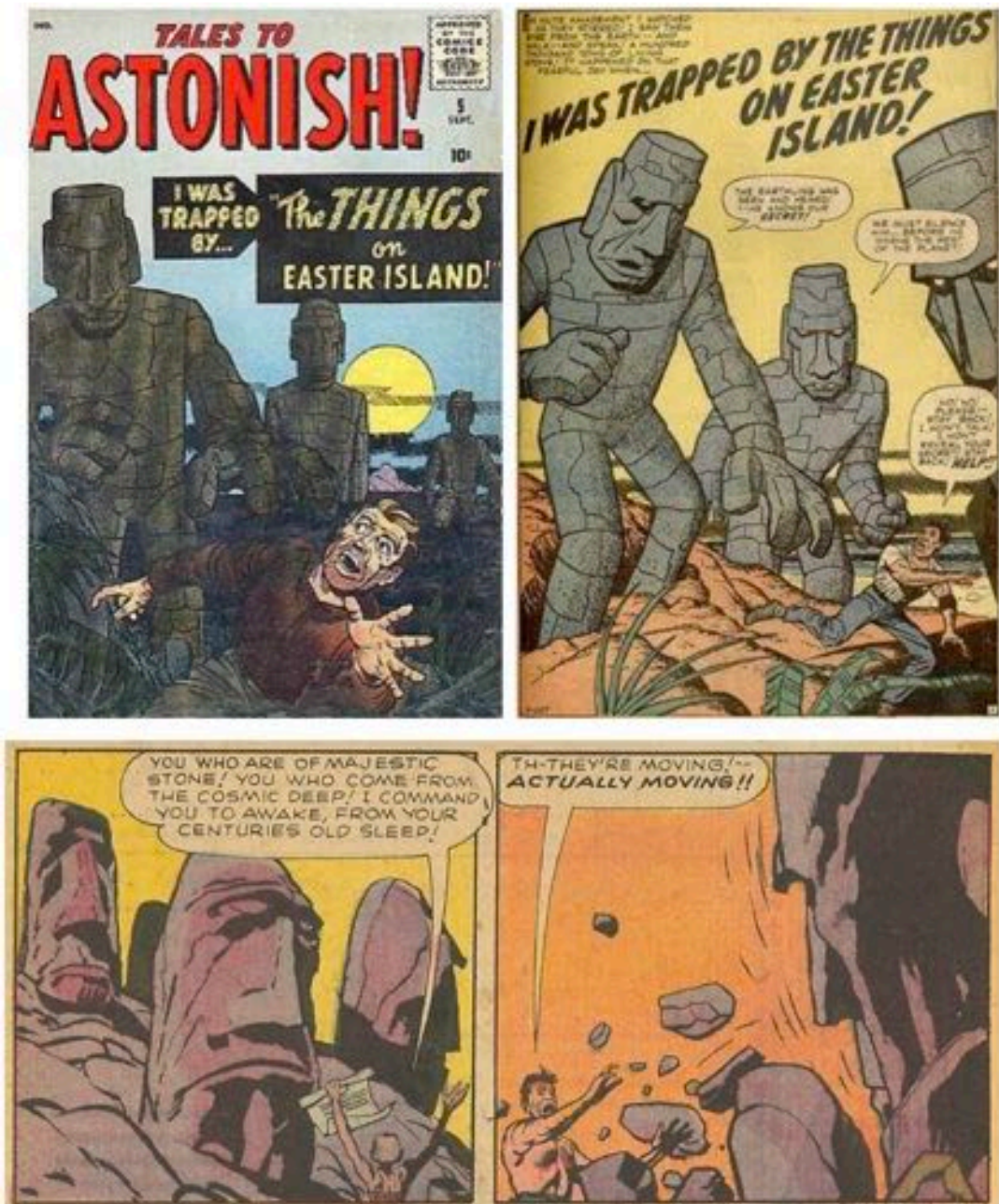


Fig. 1296. Jack Kirby, Cover and page illustrations, *Tales to Astonish* #5, Atlas Comics, May 1959.



Fig. 1297. Frank Miller, Cover art, and Sal Buscema, illustrations for *The Incredible Hulk* #261, Marvel, July 1981.



Fig. 1298. Gil Kane, Cover and page illustration, *Thor* #318, Marvel, April, 1982.

Jack Kirby's 1959 Atlas comic book (**Fig. 1296**) "I Was Trapped by "The Things on Easter Island!" set the stage for a raft of imitators and established the Marvel mythology of the "Lithodian Rexians"—a silicon-based extraterrestrial race who sent an advanced guard of stone soldiers (the moai) to earth to await an invasion; in Kirby's story, a man reads a secret incantation to unleash the moai monsters. When the Hulk went to Easter Island to fight "The Absorbing Man" in a 1981 Marvel comic book (**Fig. 1297**), he recognized the moai statues from having read Thor Heyerdahl's *Aku Aku*, with its racist—and now discredited!—theory that Easter Island had been settled by "white-skinned" Incas sailing from the west rather than by Polynesians coming long distances from the east. The next year, in a 1982 Marvel comic book (**Fig. 1298**), Thor

went to Easter Island to fight the moai monsters that had been brought to life by his evil brother Loki, leaving the island looking as it had before he defeated the “Lithodian Rexians.”



Fig. 1299. Jack Kirby, Cover art and illustrations, *Super Powers* #3, D.C. Comics, Nov., 1985.

Jack Kirby reprised the Easter Island monster-moai composition he had used in his 1959 *The House of Mystery* comic book cover (Fig. 1295) for a 1985 Paul Kupperberg *Super Powers* story about Wonder Woman, the Green Lantern, and Doctor Fate fighting the “Terror on the Island of Living Stone!” (Fig. 1299). Here, before the fighting began, Kupperberg put in an explanatory inset text about Easter Island: “It was first discovered by Europeans in 1722, and the sight that greeted the astonished Dutch seaman who first explored it . . . remains as much a mystery as it was that day over 250 years ago.” Wonder Woman follows up with an “anthropology lecture” about the Easter Island moai: “These statues are incredible! It’s hard to believe that primitive islanders could erect such magnificent monuments . . . !”

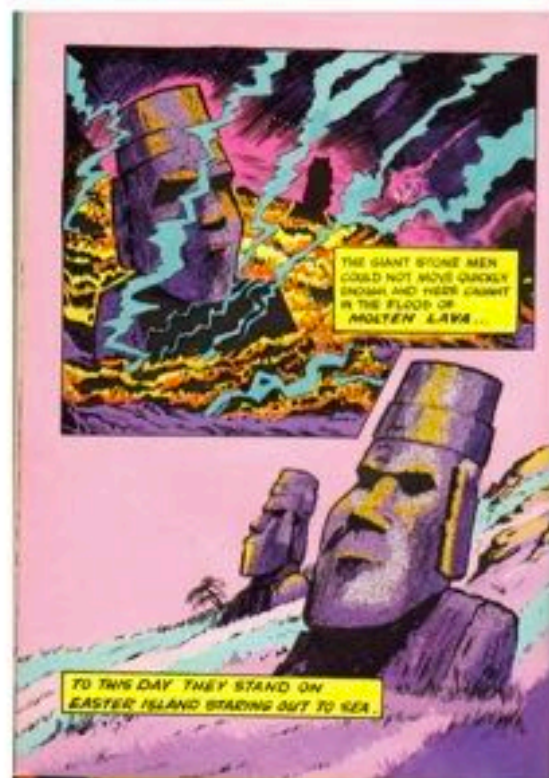
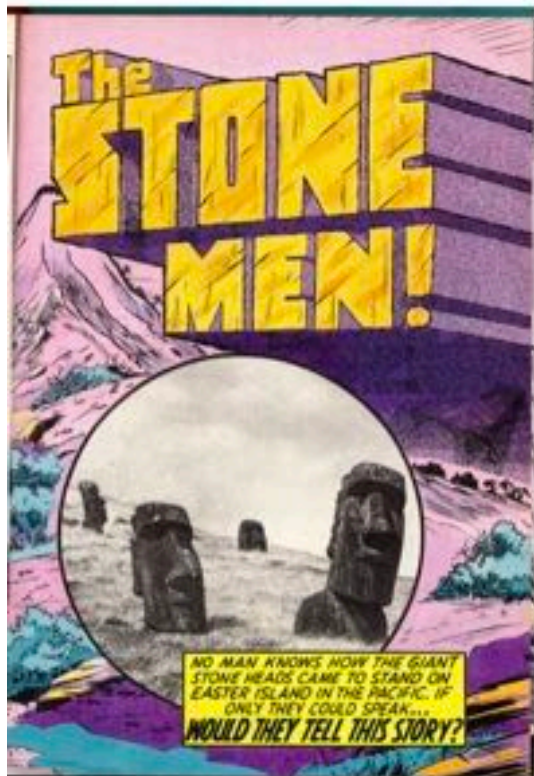


Fig. 1300. "The Stone Men!," *Sparky*, D.C. Thompson, 1977.

Monster moai were not confined to American comic-book shores. In 1977, the British comic book *Sparky* published "The Stone Men" tale (Fig. 1300) about stone monsters who terrorized the Rapanui until the moai were engulfed by lava; to answer

the “If only they could speak, would they tell this story?” question this *Sparky* comic starts with: no!



Fig. 1301. *Jewel Keepers: Easter Island* video game, Nordcurrent, 2011.

Easter Island moai have also made their way into the video game world with Nordcurrent’s 2011 *Jewel Keepers* (**Fig. 1301**). Described as an “intriguing story about the mysteries of Easter Island,” gamers are asked to aid Professor “H” reveal the island’s secrets.

In her insightful paper, “Easter Island in the Comics: 65 Years of an Island’s Career in the American Imagination,” delivered at a 2007 conference about Easter Island held at Gotland University in Sweden, Beverly Haun used her own extensive collection of Easter Island comic books to analyze how the Rapanui people and their culture are represented in American comic books. After noting the connection between comic-book mutant monsters and the American post-WWII concerns with nuclear weapons, Haun concludes that, in comic books, Easter Island is expropriated to serve American cultural hegemony.:

In American comic books that feature Easter Island ranging across 65 years, we see that Rapa Nui the island, the Rapanui people, and their moai heritage have a lack of narrative stability and take on whatever popular cultural narrative need is ideologically current. That need in the past has often been to foreground American concerns and interests at the expense of the interests and cultures of Others.

Entertaining Egyptians

If Stonehenge and Easter Island are, for comic strip artists and cartoonists, the “Other” which can be exploited without regard for historical or cultural reality, cartoons about ancient Egypt are a little more constrained. Over the past two centuries, since Champollion’s 1824 decipherment of the hieroglyphic script on the Rosetta Stone, Egypt has become integrated into the history of Western civilization. Having a written record that we can read has elevated ancient Egypt, if not into the pantheon of Biblical and Classical cultures, at least into the curriculum every school child—even the non-precocious ones—would study. Nonetheless—given that most of us are bad students—the “culturally bound background knowledge” we bring to cartoons about ancient Egypt tends to be an undifferentiated and ahistorical conglomeration of stereotypes about pyramids, mummies, and funny-looking hieroglyphics.

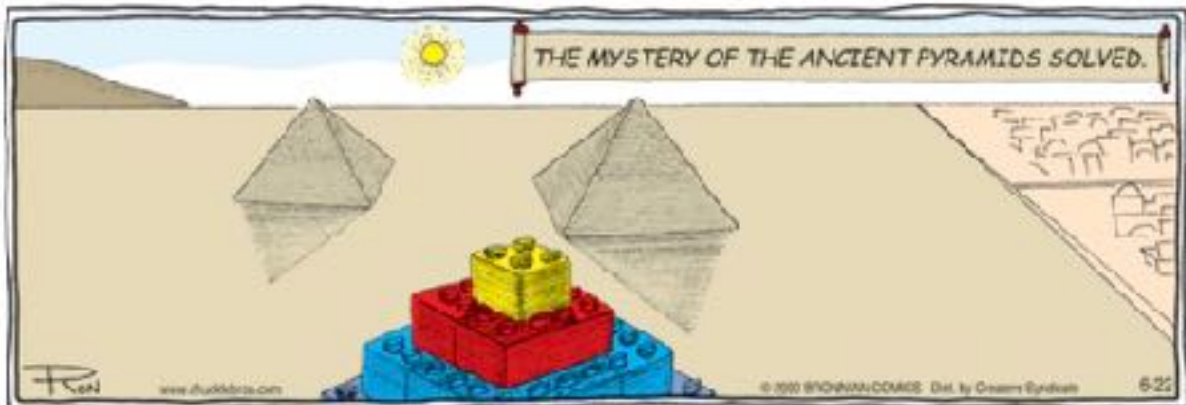


Fig. 1302. Brian and Ron Boychuk, *Chuckle Bros*, 22 June, 2009.



Fig. 1303. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 25 Sept., 2013.

Within these limited “culturally bound” constraints, comic strip artists and cartoonists have had great fun in portraying ancient Egypt as mysterious and, on occasion, as malevolent. A Boychuk brothers cartoon (**Fig. 1302**), for instance, alludes to the supposed “mystery” of how the pyramids were built—a “mystery” Erich von Däniken helped to promulgate with his ridiculous ancient alien astronauts theory; the Boychuks “solve” the “mystery: with a “humorous uchronía” Lego gag. Mike Gruhn (**Fig. 1303**) also has the pyramids being the toy blocks of a giant child—a gag that Dan Piraro would later use to “solve” the “mystery” of Stonehenge (cf. **Fig. 1256**).



In a paper entitled “Cigars of the Pharaoh: The Monstrous and Ancient Egypt in Comic-books and Cartoons” that he gave at the Institute of Archaeology in London in November of 2013 (and subsequently uploaded to slideplayer.net), George Richards analyzed how ancient Egypt was portrayed in European, American, and Japanese comics, concluding that there were parallels in how each tradition viewed ancient Egypt through the lens of the supernatural: “particularly: the combination of ancient and extraterrestrial technologies; supernatural forces; and complex, undeciphered cultural phenomena (such as language and religion).”



Fig. 1304. Hergé, *Les Cigares du Pharaon*, 1934 (1955).

The title of George Richard's talk comes from the Tintin adventure, *Les Cigares du Pharaon*, originally serialized in the Belgian youth weekly *Le Petit Vingtième* between 1932 and 1934 and later redrawn by Hergé and his assistants in 1955 (Fig. 1304). This story about the boy detective and his dog uncovering a narcotics smuggling scheme is a convoluted mystery set in part in the tomb of the fictitious Pharaoh Kih-Osskh (an allusion to the kiosks where *Le Petit Vingtième* was sold). After Tintin and the Egyptologist Sophocles Sarcophagus discover the opium-smugglers' base of operations in the tomb, they are discovered, gassed, and kidnapped by the smugglers; Hergé has depicted the gassing scene from Tintin's hallucinating perspective, with figures coming alive out of the tomb's wall painting and the smugglers taking their place.



Fig. 1305. Gil Kane, Cover Art, *Mystery in Space* #36, Feb. 1957.

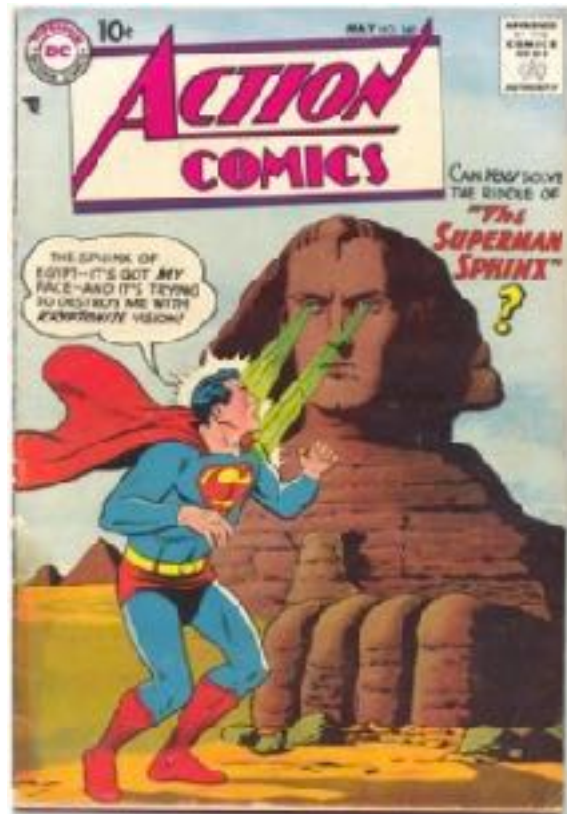


Fig. 1306. Kurt Swan and Stan Kaye, Cover art, *Action Comics*, #240, May, 1958.



Fig. 1307. Jack Kirby, Cover art and illustration, *Strange Tales* #70, Aug., 1959.



Fig. 1308. Ross Andreu and Mike Esposito, Cover art, *Wonder Woman* # 113, April, 1960.



Fig. 1309. Jack Kirby, Cover art, *Fantastic Four* #19, March, 1963.

Given the trend we've seen in American "Silver Age" superhero comic books of treating the Easter Island moai as monsters, it comes as no surprise that the Great Sphinx of Giza would similarly be animated as an adversary in these comic books. The sphinxes in Gil Kane's 1957 cover (Fig. 1305) and in the 1958 Kurt Swan and Stan Kaye cover (Fig. 1306) are sedentary but armed with death rays coming out of their eyes. A 1959 Jack Kirby cover (Fig. 1307) gives us an ambulatory Sphinx monster that has risen out of the ground, much like the Easter Island moai Kirby had depicted in comic book covers from April and May of that year (cf. Figs. 1295– 1296). The Sphinx chasing Wonder Woman in a Ross Andreu and Mike Esposito 1960 cover (Fig. 1308) is both ambulatory and armed with death rays. Another Jack Kirby cover (Fig. 1309) also has a ray gun in ancient Egypt, this time operated by Rama Tut, the "pharaoh from the future" who uses it to paralyze the male members of the Fantastic Four while he holds onto a Sue Storm dressed in a quasi-Egyptian outfit.



And just as the Easter Island moai were used by cartoonists as a set-up for a humorous gag, so too has the Great Sphinx been the butt of many a funny-pages joke.

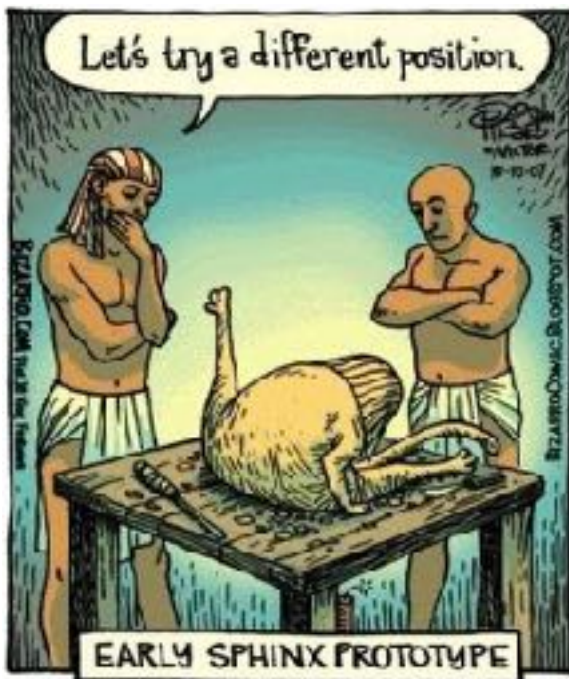


Fig. 1310. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 10 Oct., 2007.

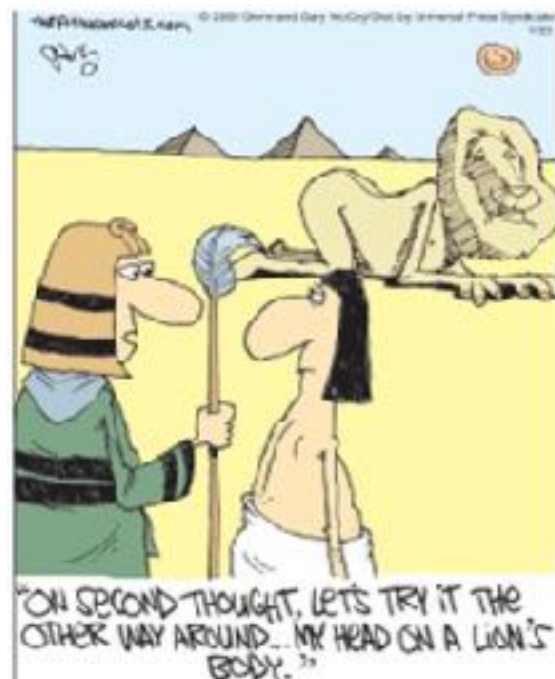


Fig. 1311. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 22 July 22, 2009.



Fig. 1312. Colby Jones, *SirColby*, 2017.



Fig. 1313. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 26 Dec., 2008.

The Argyle Sweater

By Scott Hilburn

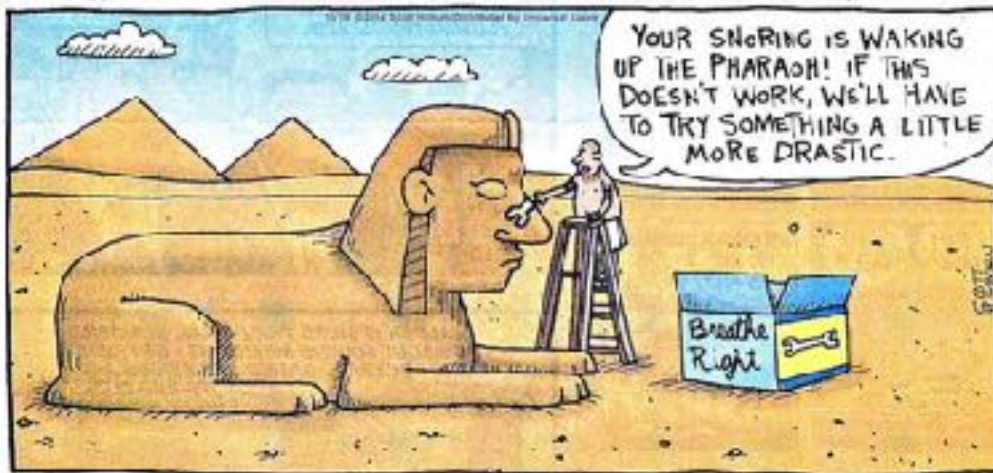


Fig. 1314. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 Oct., 2014.

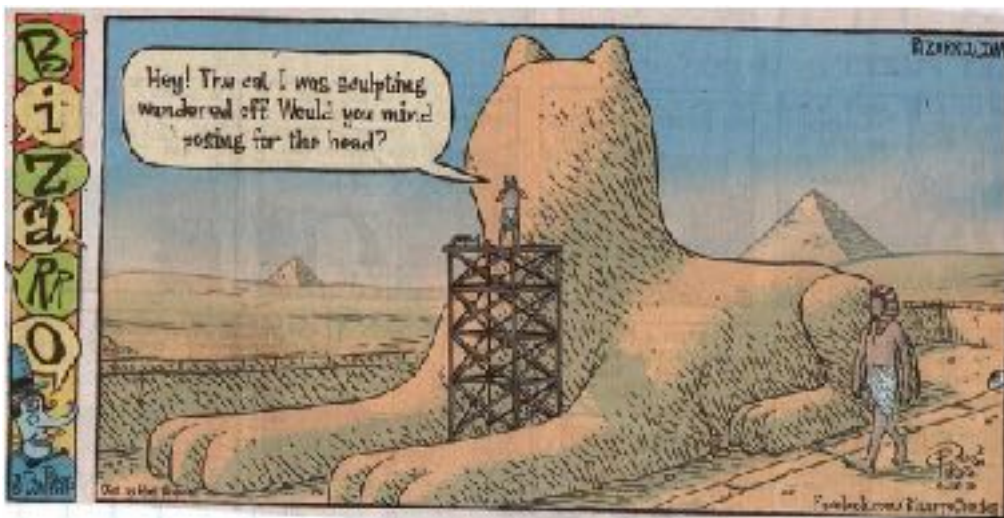


Fig. 1315. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 17 April, 2016.



Fig. 1316. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 4 Nov., 2018.

A 2007 Dan Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1310**) humorously suggests that an early prototype of the Sphinx was modeled on a cat licking itself. Sphinx cartoons by the McCoy brothers and by Colby Jones (**Figs. 1311–1312**) focus on the monument’s composite body with “humorous uchronía” gags portraying artists showing anachronistic models and scroll drawings to the pharaoh for his approval. [Although we have no evidence for the design process used to come up with the Great Sphinx, which is believed to have been constructed during the reign of Khafre (ca. 2558–2532 B.C.E.) and which is part of the funerary complex associated with Khafre's Second Pyramid at Giza, it is highly unlikely that the pharaoh would have been directly involved in selecting the form it took.] Scott Hilburn has focused on the Sphinx’s nose in “humorous uchronía” gags (**Figs. 1313–1314**) of archaeologists in endearing khaki shorts uncovering a Groucho Marx mask and of an ancient Egyptian putting an anti-snoring nose strip on the statue. [A recent study suggests that the Sphinx lost its nose sometime between the 3rd and the 10th centuries A.D.] A later Dan Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1315**) humorously suggests that the Sphinx was a sculpture of a cat that wandered off before the head was finished. A Dave Coverly *Speed Bump* cartoon (**Fig. 1316**) has comically animated the Sphinx when a tourist touched its belly.



Before Erik von Däniken published *The Chariot of the Gods* in 1965, with its insulting pseudo-scientific claims, no one could have imagined that so many people would come to believe that the Egyptian pyramids—those marvelous examples of mid-third-millennium B.C.E. human engineering skills—were built by extraterrestrials. Comic strip artists, at least, can laugh at this kooky idea.



Fig. 1317. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 21 Aug., 2012.

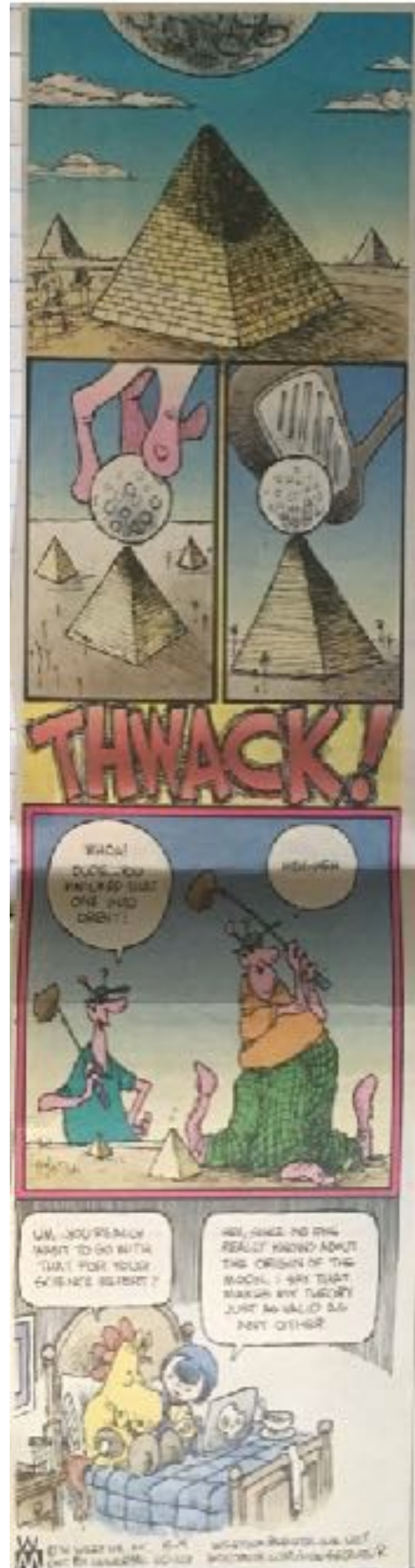


Fig. 1318. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 May, 2014.



Fig. 1319. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 3 April, 2016.



Fig. 1320. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 16 July, 2017.

Wiley Miller frequently uses his Sunday vertical-format comic strip to depict the wild imagination of Danae as she, with her animated stuffed unicorn, creatively makes sense of the world. And it seems that, every couple of years, Miller returns to ancient Egypt for one of his Sunday comic strips. A non-Danae 2012 Miller cartoon (**Fig. 1317**) jokes about a missing pyramid block anachronistically marked with up-arrows that is discovered by an anachronistic supervisor holding an anachronistic blueprint scroll. In a 2014 strip (**Fig. 1318**), Miller visualizes Danae’s science report on her wild theory that the pyramids were golf tees used by octopus-legged giant space aliens. A 2016 Miller comic strip (**Fig. 1319**) presents an alternative Danae explanation of the pyramids—an “inverse humorous uchronía” suggestion that cavemen stumbled upon them while hunting. Another “inverse humorous uchronía” Danae explanation is given in a 2017 “the Church of Danae Answers for Everything” strip (**Fig. 1320**), where she proposes that they had been built with the help of dinosaurs.

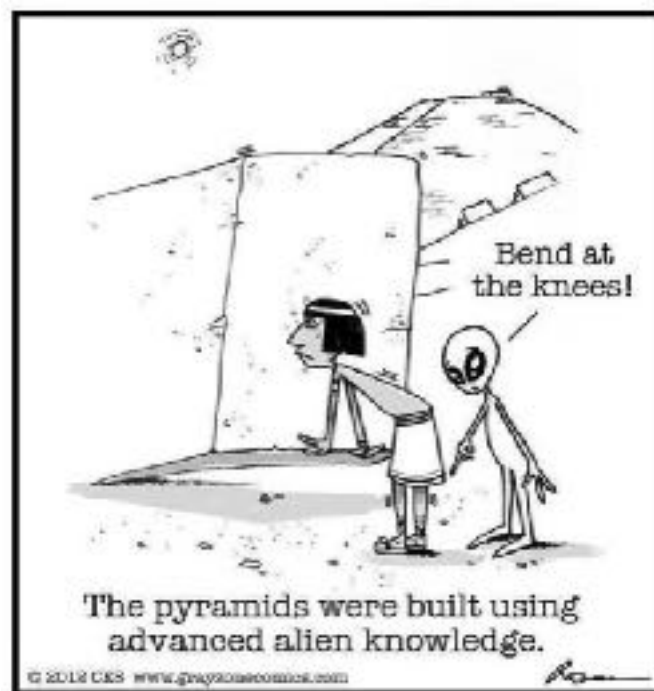


Fig. 1321. Roger L. Phillips, *The Grey Zone*, 2012.



Fig. 1322. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 7 Dec., 2014.

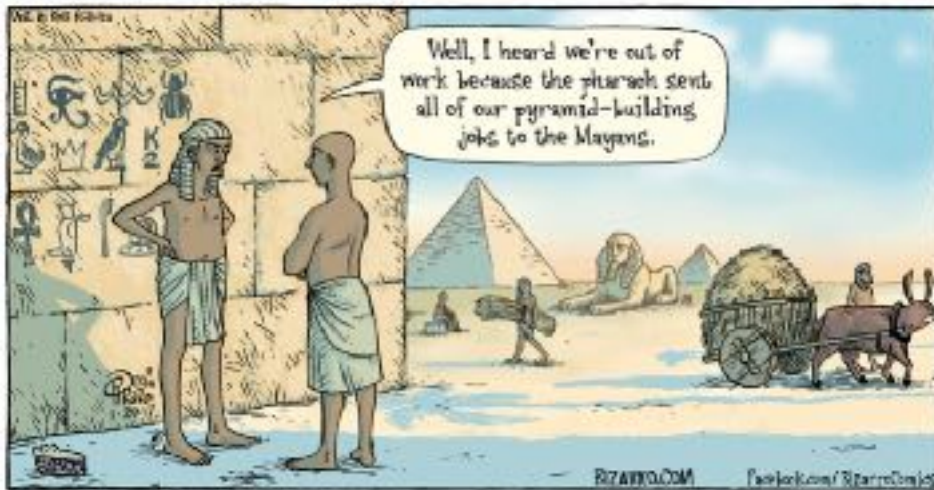


Fig. 1323. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 March, 2014.



Fig. 1324. Bill Amend, *Foxtrot*, 9 April, 2017.

Other cartoonists have also made fun of the spacemen-building-the-pyramids myth. One of Roger Philips' *Gray Zone* cartoons about aliens (Fig. 1321) explicitly targets von Däniken's wild theory that the pyramids were too technologically difficult to build without the aid of extraterrestrials. A Jim Meddick *Monty* comic-strip (Fig. 1322) turns the table on von Däniken's idea by having aliens help Monty build a back deck to his house—an incongruity that might seem reasonable to any non-handyman who has ever tried such a home construction project. Dan Piraro (Fig. 1323) humorously jokes that the pyramids were bases for artificial ski slopes. A Bill Amend *Foxtrot* comic strip (Fig. 1324) makes the metafictional joke that the pyramids were made using a pyramid scheme.



Fig. 1325. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 Feb., 2013.



Fig. 1326. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 15 Sept., 2013.

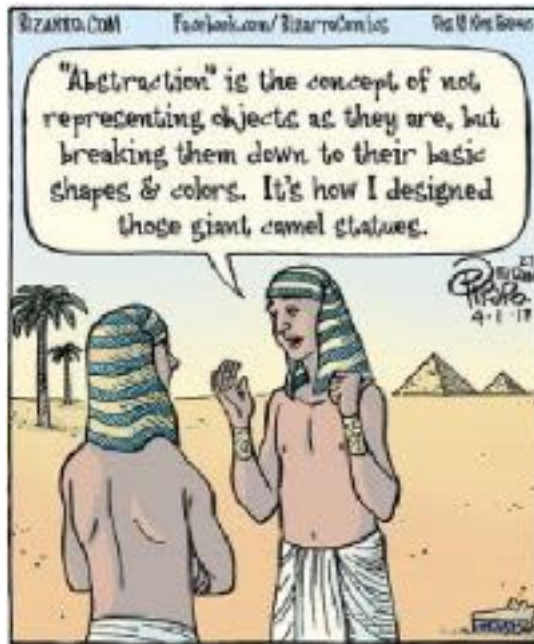


Fig. 1327. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro* 29 Jan., 2017.



Fig. 1328. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 1 April, 2017.

And, naturally, the Egyptian pyramids are a perfect vehicle for cartoonists to make incongruous “humorous uchronía” gags. Mike Peters (Fig. 1325), for instance, transports our modern concern with jobs and the economy back into Old Kingdom Egypt. [Although certainly unintentional, the concern the pyramid builder expresses in this Peters cartoon meshes with the anthropological explanation of pyramid building that, at the beginning of the ancient Egyptian state formation, building massive funereal monuments for god-kings served the social function of organizing a labor pool which had long periods of idleness during the agricultural growing season; once the ancient Egyptian state was firmly established, the intense period of pyramid building in the Old

Kingdom (ca. 2613–2181 B.C.E) came to an end, and the organized labor was employed in more productive expeditions to foreign lands.] Hilary Price (**Fig. 1326**) uses Egyptian pyramids, with a camel in every driveway, to parody American suburbia. A January, 2017, Dan Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1327**) plays with our contemporary concern with jobs being outsourced overseas; in addition to using the commonly held misconception that the third-millennium B.C.E. Egyptian pyramids have anything to do with the quite different Mesoamerican pyramids built on the other side of the globe two thousand years later, this Piraro cartoon also confusingly includes his secret symbols of the “Dynamite of Unintended Consequences” and “K2” (referring to his two children) in the hieroglyphs on the wall. An April, 2017, Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1328**) humorously suggests that the pyramids are modern art abstract sculptures.



Fig. 1329. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 26 Oct., 2008.

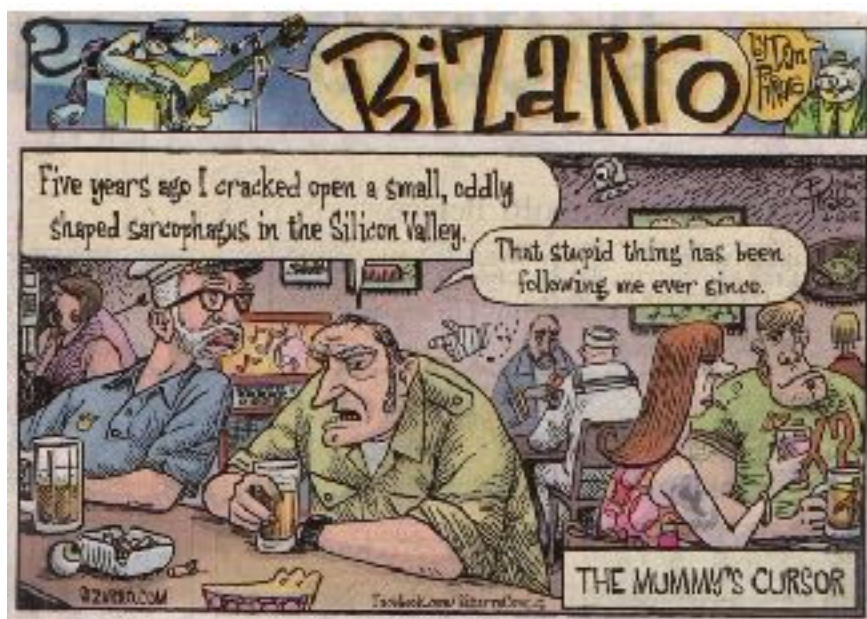


Fig. 1330. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 12 April, 2015.

The curse of the mummy has become a cultural meme for the supernatural vengeance visited upon those who would desecrate the sanctity of ancient burials. With origins stretching back to the journalistic sensationalism surrounding Howard Carter's 1922 discovery of the boy-pharaoh Tutankhamen's tomb, the curse of the mummy became fixed in popular culture through the *Mummy* film franchises of the 1930's and early 2000's (cf. **Fig. 858**). Scott Hilbrun (**Fig. 1329**) plays with this meme by combining it with the social media threat 'if you break the chain you will have bad luck for the rest of your life.' The joke in a Dan Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1330**) comes when we see the floating, linen-wrapped "mummy's cursor"—a wordplay similar to the one Tony Zuvela used in his 2009 Stone Age "precursor" gag (**Fig. 1215**); given that this cartoon has a visual punch line, Piraro's inclusion of his secret "Flying Saucer of Possibility" symbol was a poor choice.



Fig. 1331. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 March, 2014.



Fig. 1332. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm.*, 7 June, 2015.

For most comic artists and cartoonists, an Egyptian mummy is hardly threatening; it is, rather, something that is seen as inherently funny and a good excuse for a bad pun. But the less said about the “crash mummy” groaner Gary Foster submitted to one of Dan Piraro “submit a pun” *Bizarro* contests (**Fig. 1331**) or Mike Peters’ silly “mummy time” wordplay (**Fig. 1332**) the better! [Our precocious school child might point out that the first jar in the Peters cartoon is decorated in the 6th century B.C.E. Athenian Black-Figure style and that such ancient Greek pots do not appear in Egyptian tombs.]

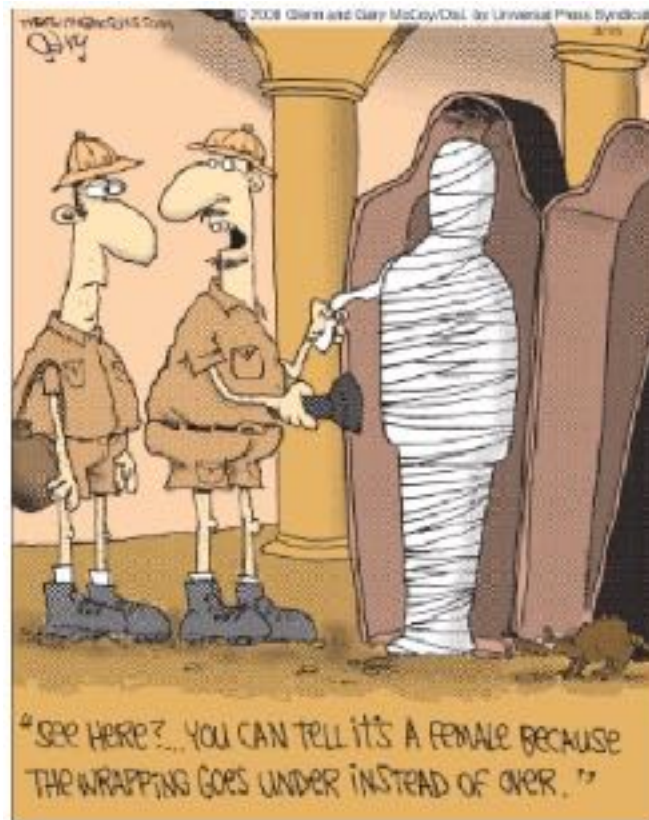


Fig. 1333. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 15 March, 2008.



Fig. 1334. Mark Tatulli, *Liö*, 16 Oct., 2010.



Fig. 1335. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 25 Sept., 2014.



Fig. 1336. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*.



Fig. 1337. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 March, 2011.



Fig. 1338. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 29 Oct., 2015.



Fig. 1339. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 9 Nov., 2016.

Cartoonists seem to be fascinated with mummy bandage wrapping. A McCoy brothers cartoon (Fig. 1333), for example, has a bearded, pith-helmeted and khaki-

wearing archaeologist explain to his younger colleague how to tell the sex of a mummy by the way that the wrapping is arranged—a gag that depends on viewers being aware of the gender differences in how modern shirts and blouses are buttoned. A Mark Tatulli cartoon (Fig. 1334) has the enterprising Liō use toilet paper and scotch tape to repair the wrappings of zombie-looking mummies. A Wulff and Morgenthaler *Wumo* cartoon (Fig. 1335) compares mummies to caterpillar cocoons. And Scott Hilburn has gone to town with mummy cartoons (cf. also Figs. 1329 and 1344): a mummy deciding what kind of toilet paper to wear (Fig. 1336); smooching mummies being told to “get a tomb” (Fig. 1337); a “cryptease” mummy slowly unwrapping in front of Frankenstein and Dracula (Fig. 1338); and a mummy trying to use a urinal (Fig. 1339).



Fig. 1340. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 8 Nov., 2018.



Fig. 1341. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 29 Nov., 2016.

Dave Coverly also seems to have a fondness for mummy cartoons. A 2018 *Speed Bump* cartoon gag (Fig. 1340) depends on viewers recognizing the “stealing the covers” issue married couples have. An earlier 2016 Coverly offering (Fig. 1341) focuses on the sarcophagus in a visual gag that takes a beat to get.

Other cartoonists have also had fun with archaeologists discovering a silly Egyptian sarcophagus.



Fig. 1342. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 3 Nov., 1995.



Fig. 1343. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 July, 2007.



Fig. 1344. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 28 May, 2011.



Fig. 1345. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 24 June, 2005.

A 1995 Wiley Miller cartoon (**Fig. 1342**) has our pith-helmeted and khaki-wearing archaeologists discover a sarcophagus incongruously outfitted with a pet flap. A Dan Piraro cartoon (**Fig. 1343**) has them discover an incongruous Pez-dispenser sarcophagus—a gag that we have seen is also used on the Easter Island moai (cf. **Figs. 1264–1266**). In one of Scott Hilburn’s mummy cartoons (**Fig. 1344**), the sarcophagus is used for a snakes-in-a-can prank to scare the flailing-arms-and-legs archaeologist. A John McPherson cartoon (**Fig. 1245**) also gives us a surprise mummy, this time one incongruously popping out of a cake at a birthday party for the amusement of the pith-helmeted and khaki-wearing archaeologists.



"Look, I said I was sorry five years ago.
Quit dredging up the past."

Fig. 1346. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*,
22 Sept., 2000.



"Keep the wrapping. You can't return it
without the original packaging."

Fig. 1347. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*,
26 Jan., 2008.



Fig. 1348. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 2 March, 2008.

As we have seen with his Stone Age cave-painting cartoons (cf. **Figs. 1136–1137**, and **1141**), once Mike Baldwin has come up with a comic set-up, he holds on to it like a dog on a bone. This Baldwin trait can also be seen with his set-up of lab-coated scientists unwrapping a mummy: a 2000 *Cornered* cartoon (**Fig. 1346**) gives us a *double*

entendre of a lab-coated scientist couple “dredging up the past”; a January, 2008, Baldwin cartoon (Fig. 1347) makes a joke about keeping the mummy’s wrapping as if it were a modern package that might be returned; Baldwin’s March, 2008, cartoon (Fig. 1348) is another mummy-wrapping/toilet-paper gag.



Fig. 1349. Alain (Daniel Brustlein), *The New Yorker*, 1 Oct., 1955.



Fig. 1350. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 10 Feb., 2012.

Given the cartoonish two-dimensionality of Egyptian tomb paintings, one might have predicted that ancient Egyptian art would have been frequently parodied in the funny pages. To be sure, some cartoonists have made fun of the two-dimensional conventions of Egyptian art, such as with Daniel Brustlein's (*aka Alain*) 1955 *New Yorker* cartoon (Fig. 1349) about an ancient Egyptian nude modeling art class or Dan Piraro's 2012 *Bizarro* gag (Fig. 1350) about Horus getting a medical exam. But these are exceptions rather than the rule.

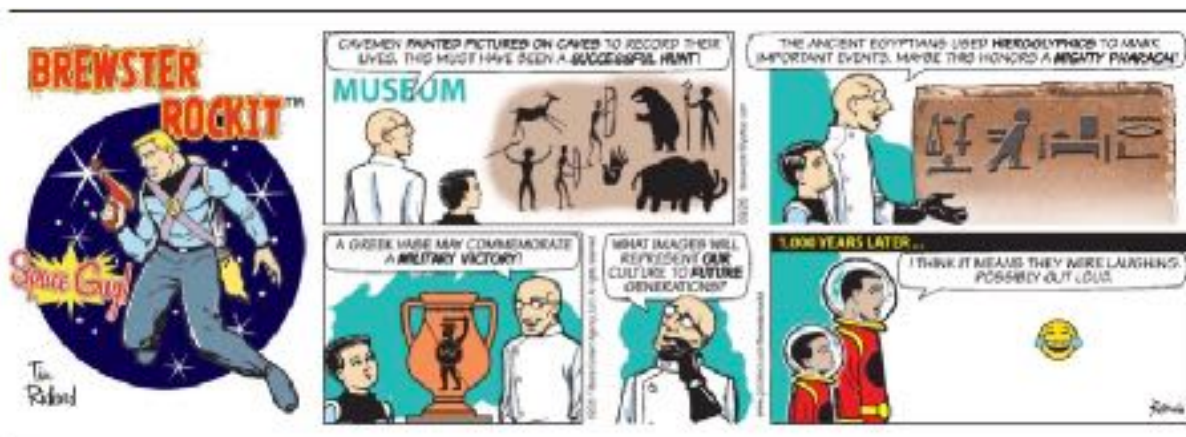


Fig. 1351. Tim Richard, *Brewster Rockit*, 20 Sept., 2020.

On the other hand, making fun of Egyptian hieroglyphs *has* become a cartoon cliché. Much like the Stone Age cave painting cliché, this hieroglyphs cliché is in part based on the mistaken belief that Egyptian inscriptions are visual narratives akin to comic strips. Although Egyptian hieroglyphic signs are figural, they are not strung together to tell a “story” but, rather, function as part of a complex writing system which used a combination of logographic, syllabic, and alphabetic characters to represent the Egyptian language. Nonetheless, cartoonists have taken Egyptian hieroglyphs as a sort of ersatz comic strip, paralleling their own cartoon combinations of textual and visual components. The cartoon ancient Egyptian carving a hieroglyphic inscription, like the cartoon caveman painting on the walls of his cave (cf. **Fig. 1133**), thus becomes a metafictional mirror of the cartoonists themselves.

[As if the cartoon gods were looking down on me, just minutes after I wrote the above paragraph, Tim Richard’s *Brewster Rockit* strip (**Fig. 1351**) was published in the online version of *The Washington Post* to which I subscribe. Illustrating the point I just made, Richard has his Dr. Mel Practice mistakenly explain to Winky that Paleolithic people “painted pictures on caves to record their lives” such as a successful hunt (again, using the post-Paleolithic Spanish Levantine style of rock shelter art) and that “the ancient Egyptians used hieroglyphs to mark important events.” (We might also note Richard’s equally mistaken assumption that Attic Black-Figured pottery commemorated military victories.) All this is not to say that the gag in Richard’s strip is not funny, but having an adult and a child standing in front of a museum display—a trope that we have seen in many museum comics (cf. **Figs. 223–227**)—inadvertently makes the point that considering Paleolithic cave painting or Egyptian hieroglyphs as “art” is as ridiculous as the spaceman and child a millennium from now seriously contemplating an LOL emoji.]

[The fact that some cartoonists and comic strip artists have, perhaps subconsciously, *retroactively* found parallels to the modern comics art form in Paleolithic painting or Egyptian hieroglyphs does not validate the “Lascaux hypothesis” we discussed in the “Introduction” to these Part III essays, which would draw a direct evolutionary line from ancient art to modern comics.]

Nevertheless, for cartoonists, the little squiggly lines, birds, eyes, beetles, and other Egyptian hieroglyphic signs are irresistibly humorous opportunities to make fun of language itself.



Fig. 1352. Ronald Searle, 1945.



Fig. 1353. Carl Rose, *The New Yorker*, 5 Jan., 1952.



Fig. 1354. Alan Dunn, *The New Yorker*, 19 April, 1952.



"It doesn't mean a thing, but boy, will it drive them crazy a thousand years from now!"
Fig. 1355. Ed Fisher, *The New Yorker*, 26 Jan., 1963.

Like many hieroglyphs cartoon gags, the humor in a 1945 cartoon by the British artist and satirical cartoonist Ronald Searle (**Fig. 1352**) comes from an incongruous equating how ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs functioned with how our modern English language is written. [In actual Egyptian hieroglyphs, there were no rules for “correct” orthography, and there were variant ways of indicating nearly every ancient Egyptian word.] Similarly, Carl Rose’s 1952 *New Yorker* cartoon (**Fig. 1353**) plays on our incorrect assumption that it would be difficult to make a rhyme in writing the ancient Egyptian language in a hieroglyphic script. [Many ancient Egyptian texts were meant to be sung and have both rhythmic meter and rhymes.] Alan Dunn’s 1952 *New Yorker* cartoon (**Fig. 1354**), with one pith-helmeted and khaki-short-wearing Egyptologist transcribing an inscription to another pith-helmeted and khaki-short-wearing Egyptologist, assumes that we would find it funny to see the equivalent of “a’ as in apple” written out in hieroglyphs. Ed Fisher’s 1963 *New Yorker* offering (**Fig. 1355**), like Zachary Kanin’s 2014 Stonehenge cartoon (**Fig. 1250**), derives its humor from the inscription carver’s incongruous anticipation of what people in the future will think of what he is creating; given the fact that the script seems to be a nonsensical combination of hieroglyphs and cuneiform, Fisher’s inscription carver is probably right to think that it would drive a future epigrapher crazy.



Fig. 1356. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 12 July, 2013.

Anyone who, as a schoolchild, had to listen to their English teachers drone “never end a sentence with a preposition” would smile at Wiley Miller’s (Fig. 1356) “humorous uchronía” transportation of this admonition back into ancient Egypt; our “precocious” schoolchild culture police, however, might point out that there were no hieroglyphic inscriptions on the Great Sphinx of Giza.



Fig. 1357. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 Oct., 2009.



Fig. 1358. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 Oct., 2012.

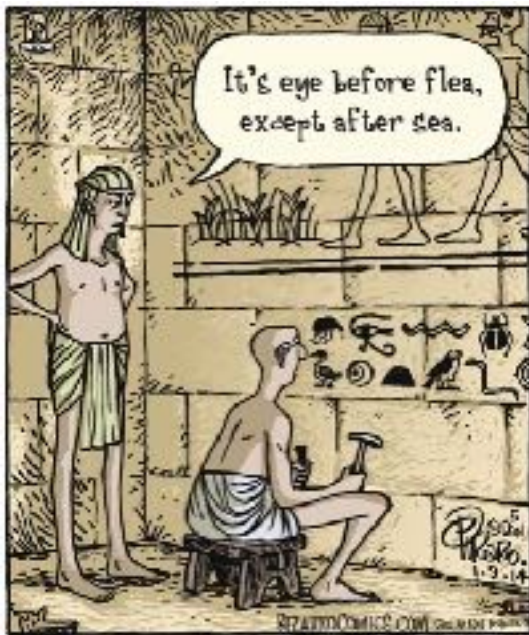


Fig. 1359. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 Jan., 2014.



Fig. 1360. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 Feb., 2017.

It is not surprising that Dan Piraro would also have latched onto the hieroglyph cartoon cliché. The jokes in his 2009 and 2012 *Bizarro* cartoons (Figs. 1357–1358) depend on the mistaken belief that Egyptian hieroglyphic signs were pronounced (in English!) as if they were all logograms. [The image of the goddess Maat worshipping Hathor and its accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions behind the boy in the Fig. 1358 “humorous uchronía” spelling bee gag is a more-or-less faithful copy of a painting from the 19th Dynasty (ca. 1270 B.C.E.) tomb of Nefetari in the Valley of the Queens in Thebes, which Piraro probably saw on one of the popular modern papyrus copies that have flooded the tourist market; Piraro could not resist replacing the cartouche inscription in front of Maat’s outstretched wings with one of his “Eyeball of Observation” hidden symbols.] In 2014, Piraro self-plagiarized his 2009 cartoon (much like Mike Baldwin had done with his archaeologists-discovering-cave-paintings cartoons, Figs. 1136–1137), republishing the exact same image with a new, “humorous uchronía” gag (Fig. 1359) transporting “‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘c’” back into ancient Egypt. Three years later, Piraro used a reversed version of this same image for a “humorous uchronía” poop emoji gag (Fig. 1360); the lowered speech bubble in this version has allowed Piraro to take his Pie of Opportunity hidden symbol off of the tomb floor and more appropriately place it, together with his Dynamite of Unintended Consequences symbol, in the hands of gift-bearers painted on the background wall.

Other cartoonists, of course, have also used the hieroglyphs cartoon cliché for “humorous uchronía” gags.

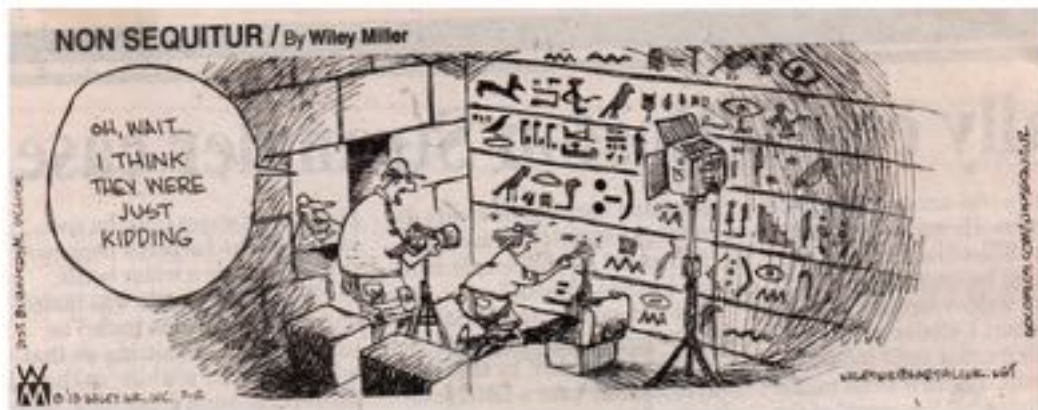


Fig. 1361. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 6 Oct., 2011.



Fig. 1362. Tony Zuvela, 2008.



"I'm glad they set that 140-character limit..."

Fig. 1363. Rob Murray, “Alternative Histories: Twitter in Ancient Egypt,” *History Today*, 8 June, 2012.



Fig. 1364. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 26 April, 2014.

Wiley Miller uses the Egyptologists-discovering-a-tomb trope (**Fig. 1361**) to make a “humorous uchronía” joke about a smiley-face hieroglyph; our “precocious” schoolchild culture police might point out that not all of the other hieroglyphic signs in this Miller cartoon are real as well. Tony Zuvela (**Fig. 1362**) makes a “humorous uchronía” pun about “roll the presses.” For one of his “Alternative Histories” cartoons (**Fig. 1363**), the British cartoonist Rob Murray makes a “humorous uchronía” hieroglyph Twitter joke. And a clever Dave Coverly cartoon (**Fig. 1364**) gives us an ancient Egyptian couple drinking an anachronistic cup of coffee and doing a hieroglyphic crossword puzzle.

Biblical Boffos

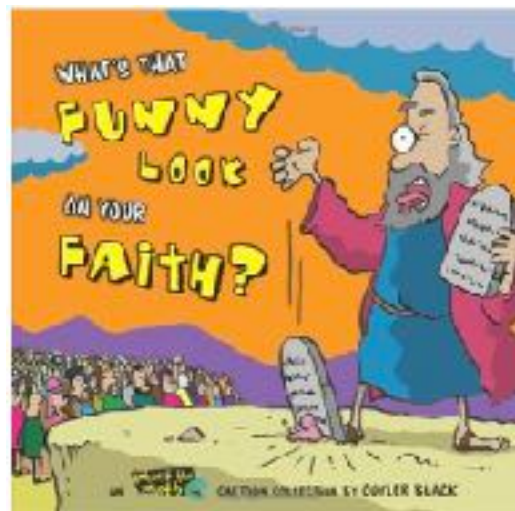


Fig. 1365. Cuyler Black, front page of *What's That Funny Look on Your Faith?*, 2006.

Making fun of religion can be dangerous, as the world tragically learned on 7 Jan., 2015, when two brothers broke into the Parisian offices of the satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and killed twelve people and wounded eleven others in retaliation for the newspaper having published satirical cartoons of Mohammed. While this horrific act of al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism must be understood in terms of the larger war against Islamist militarism that has embroiled the Middle East over the past two decades, it also has its roots in a much, much older conflict about the role of visual images in Biblical religions. Following the *Deuteronomy* commandment “thou shall not make unto thee any graven image,” early Judaism, by the 7th century B.C.E., eschewed any visual representation of the human form in its religious imagery. This prohibition was gradually abandoned by early Christians, and by the 8th century A.D., a full-blown

iconoclast movement roiled the Byzantine world, while the use any human image was prohibited in the emerging Islamic world; within the European Christian world, the iconoclasm issue reemerged in the 16th-century Reformation as Calvinist mobs defaced Catholic monuments for being objects of idolatrous veneration.

Against this long history of iconoclasm—not to mention the recent attack on *Charlie Hebdo*—the cartoons of Cuyler Black stand out as a remarkable body of humorous gags targeting figures from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Black, who comes from a long line of ministers, is a Canadian-born pastor at the large evangelical Liquid Church in New Jersey. A cartoonist since childhood, Black’s deep-seated Christian faith has enabled him to employ his Biblical cartoons as “a great way to present the faith to those who think believers need to lighten up!” Like Christian rock musicians who use youth music to popularize their faith, Cuyler Black has used his cartoons to appeal to younger audiences. In addition to his published books of cartoons (**Fig. 1365**) and the use of his cartoons on merchandise distributed by Christian retail stores, Black has posted several hundred of his “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons on his website, cuylerblack.com. I present here a generous selection of Black’s cartoons in order to demonstrate both the range of subjects he has selected and the types of humor he employs in making fun of them.



Fig. 1366a. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

Some of Black's cartoons might seem to verge on the sacrilegious. His cartoons of God whistling while doing the laundry or appearing with his hand on a Bible in a law court (**Fig. 1366a**) certainly break taboos against representing the deity, although the light-hearted jokes about God separating lights from darks or swearing in his own name are hardly offensive; in fact, Black's changing the formulaic "Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" to "Do you promise to be the truth . . ." has a ring of proselytizing fervor to it.



Fig. 1366b. Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.



Fig. 1366c. Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.



Fig. 1366d. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.



Fig. 1366e. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

Some of Cuyler Black’s humorous Biblical cartoons are generalized spoofs on the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, such as his silly “Book of Genesisissies” with Adam running away from the snake, Noah getting a splinter while constructing the Ark, and Moses being squeamish about the mud after parting the Red Sea, or his joke about one of the supposedly long-lived Patriarchs looking for a 625th wedding present, or his gag about literally going to hell in a hand basket (Fig. 1366b). The subjects of Black’s cartoons, which are nearly evenly divided between Old Testament and New Testament topics, comprise something like “the greatest hits” from the Bible—subjects that even someone with only a vague familiarity with the Bible could be expected to know. Of his Old Testament cartoons, Black comes back to certain subjects time and time again, such as Adam and Eve in Eden (Fig. 1366c), Noah’s Ark (Fig. 1366d), Moses’ receiving the Ten Commandments and leading the Israelites on the Exodus, or David battling Goliath (Fig. 1366e).



Fig. 1366f. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.



Fig. 1366g. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

One of Cuyler Black’s favorite New Testament subjects is the Bethlehem creche scene. He has used the birth of Christ as a backdrop for “humorous uchronía” gags about parents putting bumperstickers on their camels to brag about their children and—in cartoons verging on the sacrilegious—Joseph making a pun on “Hail Mary” and Mary trying to start a “Virgin Teen Mom’s Mutual Support Group” (**Fig. 1366f**). Black has also had a field day with the Magi (**Fig. 1366g**), making silly wordplays about frankincense and myrrh and “humorous uchronía” gags about what gifts three wise women would have brought and about Mary writing thank-you notes.



Fig. 1366h. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

And Cuyler Black has not averted his humorous gaze from Christ himself, making a pun about the Sermon on the Mount, a joke about the miracle at the Marriage at Cana, and cartoons with a skateboard-riding Jesus “clearing” the Temple, and Mary asking Jesus if he was “born in a barn?” (**Fig. 1366h**); Black has also used Jesus in “humorous uchronía” gags targeting McDonalds and the credulity of people who believe that an image of Jesus or the Virgin could appear on a piece of toast.



Fig. 1366i. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

Black has also used Jesus’ disciples for his jokes, such as in the wordplay of the follower who couldn’t see Jesus because he was suffering from “ascension deficit disorder,” or a Paul slipping on a banana peel gag, or an atrocious apostles/opossums pun (Fig. 1366i).



Fig. 1366j. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

And, as an active member of a large church community, Cuyler Black has not been able to resist making fun of church life, such as using donuts in religious marketing, the separation of church and “steak,” or the endearing childish misunderstanding of John the Baptist being “bee-headed” (Fig. 1366j).



Fig. 1367. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 27 Sept., 2020.

In contrast to Cuyler Black’s copious corpus of Biblical cartoons, which make fun of both Old Testament and New Testament subjects, the vast majority of Bible-themed cartoons one finds in the American syndicated funny pages only target characters from the Old Testament. [For example, the Scott Hilburn comic strip (Fig. 1367) that was published on the very day I wrote the previous sentence—thanks, cartoon gods!.] This reluctance to tackle New Testament subjects is no doubt rooted in a desire not to offend a generally conservative, and mostly Christian, American readership. To be sure, one occasionally runs across political op-ed cartoons about Christianity, such as those targeting creationism (Figs. 911–917), as well as cartoons that more generally poke fun at organized religion (cf., e.g., Figs. 1027 and 1196). But, apparently, mainstream American cartoonists and webcomic artists believe Americans can “lighten up” when reading cartoons making fun of such “greatest hits” Old Testament subjects like Adam and Eve, Noah, the Patriarchs, or Moses. It is as if these are “safe” topics like cavemen, Stonehenge, pharaonic Egypt, or Greek mythology—ancient history that is only tangentially related to Christianity.



Fig. 1368. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 12 May, 2016.

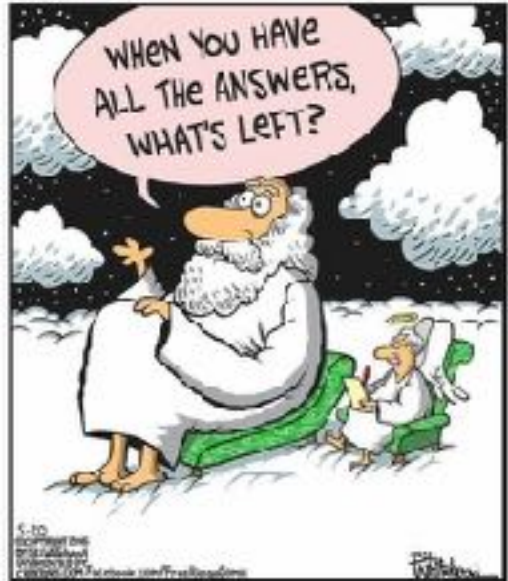


Fig. 1369. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 20 May, 2016.



Fig. 1370. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 30 May, 2017.



Fig. 1371. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 May, 2016.



Fig. 1372. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 April, 2016.



"Must I sacrifice family for career?"

Fig. 1373. David Borchart, *The New Yorker*, 14 Oct., 2013.



Fig. 1374. Scott Hilburn, 30 April, 2009.



Fig. 1375. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 7 Jan., 2010.



The unicorns learn a valuable lesson on the importance of punctuality.



Fig. 1376. Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*, 24 Jan., 2011.

Fig. 1377. Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*, 24 Oct., 2011.

Like Cuyler Black (Fig. 1366a), Dave Whamond and Bill Whitehead have drawn taboo-breaking “humorous uchronía” cartoons depicting God as a white man with a long white beard: Whammod’s offering (Fig. 1368) is a gag about GPS technology; Whitehead’s 2016 cartoon (Fig. 1369) is a joke using one of the most common of cartoon clichés, a patient on the psychiatrist’s couch. A 2017 Bill Whitehead *Free Range* cartoon (Fig. 1370), where cavemen walking in front of a smoking volcano (cf. Fig. 1243) are about to be hit by a flaming meteor, depicts God as a more iconoclastically acceptable *manus dei*. [As we are presumably supposed to think that the meteor is the 65 million-year-old Chicxulub impactor, this cartoon would seem to be another example of the mistaken belief in the contemporaneousness of cavemen and dinosaurs.] Dan Piraro (Fig. 1371) makes a joke about Adam and Eve not having parental role models—a gag quite similar to Cuyler Black’s belly-button gag (Fig. 1366c). Several comics artists, such as Mike Peters (Fig. 1372), have made “humorous uchronía” gags about Lot using his wife as a source of salt. The *New Yorker* cartoonist David Borchart (Fig. 1373) has used the sacrifice of Isaac for a “humorous uchronía” gag about modern careerism. And Noah’s Ark is a perennial favorite subject for cartoonists (Figs. 1374–1377; cf. also the dinosaurs-missing-the-boat cartoons by Thomas Sullivant, Dan Regan, and Mark Godfrey, Figs. 784–786). [Apparently, putting giraffes and unicorns in Noah’s Ark cartoons makes them funnier!]



Fig. 1378. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoy's*, 5 Dec. 2009.

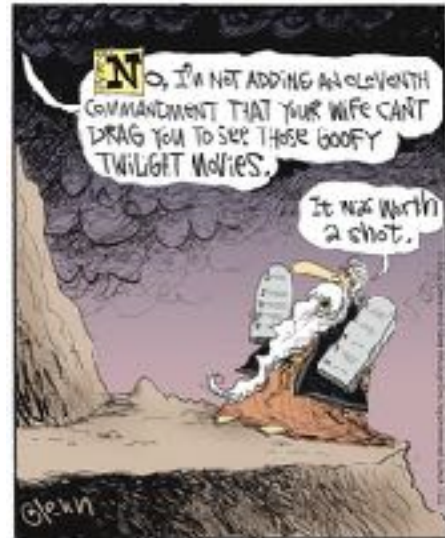


Fig. 1379. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoy's*, 22 July, 2010.



Fig. 1380. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoy's*, 1 Feb., 2016.



Fig. 1381. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 20 July, 2010.



Fig. 1382. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 6 Jan., 2012.



Fig. 1383. Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*.

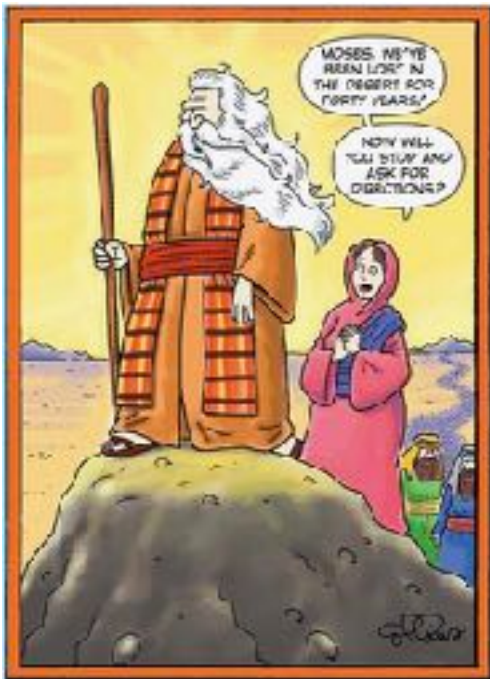


Fig. 1384. Daniel Collins, NobleWorks Cards.

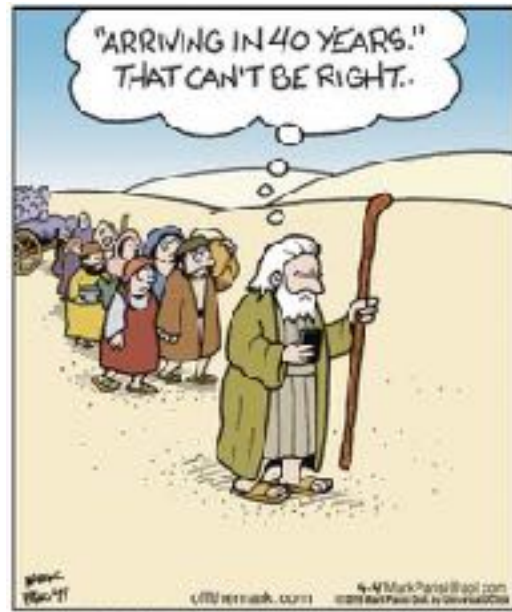


Fig. 1385. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 4 April, 2015.



Fig. 1386. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 1 Jan., 2016.



Fig. 1387. Dan Reynolds, *Divine Comedy*, 2016.

By far the most common type of Bible-themed cartoons are those that make fun of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments and of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. And most of these employ “uchronía” humor to make us smile: the McCoy brothers crack jokes about Moses wanting God to dedicate the tablets to him, about a commandment against having to watch Twilight movies, and about the commandments not getting Facebook likes (Figs. 1378–1380); Dave Coverly jokes about God—shown as a *manus dei*— making Moses climb Mount Sinai to save on shipping costs (Fig. 1381);

Dan Piraro’s cartoon makes a humorous comparison to computer tablets (**Fig. 1382**); and a Leigh Rubins cartoon jokes about Moses wishing the stone tablets had come out in paperback (**Fig. 1383**). For his Exodus gag (**Fig. 1384**), the greeting-card cartoonist Daniel Collins jokes about the stereotype of modern men being unwilling to ask for directions; Mark Parisi’s cartoon (**Fig. 1385**) and Dan Reynold’s *Divine Comedy* cartoon (**Fig. 1387**) assume readers are familiar with Google Maps directions; and Bill Whitehead’s “are we there yet?” gag (**Fig. 1386**) assumes we will recognize the cliché of American children fighting in the back seat of the car (cf. **Fig. 1104** for Harry Bliss’ use of this cliché in a caveman joke).





"Could you dumb it down a little?"
12 May, 2012.



"Could I get it as an ebook?"
10 May, 2013.



"To read the next set of Commandments, scroll down or swipe to the left?"
18 July, 2017.



God messes with Moses.
23 March, 2019.



"This next one covers the do's and don'ts of regifting."

7 April, 2020.

Fig. 1388. Selection of Mike Baldwin, *Cornered* cartoons, 2000 to 2020.

Perhaps no other cartoonist has been as taken with Moses on Mount Sinai as has Mike Baldwin, who seems compelled to return to this topic to make a “humorous uchronía” gag every other year or so (**Fig. 1388**). In his Feb. 2000 gag, Baldwin depicts God as a white man with long white beard sitting behind a desk; his May 2013 cartoon portrays God as a *manus dei* coming out of the heavens. [Note that, in his July 2017 and April 2020 cartoons, Mike Baldwin has once again self-plagiarized by using nearly

identical images—differing only in the position of the birds in the sky and the placement of the signature—with different captions; as we noted in the case of Baldwin doing the same thing with his 2014 and 2020 cave-painting cartoons (Figs. 1136–1137), we can generously mark this type of self-plagiarism down to the influence of the “caption that cartoon” fad.]

Another part of the Exodus story that cartoonists have found inherently humorous is Moses parting the Red Sea.



Fig. 1389. J.V., 2002.



Fig. 1390. Harry Bliss, 24 Sept., 2005.



Fig. 1391. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 2007.

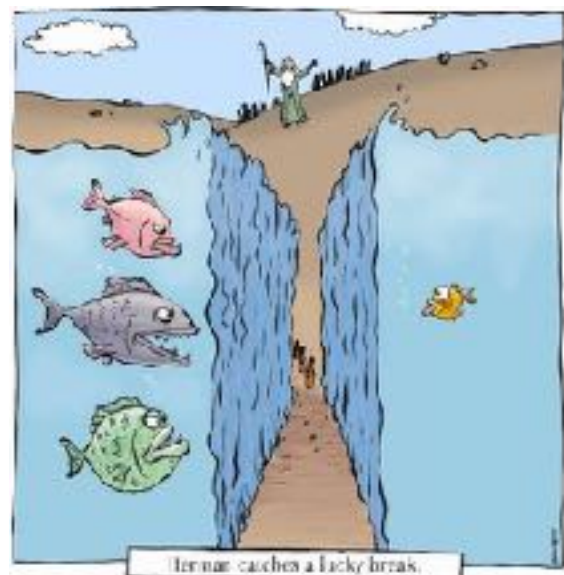


Fig. 1392. John Huckeby and Nicholas DeYoung, *Bible Tails*, DaySpring, 2008.



Fig. 1393. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

One approach to making a Moses-parting-the-Red-Sea cartoon is to transfer the miracle to an incongruous setting, as with J.V.’s meme of Moses parting a stream where he and his companion are fishing (Fig. 1389). Another approach is to use the image of the Israelites crossing the parted sea as a visual set-up for a joke, such as with Harry Bliss’ cartoon (Fig. 1390) of a man fishing in the parted side wall, or Scott Hilburn’s gag (Fig. 1391) of Moses’ first attempt to part the sea, or the *Bible Tails* greeting card (Fig. 1392) of the lucky little fish who was separated from its predators. Cuyler Black (Fig. 1393) has also taken this approach, cracking a “humorous uchronía” joke about cellphone reception, and gags about a boy being bitten by a shark and a man who picked up a mermaid.



Fig. 1394. A Gary Larson cartoon.

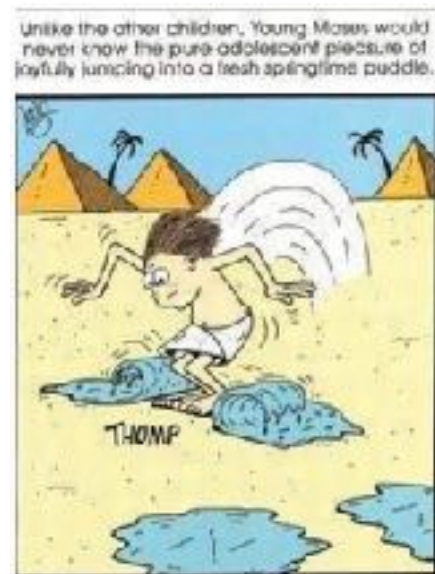


Fig. 1395. A Leigh Rubins cartoon.



Fig. 1396. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 5 April, 2010.



Fig. 1397. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 4 Sept., 2013.

Given, as we have seen, the propensity of cartoonists to humorously retro-project the artistic style of mature artists back into their childhood (e.g. Michelangelo **Figs. 16–18**, Picasso **Fig. 20**, Dalí **Fig. 21**, Seurat **Fig. 518**, Pollock **Figs. 626–632**, and Warhol **Fig. 647**), it is not surprising that cartoonists would also have retro-projected Moses' ability to part water back onto his childhood: Gary Larson (**Fig. 1394**) gives us a fat-cheeked boy Moses in an American-style kitchen splitting the milk in his glass; a Leigh Rubins cartoon (**Fig. 1395**) has a frustrated boy Moses failing to jump in a rain puddle in front of the pyramids (have there ever been rain puddles in the Giza desert?); and the boy Moses in cartoons by the McCoy brothers and by Dave Coverly (**Figs. 1396–1397**) parts the water in his anachronistic bathtub—a gag so obvious that we can ascribe these boys-don't-like-to-take-baths jokes to independent invention.

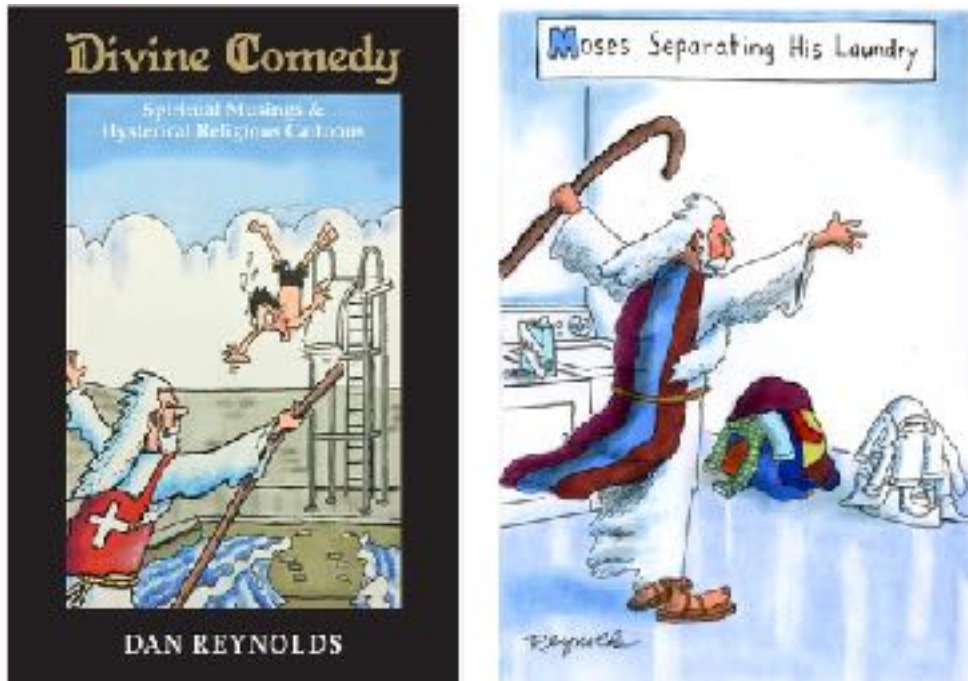


Fig. 1398. Dan Reynolds, Cover and cartoon from *Divine Comedy*, 2017.

The *Readers Digest* cartoonist and greeting card artist Dan Reynolds, like Cuyler Black, is a devout Christian who uses his comics art to encourage readers to “lighten up” about his faith. The cover to his first volume of Biblical cartoons, *Divine Comedy: Spiritual Musings & Hysterical Religious Cartoons* (Fig. 1398), depicts Moses (rather maliciously) parting the water in a swimming pool just as a boy is about to dive into it; another cartoon in this volume has Moses divide his laundry into lights and darks—a gag that Cuyler Black used in one of his God cartoons (Fig. 1366a).



Fig. 1399. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 9 Aug., 2014.



Fig. 1400. Hank Ketcham, *Dennis the Menace*, 28 May, 2017.



Fig. 1401. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 16 Feb., 2019.

Another “safe” Old Testament topic found in the American funny pages is David and Goliath. Bill Whitehead (Fig. 1399) humorously suggests that the shepherd killed the giant by accident. Hank Ketcham’s Dennis (Fig. 1400) assumes the role of David in a dream and defeats a Mr. Wilson/Goliath by taking a “mulligan”—a golf term Ketcham assumes is part of his readers “culturally bound background knowledge.” Mikael Wulff’s and Anders Morgenthaler’s David (Fig. 1401) does in Goliath with a humorous low blow.



There are a few exceptions to the general rule that American cartoonists tend to avoid risky New Testament subjects.



Fig. 1402. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 18 Dec., 2013.



Fig. 1403. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 Dec., 2016.



Fig. 1404. Scott Metzger, *The Bent Pinky*.



Fig. 1405. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 29 April, 2015.

Two Bethlehem-creche cartoons (Figs. 1402–1403) by the Texan Scott Hilburn, both published at Christmastime, use similar “silent night” punch lines placed in prominent text boxes at the bottom of his gags about a quarreling Mary and Joseph. The northern Californian Scott Metzger makes a pun on myrrh (Fig. 1404) in a cartoon of Mary anachronistically writing thank-you notes (cf. Fig. 1366g for a similar Cuyler Black gag). The Kansan Bill Whitehead has published a cartoon (Fig. 1405) that borders on

the sacrilegious, suggesting that Jesus would be unable to raise an anachronistic automobile from the dead.



It would seem that non-American cartoonists are a little less hesitant about making fun of Christian subjects.



Fig. 1406. Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories: Galilee, A.D. 26," *History Today*, 5 Aug., 2015.



Fig. 1407. Phil Judd, 2008.

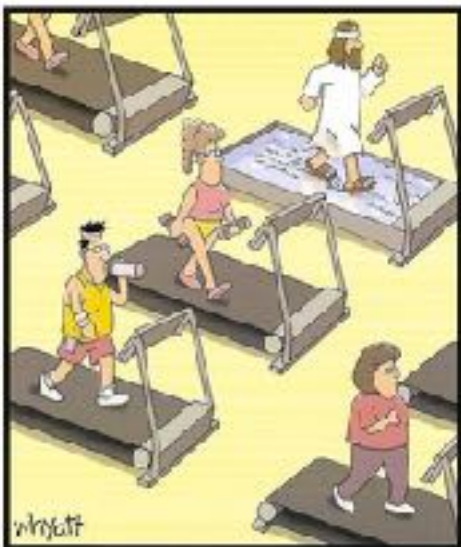


Fig. 1408. Three Tim Whyatt greeting card cartoons.



Fig. 1409. Joseph Nowak.

The British cartoonist Rib Murray, for instance, has used one of his “Alternative Histories” cartoon (Fig. 1406) to make a “humorous uchronía” gag about Jesus encouraging his disciples to use social media to support his ministry. The Australian Phil Judd gives us a Bethlehem creche cartoon (Fig. 1407) with “humorous uchronía” Elvis Presley imitators. Judd’s fellow Australian comic Tim Whyatt has drawn greeting cards with an ironic joke about Jesus having his birthday on the same day as Christmas, and gags about Jesus walking on an anachronistic water treadmill or doing an anachronistic moon walk on water (Fig. 1408). The German cartoonist Joseph Nowak has, like we have seen with the boy Moses cartoon gags, retro-projected Jesus’ miraculous ability back into his childhood with a cartoon (Fig. 1409) where a baby Jesus refuses to take an anachronistic bath.

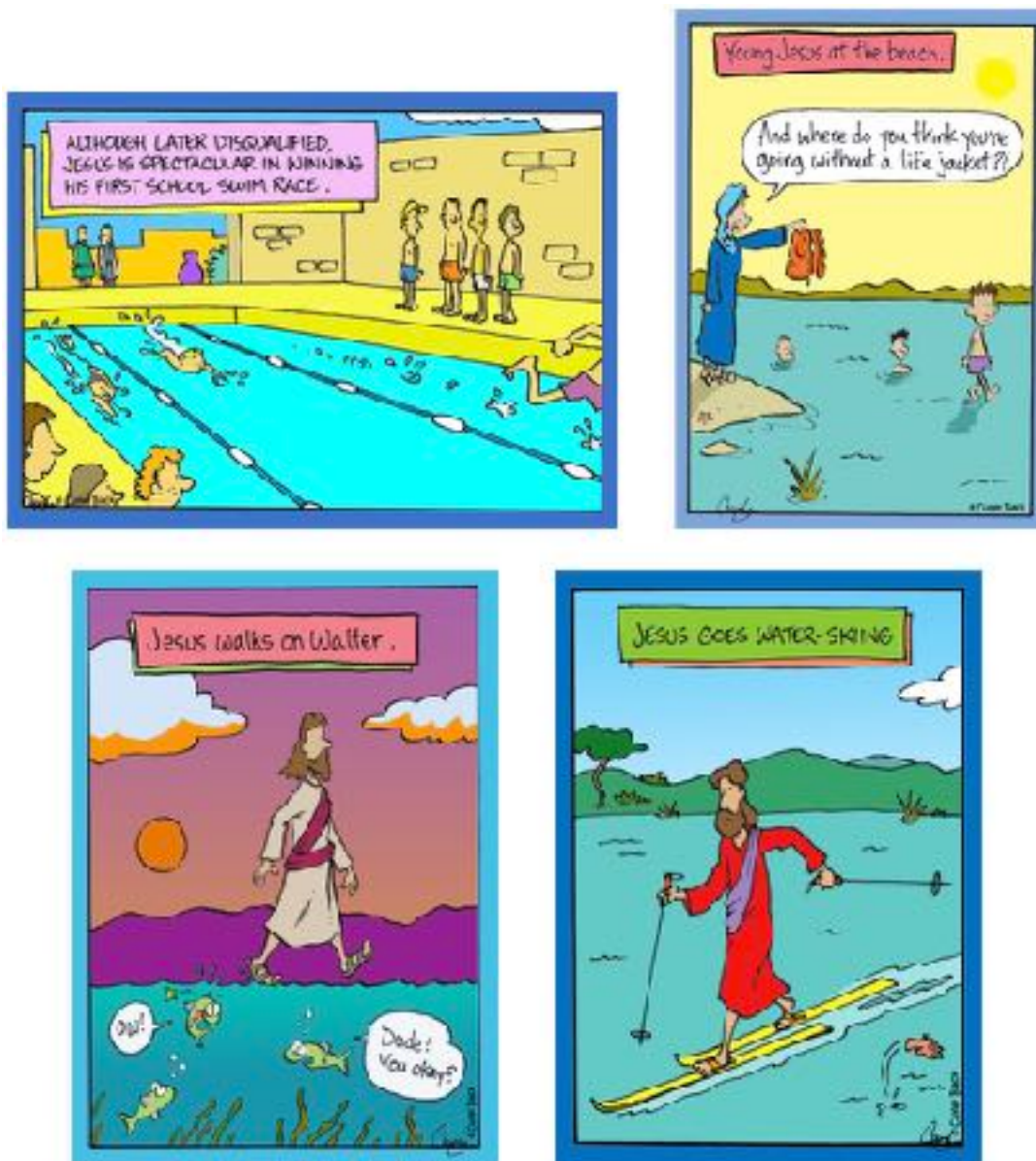
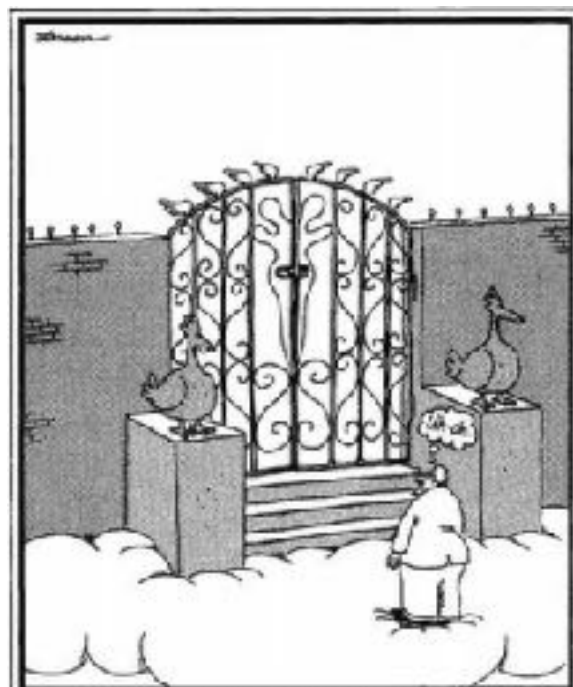


Fig. 1410. Cuyler Black, a selection of “Inherit the Mirth” cartoons.

[The religious American cartoonist Cuyler Black has also found humor in the miracle of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, retro-projecting it back into a young Jesus winning an anachronistic school swim meet or not needing an anachronistic life jacket, or by making a bad pun about Jesus walking on a fish named “Walter” or a silly gag about Jesus water-skiing as if he were cross-country skiing (Fig. 1410).]



If one were to list the top-10 most popular cartoon clichés, St. Peter at the Pearly Gates would probably be right up there with the psychiatric patient on a couch, the two people stranded on a tiny desert island, the man dying of thirst crawling through a desert, a policeman stopping a motorists, the Grim Reaper, and, yes, Stone Age cavemen and Moses and the Ten Commandments (and as we will see later, Sisyphus pushing a boulder up the hill). (The British CartoonStock company, for example, lists 1,141 cartoons and comic strips about Moses and 1,145 about the Pearly Gates.) Although ostensibly religious in nature, these Pearly-Gates cartoons differ from the Bible-themed cartoons we have looked at in this section in so far as they do not target Biblical subjects *per se*, but, rather, use the entrance to heaven as a set-up for a joke, usually making fun of the person who is trying to enter. [These should not be confused with the Australian cartoonist Ian Jones’ long-running comic strip series entitled *Pearly Gates*.]



Colonel Sanders at the Pearly Gates
Fig. 1411. A Gary Larson cartoon.



Fig. 1412. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 26 Jan., 2007.



Fig. 1413. A Chris Madden cartoon.

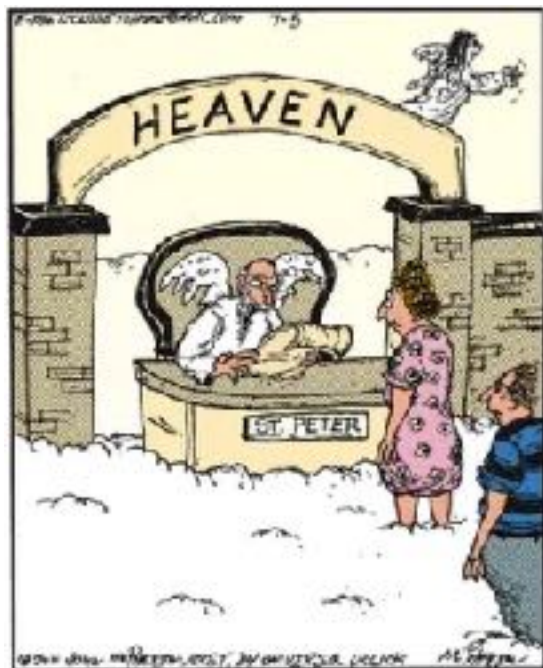


Fig. 1414. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 5 July, 2011.

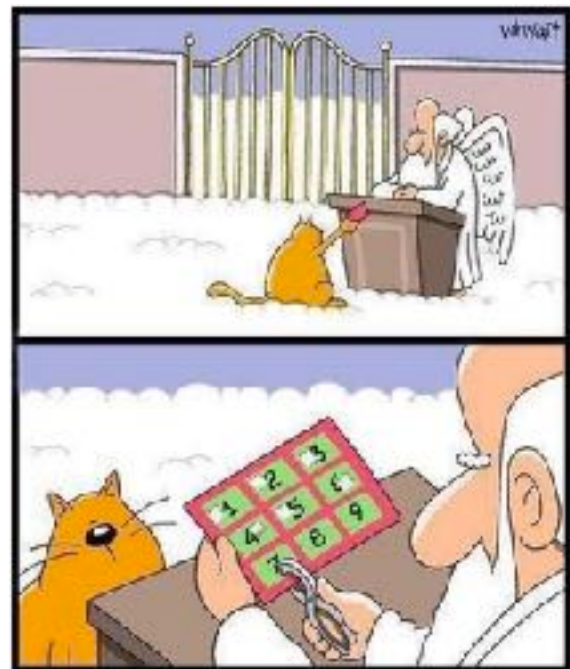


Fig. 1415. A Tim Whyatt greeting card cartoon.

A Gary Larson cartoon (Fig. 1411), for instance, makes us smile when we see the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken confront a Pearly Gates guarded by chicken statues. A Dan Piraro cartoon (Fig. 1412) targets a believer, while the British cartoonist Chris Madden (Fig. 1413) targets a non-believer. A John McPherson's Pearly-Gates cartoon (Fig. 1414) takes a jab at the woman who incongruously thinks she could go home to check if she had left an appliance on.

The Australian cartoonist Tim Whyatt (**Fig. 1415**) pokes fun at the idea of St. Peter punching a cat's nine-lives card.



Fig. 1416. Randy Bish, *Pittsburgh Tribune*, 13 Feb. 2000.



Fig. 1417. John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 16 June, 2017.



Fig. 1418. Loren Fishman, *Humoresque Cartoons*, 2011.

The political cartoonist Randy Bish used the Pearly-Gates setting for an homage to Charles Schultz at the time of death of the creator of *Peanuts* (**Fig. 1416**; for Patrick McDonald’s metafictional “intertextuality” homages to Schultz, cf. **Figs. 271** and **274**). A John Atkinson comic strip (**Fig. 1417**) makes a metafictional allusion to the common, “a priest, a rabbi, and a minister walk into . . .” set-up to a verbal joke; a Loren Fishman

cartoon (Fig. 1418) puts a twist on this gag by having the priest, rabbi, and imam find Zeus having incongruously replacing St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.



Fig. 1419. Barry Blitt *The New Yorker*, 10 July, 2020.

The *New Yorker* cartoonist Barry Blitt recently used St. Peter at the Pearly Gates for a set-up to a pandemic cartoon (Fig. 1419) where we smile as we see the guardian of heaven behind a plexiglass barrier checking the temperatures of the entering souls.



Fig. 1420. George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 6 Jan., 1906.



Fig. 1421. Wesley Osam, 16 Oct., 2008.

I close this “Biblical Boffos” section of this “Comical Cultures” essay by looking at two cartoons about other ancient cultures tangentially related to the Biblical world. [I am shoe-horning these in here because, unlike the plethora of cartoons about ancient Greece and Rome we will examine in the following section, cartoons about non-Biblical ancient Near Eastern cultures are almost never found in the American funny pages.] The silly wordplay in a 1906 George Herman *Krazy Kat* strip (**Fig. 1420**) does assume that readers would recognize the name of the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, presumably through the references to Nineveh found in the Bible, if not through the mid-19th-century excavations of Austen Henry Layard at ancient Nineveh (near Mosul in modern-day northern Iraq) that yielded Neo-Assyrian sculptures now in the British Museum in London and the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. Wesley Osam’s 2008 comic strip (**Fig. 1421**) about archaeologists uncovering humorously literal “Hittites” assumes a more surprising recognition of the name of that powerful 2nd-millennium B.C.E. Late Bronze Age Anatolian empire.

Indices

List of Figures

- Frontispiece:** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 13 Oct., 1968.
Fig. i. From Neil Cohn, 2015, p. 6 (top) and p. 15 (bottom).
Fig. 1. Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 20 March, 1989.
Fig. 2. Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, March 15–20, 1989.
Fig. 3. Mike Peters, 19 Feb, 2016.
Fig. 4. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 31 March, 2012.
Fig. 5. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 3 April, 2014.
Fig. 6. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 9 Oct., 2011.
Fig. 7. Toons, Sistine Chapel, 25 March, 2010.
Fig. 8. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 1 July, 2010.
Fig. 9. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 6 Oct., 2007.
Fig. 10. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 14 July, 2013.
Fig. 11. Royston Robertson, 23 Nov., 2012.
Fig. 12. John Hart, *B.C.*, 25 Aug., 1992.
Fig. 13. Jack and Carole Bender, *Alley Oop*, 2 March, 2002.
Fig. 14. John Gannam, *Gone Gal*, Advertisement for Balanced Pacific Sheets, 1948.
Fig. 15. Bill Watterson, Poster for the movie *Stripped*, 2014.
Fig. 16. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 21 Jan., 2011.
Fig. 17. Blue, *Funny Times*, 6 Oct., 2004.
Fig. 18. Scott Hilburn, *Argyle Sweater*, 4 April, 2016.
Fig. 19. Paul Trap, *Thatababy* 21 Aug., 2016.
Fig. 20. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 26 March, 1987.
Fig. 21. Craig Malamut.
Fig. 22. Randall Monroe, “A/B”, *xkcd.com/2151*, 19 May, 2019.
Fig. 23. Meme of Jacques Louis David, *Madame François Buron*, 1769. Art Institute, Chicago.
Fig. 24. Meme of Orazio Gentileschi, *Danaë and the Shower of Gold*, 1621–1623. J. Paul Getty Museum.
Fig. 25. Meme of Randolph Rogers, *Nydia, the Blind Flower Girl of Pompeii*, 1855–1856. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Fig. 26. Meme of Edgar Degas, *L’Absinthe*, 1875–1876. Musée d’Orsay.
Fig. 27. Meme of Michelangelo, *The Sistine Chapel*, 1508–1512.
Fig. 28. Meme of Vincent van Gogh, *Self Portrait*, 1889. Musée d’Orsay.
Fig. 29. Meme of the *Chigi Vase*, ca. 650 BCE. Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome.
Fig. 30. Detail of the upper frieze of the *Chigi Vase*, ca. 650 BCE. Villa Giulia, Rome.
Fig. 31. Antonio Guillem, “Disloyal man with his girlfriend looking at another girl,” 2015.
Fig. 32. Meme based on Guillem (2015), 2017.
Fig. 33. Two memes based on Guillem (2015), 2018.
Fig. 34. Dan Cretu, Composites (from Richman-Abdou, 2017).
Fig. 35. Shusaku Takaoka, Collages (from Barnes, 2017).
Fig. 36. Ditto Von Tease, *Classicool*, 2018 (from Taggart, 2019).
Fig. 37. José Manuel Ballester. Photographs on canvas, 2007–2012.
Fig. 38. Ertan Atay, 28 June, 2018, 4 Sept., 2019, 16 Feb., 2018, 20 Aug., 2018, 4 Feb., 2020, 6 Sept., 2019, 23 Feb., 2020, 23 Feb., 2020, 9 Aug., 2018, 29 Oct., 2018, and 15 April, 2018.
Fig. 39. Ertan Atay, 27 Aug., 2019, 20 July, 2018, and 23 Feb., 2020.
Fig. 40. Ertan Atay, 8 March, 2019.
Fig. 41. Ertan Atay, 20 Feb., 2018 and 29 Nov., 2018.
Fig. 42. Ertan Atay, 20 May, 2019.
Fig. 43. Ertan Atay, 12 April, 2018.
Fig. 44. Ertan Atay, 27 Aug., 2019, and 5 Dec., 2018.
Fig. 45. Ertan Atay, 7 May, 2018, 5 Dec., 2018, , and 27 Sept., 2018.
Fig. 46. Ertan Atay, 9 Sept., 2018, 29 Aug., 2018, 11 Dec., 2018, and 10 Jan, 2020.
Fig. 47. Meme of Caveman Spongebob.

- Fig. 48.** The imgflip.com “caveman Meme Generator”.
- Fig. 49.** A Geico Caveman meme.
- Fig. 50.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 15 May, 2014.
- Fig. 51.** Mark Stevers, 2013.
- Fig. 52.** Jen Sorensen, 8 March, 2018.
- Fig. 53.** Alex Gregory, *The New Yorker*, 22 May, 2006.
- Fig. 54.** A screen-shot of James Tantum’s submission to *The New Yorker*, May, 2010.
- Fig. 55.** Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 14 Jan., 2010.
- Fig. 56.** Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 26 March., 2013.
- Fig. 57.** Responses to “#artathome” challenge from Tussen Kunst en Quarantaine, March, 2020.
- Fig. 58.** Responses to “#artathome” challenge from Pinchuk Art Center (Kiev), March, 2020.
- Fig. 59.** #artathome parodies on the Russian Facebook group *Izoizolyacia* (“Art Isolation”), after Maynes, 2020.
- Fig. 60.** Looma, “Art of the Quarantine” Campaign, Ukranian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, March, 2020. (After Siente, 10 April, 2020).
- Fig. 61.** *La Nueva España*, 19 April, 2020.
- Fig. 62.** #artathome pastiches of Edward Hopper paintings. (After Siente, 21 April, 2020.)
- Fig. 63.** Pelac, Pastiche of Magritte’s *Golconda* (1953). (After Stewart, 2020.)
- Fig. 64.** Responses to #StayArtHomePelac.
- Fig. 65.** Ertan Atay, 8 April, 2020.
- Fig. 66.** Ertan Atay, 14 April, 2020.
- Fig. 67.** Responses to “#artathome” challenge from the Getty Museum, 28 March–3 April, 2020.
- Fig. 68.** Olivier Ménégol, *Le Confinement dans l’Histoire de l’ Art*, 4, 6, 8, 14 April, 11 May, 2020.
- Fig. 69.** Michelangelo *Creation of Adam* pandemic cartoons.
- Fig. 70.** Antonio Rodríguez Garcia, 1 March, 2020.
- Fig. 71.** Alex Balamain, 1 March, 2020.
- Fig. 72.** Joe Berger and Pascal Wyse, *The Guardian*, 16 May, 2020.
- Fig. 73.** David Pope, *Canberra Times*, 28 April, 2020.
- Fig. 74.** José Luis Martin, *Vanguardia*, 1 March, 2020.
- Fig. 75.** Dave Whamond and Bas van der Schot (*De Volkskrant*), 1 March, 2020.
- Fig. 76.** Michael Cambon, “L’art en temps de pandémie” cartoons.
- Fig. 77.** O-Sekoer (Luc Descheemaeker), 1 March, 2020.
- Fig. 78.** Patrick Blower, *The Telegraph*, 3 March, 2020.
- Fig. 79.** Patrick Blower, *The Telegraph*, 18 March, 2020.
- Fig. 80.** Peter Kuper, March, 2020.
- Fig. 81.** Ángel Idígoras, *Sur*, 11 March, 2020.
- Fig. 82.** David Sipress, *The New Yorker*, 9 April, 2020.
- Fig. 83.** Manel Trenchs i Mola, 29 March, 2020.
- Fig. 84.** Pinto (David Pintor Noguerol) and Chinto (Carlos López Gómez).
- Fig. 85.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 21–22 June, 1955.
- Fig. 86.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 2 July, 1961.
- Fig. 87.** Three “my kid could do that” cartoons.
- Fig. 88.** U.S. Postal Service, *Comic Strip Classics*, 1 Oct., 1995.
- Fig. 89.** Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *The New York Herald*, 23 Feb., 1908.
- Fig. 90.** Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *The New York Herald*, 26 July, 1908.
- Fig. 91.** Lyonel Feininger, *Wee Willie Winkie’s World*, *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 11 Nov., 1906.
- Fig. 92.** Charles Forbell, *Naughty Pete*, *New York Herald*, November 16, 1913.
- Fig. 93.** Winsor McCay (alias “Silas”), *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*, *Evening Telegram*, 15 Feb, 1905.
- Fig. 94.** Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *The New York Herald*, 18 April, 1909.
- Fig. 95.** Winsor McCay, *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*, *New York American*, 26 Nov., 1911.
- Fig. 96.** Alek Sass, “Nobody Who Has Been Drinking is Let in to See This Show,” *New York World*, 17 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 97.** Comparison of Alek Sass’s caricatures to originals exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 98.** Thomas E. Powers, “Art at the Armory by Powers, Futurist,” *New York American*, 22 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 99.** Comparison of Powers’ caricatures to originals exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 100.** Will B. Johnstone, *The Evening World*, 22 Feb., 1913.

- Fig. 101.** Comparison of Johnstone's caricatures to originals exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 102.** Oscar Cesare, "What Cesare Saw at the Armory Art Show," *The Sun*, 23 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 103.** Comparison of Cesare's drawings to originals exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 104.** Frederick Opper, "The 'New Art' Fest," *New York American*, 27 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 105.** Comparison of F. Opper's drawing to original exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 106.** Bartimaeus Winson (?), "A Near Post-Impression of a Post-Impressionist Room at the International Exhibition," *New-York Tribune*, Sunday, 2 March, 1913.
- Fig. 107.** Comparison of B. Winson (?) drawing to original exhibited in Armory Show.
- Fig. 108.** Winsor McCay, "The Modern Art Show," *New York Herald*, 1913.
- Fig. 109.** Frank King, "A Few Futurist Fancies," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 16 March, 1913.
- Fig. 110.** *Chicago Examiner*, 2 April, 1913.
- Fig. 111.** J.F. Griswold, "The Rude Descending a Staircase (Rush Hour at the Subway)," *New York Evening Sun*, 20 March, 1913.
- Fig. 112.** John T. McCutcheon, "A Near-Futurist Painting," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 April, 1913.
- Fig. 113.** Clare Briggs, "The Original Cubist," *New York Evening Sun*, 1 April, 1913.
- Fig. 114.** F. Fox, "Cubisto Picture Composed by Dad, Under the Inspiration of the Incoming Bills for the Ladies' Spring Purchases," *New York Evening Sun*, 8 April, 1913.
- Fig. 115.** Maurice Ketten, "The New Art," *New York Evening World*, 21 February, 1913.
- Fig. 116.** John T. McCutcheon, "How to Become a Post-Impressionist Paint Slinger," *New York Evening Sun*, 6 March, 1913.
- Fig. 117.** Charles Voight, "Who Said Anything Against Futurists?," *Mrs. Worry, New York Evening Mail*, 24 March, 1913.
- Fig. 118.** Frank King, "After the Cubist Food Exhibit," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 April, 1913.
- Fig. 119.** George Herriman, "If Cubists Don't Come From There, Where Do They Come From," *The Dingbat Family, New York Evening Journal*, 23 Dec., 1914.
- Fig. 120.** L. M. Glakings, "With the Cubists and Futurists," *Puck*, 19 March, 1913, p. 6.
- Fig. 121.** Harry Grant Dart, "Beautiful New York Made Possible by the New Art," *Life*, 20 March, 1913.
- Fig. 122.** Comparison of Harry Dart's drawing to original exhibited in 1913 Armory Show.
- Fig. 123.** Rea Irvin, "Cubist Artist: Ah, If You Could Only See Things as I Do, My Dear!," *Life*, 20 March, 1913.
- Fig. 124.** Power O'Malley, "'The Light that Lies in Woman's Eyes' As the Futurist sees it," *Life* 27 March 1913.
- Fig. 125.** Art Young, "How to Judge a Picture According to Modern Criticism," *Life*, 3 April 1913.
- Fig. 126.** M.A. Stocking, "Art: Past, Present, Future," *Life*, 24 April, 1913.
- Fig. 127.** George Carlson, "Suggestion to Futurists: Why Not Paint Four Pictures on One Canvas?" *Life*, 8 May 1913.
- Fig. 128.** Will Allen, "A Futurist Home Run," *Life*, 10 July, 1913, p. 64.
- Fig. 129.** John Sloan, "A Slight Attack of Third Dementia Brought on by Excessive Study of the Much-talked of Cubist Pictures in the International Exhibition at New York," *The Masses*, Vol. 4:7, April 1913.
- Fig. 130.** Mary Mills Lyall and Earl Harvey Lyall, *The Cubies' ABC*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913.
- Fig. 131.** Harvey Peake, "Why Not Let the Cubists and Futurists Design the Spring Fashions?," *New York World*, 16 March, 1913.
- Fig. 132.** J.F. Griswold, "A Spring Day on Fifth Avenue," *New York Evening Sun*, 19 March, 1913, p. 15.
- Fig. 133.** Advertisement, *Chicago Tribune*, 24 March, 1913.
- Fig. 134.** *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 135.** Derry Noyes, "Armory Show 1913," *Celebrate The Century 1910s*, Stamp, United States Postal Service, 1998.
- Fig. 136.** Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 20 July, 1993.
- Fig. 137.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 6 Jan., 2000.
- Fig. 138.** Comparison of art work of George Herriman and Joan Miró.
- Fig. 139.** Ellison Hoover, "The American Museum of Art," *Life (The Comic Strip Number)*, 13 Feb. 1927.

- Fig. 140.** Photographs of the exhibition *Bande Dessinée et Figuration Narrative* (Comic Strips and Narrative Figuration), Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1967. Top image reported in *The Cartoonist*, from Munson (2016).
- Fig. 141.** Photographs of the exhibition *The Comic Art Show*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1983. From Munson (2012).
- Fig. 142.** Roy Lichtenstein, *Look Mickey*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 122 x 175 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
- Fig. 143.** Jean-Michel Basquiat, *A Panel of Experts*, 1982. Acrylic and oil pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 152.5 x 152 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.
- Fig. 144.** Mali Olatunji, Installation photographs for the exhibition *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*, Museum of Modern Art, 7 Oct., 1990–15 Jan., 1991.
- Fig. 145.** Art Spiegelman, “High Art Lowdown.” From *Artforum*, December 1990.
- Fig. 146.** Detail of above.
- Fig. 147.** *Masters of American Comics*, Hammer Museum, 20 Nov., 2005- 12 March, 2006.
- Fig. 148.** Chris Ware, Detail of back cover to *Uninked: Paintings, Sculpture and Graphic Works By Five Cartoonists*, Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2007.
- Fig. 149.** Installation views of *Comic Abstraction: Image-Making, Image-Breaking*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 4 March – 11 June, 2007.
- Fig. 150.** Rivanne Neuenschwander, First two pages from *Zé Carioca no. 4, A Volta de Zé Carioca*, 2004. Synthetic polymer paint on comic book pages, each 15.9 x 10.2 cm.
- Fig. 151.** Installation views of *VRAOUM! An Exhibition of Comic Strips and Contemporary Art*, Maison Rouge, Paris, 28 May, 27 Sept., 2009.
- Fig. 152.** Sammy Engramer, *Untitled*, 2005. Néon, plexiglas, acrylic, 120 x 140 cm.
- Fig. 153.** Sammy Engramer, *Speech Bubbles*, 2005. Digital prints on paper, each 19 x 25 cm.
- Fig. 154.** Gilles Barbier, *L'hospice*, 2002, private collection.
- Fig. 155.** David Arky and John Barrett, Cover photograph, Sean Kelly, ed., *National Lampoon Presents The Very Large Book of Comical Funnies*, 1975.
- Fig. 156.** Eldon Redmi, *The New Yorker*, 17 Sept., 1990.
- Fig. 157.** Ruben Bolling (Ken Fisher), from *Tom the Dancing Bug*, 23 Jan., 2010.
- Fig. 158.** Harry Bliss, 19 July, 2012.
- Fig. 159.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 23 Aug., 2013.
- Fig. 160.** Exhibition catalog for the La Luz de Jesus Gallery show *Pop Sequentialism: Great Comic Book Art of the Modern Age* (May, 2011), and exhibition poster for the Gallery 30 South show *Pop Sequentialism: The Art of Comics* (July, 2018).
- Fig. 161.** Wizardskull, 72, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 30.48 x 30.48 cm.
- Fig. 162.** Teresa Watson, *Yummy Cowgirl*, 2019. Gouache with acrylic spray varnish, 20.32 X 20.32 cm.
- Fig. 163.** Brian and Greg Walker and Chance Browne, *Hi and Lois*, 27 Aug., 1989.
- Fig. 164.** Will Eisner, Original work of art created for the opening of the International Museum of Cartoon Art at Boca Raton, March 1996. Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, Ohio State University.
- Fig. 165.** Excerpts from David Prudhomme, *La Travsée du Louvre*, 2012.
- Fig. 166.** Comics published by the Museo del Prado. Top left: Max (Francesc Capdevila Gisbert), *El Tríptico de los Encantados (Una pantomima bosquiana)*, 2016; Top right: Antonio Altarriba and Keko (José Antonio Godoy Cazorla), *El Perdón y la Furia*, 2017; Bottom left: Montesol (Francisco Javier Ballester Guillén), *Idilio. Apuntes de Fortuny*, 2017; Bottom right: Vincent, “Sento” Llobell Bisba, *Historietas del Museo del Prado*, 2019.
- Fig. 167.** Installation photograph of *Botticelli: Heroines + Heroes*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 14 Feb. - 19 May, 2019.
- Fig. 168.** Karl Stevens, *Lucretia*, 2018, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.
- Fig. 169.** Installation photograph and detail of Karl Stevens, *Botticelli*, 2018, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.
- Fig. 170.** Nina Paley, *Nina’s Adventures*, 15 July, 2008.
- Fig. 171.** Anatol Kovarsky, “Modern Art Museum,” *The New Yorker*, 19 Oct., 1957.
- Fig. 172.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 9 Jan., 2003.
- Fig. 173.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 5 Oct., 2014.
- Fig. 174.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*.
- Fig. 175.** Isabella Bannerman, *Six Chix*, 18 Aug., 2018.

- Fig. 176. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 25 Jan., 2015.
- Fig. 177. James Stevenson, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 178. Lee Lorenz, *The New Yorker*, 16 Jan., 2012.
- Fig. 179. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 28 April, 2013.
- Fig. 180. Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, 21 March, 1950.
- Fig. 181. Brian and Ron Boychuk, *Chuckle Bros*, 11 Nov., 2009.
- Fig. 182. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 5 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 183. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 27 March, 2013.
- Fig. 184. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 11 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 185. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 18 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 186. Alex Gregory, *The New Yorker*, 20 April, 2015.
- Fig. 187. Jim Unger, *Herman*, 28 April, 2012.
- Fig. 188. Grant Snider, *Incidental Comics*, 3 July, 2012.
- Fig. 189. Liana Finck, *The New Yorker*, 19 Nov., 2018.
- Fig. 190. Daniel Beyer, *Long Story Short*, 24 Jan., 2019.
- Fig. 191. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 13 April, 2004.
- Fig. 192. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 19 July, 2015.
- Fig. 193. Harry Bliss, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 15 March, 1999.
- Fig. 194. John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 30 July, 2013.
- Fig. 195. Mark Tatulli, *Liō*, 1 April, 2016.
- Fig. 196. Gary Larson and John McPherson Etch-A-Sketch cartoons.
- Fig. 197. Samson (Samuli Lintula), *Dark Side of the Horse*, 6 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 198. Weingartens & Clark, *Barney and Clyde*, 9 June, 2013.
- Fig. 199. Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, 2008.
- Fig. 200. Art Young, "Fagged Out. A Sketch of the French Section of Fine Arts at the World's Fair," *The Inter Ocean*, 31 May, 1893.
- Fig. 201. Isabella Bannerman, *Six Chix*, 20 May, 2013.
- Fig. 202. Lee Lorenz, *The New Yorker*, 30 Nov., 1968.
- Fig. 203. Todd Clark, *Lola*, 15 Oct., 2007.
- Fig. 204. Dan Thompson, *Brevity*, 9 Sept., 2010.
- Fig. 205. Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 15 Nov., 1952.
- Fig. 206. Harry Bliss, 26 April, 2012.
- Fig. 207. Willey Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 208. Kaamran Hafeez, *Barron's*, 17 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 209. Harry Bliss, 31 March, 2015.
- Fig. 210. Stephen Pastis, *Pearls Before Swine*, 8 Feb., 2007.
- Fig. 211. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 19 Oct., 2009.
- Fig. 212. Harry Bliss, 2 July, 2018.
- Fig. 213. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 11 Nov., 2011.
- Fig. 214. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 12 April, 2015.
- Fig. 215. Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*, 29 Feb., 2016.
- Fig. 216. Bruce McCall, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 13 Jan., 2020.
- Fig. 217. George Herriman, *Krazy Kat and Ignatz*, *New York American*, 17 Nov., 1911.
- Fig. 218. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Duplex*, 14 July, 2000.
- Fig. 219. Nina Paley and Stephen Hersh, *The Hots*, 2003.
- Fig. 220. Jef Mallett, *Frazz*, 12 June, 2004.
- Fig. 221. Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, 13 May, 1950.
- Fig. 222. Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, 23 June, 1971.
- Fig. 223. Mike Twohy, *The New Yorker*, 9 July, 2001.
- Fig. 224. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 10 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 225. David Sipress, *The New Yorker*, 23 Sept., 2019.
- Fig. 226. Lynda Barry, *The Near-Sighted Monkey*, May, 2016. Web.
- Fig. 227. Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*.
- Fig. 228. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 23 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 229. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 7 May, 1971.
- Fig. 230. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 22 July, 1975.
- Fig. 231. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 25 - 27 Jan., 1999.
- Fig. 232. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 11 April, 2015.

- Fig. 233.** Kevin Fagan, *Drabble*, 18 March, 2005.
- Fig. 234.** Weingartens & Clark, *Barney and Clyde*, 9 April, 2011.
- Fig. 235.** Brian and Greg Walker, *Hi and Lois*, 16 Oct., 2011.
- Fig. 236.** Bil Keane, *The Family Circus*, 11 June, 1975.
- Fig. 237.** Rob Harrell, *Adam@Home*, 24 March, 2010.
- Fig. 238.** Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 17 May, 1987.
- Fig. 239.** Pat Brady and Don Wimmer, *Rose is Rose*, 27 Oct., 2013.
- Fig. 240.** Detail from Winsor McCay, *Midsummer Day Dreams*, 11 Nov., 1911 (cf. **Fig. 283**).
- Fig. 241.** Detail of Chris Ware, back cover to *Uninked: Paintings, Sculpture and Graphic Works By Five Cartoonists*, Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2007 (cf. **Fig. 148**).
- Fig. 242.** Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Dreamland*, 2 May, 1909.
- Fig. 243.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 26 Nov., 1916.
- Fig. 244.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 24 May, 1936.
- Fig. 245.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*. 11 June, 1939.
- Fig. 246.** Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*, 1 Nov., 1961.
- Fig. 247.** Richard Thompson, *Cul de Sac*, 25 Nov., 2007 (23 Sept., 2012).
- Fig. 248.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 23 April, 1922.
- Fig. 249.** Bud Fisher (Al Smith), *Mutt and Jeff*, 1952.
- Fig. 250.** Winsor McCay, *Little Sammy Sneeze*, 24 Sept., 1905.
- Fig. 251.** Detail from Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo in Dreamland*, 8 Nov., 1908.
- Fig. 252.** Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, 7 May, 1949.
- Fig. 253.** Olivia Jaimes, *Nancy*, 20 Jan. 2019.
- Fig. 254.** Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, 1 Jan., 1949.
- Fig. 255.** Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*, 16 Oct., 1961.
- Fig. 256.** Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 5 Dec., 1987.
- Fig. 257.** Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*, 30 April, 1962.
- Fig. 258.** Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 22 Nov., 1999.
- Fig. 259.** Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*, 31 Oct., 1961.
- Fig. 260.** Hank Ketcham, *Dennis the Menace*, 22 Dec., 1988.
- Fig. 261.** Marcus Hamilton, *Dennis the Menace*, 28 July, 2011.
- Fig. 262.** Lynn Johnston (of *For Better or Worse*), *Mother Goose and Grimm* (Mike Peters), 1 April, 1997.
- Fig. 263.** Mike Peters (of *Mother Goose and Grimm*), *For Better or Worse* (Lynn Johnston), 1 April, 1997.
- Fig. 264.** Bill Keene (of *The Family Circus*), *Dilbert* (Scott Adams), 1 April, 1997.
- Fig. 265.** Scott Adams (of *Dilbert*), *The Family Circus* (Bill Keene), 1 April, 1997.
- Fig. 266.** Bill Keene, *The Family Circus*, 2 April, 1997.
- Fig. 267.** Alex Norris *et alia*, April Fools Day 2016 webcomics (after Lee, 2016).
- Fig. 268.** "Bill Watterson" (Berkeley Breathed), "Calvin and Hobbes 2016," 1 April, 2016.
- Fig. 269.** "Bill Watterson" and Berkeley Breathed, *Calvin County*, 1 April, 2018.
- Fig. 270.** Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 3 Feb., 1987.
- Fig. 271.** Patrick McDonnell, *Mutts*, 1994.
- Fig. 272.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 28 Jan., 1999.
- Fig. 273.** Patrick O'Donnell, San Diego Comic Con, 2015.
- Fig. 274.** Patrick O'Donnell, #DrawSnoopy. Poster. 2015.
- Fig. 275.** Stephan Pastis, "Alice Traps the Family Circus Kids," *Team Cul de Sac*, 2012.
- Fig. 276.** Patrick O'Donnell. Original artwork created for the Team Cul de Sac auction held 8-10 June, 2012.
- Fig. 277.** Robert Sikoryak. Original artwork created for the Team Cul de Sac auction held on 8 - 10 June, 2012.
- Fig. 278.** Pablo Picasso, *Three Musicians*. Oil on canvas, 201 x 223 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Fig. 279.** Jimmy Johnson, *Arlo and Janis*, 15 Feb., 2009.
- Fig. 280.** Patrick O'Donnell. Selection of *Mutts* Sunday title-page homages to art and their artistic inspirations (<https://mutts.com/title-panel-inspiration/>).
- Fig. 281.** Mid-20th-century Illustrated advertisements for correspondence cartoon courses.
- Fig. 282.** Dan A. Runyan, *Cartoonist Exchange Laugh Finder*, 1937.
- Fig. 283.** Winsor McCay, *Midsummer Day Dreams*, 11 Nov., 1911.

- Fig. 284.** Thomas E. Powers, "Krazy Kat Herriman Loves his Kittens," 1922.
- Fig. 285.** Mark Tatulli, *Liō*, 4 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 286.** Selection of Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*.
- Fig. 287.** Stephan Pastis, *Pearls Before Swine*, 2–7 June, 2014.
- Fig. 288.** Stephan Pastis, "The Sad, Lonely Journey of a 'Pearls' Comic Strip," *Pearls Before Swine*, 11 July, 2004.
- Fig. 289.** Midnight Strike, "No. 1209. The Sad, Lonely Journey of a Garfield Comic Strip," *Square Root of Minus Garfield*, 9 Sept., 2012.
- Fig. 290.** Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas, *Sam's Strip*, 20 Dec., 1961.
- Fig. 291.** Scott Adams, *Dilbert*, 18–19 May, 1998.
- Fig. 292.** Selection of Stephan Pastis, *Pearls Before Swine*, 7–12 July, 2002.
- Fig. 293.** John Bell, *The Bell Curve Cartoons*.
- Fig. 294.** John Deering, 16 June, 2011.
- Fig. 295.** Nicholas Gurewitch, "Rubbed," *The Perry Bible Fellowship*, 2020. Web.
- Fig. 296.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 8 Dec., 2011.
- Fig. 297.** Jim Benton, 26 March, 2012.
- Fig. 298.** LOL Zombie, 19 May, 2010.
- Fig. 299.** Hillary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 9 Feb., 2014.
- Fig. 300.** Dana Fradon, *The New Yorker*, 1 May, 1948.
- Fig. 301.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 2 April, 2017.
- Fig. 302.** Lou Brooks, *The Museum of Forgotten Art Supplies*. 2019. Web.
- Fig. 303.** Garrett Price, "All right then, what is your conception of the Awakening of Intelligence through Literature and Music?" *The New Yorker*, 1934.
- Fig. 304.** Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe*, 1934. Mural, 160 x 43 cm. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.
- Fig. 305.** Maurice Ketten, "Why Not?," *The New York Evening World*, 27 April, 1916.
- Fig. 306.** Detail of **Fig. 243**, George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 26 Nov., 1916.
- Fig. 307.** Two cartoons by Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 308.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 3 May, 1952.
- Fig. 309.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 8 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 310.** Charles Saxon, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 5 Aug., 1961.
- Fig. 311.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 25 Oct., 1999.
- Fig. 312.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 2 May, 2014.
- Fig. 313.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 10 July, 2013.
- Fig. 314.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 5 April, 2017.
- Fig. 315.** Lee Lorenz, *The New Yorker*, 26 Jan., 1987.
- Fig. 316.** Todd Clark, *Lola*, 25 July, 2010.
- Fig. 317.** Garrett Price, *The New Yorker*, 2 July, 1951.
- Fig. 318.** Robert J. Day, *The New Yorker*, 5 Jan., 1952.
- Fig. 319.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 5 April, 2014.
- Fig. 320.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 27 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 321.** Harry Bliss, 18 Aug., 2018.
- Fig. 322.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 7 June, 2015.
- Fig. 323.** Donald "Duck" Edwing, *Tribune Toon*, 22 Oct., 1995.
- Fig. 324.** Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 325.** Chip Dunham, *Overboard*, 30 Oct., 2002.
- Fig. 326.** Isabella Bannerman, *Six Chix*, 27 May, 2018.
- Fig. 327.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 7 July, 2003.
- Fig. 328.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 11 March, 2012.
- Fig. 329.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 1 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 330.** Grant Snider, *Incidental Comics*, 13 Oct., 2011.
- Fig. 331.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 5 March, 2016.
- Fig. 332.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 6 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 333.** Jeff Berry, 8 Nov., 2011.
- Fig. 334.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 12 May, 2019.
- Fig. 335.** Russell Myers, *Broom-Hilda*, 6 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 336.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 June, 2017.
- Fig. 337.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 10 April, 2016.

- Fig. 348. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 22 April, 2012.
- Fig. 339. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 25 Aug., 2013.
- Fig. 340. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 12 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 341. Jim Davis, *Garfield*, May 3, 2011.
- Fig. 342. Two Harry Bliss cartoons.
- Fig. 343. Two cartoons by Bernard “Hap” Kliban.
- Fig. 344. Mike Twohy, *The New Yorker*, 11 Aug., 2014.
- Fig. 345. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 16 March, 2013.
- Fig. 346. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 1 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 347. Harry Bliss, 13 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 348. Lv Guo-hong, *Self-portrait*, 1 Dec., 2011.
- Fig. 349. Jim Tweedy, *Self Portrait, Tiger*, 7 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 350. Norman Rockwell, *Triple Self-Portrait*, 1960. Oil on canvas, 113 x 88 cm. Cover illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, 13 Feb., 1960. Norman Rockwell Museum.
- Fig. 351. Helen E. Hokinson, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 29 May 1937.
- Fig. 352. Dean Young & John Marshall, *Blondie*, 21 March, 2011.
- Fig. 353. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 13 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 354. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 24 Jan., 2018.
- Fig. 355. Mike Lester, *Mike du Jour*, 14 Jan., 2018.
- Fig. 356. Harry Bliss.
- Fig. 357. Lalo Alcaraz, *La Cucaracha*, 6 May, 2005.
- Fig. 358. Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 21 June, 1952.
- Fig. 359. Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 4 June, 1985 (republished 29 Sept., 2015).
- Fig. 360. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 3 March, 2013.
- Fig. 361. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 21 Aug., 2016.
- Fig. 362. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 13 July, 1998.
- Fig. 363. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*. 2 Nov., 2011.
- Fig. 364. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 12 Dec., 2012.
- Fig. 365. Jan Eliot, *Stone Soup*, 4, 6–7 Dec., 2001.
- Fig. 366. Robb Armstrong, *Jump Start*, 6–7, 10–11, 13 Jan., 2003.
- Fig. 367. Bill Schoor, *The Grizzwells*, 13 March, 2017.
- Fig. 368. Isabella Bannerman, *Six Chix*, 20 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 369. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 21 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 370. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 3 April, 2016.
- Fig. 371. Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 372. William O’Brian, *The New Yorker*, 19 Aug., 1967.
- Fig. 373. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 374. Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 3 June, 2011.
- Fig. 375. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 20 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 376. Brian Crane, *Pickles*, 2012.
- Fig. 377. Brian Crane, *Pickles*, 16 March, 2014.
- Fig. 378. Brian Crane, *Pickles*, 4 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 379. Brian Crane, *Pickles*, 8 April, 2019.
- Fig. 380. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 2 March, 2013.
- Fig. 381. Bill Amend, *FoxTrot*, 22 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 382. Brant Parker and Jonny Hart, *The Wizard of Id*, 10 April, 2015.
- Fig. 383. Brian Crane, *Pickles*, 20–21 March, 2012.
- Fig. 384. Paul Jon Boscacci, *Fort Knox*, 8 April, 2013.
- Fig. 385. Jerry Scoot and Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 8 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 386. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 21 Feb., 2011.
- Fig. 387. Darby Conley, *Get Fuzzy*, 14 July, 2008.
- Fig. 388. Hank Ketcham (Ron Ferdinand), *Dennis the Menace*, 3 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 389. Bill Amend, *FoxTrot*, 10 Jan., 2016.
- Fig. 390. Chad Carpenter, *Tundra Comics*, 11 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 391. Richard Thompson, *Richard’s Poor Almanac*, reprinted 11 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 392. Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 29 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 393. Jimmy Johnson, *Arlo and Janis*, 5 April, 2015.
- Fig. 394. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 3 June, 2002.

- Fig. 395a. Dan Piraro, 1985.
- Fig. 395b. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 15 March, 2015.
- Fig. 396. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 March, 2015.
- Fig. 397. Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, reprinted 11 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 398. Front cover of Marjorie Henderson Buell, *Little Lulu Has an Art Show*, Atlanta: Whitman Publishing Co., 1964.
- Fig. 399. Guy and Brad Gilchrist, *Nancy*, 22 April, 1996.
- Fig. 400. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 9 May, 1959.
- Fig. 401. Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 15 July, 1995.
- Fig. 402. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 16 July, 1997.
- Fig. 403. Chris Cassatt, Gary Brookins, and Susie MacNelly, *Jeff MacNelly's Shoe*, 12 Feb., 2012.
- Fig. 404. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 19 Oct., 2009.
- Fig. 405. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 14 Aug., 2006.
- Fig. 406. Harry Bliss, 27 March, 2012.
- Fig. 407. Guy Gilchrist, *Nancy*, 11 Jan. 2006.
- Fig. 408. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 28 Aug., 2018.
- Fig. 409. Jason Love and Vladimir Stankovski, *Snapshots*.
- Fig. 410. Lee Lorenz, *The New Yorker*, 5 Jan., 1987.
- Fig. 411. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 2 Sept., 1990.
- Fig. 412. Brian Basset, *Red and Rover*, 21 May, 2013.
- Fig. 413. Robb Armstrong, *Jump Start*, 21 Aug., 2016.
- Fig. 414. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 8 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 415. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 2015.
- Fig. 416. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 7 Feb., 2016.
- Fig. 417. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 17 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 418. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 3 May., 2015.
- Fig. 419. Charles Schulz, *Peanuts Classics*, 6 Jan., 2011 (1995).
- Fig. 420. Richard Thompson, *Cul de Sac*, 8 March, 2009.
- Fig. 421. Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 1 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 422. Harry Bliss, 13 March, 2014.
- Fig. 423. Harry Bliss, 6 July, 2017.
- Fig. 424. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 29 Dec., 2006.
- Fig. 425. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 7 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 426. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 6 May, 1995.
- Fig. 427. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 23, 25 May, 1991.
- Fig. 428. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 2-4 April, 1997.
- Fig. 429. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 4 March, 2016.
- Fig. 430. Grant Snider *Incidental Comics*, 25 March, 2010.
- Fig. 431. Neal Skorpen *Cyclotoon*, 2003.
- Fig. 432. Neal Skorpen *Cyclotoon*, 2007.
- Fig. 433. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 9 Dec., 2012.
- Fig. 434. Two Mark Parisi, "How Artists Are Inspired" *Off the Mark* cartoons.
- Fig. 435. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 25 Nov., 2018.
- Fig. 436. John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 4 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 437. John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 8 June, 2018.
- Fig. 438. Kenneth Mahood, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 7 Jan., 1991.
- Fig. 439. Bob Knox, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 19 July, 1993.
- Fig. 440. Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, 16 May, 2011.
- Fig. 441. Richard Thompson, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 1999 (redrawn in 2008).
- Fig. 442. Richard Thompson, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 2006.
- Fig. 443. Grant Snider, *Incidental Comics*, 1 Oct., 2013.
- Fig. 444. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 15 April, 2012.
- Fig. 445. Isabella Bannerman, *Six Chix*, 16 July, 2018.
- Fig. 446. Peter Duggan, *Artoons*, 9 Feb., 2016.
- Fig. 447. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 27 Nov., 2011.
- Fig. 448. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 5 Oct., 2014.
- Fig. 449. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 16 April, 2017.
- Fig. 450. Jimmy Johnson, *Arlo and Janis*, 10 Aug., 2014.

- Fig. 451.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 28 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 452.** Benjamin Schwartz, *The New Yorker*, 24 June, 2013.
- Fig. 453.** Ros Chast, *The New Yorker*, 4 June, 2014.
- Fig. 454.** Dan Pirraro, *Bizzaro*, 27 Sept. 2017.
- Fig. 455.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 17 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 456.** Benjamin Schwartz, *The New Yorker*, 6 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 457.** Dan Piraro and Andy Cowan, *Bizarro*, 10 Feb., 2011.
- Fig. 458.** Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*, 2017.
- Fig. 459.** Charles Addams, *The New Yorker*, 20 Aug. 1979.
- Fig. 460.** Edward Sorel, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 21 May, 2001.
- Fig. 461.** Harry Bliss, 2014.
- Fig. 462.** J. B. Handelsman, *The New Yorker*, 3 Oct., 1988.
- Fig. 463.** A panel from Dan Piraro, *Bizaro*, 9 Sept., 2012.
- Fig. 464.** Darren Bell, *Candorville*, 21 July, 2004.
- Fig. 465.** Norman Rockwell, *The Connoisseur*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 96 x 80 cm. Cover illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, January 13, 1962. Private Collection.
- Fig. 466.** Photograph of Norman Rockwell painting his model for *The Connoisseur*, 1961. Norman Rockwell Museum.
- Fig. 467.** Harry Bliss, "Paint by Pixel," *The New Yorker*, 30 April, 2007.
- Fig. 468.** Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, 25 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 469.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 27 Jan., 1999 (cf. **Fig. 231**).
- Fig. 470.** Detail from Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 23 Aug., 2013 (cf. **Fig. 159**).
- Fig. 471.** Two panels from Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 21 April, 2013.
- Fig. 472.** Ros Chast, *The New Yorker*, 4 August, 2014.
- Fig. 473.** Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 2 Nov., 1995.
- Fig. 474.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 28 Oct. 1998.
- Fig. 475.** Dan Reynolds, 2009.
- Fig. 476.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 9 June, 2018.
- Fig. 477.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 7 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 478.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 26 Aug., 2017.
- Fig. 479.** Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 13 Sept., 2005.
- Fig. 480.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 13 Nov., 2007.
- Fig. 481.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 31 Jan., 2019.
- Fig. 482.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 31 July, 2016.
- Fig. 483.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 19 Sept., 2008.
- Fig. 484.** Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 30 Jan., 1991.
- Fig. 485.** Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 2 Nov., 2009.
- Fig. 486.** Dan Thompson, *Brevity*, 25 April, 2012.
- Fig. 487.** Dan Thompson, *Brevity*, 20 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 488.** Peter Duggan, *The Guardian*, 25 April., 2012.
- Fig. 489.** Peter Porges, *The New Yorker*, 16 Nov., 1987.
- Fig. 490.** J. B. Handelsman, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 491.** T. Lewis and Michael Fry, *Over the Hedge*, 16 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 492.** Paul Trap, *Thatbaby*, 14 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 493.** Lynn Johnston, *For Better or for Worse*, 26 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 494.** John Zakour and Scott Roberts, *Working Daze*, 7 March, 2009.
- Fig. 495.** Kara Walker, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 27 Aug., 2007.
- Fig. 496.** Harry Bliss, 31 July, 2017.
- Fig. 497.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 20 Feb., 1977.
- Fig. 497.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 19 Dec., 1999.
- Fig. 499.** Tim Rickard, *Brewster Rockit: Space Guy!*, 22 Feb., 2012.
- Fig. 500.** Paul Trap, *Thatbaby*, 18 Aug. 2013.
- Fig. 501.** U.S. Post Office, 1934.
- Fig. 502.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 14 Dec., 1957.
- Fig. 503.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 28 Dec., 2007.
- Fig. 504.** Gary Wise and Lance Aldrich, *Real Life Adventures*, 13 Dec., 2009.
- Fig. 505.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 20 June, 2011.
- Fig. 506.** Edward Sorel, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 13 May, 1996.

- Fig. 507. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 31 July, 2006.
- Fig. 508. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 15 Oct., 2007.
- Fig. 509. Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 1 May, 2013.
- Fig. 510. Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 12 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 511. Scott Hilburn, *Close to Home*, 28 Dec., 2010.
- Fig. 512. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 21 Oct., 2014.
- Fig. 513. Ian Falconer, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 5 June, 2000.
- Fig. 514. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 24 Sept., 2018.
- Fig. 515. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 11 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 516. Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 1986.
- Fig. 517. Jeff Stahler, *Moderately Confused*, 5 Nov., 2004.
- Fig. 518. Marjorie Sarnat, 21 Sept., 2011.
- Fig. 519. Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*.
- Fig. 520. Bob Knox, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 15 July, 1991.
- Fig. 521. L.H. Siggs, *The New Yorker*, 30 Aug., 1952.
- Fig. 522. Bunny Hoest and John Reiner, *The Lockhorns*, 2011.
- Fig. 523. Greg Walker and Mort Walker, *Beetle Bailey*, 10 June, 2012.
- Fig. 524. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 10 June, 2011.
- Fig. 525. Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 526. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 7 Nov., 2006.
- Fig. 527. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 28 Feb., 2006.
- Fig. 528. Bob Mankoff, "Cartoon Desk: Inking and Thinking," *The New Yorker*, 16 June, 2010.
- Fig. 529. Two versions of a Dan Reynolds cartoon, 2012.
- Fig. 530. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 1993. p. 122.
- Fig. 531. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 17 April, 2000.
- Fig. 532. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 25 Sept, 2014.
- Fig. 533. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 19 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 534. Jack Ziegler, *The New Yorker*, 12 Dec., 1994.
- Fig. 535. Harry Bliss, 4 May, 2012.
- Fig. 536. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 19 April, 2018.
- Fig. 537. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 21 June, 2015.
- Fig. 538. Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 26 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 539. Dan Reynolds, 2009.
- Fig. 540. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 11 Nov., 1997.
- Fig. 541. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 14 June, 2016.
- Fig. 542. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 5 May, 2014.
- Fig. 543. Harry Bliss, 18 Nov., 2017.
- Fig. 544. Weingartens & Clark, *Barney and Clyde*. 21 March, 2011.
- Fig. 545. Jim Davis, *Garfield*, 8 Jan., 1998.
- Fig. 546. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 24 March, 2012.
- Fig. 547. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 29 April, 2016.
- Fig. 548. Ben Zaehringer, *Berkeley Mews*, 30 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 549. Harry Bliss, 11 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 550. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 27 Oct., 2009.
- Fig. 551. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 17 April, 2013.
- Fig. 553. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 21 May, 2006.
- Fig. 554. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 9 July, 2017.
- Fig. 555. Doug Savage, *Savage Chickens*, 17 October, 2013.
- Fig. 556. Ruben Bolling (Ken Fisher), *Tom the Dancing Bug*, 2009 (republished 15 Nov., 2012).
- Fig. 557. Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 13 Oct., 2006.
- Fig. 558. Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 26 Nov., 2006.
- Fig. 559. Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 3 Nov., 1993.
- Fig. 560. Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 23 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 561. Bill Griffith, *Zippy*, 25 Dec., 2003.
- Fig. 562. Bill Griffith, "Cartoonist Descending a Staircase," 2003.
- Fig. 563. Henri Matisse, *Dance (I)* and *Dance*.
- Fig. 564. Roy Lichtenstein, *Artist Studio "The Dance"*, 1974. Oil on canvas, 2.44 X 3.26 m. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

- Fig. 565.** Roy Lichtenstein, *Tintin Reading*, 1994. Lithograph.
- Fig. 566.** Henri Matisse, *The Dessert: Harmony in Red*, 1908. Oil on canvas, 1.8 X 2.2 m. Hermitage Museum.
- Fig. 567.** Larry Rivers, *Déjà vu and the RedRoom: Double Portrait of Matisse*, 1996.
- Fig. 568.** Christina Malman, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 2 May, 1942.
- Fig. 569.** Andrea Arroyo, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 26 Oct., 1992.
- Fig. 570.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 6 Feb., 1995.
- Fig. 571.** TubeyToons, 13 March, 2015.
- Fig. 572.** Brian and Ron Boychuk, *Chuckle Bros*, 8 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 573.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 4 April, 1997.
- Fig. 574.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 30 July, 2016.
- Fig. 575.** Jim Davis, *Garfield*, 3 March, 1983.
- Fig. 576.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 1 March., 2007.
- Fig. 577.** Mark Tatulli, *Liō*, 26 Aug., 2009.
- Fig. 578.** Quino (Joaquín Salvador Lavado Tejón).
- Fig. 579.** Pablo Picasso, *Sueño y mentira de Franco (The Dream and Lie of Picasso)*, 1937. Etching and aquatint on paper, 31.2 x 40.0 cm. Sheet 1; Series of 150.
- Fig. 580.** Marc Chagall, *The Village and I*, 1911. Oil on canvas, 192 X 151 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Fig. 581.** Bob Knox, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 8 Feb., 1993.
- Fig. 582.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 24 Dec., 2017.
- Fig. 583.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 May, 1997.
- Fig. 584.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 24 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 585.** Robert Leighton, *The New Yorker*, 4 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 586.** Mark Tatulli, *Liō*, 26 July., 2006.
- Fig. 587.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 21 August, 2016.
- Fig. 588.** M.C. Escher, *Drawing Hands*, 1948. Lithograph, 28.2 x 32.2 cm.
- Fig. 589.** Patrick O'Donnell, *Mutts*, 18 Oct., 1998.
- Fig. 590.** Chis Cater, 24 July, 2013.
- Fig. 591.** Harry Bliss, 28 May, 2019.
- Fig. 592.** Carl Rose, *The New Yorker*, 1937.
- Fig. 593.** Bill Griffith, *Zippy*. 21 July, 2013.
- Fig. 594.** Grant Snider, "My Neighbor Magritte," *Medium.com*, 3 Sept., 2013. Web.
- Fig. 595.** Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 1993. pp. 24–25.
- Fig. 596.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 1997.
- Fig. 597.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 19 Feb., 2011.
- Fig. 598.** Harry Bliss, 27 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 599.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 1 Dec., 2010.
- Fig. 600.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 17 Nov., 2005.
- Fig. 601.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 24 Aug. 2012.
- Fig. 602.** Wayne Honath, *Bizarro*, 16 May, 2018.
- Fig. 603.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 4 April, 2016.
- Fig. 604.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 4 April, 2016.
- Fig. 605.** Richard Taylor, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 9 Jan., 1937.
- Fig. 606.** Sam Cobeau, *The New Yorker*, 1947.
- Fig. 607.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 21 Feb., 2014.
- Fig. 608.** Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 18 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 609.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 7 July, 1996.
- Fig. 610.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 1 Sept., 2012.
- Fig. 611.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 24 July, 2010.
- Fig. 612.** Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 7 Jan., 2003.
- Fig. 613.** Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 9 June, 2010.
- Fig. 614.** John Deering, *Strange Brew*, 20 July, 2017.
- Fig. 615.** Maria Scrivan, *Half Full*, 25 April, 2019.
- Fig. 616.** Dan Piraro and Wayne ("Wayno") Honath, *Bizarro*, 15 Jan., 2012.
- Fig. 617.** Harry Bliss, 1 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 618.** Wayne Honath, *WaynoVision*, 16 Feb., 2015.

- Fig. 619.** Jesús Ángel González López, “Metafiction in American Comic Strips,” Slide 11, *slideshare.net*, 5 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 620.** Jef Mallett, *Frazz*, 23 Sept., 2003.
- Fig. 621.** James Stevenson, *The New Yorker*, 20 Oct., 1980.
- Fig. 622.** Bill Griffith, *Zippy*, 3 Nov., 1989.
- Fig. 623.** Three Anatol Kovarsky cartoons from *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 624.** Arthur Getz, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 7 Oct., 1972.
- Fig. 625.** Jackson Pollock, *Untitled* ca. 1945. Crayon, colored pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper, 51.5 x 63.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Fig. 626.** Rob Harrell, *Adam@Home*, 8 May, 2001.
- Fig. 627.** Harry Bliss, 29 Jan., 2013.
- Fig. 628.** Wayne Honath, *WaynoVision*, 6 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 629.** Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 15 Dec., 2010.
- Fig. 630.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 15 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 631.** Harry Bliss, 29 Sept., 2018.
- Fig. 632.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 27 April, 2014.
- Fig. 633.** Steve Breen, *Grand Avenue*, 20 July, 1999.
- Fig. 634.** Mark Tatulli, *Heart of the City*, 2 Feb., 2003.
- Fig. 635.** Brian Basset, *Red and Rover*, 12 March, 2008.
- Fig. 636.** Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 2012.
- Fig. 637.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 22 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 638.** John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 21 May, 2019.
- Fig. 639.** Hector D. Cantú and Carlos Castellanos, *Baldo*, 3 Sept., 2006.
- Fig. 640.** James Stevenson, *The New Yorker*, 29 Aug., 1964.
- Fig. 641.** Pat Oliphant, 11 August, 1986.
- Fig. 642.** Paul Trap *Thatababy*, 15 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 643.** Harry Bliss, 19 Aug., 2019.
- Fig. 644.** Selection of Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 1964—1968.
- Fig. 645.** Charles Schulz, *Peanuts*, 29 Jan., 1999.
- Fig. 646.** Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 5 July, 1994.
- Fig. 647.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 18 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 648.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 May, 2014.
- Fig. 649.** Grant Snider, *Incidental Comics*, 13 June, 2012.
- Fig. 650.** Grant Snider, *Incidental Comics*, 13 Jan., 2014 (originally posted on *medium.com*, 7 Oct., 2013).
- Fig. 651.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 26 Sept., 1959.
- Fig. 652.** Disney commemorative pins, 2004, 2018.
- Fig. 653.** Tony Fernandez, “Inspired By” Collection.
- Fig. 654.** Two stills from Matt Groening, “The Crepes of Wrath,” *The Simpsons*, Season 1, Episode 11, 15 April, 1990.
- Fig. 655.** Alina Urusov, Cover art for *Ghost Rider*, #34, June, 2009.
- Fig. 656.** Laura Martin, Cover art for *Uncanny X-Men*, #508, June, 2009.
- Fig. 657.** Juan Doe, Cover art for *Moon Knight*, #29, June, 2009.
- Fig. 658.** Jason Chan, Cover art for *Exiles*, #1, June, 2009.
- Fig. 659.** Paolo Rivera, Cover art for *The Amazing Spider-Man*, #592, June, 2009.
- Fig. 660.** Morry Hollowell, Cover art for *Wolverine: Legacy*, #223, June, 2009.
- Fig. 661.** Juan Doe and Russ Heath, Cover art for *Daredevil*, #118, June, 2009.
- Fig. 662.** Skottie Young, Cover art for *Captain Britain and M113*, #12, June, 2009.
- Fig. 663.** Chris Eliopoulos, Cover art for *Wolverine: First Class*, #14, June, 2009.
- Fig. 664.** Christian Nauck, Cover art for *Age of Apocalypse*, No. 2, April, 2012.
- Fig. 665.** Greg Horn, Cover art for *Invincible Iron Man*, No. 515, April, 2012.
- Fig. 666.** Julian Totino Tedesco, Cover art for *Future Foundation*, No. 17, April, 2012.
- Fig. 667.** Richard Isanove, Cover art for *Captain America*, No. 10, April, 2012.
- Fig. 668.** Greg Horn, Cover art for *Uncanny X Men*, No. 11, April, 2012.
- Fig. 669.** Gabriele Dell’Otto, Cover art for *Avengers*, No. 25, April, 2012.
- Fig. 670.** Gerald Parel, Cover art for *Uncanny X Force*, No. 24, April, 2012.
- Fig. 671.** Julian Totino Tedesco, Cover art for *Secret Avengers*, No. 26, April, 2012.
- Fig. 672.** Alex Maleev, Cover art for *Wolverine & the X-Men*, No. 9, April, 2012.

- Fig. 673.** Joe Quinones, Cover art for *The Mighty Thor*, No. 13, April, 2012.
- Fig. 674.** Mike del Mundo, Cover art for *Amazing Spiderman*, No. 683, April, 2012.
- Fig. 675.** Michael Kaluta, Cover art for *Fantastic Four*, No. 605. April, 2012.
- Fig. 676.** Steffi Schutzee, Cover art for *Daredevil*, No. 11, April, 2012.
- Fig. 677.** M. T. "Penny" Ross, "Mamma's Angel Child has a Cubist Nightmare in the Studio of Monsieur Paul Vincent Cezanne Van Gogen Ganguin," *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 1916.
- Fig. 678.** Rube Goldberg, *Cosmopolitan*, 1928.
- Fig. 679.** Detail of Thomas E. Powers, "Art at the Armory by Powers, Futurist," *New York American*, 22 Feb., 1913 (**Fig. 98**).
- Fig. 680.** Cliff Sterrett, *Polly and Her Pals*, 26 Sept., 1929.
- Fig. 681.** Ernie Bushmiller, *Nancy*, from Groensteen (2017).
- Fig. 682.** Cliff Sterrett, *Polly and Her Pals*, 31 March, 1936.
- Fig. 683.** Richard Taylor, Frontispiece from Taylor (1947).
- Fig. 684.** Frank King, *Gasoline Alley*, 2 Nov., 1930.
- Fig. 685.** Constantin Alajalov, *Vanity Fair*, March, 1938.
- Fig. 686.** Constantin Alajalov, *New Yorker*, 27 Sept., 1941.
- Fig. 687.** Ad Reinhardt, "How to Look at a Cubist Painting," *PM* 1946.
- Fig. 688.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 12 Jan., 1952.
- Fig. 689.** Chon Day, *The New Yorker*, 8 March, 1952.
- Fig. 690.** Garrett Price, *The New Yorker*, 22 March, 1952.
- Fig. 691.** Charles E. Martin, *The New Yorker*, 9 Aug., 1952.
- Fig. 692.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 18 Oct., 1952.
- Fig. 693.** Saul Steinberg, *The New Yorker*, 1 Nov., 1952.
- Fig. 694.** Robert Krauss, *The New Yorker*, 27 Dec., 1952.
- Fig. 695.** Ollie Harrington, *Bootsie, Pittsburgh Currier*, 17 Oct., 1959.
- Fig. 696.** Jim Berry, *Berry's World* 1974.
- Fig. 697.** Harry Bliss, 22 June, 2011.
- Fig. 698.** John Ruge, "I know what he's trying to say, - he's trying to say that he can't paint worth a damn!" *Playboy*, April, 1963.
- Fig. 699.** Abel Faivre, "At an Exhibition of 'Cubist' or 'Futurist' Pictures," *The Century*, Vol. 85:6, April, 1913, p. 960.
- Fig. 700.** Wiley Miller, 1981.
- Fig. 701.** Ellison Hoover, "At the Museum," 1940. Lithograph, 25 x 36 cm.
- Fig. 702.** Gary Brookins & Susie MacNelly, Jeff MacNelly's Shoe, 5 April, 2015.
- Fig. 703.** Jeff Stahler, *Moderately Confused*, 10 March, 2018.
- Fig. 704.** Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 2 Dec., 2010
- Fig. 705.** Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 28 Sept., 2018.
- Fig. 706.** P. C. Vey, *Narrative Magazine*, 2018.
- Fig. 707.** P. C. Vey, *Barron's*, 2019.
- Fig. 708.** Pat Byrnes, *Barron's*, 5 Dec. 2018.
- Fig. 709.** Selection of Bunny Hoest and John Reiner, *The Lockhorns*, 2011–2017.
- Fig. 710.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 19 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 711.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 10 Oct., 2016.
- Fig. 712.** Barbara Shermund, "Of course it's a woman. They don't do landscapes in marble," *The New Yorker*, 29 Oct., 1939.
- Fig. 713.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 1 March, 1947.
- Fig. 714.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 1955.
- Fig. 715.** Charles E. Martin, Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 15 Jan. 1955.
- Fig. 716.** Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 18 April, 1989.
- Fig. 717.** Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 30 April, 1990.
- Fig. 718.** Ron Ferdinand and Scott Ketcham, *Dennis the Menace*, 6 March, 2016.
- Fig. 719.** Bill Amend, *Foxtrot*, 12 June, 2011.
- Fig. 720.** Lincoln Peirce, *Big Nate*, 30 Oct., 2016.
- Fig. 721.** Berkeley Breathed, *Bloom County*, 8 April, 1985.
- Fig. 722.** Garry Trudeau, *Doonesbury*, 1985.
- Fig. 723.** Glenn and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 9 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 724.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 16 Sept., 2014.

- Fig. 725.** Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 19 May, 2006.
- Fig. 726.** Dean Young and John Marshall, *Blondie*, 19 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 727.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 23 Oct., 2008.
- Fig. 728.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 17 April, 2015.
- Fig. 729.** Jim Toomey, *Sherman's Lagoon*, 11 March, 2011.
- Fig. 730.** Matthew Diffie, 2018.
- Fig. 731.** Wayne Honath, *Bizarro*, 2 May, 2011.
- Fig. 732.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 23 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 733.** Saul Steinberg, Detail from "Comic Strip," 1958.
- Fig. 734.** Robert Crumb, "Abstract Expressionist Ultra Super Modernistic Comics," *Zap Comix*, No. 1, 1968.
- Fig. 735.** Mike Getsiv, Tim Gaze, Jonny Gray, Maco, Steven LaRose, Satu Kaikkonen, Steven Bellitt, Rosaire Appel, Alexey Sokolin, Gareth A Hopkins, Chris Kreuter, A Decker, Daryl P. Morris, Charles Newton, Jase Daniels, Robukka, Rob, Ruela, Emmanuel, El Pájaro Mixto, Mauro Cesari, Amy Kuttab, Jenny Robins, Abi Daker, and Dellde Loport, *ABCOLAB #2*, 5–25 June, 2010. From Mike Getsiv, *Abstract Comics*, 5 July, 2010. Web.
- Fig. 736.** Man Ray, André Breton, Yves Tanguy, and Max Morise, "Exquisite Corpse" drawing, 1928. Art Institute, Chicago.
- Fig. 737.** Pablo Picasso and Saul Steinberg, "Exquisite Corpse" drawing, 16 May, 1958. Crayon and pencil on paper, 26 x 17 cm. Beinike Library, Yale University.
- Fig. 738.** Pablo Picasso and Saul Steinberg, "Exquisite Corpse" drawing, 16 May, 1958. Ink on paper, 26 x 17 cm. Private Collection.
- Fig. 739.** Ros Chast, "Ad Infinitum," Cover art, *The New Yorker*, 4 March, 2013.
- Fig. 740.** Silly art critics, from **Figs. 116–117, 136, 157, 184, 193, 402, 696–697, and 719.**
- Fig. 741.** Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 22 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 742.** Mike Peters, Editorial, *Dayton Daily*, 24 Feb., 2010.
- Fig. 743.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose and Grimm*, 18 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 744.** Detail of the "Hesione Vase," Late Corinthian column krater, ca. 550 BCE. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
- Fig. 745.** Édouard Riou, Illustration for Jules Verne, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 1864.
- Fig. 746.** Gilbert Gaul, Illustration for James De Mille, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*, 1888.
- Fig. 747.** Robert L. Mason, Illustration for Frank Savile, *Beyond the Great South Wall*, 1901.
- Fig. 748.** Harry Roundtree, Illustrations for Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Lost World*, 1912.
- Fig. 749.** J. Allen St. John, Cover art for Edgar Rice Burrough's *At the Earth's Core*, 1922.
- Fig. 750.** J. Allen St. John, Cover art, Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land that Time Forgot*, 1924.
- Fig. 751.** J. Allen St. John, Cover art and illustration for Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan the Terrible*, 1921.
- Fig. 752.** J. Allen St. John, Cover art and illustration for Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan at the Earth's Core*, 1930.
- Fig. 753.** John Taine (Eric Temple Bell), *The Greatest Adventure*, 1928. (Ace Book edition, 1960).
- Fig. 754.** Don Marquis, *Love Sonnets of a Cave Man*, 1928.
- Fig. 755.** Two stills from D. W. Griffith, *Brute Force* (Primitive Man), 1914.
- Fig. 756.** Still from Willis O'Brien, *RRD 10,000 BC*, Conquest Pictures, 1917.
- Fig. 757.** Still from Willis O'Brien, *Prehistoric Poultry*, Conquest Pictures, 1917.
- Fig. 758.** Movie poster for *The Lost World*, First National Pictures, 1925.
- Fig. 759.** Two stills from *The Lost World*, First National Pictures, 1925.
- Fig. 760.** Two still from *King Kong*, 1933.
- Fig. 761.** Two stills from the Buster Keaton 1923 movie, *The Three Ages*.
- Fig. 762.** Movie Poster and production photograph, *One Million B.C.*, Hal Roach Studios, 1940.
- Fig. 763.** Tom Chantrell, Movie poster for *One Million Years B.C.*, Hammer Film Productions, 1966.
- Fig. 764.** Movie poster for *Unknown Island*, Universal Studios, 1948.
- Fig. 765.** Movie poster for *Two Lost Worlds*, Sterling Productions, 1951.
- Fig. 766.** Movie poster and promotional photograph for *The Land Unknown*, Universal Pictures, 1957.

- Fig. 767.** Movie poster for *The Lost World*, 20th Century Fox, 1960.
- Fig. 768.** Movie poster for *The Land that Time Forgot*, Amicus Production, 1975.
- Fig. 769.** Movie poster for *At the Earth's Core*, Amicus Production, 1976.
- Fig. 770.** Movie Poster for *Quest for Fire*, Cinema International Company, 1981.
- Fig. 771.** Movie poster for *Caveman*. Turman-Foster Company, 1981.
- Fig. 772.** Frank R. Paul, Cover art for *Amazing Stories*, Feb., 1927.
- Fig. 773.** Joe Kubert, Cover art for *One Million Years Ago!*, St. John's, 1953.
- Fig. 774.** Joe Kubert, Cover art for *Tor*, D.C. Comics, 1974.
- Fig. 775.** *Turok, Son of Stone*, Dell Comics, 1956, Gold Key Comics, 1966.
- Fig. 776.** Jack Sparling, Cover art, *Naza, Stone Age Warrior*, Dell Comics, 1964 and 1966.
- Fig. 777.** *Tarzan of the Apes*, Gold Key Comics, No. 142 (June, 1964) and No. 146 (Oct., 1964).
- Fig. 778.** Russ Manning, Cover art, *Tarzan of the Apes*, Gold Key Comics, Nos. 166–167 (July Sept. 1968).
- Fig. 779.** Doug Wildey, Cover art, *Tarzan of the Apes*, Gold Key Comics, Nos. 179–181 (Sept.–Dec., 1968).
- Fig. 780.** Ross Andru and Mike Esposito, Cover art, *Star Spangled War Stories*, No. 92 (Sept. 1960), No. 103 (July, 1960), and No. 125 (March, 1966).
- Fig. 781.** David Schleinkofer, Cover art for Harry Harrison, *West of Eden*, 1984.
- Fig. 782.** E.T. Reed, *Mr. Punch's Prehistoric Peeps*, 1894.
- Fig. 783.** Oskar Andersson, "Urmänniskan och Urhunden," 1900.
- Fig. 784.** Thomas Starling Sullivant, "Missed the Boat," *Life Magazine*, 15 June, 1899.
- Fig. 785.** Dan Regan, Hallmark Cards, 2009.
- Fig. 786.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 787.** Charles R. Knight, Brontosaurus (*Apatosaurus*) and Diplodocus, American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1898.
- Fig. 788.** Frederick Opper, Frontispiece to *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903.
- Fig. 789.** Frederick Opper, Selection of *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903.
- Fig. 790.** Frederick Opper, "Our Antediluvian Ancestors," 3 April, 1904. Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, Ohio State University.
- Fig. 791.** William A. Rodgers, *Harper's Weekly*, 11 Jan., 1902.
- Fig. 792.** Winsor McCay, *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend*, 25 May, 1913.
- Fig. 793.** Winsor McCay, "Flip in the Land of the Antediluvians," *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*, 21 September, 1913.
- Fig. 794.** Winsor McCay, "Flip Educates a Distacuteus Mastadonius," *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*, 5 Oct., 1913.
- Fig. 795.** Winsor McCay, "Going Up! Flip and His Party Visit the Mayor of Cliffville," *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*, 12 Oct., 1913.
- Fig. 796.** Winsor McCay. Poster and animation cell from *Gertie the Dinosaur*, 1914..
- Fig. 797.** Poster for Fox Studio's *Winsor McCay's "Gertie"*, 1914.
- Fig. 798.** Robert McCay (Winsor McCay), *Dino*, 1934. Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, Ohio State University. From Merkl, 2015, pp. 16–17.
- Fig. 799.** "Winsor McCay, Jr." (Robert McCay), *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, 27 June, 1937.
- Fig. 800.** V. T. Hamlin, First *Alley Oop* comic strip, 5 Dec., 1932.
- Fig. 801.** V. T. Hamlin, *Alley Oop*, 9 Sept., 1934.
- Fig. 802.** V. T. Hamlin, *Alley Oop*, 21 Oct, 1934.
- Fig. 803.** Jon St. Ables Cover art, *Lucky Comics*, Aug.–Sept., 1945 and Feb.–March, 1946.
- Fig. 804.** Albert Robida, "Une bonne partie de chasse à l'époque tertiaire," ca. 1900.
- Fig. 805.** Georges Léonnec, "L'Histoire gallant: Le Chapitre des baignoires," *La Vie parisienne*, 1912.
- Fig. 806.** Maurice Cuvillier, Detail from "The Adventures of Ra and Ta, Stone Age schoolchildren," *Guignol Cinema de la jeunesse*, 6 May, 1928.
- Fig. 807.** Pouf, "Iroh, l'enfant des cavernes," *Guignol Cinema de la jeunesse*, 19 May, 1933.
- Fig. 808.** Douglas Dundee (Dugald Matheson Cumming-Skinner), "Cave-Boy Ereke," *The Triumph, The Boys' Best Story Paper*, 1933.
- Fig. 809.** Michael Maslin, *The New Yorker*, 14 April, 2008.
- Fig. 810.** Frank Cotham, *The New Yorker*, 13 April, 2020.
- Fig. 811.** Max Garcia, *Sunny Street*, 2013.

- Fig. 812.** Bill Abbott, *Spectickles*, 27 Aug., 2019.
- Fig. 813.** Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*. From “KoProFagO” 2020.
- Fig. 814.** Photograph of the exhibition, *Prehistòria i Còmic*, Museu de Prehistòria de València, 14 June, 2016–8 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 815.** Front cover to Fabrice Douar and Jean-Luc Martinez, *L’Archéologie en bulles*, Musée du Louvre, 2018.
- Fig. 816.** Poster for exhibition *Archéo-BD, A la croisée de l’archéologie et de la bande dessinée*, Service Archéologique de Melun, 2018–2019.
- Fig. 817.** Obelix, from *Astérix le Gaulois*, created by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo.
- Fig. 818.** From André Houot, *Chroniques de la nuit des temps*, 1. *Le Couteau de pierre* (“The Stone Knife”), Fleurus, 1987.
- Fig. 819.** From André Houot, *Chroniques de la nuit des temps*, 3. *On a marché sur la terre* (“We Walked on Earth”), Le Lombard, 1990.
- Fig. 820.** From Priscille Mahieu and Éric Le Brun, *Ticayou, Chasseur de la préhistoire (Prehistoric Hunter)*, Totem, 5 Nov., 2009.
- Fig. 821.** Covers to Éric Le Brun, *L’art préhistorique en bande dessinée*, (Glénat, 2012–2018).
- Fig. 822.** Cover and page from David Prudhomme, Emmanuel Guibert, Pascal Rabaté, Troub’s, Marc-Antoine Mathieu and Etienne Davodeau, *Rupestres*, Futuropolis, 2011.
- Fig. 823.** Poster and panel from *Préhistoire de la bande dessinée et du dessin animé*, 2008–2009.
- Fig. 824.** Engraving of an ibex, from the rock shelter of Colombier (Ardèche) and a carved plaque with a horse, from Le Marche, after Azéma (2008).
- Fig. 825.** Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 1993. p. 141.
- Fig. 826.** From Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, 2008 (1996), p. 1.
- Fig. 827.** Sephko (Gojko Franulic), 4 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 828.** Reza Farazmand, *Poorly Drawn Lines*, 18 Aug., 2014.
- Fig. 829.** Mick Steven, *The New Yorker*, 22 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 830.** A mid-2nd century B.C.E. “Homeric” bowl in the Antikensammlung Staatliche Museum zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz (3161n). Top, from Mertens, 2019, p. 156, fig. 14; bottom, drawing after Roberts 1890, p. 8, fig. A.
- Fig. 831.** John Swogger, Page from *Llyn Cerrig Bach* (CADW – Welsh Government Historic Environment Service), 2014. From Swogger, Feb., 2014.
- Fig. 832.** Sylvain Savoia, *Les Esclaves oubliés de Tromelin*, 2015, plates 72 and 82. From Douar and Martinez, 2018, pp. 24–25.
- Fig. 833.** Johannes H. N. Loubser, *Archaeology. The Comic*, 2003, p. 47.
- Fig. 834.** Larry Gonick, cover to *The Cartoon History of the Universe I*, and page from *The Cartoon History of the Universe II*.
- Fig. 835.** Troy Lovata, “How to Use the Tool,” 2000. Reprinted in de Boer, 2004, p. 113.
- Fig. 836.** Faith Haney, “Six Things I’ve Never Found [A True Story],” *Shovel Bum #13*, 2012, p. 9.
- Fig. 837.** Anne Glynnis Fawkes, *Cartoons of Cyprus*, 2001, p. 26.
- Fig. 838.** Anne Glynnis Fawkes, *Cartoons of Cyprus*, 2001, pp. 28 and 33.
- Fig. 839.** Anne Glynnis Fawkes, *Cartoons of Cyprus*, 2001, p. 27.
- Fig. 840.** Anne Glynnis Fawkes, *Cartoons of Cyprus*, 2001, pp. 43.
- Fig. 841.** Anne Glynnis Fawkes, *Cartoons of Cyprus*, 2001, pp. 34–35.
- Fig. 842.** Fredrick Opper, *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903, Fig. 40.
- Fig. 843.** Fredrick Opper, *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903, Fig. 48.
- Fig. 844.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 7 March, 2007.
- Fig. 845.** Two stills from *The Flintstones*.
- Fig. 846.** Fred Flintstone at work, and Fred, Wilma, and Pebbles Flintstone with their pet, Dino.
- Fig. 847.** Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 26 Oct., 1984.
- Fig. 848.** Troy Lovata, “Talking Dog Archaeology,” 2005, p. 25.
- Fig. 849.** Front Cover to Cornelius Holtorf, *Archaeology is a Brand!*, 2007.
- Fig. 850.** Walter Paget, Illustration for H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mine*, 1888.
- Fig. 851.** Arthur Conan Doyle, “Burger’s Secret” (“The New Catacomb”), *The Sunlight Year-Book*, 1898.
- Fig. 852.** Robert Macartney, Dust jacket illustration for Agatha Christie, *Murder in Mesopotamia*, 1936.
- Fig. 853.** Cover to Glyn Daniel, *The Cambridge Murders* (1964 Penguin reprint of 1945 original).
- Fig. 854.** Poster for *Mister V (Pimernel Smith)*, 1941.

- Fig. 855.** Poster for *Indiana Jones* movies, 1981–2008.
- Fig. 856.** Howard Chakyn, Cover art for Walt Simonson, “Raiders of the Lost Arc,” *Marvel Comics Super Special*, Vol. 1, # 18 (September, 1981).
- Fig. 857.** *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2014.
- Fig. 858.** Poster for *the Mummy*, 1999.
- Fig. 859.** Poster for *Lara Croft Tomb Raider*, 2001.
- Fig. 860.** Michael Turner, Cover illustration for *Tomb Raider* # 1 (1 Jan., 1999).
- Fig. 861.** Adam Hughes, Cover illustration for *Tomb Raider* # 33 (1 Jan., 2003).
- Fig. 862.** Poster for *Relic Hunter*, 1999.
- Fig. 863.** Salvador Larocca, Cover art for Kieron Gillen, *Star Wars Doctor Aphra*, Marvel Comics, 25 March, 2015.
- Fig. 864.** Rucka and Bilquis Evely, *D.C. Universe Rebirth # 8, Wonder Woman* (Dec., 2016).
- Fig. 865.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 6 Feb., 2007.
- Fig. 866.** Mark Tatulli, *Heart of the City*, 2 March, 2015.
- Fig. 867.** Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 2–7 and 9–12 May, 1988.
- Fig. 868.** Jan Eliot, *Stone Soup*, 24 Sept., 2000.
- Fig. 869.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 16 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 870.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 22 March, 2015.
- Fig. 871.** Jeff Stahler, *Moderately Confused*, 31 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 872.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 29 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 873.** Paul Gilligan, *Pooch Café*, 23 June, 2013.
- Fig. 874.** Paul Gilligan, *Pooch Café*, 22 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 875.** Nick D Kim, 5 September, 2017.
- Fig. 876.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 30 April, 2019.
- Fig. 877.** Charles Addams, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 878.** Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 13 March, 2015.
- Fig. 879.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 27 March, 2019.
- Fig. 880.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 881.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 25 March, 2013.
- Fig. 882.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 14 July, 2013.
- Fig. 883.** David Maccaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries*, 1979.
- Fig. 884.** Sophia Schleimann wearing the “Jewels of Helen,” 1874.
- Fig. 885.** David Maccaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries*, 1979.
- Fig. 886.** David Maccaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries*, 1979.
- Fig. 887.** Gary Wise and Lance Aldrich, *Real Life Adventures*. 29 Dec., 1999.
- Fig. 888.** Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 13 July, 2011.
- Fig. 889.** Walt Handelsman, *Newsday* 19 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 890.** Wayne Honath, *WaynoVision*, 7 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 891.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 6 July, 2016.
- Fig. 892.** John Baynham 2006.
- Fig. 893.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 24 July, 2009.
- Fig. 894.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 7 Oct., 1992.
- Fig. 895.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 7 July, 1998.
- Fig. 896.** Ruben Bolling (Ken Fisher), *Tom the Dancing Bug*, 4 May, 2002.
- Fig. 897.** Matt Wurker, 12 July, 2012.
- Fig. 898.** Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 28 March 2011.
- Fig. 899.** Rudolph Zallinger, *Early Man*, 1965.
- Fig. 900.** Greg Noll “Da Cats” surfboard ad, 1966.
- Fig. 901.** Logo of the Leakey Foundation, 1968.
- Fig. 902.** Joe Garnett, Cover art to Door’s *Full Circle* album, 1972.
- Fig. 903.** Supertramp, *Brother Where You Bound* album cover, 1985.
- Fig. 904.** *Encino Man* soundtrack album cover, 1992.
- Fig. 905.** Robert Leighton, *The New Yorker*, 25 Dec., 2006.
- Fig. 906.** Steve Greenberg, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 1996.
- Fig. 907.** Patrick Hardin, 3 Feb. 1999.
- Fig. 908.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 30 Aug., 2004.

- Fig. 909.** Kris Wilson, Rob DenBleyker, Matt Melvin and Dave McElfrick. *Cyanide and Happiness*, explosum.net, April, 2005.
- Fig. 910.** Paul Reiley, *Judge*, 18 July, 1925.
- Fig. 911.** Mike Luckovid, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 1 Feb., 2003.
- Fig. 912.** Jeff Parker, *Florida Today*, 6 May, 2005.
- Fig. 913.** R. J. Matson, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 10 Nov., 2005.
- Fig. 914.** Bill Day, *Detroit Free Press*, from Pausas (2009).
- Fig. 915.** Matt Davies, *The Journal News*, 15 April, 2005.
- Fig. 916.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 24 Oct., 2006.
- Fig. 917.** Tony Auth, from Pausas (2009).
- Fig. 918.** Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, reprinted 14 July, 2014.
- Fig. 919.** Nick D Kim, *Science and Ink*.
- Fig. 920.** Carmen Ezgeta, from Gri (2016).
- Fig. 921.** Peter Steiner, *The New Yorker*, 30 July, 1990.
- Fig. 922.** Mort Gerberg, *The New Yorker*, 24 Dec., 2001.
- Fig. 923.** Sam Gross, from Pausas (2009).
- Fig. 924.** Bruce McCall, three alternative covers for *The New Yorker*, 14 May, 2007.
- Fig. 925.** Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 10 April, 2015.
- Fig. 926.** Mike Keefe, *The Denver Post*, 27 March, 2009.
- Fig. 927.** David Horsey, *The Los Angeles Times*, 2012.
- Fig. 928.** George Riemann, from Gri (2016).
- Fig. 929.** Wilbur Dawbarn, from Giller and Conniff (2014).
- Fig. 930.** From Gri (2016).
- Fig. 931.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 16 July, 2017.
- Fig. 932.** Matthew Inman, "The evolution of our spine and speech," theotmeal.com, 2020.
- Fig. 933.** Patrick Boivin, June, 2005. From Gri (2016).
- Fig. 934.** Darren Humphreys and John Schmelzer, 14 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 935.** Amjad Rasmi, from Gri (2016).
- Fig. 936.** Anonymous, street art, London, 2008.
- Fig. 937.** From Gri (2016).
- Fig. 938.** MAC (Stanley McMurtry), *Daily Mail*, 2008.
- Fig. 939.** Jon Kudelka, 4 June, 2009.
- Fig. 940.** Teddy Tietz, 2009.
- Fig. 941.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 Dec., 2007.
- Fig. 942.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 1 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 943.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 April, 2017.
- Fig. 944.** Chris Madden, 1 Sept., 2008.
- Fig. 945.** Glenn Jones, from Gri (2016).
- Fig. 946.** Matt Groening, from Gri (2016).
- Fig. 947.** Maentis, Selection of "99 Steps of Progress" posters, 2012.
- Fig. 948.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 949.** Jorodo, 1 March, 2010.
- Fig. 950.** Clare Mulley, *The Spectator*, 29 Feb., 2020.
- Fig. 951.** Mick Stevens, *The New Yorker*, 24 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 952.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 4 April, 2018.
- Fig. 953.** Carlotta Monterey and Louis Wolheim in the 1922 Plymouth Theater production of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- Fig. 954.** Caricature of Charles Darwin as a monkey, *La Petite Lune*, 1878.
- Fig. 955.** C. H. Bennett, *Punch's Almanack for 1882*, 6 Dec. 1881.
- Fig. 956.** Label of "Anis de Mono" liquor, and statue in Vicente Bosch Company, Badalona, Spain.
- Fig. 957.** Emmanuel Frémiet, *Gorille enlevant une femme*, 1887. Bronze sculpture, 187 X 167 X 100 cm, Musée d'Arts, Nantes.
- Fig. 958.** Cover to Georges Sim (Georges Simenon), *Le Gorille-roi*, 1929.
- Fig. 959.** Still from the 1933 RKO movie, *King Kong*.
- Fig. 960.** Fred J. Arting, Book cover to Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, A. C. McClurg, 1914.
- Fig. 961.** Lee O'Mealia, Cover art for *Action Comics*, No. 6, Nov., 1938.

- Fig. 962.** Publicity photo of Dorothy Lamour in *Her Jungle Love*, 1938.
- Fig. 963.** Pierre Boitard, Frontispiece, *Paris avant les hommes (Paris Before Man)*, 1861.
- Fig. 964.** Frontispiece to Charles G.D. Roberts, *In the Morning of Time*, 1919.
- Fig. 965.** Joe Kubert, Cover art, DC Comics *Tor*, No. 1, June, 1975.
- Fig. 966.** Movie poster and still from D. W. Griffith, *Brute Force (Primitive Man)*, 1914.
- Fig. 967.** Still from Buster Keaton, *The Three Ages*, 1923.
- Fig. 968.** Léon-Maxime Faivre, *Envahisseurs, épisode d'une migration a l'âge de pierre*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 259 x 189 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Vienna.
- Fig. 969.** Paul Jamin, *Rapt à l'âge de pierre*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 279 x 200 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims.
- Fig. 970.** Giambologna, *The Capture of the Sabine Women*, 1581–1583. Marble, 4.1 m. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.
- Fig. 971.** Photograph of the Centenary of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, Liverpool, Sept., 1930.
- Fig. 972.** Frederick Opper, *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903.
- Fig. 973.** Leonard Dove, *The New Yorker*, 1 Dec., 1934.
- Fig. 974.** Misha Richter, *The New Yorker*, 27 Nov., 1943.
- Fig. 975.** Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 12 April, 1999.
- Fig. 976.** Danny Shanahan, *The New Yorker*, 2002.
- Fig. 977.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 978.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 18 Oct., 2019.
- Fig. 979.** Leigh Rubin, *Rubes*, 27 May, 2018.
- Fig. 980.** Ballo (Rex May), 2010.
- Fig. 981.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 982.** Robert Crumb, "Cave Wimp," *Zap Comix*, No. 12, 1988.
- Fig. 983.** Front cover to E.T. Reed, *Mr. Punch's Prehistoric Peeps*, 1894.
- Fig. 984.** Dust jacket to Walt Disney, *Mickey Mouse on the Cave-Man Island*, 1944.
- Fig. 985.** Jean Ache (Jean-Baptiste Huet), "Archibald, l'homme de la préhistoire," *Pilote. Le journal d'Asterix et Obelix*, 1965.
- Fig. 986.** Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.
- Fig. 987.** Kaaman Hafeez, *The New Yorker*, 2 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 988.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 12 May, 2013.
- Fig. 989.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 31 May, 2015.
- Fig. 990.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 23 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 991.** Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 22 June, 2009.
- Fig. 992.** Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 11 Oct., 2011.
- Fig. 993.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 14 Dec., 2019.
- Fig. 994.** Steve Moore, *In the Bleachers*, 27 Dec., 2001.
- Fig. 995.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 996.** Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 5 May, 1988.
- Fig. 997.** Screen shots from *Originalos*, Tiny Film, 2010.
- Fig. 998.** Baloo (Rex F. May), 2014.
- Fig. 999.** Chuck Ingwersen, 2009.
- Fig. 1000.** Paul Mahoney, 2012.
- Fig. 1001.** Ted Blackman, *Crotchety Comics*, 2012
- Fig. 1002.** "El origen de algunas cosas," *TBO*. Año XIV, n. 701, Barcelona, 1928.
- Fig. 1003.** Three Gary Larson *The Far Side* cartoons.
- Fig. 1004.** Bill Abbott, Sept., 2001.
- Fig. 1005.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 5 April, 2010.
- Fig. 1006.** Robert Leighton, *The New Yorker*, 13 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 1007.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 14 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1008.** Maurice Cuvillier, "Les Aventures de Ra et Ta. Écoliers de L'Âge de Pierre," *Guignol*, no. 96, 6 May, 1928, pp. 1 and 8.
- Fig. 1009.** Jon St. Ables, *Lucky Comics*, Oct.–Nov., 1945.
- Fig. 1010.** Gene Hazelton, *The Flintstones*, 27 Nov., 1962.
- Fig. 1011.** Johnny Hart, *B.C.*, 1958.
- Fig. 1012.** Arby's B.C. Comics Caveman Unicycle Glass Tumbler, 1981.

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- Fig. 1014. Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 23 Oct., 1984.
- Fig. 1015. Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 24 July, 1985.
- Fig. 1016. Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 17 Jan., 1986.
- Fig. 1017. Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 15 Jan., 1988.
- Fig. 1018. Gary Larson, *Far Side*, 22 May, 1990.
- Fig. 1019. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 3 Aug., 2014.
- Fig. 1020. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 27 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 1021. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 22 Oct., 2017.
- Fig. 1022. Patrick Hardin, 4 March, 2003.
- Fig. 1023. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 17 April, 2005.
- Fig. 1024. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1025. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 4 Jan. , 2010.
- Fig. 1026. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 14 Feb., 2014.
- Fig. 1027. Mike Stanfill, 12 April, 2013.
- Fig. 1028. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 2 June, 2016.
- Fig. 1029. Harry Bliss, 21 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 1030. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 12 Feb., 2018.
- Fig. 1031. David Sipress, *The New Yorker*, 24 Sept., 2018.
- Fig. 1032. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 25 April, 2019.
- Fig. 1033. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1034. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1035. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 22 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 1036. Nick D. Kim, *Science and Ink*.
- Fig. 1037. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 1985.
- Fig. 1038. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 28 Sept., 2003.
- Fig. 1039. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.
- Fig. 1040. Dave Blazek, *Loose Parts*, 8 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 1041. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 11–14, 19, 21–23, and 25–26 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 1042. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 27–28 Feb., and 1–2, 4, 6 March, 2013.
- Fig. 1043. Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 4 Nov., 1995.
- Fig. 1044. Aurelio Santarelli, 1998.
- Fig. 1045. Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 6 April, 2019.
- Fig. 1046. Eight Gary Larson *The Far Side* cartoons.
- Fig. 1047. Baloo (Rex F. May), 2011.
- Fig. 1048. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.
- Fig. 1049. Zahary Kanin, *The New Yorker*, 1 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1050. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 8 April, 2009.
- Fig. 1051. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 17 Aug., 2009.
- Fig. 1052. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 17 Sept., 2009.
- Fig. 1053. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 Dec., 2009.
- Fig. 1054. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 May, 2012.
- Fig. 1055. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 19 Sept., 2012.
- Fig. 1056. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 4 May, 2013.
- Fig. 1057. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 28 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 1058. Wayne Honath, *Bizarro*, 31 Aug., 2018.
- Fig. 1059. Wayne Honath, *Bizarro*, 15 July, 2020.
- Fig. 1060. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 July, 1992.
- Fig. 1061. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 31 Dec., 1998.
- Fig. 1062. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 5 March, 2012.
- Fig. 1063. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 30 April, 2012.
- Fig. 1064. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 17 April, 2016.
- Fig. 1065. Johnny Hart, Advertisement for Dr. Pepper, 1963.
- Fig. 1066. Danny Shanahan, *The New Yorker*, 27 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 1067. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1068. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 1069. Peter C. Vey, *The New Yorker*, 27 April, 2020.
- Fig. 1070. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 23 May, 2004.

- Fig. 1071. Dan Piraro and Wayne Honath, *Bizarro*, 28 July, 2018.
- Fig. 1072. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 19 Sept., 2008.
- Fig. 1073. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 14 June, 2016.
- Fig. 1074. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1075. James Stevenson, *The New Yorker*, 21 Feb., 1970.
- Fig. 1076. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 12 Dec., 2018.
- Fig. 1077. Matthew Diffie, *The New Yorker*, 20 Dec., 2004.
- Fig. 1078. Leigh Rubin, *Rubes*, 17 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 1079. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 1 Feb., 2010.
- Fig. 1080. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 22 July, 2013.
- Fig. 1081. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 5 March 2013.
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- Fig. 1083. Dan Thompson, *Brevity*, 31 March, 2012.
- Fig. 1084. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 30 June, 2014.
- Fig. 1085. Tom Sloan, 26 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 1086. Max Garcia, *Sunny Street*, 2013.
- Fig. 1087. Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 29 Jan., 2013.
- Fig. 1088. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 24 Nov., 2011.
- Fig. 1089. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 16 Feb., 2019.
- Fig. 1090. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 16 July, 2000.
- Fig. 1091. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 25 April, 2002.
- Fig. 1092. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 20 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1093. Four Gary Larson, *The Far Side* cartoons.
- Fig. 1094. Nick D. Kim, *Science and Ink*.
- Fig. 1095. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 7 Sept. 2014.
- Fig. 1096. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 1 June, 2006.
- Fig. 1097. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 20 Oct., 2009.
- Fig. 1098. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 1 April, 1980.
- Fig. 1099. Brian and Ron Boychuk, *Chuckle Bros*, 26 Aug., 2013.
- Fig. 1100. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 15 Jan., 2010.
- Fig. 1101. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 1 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1102. Harley Schwadron, 2006.
- Fig. 1103. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 8 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 1104. Harry Bliss, 2017.
- Fig. 1105. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 25 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 1106. Cedric Hohnstadt, 7 March, 2016.
- Fig. 1107. Kaaman Hafeez, *The New Yorker*, 17 Aug., 2020.
- Fig. 1108. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 9 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1109. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 16 Sept., 2011.
- Fig. 1110. Dave Granlund, 11 March, 2020.
- Fig. 1111. Baloo (Rex F. May), 2013.
- Fig. 1112. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*, 1986.
- Fig. 1113. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 11 March, 2011.
- Fig. 1114. Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 21 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 1115. Paul Trap, *Thatababy*, 1 Dec., 2018.
- Fig. 1116. Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 6 April, 2008.
- Fig. 1117. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 8 July, 2008.
- Fig. 1118. Mark Tatulli, *Lio*, 22 May, 2014.
- Fig. 1119. Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.
- Fig. 1120. Nick Kim, 23 Sept., 2008.
- Fig. 1121. Harry Bliss, 13 Feb., 2012.
- Fig. 1122. Garrett Price, *The New Yorker*, 5 July, 1952.
- Fig. 1123. Three Gary Larson, *The Far Side* cartoons.
- Fig. 1124. NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1125. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 14 Feb., 2008.
- Fig. 1126. Bob Eckstein, *Barron's*, 2018.
- Fig. 1127. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 31 Oct., 1999.

Fig. 1128. Dave Blazek, *Loose Parts*, 29 Oct., 2015.
Fig. 1129. Richard Thompson, *Richard's Poor Almanac*, reprinted 27 Nov., 2014.
Fig. 1130. Teddy Tietz, 2010.
Fig. 1131. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 Dec., 2013.
Fig. 1132. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 29 Dec., 2015.
Fig. 1133. Baloo (Rex F. May), 2013.
Fig. 1134. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 9 Jan., 1994.
Fig. 1135. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 5 Oct., 2014.
Fig. 1136. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 18 March, 2014.
Fig. 1137. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 26 March, 2020.
Fig. 1138. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 Aug., 2004.
Fig. 1139. Mike Luckvid, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 28 Nov., 2012.
Fig. 1140. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 7 Aug., 2016.
Fig. 1141. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 3 May, 2005.
Fig. 1142. Harley Schwadron, 2005.
Fig. 1143. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 27 July, 2014.
Fig. 1144. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 6 March, 2018.
Fig. 1145. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 19 Feb., 2014.
Fig. 1146. Leigh Ruben, *Rubes*, 26 Oct., 2016.
Fig. 1147. John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 2 Feb., 2009.
Fig. 1148. Ryan Pagelow, *Buni*, 2012.
Fig. 1149. Frederick Opper, *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903, Fig. 41.
Fig. 1150. Leigh Ruben, *Rubes*, 21 Dec., 2018.
Fig. 1151. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 23 Aug., 2015.
Fig. 1152. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 16 March, 1995.
Fig. 1153. Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 16 Sept., 2005.
Fig. 1154. Leo Cullum, *The New Yorker*, 29 June, 2009.
Fig. 1155. Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 8 April, 2010.
Fig. 1156. Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 27 July, 2015.
Fig. 1157. Adrian Raeside, 3 April, 2020.
Fig. 1158. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 21 Aug., 2012.
Fig. 1159. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 16 Dec., 2014.
Fig. 1160. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 3 March, 2019.
Fig. 1161. Jim Unger, *Herman*, 28 March, 2006.
Fig. 1162. Dave Blazek, *Loose Parts*, 6 July, 2017.
Fig. 1163. Tom Toro.
Fig. 1164. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 18 Feb., 2013.
Fig. 1165. Kim Warp, *The New Yorker*, 14 June, 2010.
Fig. 1166. Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 24 May, 2015.
Fig. 1167. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 26 Feb., 2012.
Fig. 1168. Rina Piccolo and Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 10 April, 2020.
Fig. 1169. Tony Husband, 2011.
Fig. 1170. Jeff Stahler, *Moderately Confused*, 12 Oct., 2018.
Fig. 1171. Ed McLachlan, 2006.
Fig. 1172. Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 9 Jan., 2012.
Fig. 1173. Frederick Opper, *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903, Fig 45.
Fig. 1174. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 30 Oct., 2001.
Fig. 1175. David Sipress, *The New Yorker*, 12 Jan., 2015.
Fig. 1176. Laurie Ransom, 2018.
Fig. 1177. Mason Mastroianni, *B.C.*, 25 Aug., 2011.
Fig. 1178. Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 2 Sept., 2017.
Fig. 1179. M. J. Fry, 2012.
Fig. 1180. Claude Smith, *The New Yorker*, 26 July, 1952.
Fig. 1181. Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 30 Oct., 2017.
Fig. 1182. Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 26 Nov., 1997.
Fig. 1183. Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 14 May, 1997.
Fig. 1184. Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 9 Feb., 2002.
Fig. 1185. Tony Carrillo, *F Minus*, 30 June, 2008.

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- Fig. 1189. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 15 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 1190. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 6 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 1191. Harry Bliss, 1 June, 2009.
- Fig. 1192. Harry Bliss, 3 Feb., 2018.
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- Fig. 1201. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest.*, 18 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 1202. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest.*, 14 Aug., 2016.
- Fig. 1203. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 29 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 1204. Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 6 May, 2015.
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- Fig. 1209. Pat Byrnes, *The New Yorker*, 18 April, 2016.
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- Fig. 1211. Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 2 April, 2012.
- Fig. 1212. Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 6 June, 2016.
- Fig. 1213. Ryan Pagelow, *Buni*, 25 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1214. Leigh Rubin, *Rubes*, 14 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 1215. Tony Zuvela, 2009.
- Fig. 1216. M. Moeller, 2012.
- Fig. 1217. Figure from Moser and Gamble, 1997.
- Fig. 1218. Frederick Opper, Selection of *Our Antediluvian Ancestors*, 1903.
- Fig. 1219. Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 17 April, 2008.
- Fig. 1220. Dan Pirraro, *Bizarro*, 23 May, 2015.
- Fig. 1221. Dan Piraro and Wayne (“Wayno”) Honath, *Bizarro*, 3 May, 2018.
- Fig. 1222. Dave Carpenter, 2006.
- Fig. 1223. Chris Wildt, 2008.
- Fig. 1224. Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 25 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 1225. Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 18 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 1226. Cartoon cave paintings with a sun icon (from Figs. 1080, 1117, 1174, 1199, and 1224).
- Fig. 1227. Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 15, 16 Feb. 2013.
- Fig. 1228. Frank Cotham, *The New Yorker*, 28 May, 2007.
- Fig. 1229. Dan Pirraro, *Bizarro*, 29 Jan., 2007.
- Fig. 1230. Dan Pirraro, *Bizarro*, 30 March, 2010.
- Fig. 1231. Dan Pirraro, *Bizarro*, 31 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1232. Dan Pirraro, *Bizarro*, 28 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1233. A sample of cartoon cavemen speaking (from Figs. 870, 994, 1001, 1026, 1030, 1050, 1068, 1103, 1106, 1123, 1125, 1068, 1206, 1208, 1219, 1229, and 1231).
- Fig. 1234. Fred and Wilma Flintstone, 1960–1966.
- Fig. 1235. “A selection of ornaments found in Paleolithic and Mesolithic deposits of coastal and inland sites in Greece,” from Boric and Christiani, 2019.
- Fig. 1236. Burial 1 from Sungir, Russia.
- Fig. 1237. Neanderthal body ornaments from he Grotte du Renne (Arcy-sur-Cure, France).
- Fig. 1238. Carved stag horn ornament from Tito Bustillo, Spain.
- Fig. 1239. Detail of Fig. 1195.
- Fig. 1240. Detail of Fig. 1079.

- Fig. 1241.** Selection of cartoon cavewomen with bone hair ornaments (from Figs. 1067, 1080, 1096, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1105, 1207, and 1224).
- Fig. 1242.** Jim Unger, *Herman*, 10 Dec., 2009.
- Fig. 1243.** Volcanoes in cavemen cartoons (from Figs. 54, 829, 870, 975, 976, 978, 982, 993, 1000, 1027, 1028, 1032, 1066, 1081, 1089, 1100, 1108, 1114, 1163, 1172, 1222, and 1228).
- Fig. 1244.** Adam Zyglis, *The Buffalo News*, 16 Nov., 2008.
- Fig. 1245.** Two Stonehenge/Easter Island internet memes.
- Fig. 1246.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 25 July, 2012.
- Fig. 1247.** Dan Reynolds, 19 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 1248.** Mid-14th-century illustration from a manuscript of the *Roman de Brut* by Wace, showing a giant helping the wizard Merlin build Stonehenge, British Library (Egerton MS 3028).
- Fig. 1249.** William O'Brian, "Well we've done it, but don't ask me how," *The New Yorker*, 1950's.
- Fig. 1250.** Zachary Kanin, *The New Yorker*, 24 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1251.** E.T. Reed, "Howzat Umpire?," *Mr. Punch's Prehistoric Peeps*, 1894.
- Fig. 1252.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 1998.
- Fig. 1253.** Guy Endore-Kaiser and Rodd Perry, *Brevity*, 23 May, 2006.
- Fig. 1254.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 30 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 1255.** Mason Mastroianni, *B.C.*, 10 Jan, 2017.
- Fig. 1256.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 25 June, 2017.
- Fig. 1257.** Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories," *History Today*.
- Fig. 1258.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 19 Feb., 2017.
- Fig. 1259.** Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*, 12 April, 1999.
- Fig. 1260.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 9 Oct., 2006.
- Fig. 1261.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 12 March, 2017.
- Fig. 1262.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 10 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 1263.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 16 Dec., 2012.
- Fig. 1264.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 3 Feb., 2008.
- Fig. 1265.** Jeremy Kramer and Eric Vaughn, 2008.
- Fig. 1266.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 17 April, 2017.
- Fig. 1267.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 1268.** Tim White, *Back of the Class*, 2009.
- Fig. 1269.** Jamie Smith, *Ink & Snow*, 1 April, 2012.
- Fig. 1270.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 29 March, 2011.
- Fig. 1271.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 3 April, 2013.
- Fig. 1272.** Pat Byrnes, 2007.
- Fig. 1273.** Jack Ziegler, *The New Yorker*, 16 March, 2016.
- Fig. 1274.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 17 June, 1997.
- Fig. 1275.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 19 Sept., 2004.
- Fig. 1276.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 28 June, 2012.
- Fig. 1277.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 14 Nov., 2017.
- Fig. 1278.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 25 Dec., 2017.
- Fig. 1279.** Arnie Levin, *The New Yorker*, 20 April, 1992.
- Fig. 1280.** Joe Dator, *The New Yorker*, 16 Jan., 2012.
- Fig. 1281.** Harry Bliss, *The New Yorker*, 5 Aug., 2013.
- Fig. 1282.** Joseph Farris, *The New Yorker*, 23 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 1283.** Jon Carter, *Cartertoons*, 2009.
- Fig. 1284.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 8 May, 2011.
- Fig. 1285.** Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman, *Zits*, 10 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 1286.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 13 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 1287.** NAD (Mark Godfrey), *Wildlife Cartoons Australia*, 2013.
- Fig. 1288.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 1 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 1289.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 30 March, 2014.
- Fig. 1290.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 9 Feb., 2014.
- Fig. 1291.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 6 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 1292.** Daan Jippes, Cover art, *Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge Adventures #3*, Gladstone, Jan. 1988.

- Fig. 1293.** Geronimo Stilton (Elisabetta Dami), #60, *The Treasure of Easter Island*, Scholastic, June 2015.
- Fig. 1294.** Gil Kane, Cover art for *Strange Adventures* #16, D.C. Comics, Jan., 1952.
- Fig. 1295.** Jack Kirby, Cover art for *House of Mystery*, Vol 1, #85, D.C. Comics, April, 1959.
- Fig. 1296.** Jack Kirby, Cover and page illustrations, *Tales to Astonish* #5, Atlas Comics, May 1959.
- Fig. 1297.** Frank Miller, Cover art, and Sal Buscema, illustrations for *The Incredible Hulk* #261, Marvel, July 1981.
- Fig. 1298.** Gil Kane, Cover and page illustration, *Thor* #318, Marvel, April, 1982.
- Fig. 1299.** Jack Kirby, Cover art and illustrations, *Super Powers* #3, D.C. Comics, Nov., 1985.
- Fig. 1300.** "The Stone Men!," *Sparky*, D.C. Thompson, 1977.
- Fig. 1301.** *Jewel Keepers: Easter Island* video game, Nordcurrent, 2011.
- Fig. 1302.** Brian and Ron Boychuk, *Chuckle Bros*, 22 June, 2009.
- Fig. 1303.** Mike Gruhn, *WebDonuts*, 25 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 1304.** Hergé, *Les Cigares du Pharaon*, 1934 (1955).
- Fig. 1305.** Gil Kane, Cover Art, *Mystery in Space* #36, Feb. 1957.
- Fig. 1306.** Kurt Swan and Stan Kaye, Cover art, *Action Comics*, #240, May, 1958.
- Fig. 1307.** Jack Kirby, Cover art and illustration, *Strange Tales* #70, Aug., 1959.
- Fig. 1308.** Ross Andreu and Mike Esposito, Cover art, *Wonder Woman* # 113, April, 1960.
- Fig. 1309.** Jack Kirby, Cover art, *Fantastic Four* #19, March, 1963.
- Fig. 1310.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 10 Oct., 2007.
- Fig. 1311.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 22 July 22, 2009.
- Fig. 1312.** Colby Jones, *SirColby*, 2017.
- Fig. 1313.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 26 Dec., 2008.
- Fig. 1314.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 Oct., 2014.
- Fig. 1315.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 17 April, 2016.
- Fig. 1316.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 4 Nov., 2018.
- Fig. 1317.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 21 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 1318.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 May, 2014.
- Fig. 1319.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 3 April, 2016.
- Fig. 1320.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 16 July, 2017.
- Fig. 1321.** Roger L. Phillips, *The Grey Zone*, 2012.
- Fig. 1322.** Jim Meddick, *Monty*, 7 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 1323.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 March, 2014.
- Fig. 1324.** Bill Amend, *Foxtrot*, 9 April, 2017.
- Fig. 1325.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 1326.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 15 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 1327.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro* 29 Jan., 2017.
- Fig. 1328.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 1 April, 2017.
- Fig. 1329.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 26 Oct., 2008.
- Fig. 1330.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 12 April, 2015.
- Fig. 1331.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 March, 2014.
- Fig. 1332.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm.*, 7 June, 2015.
- Fig. 1333.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 15 March, 2008.
- Fig. 1334.** Mark Tatulli, *Liō*, 16 Oct., 2010.
- Fig. 1335.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 25 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1336.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*.
- Fig. 1337.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 March, 2011.
- Fig. 1338.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 29 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 1339.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 9 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 1340.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 8 Nov., 2018.
- Fig. 1341.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 29 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 1342.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 3 Nov., 1995.
- Fig. 1343.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 July, 2007.
- Fig. 1344.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 28 May, 2011.
- Fig. 1345.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 24 June, 2005.
- Fig. 1346.** Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 22 Sept., 2000.
- Fig. 1347.** Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 26 Jan., 2008.

- Fig. 1348.** Mike Baldwin, *Cornered*, 2 March, 2008.
- Fig. 1349.** Alain (Daniel Brustlein), *The New Yorker*, 1 Oct., 1955.
- Fig. 1350.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 10 Feb., 2012.
- Fig. 1351.** Tim Richard, *Brewster Rockit*, 20 Sept., 2020.
- Fig. 1352.** Ronald Searle, 1945.
- Fig. 1353.** Carl Rose, *The New Yorker*, 5 Jan., 1952.
- Fig. 1354.** Alan Dunn, *The New Yorker*, 19 April, 1952.
- Fig. 1355.** Ed Fisher, *The New Yorker*, 26 Jan., 1963.
- Fig. 1356.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 12 July, 2013.
- Fig. 1357.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 Oct., 2009.
- Fig. 1358.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 1359.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 9 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 1360.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 Feb., 2017.
- Fig. 1361.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 6 Oct., 2011.
- Fig. 1362.** Tony Zuvela, 2008.
- Fig. 1363.** Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories: Twitter in Ancient Egypt," *History Today*, 8 June, 2012.
- Fig. 1364.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 26 April, 2014.
- Fig. 1365.** Cuyler Black, front page of *What's That Funny Look on Your Faith?*, 2006.
- Fig. 1366a.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366b.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366c.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366d.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366e.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366f.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366g.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366h.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366i.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1366j.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1367.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 27 Sept., 2020.
- Fig. 1368.** Dave Whamond, *Reality Check*, 12 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1369.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 20 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1370.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 30 May, 2017.
- Fig. 1371.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 22 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1372.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 17 April, 2016.
- Fig. 1373.** David Borchart, *The New Yorker*, 14 Oct., 2013.
- Fig. 1374.** Scott Hilburn, 30 April, 2009.
- Fig. 1375.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 7 Jan., 2010.
- Fig. 1376.** Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*, 24 Jan., 2011.
- Fig. 1377.** Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*, 24 Oct., 2011.
- Fig. 1378.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 5 Dec. 2009.
- Fig. 1379.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 22 July, 2010.
- Fig. 1380.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 1 Feb., 2016.
- Fig. 1381.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 20 July, 2010.
- Fig. 1382.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 6 Jan., 2012.
- Fig. 1383.** Leigh Rubins, *Rubes*.
- Fig. 1384.** Daniel Collins, NobleWorks Cards.
- Fig. 1385.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 4 April, 2015.
- Fig. 1386.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 1 Jan., 2016.
- Fig. 1387.** Dan Reynolds, *Divine Comedy*, 2016.
- Fig. 1388.** Selection of Mike Baldwin, *Cornered* cartoons, 2000 to 2020.
- Fig. 1389.** J.V., 2002.
- Fig. 1390.** Harry Bliss, 24 Sept., 2005.
- Fig. 1391.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 2007.
- Fig. 1392.** John Huckleby and Nicholas DeYoung, *Bible Tails*, DaySpring, 2008.
- Fig. 1393.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1394.** A Gary Larson cartoon.
- Fig. 1395.** A Leigh Rubins cartoon.

- Fig. 1396.** Glenn McCoy and Gary McCoy, *The Flying McCoys*, 5 April, 2010.
- Fig. 1397.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 4 Sept., 2013.
- Fig. 1398.** Dan Reynolds, Cover and cartoon from *Divine Comedy*, 2017.
- Fig. 1399.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 9 Aug., 2014.
- Fig. 1400.** Hank Ketcham, *Dennis the Menace*, 28 May, 2017.
- Fig. 1401.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 16 Feb., 2019.
- Fig. 1402.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 18 Dec., 2013.
- Fig. 1403.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 1404.** Scott Metzger, *The Bent Pinky*.
- Fig. 1405.** Bill Whitehead, *Free Range*, 29 April, 2015.
- Fig. 1406.** Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories: Galilee, A.D. 26," *History Today*, 5 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 1407.** Phil Judd, 2008.
- Fig. 1408.** Three Tim Whyatt greeting card cartoons.
- Fig. 1409.** Joseph Nowak.
- Fig. 1410.** Cuyler Black, a selection of "Inherit the Mirth" cartoons.
- Fig. 1411.** A Gary Larson cartoon.
- Fig. 1412.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 26 Jan., 2007.
- Fig. 1413.** A Chris Madden cartoon.
- Fig. 1414.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 5 July, 2011.
- Fig. 1415.** A Tim Whyatt greeting card cartoon.
- Fig. 1416.** Randy Bish, *Pittsburgh Tribune*, 13 Feb. 2000.
- Fig. 1417.** John Atkinson, *Wrong Hands*, 16 June, 2017.
- Fig. 1418.** Loren Fishman, *Humoresque Cartoons*, 2011.
- Fig. 1419.** Barry Blitt *The New Yorker*, 10 July, 2020.
- Fig. 1420.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 6 Jan., 1906.
- Fig. 1421.** Wesley Osam, 16 Oct., 2008.
- Fig. 1422.** Curt Swan, Cover art, *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* #92, D. C. Comics, May, 1969. (From Kovacs, 2011, fig. 1.1.)
- Fig. 1423.** David Mazzucchelli, Cover art, *Daredevil* #226, Marvel Comics, Jan., 1986. (From Kovacs and Marshall, 2011, fig. 0.1.)
- Fig. 1424.** Frank Miller, *300*, Dark Horse Comics, 1998.
- Fig. 1425.** Everett E. Hibbard, Cover art for *The Flash* #10, D.C. Comics, Oct., 1940.
- Fig. 1426.** William Moulton Marston and Harry G. Peter, Panel from *All Star Comics* #8, D.C. Comics, Dec. 1941.
- Fig. 1427.** George Perez, *Wonder Woman Omnibus*, D.C. Comics, 2015.
- Fig. 1428.** C. C. Beck, Cover art for *Whiz Comics* #2,, Fawcett Comics, Feb., 1940.
- Fig. 1429.** Al Plastino, Cover art for *Action Comics* #293, D.C. Comics, Oct., 1962.
- Fig. 1430.** Theatrical release poster for *Hercules*, Walt Disney Pictures, 1997.
- Fig. 1431.** Andrew Kreisberg, Josh Lieb, and Matt Warburton, "D'oh, Brother Where Art Thou?" *The Simpsons*, March, 2002.
- Fig. 1432.** Pedro Cifuentes, Title page to *Historia del arte en cómic 1. El mundo clásico*, 2019.
- Fig. 1433.** Pedro Cifuentes, *Historia del arte en cómic 1. El mundo clásico*, 2019, p. 42.
- Fig. 1434.** Detail of an Attic Red-Figure Stamnos ("The Siren Vase"). From Vulci, 480–470 B.C.E. The British Museum.
- Fig. 1435.** Pedro Cifuentes, *Historia del arte en cómic 1. El mundo clásico*, 2019, p. 43.
- Fig. 1436.** Marble sculpture of Aphrodite, Pan, and Eros. From Delos, ca. 100 B.C.E. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.
- Fig. 1437.** John Buscema, Cover art, *The Iliad*, Marvel Classics Comics #26, July, 1977.
- Fig. 1438.** Ernie Chan, Cover art, *The Odyssey*, Marvel Classics Comics #18, Dec., 1976.
- Fig. 1439.** George Pichard, Cover art to *Ulysses*, Heavy Metal, 1978.
- Fig. 1440.** José María Martín Saurí, Cover art to *The Odyssey*, Heavy Metal, 1983.
- Fig. 1441.** José María Martín Saurí, Illustration for *Odiseo*, 1983.
- Fig. 1442.** José María Martín Sauri, illustrations for *The Odyssey*, Heavy Metal, 1983. (From Jenkins, 2011, figs. 16.1 and 16.2)
- Fig. 1443.** Cover to Virgin Steele, *The House of Atreus* album, 2009.
- Fig. 1444.** Cover to Symphony, *The Odyssey* album, Inside Out Music, 2002.
- Fig. 1445.** Eric Shanower, Title page to *Age of Bronze*, Vol. 1, 2001.

- Fig. 1446.** Eric Shanower, *Age of Bronze*, “Mycenae Palace Courtyard,” (From Shanower, 2005, fig. 1.)
- Fig. 1447.** Eric Shanower, “Twenty-first Century Troy” (2011), pp. 199, 200, 202, and 206.
- Fig. 1448.** Eric Shanower, Paris and Helen, detail from *Age of Bronze* 23, 2006. (From Sulprizio, 2011, fig. 15.2)
- Fig. 1449.** V.T. Hamblin, *Alley Oop*, 23 Aug., 1939.
- Fig. 1450.** Bob Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 8 Oct., 1996.
- Fig. 1451.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 1 Feb., 2015.
- Fig. 1452.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 11 May, 2015.
- Fig. 1453.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 20 Feb, 2012.
- Fig. 1454.** Mark Schultz and Thomas Yeates, *Prince Valiant*, 4 Jan., 2015.
- Fig. 1455.** Mark Schultz and Thomas Yeates, *Prince Valiant*, 11 Jan., 2015.
- Fig. 1456.** Dolphin fresco, Palace of Knossos, Minoan, ca. 1500 B.C.E. Herakleion Museum, Crete.
- Fig. 1457.** “Ladies in Blue” fresco, Palace of Minoan, ca. 1500 B.C.E. Herakleion Museum, Knossos, Crete.
- Fig. 1458.** Dan Thompson, *Brevity*, 31 March, 2012.
- Fig. 1459.** Eric Shanower, panel from Shanower, 2011, p, 196.
- Fig. 1460.** Cover and illustration from *D’Aulaires’ Book of Greek Myths*.
- Fig. 1461.** Bill Waterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 3 Feb., 1988.
- Fig. 1462.** Arnie Levin, *The New Yorker*, 8 Jan., 1990.
- Fig. 1463.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 23 June, 2013.
- Fig. 1464.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 12 Feb., 2008.
- Fig. 1465.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 15 May, 2016.
- Fig. 1466.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 28 Oct., 2012.
- Fig. 1467.** Roger L. Phillips, *The Grey Zone*, 2014.
- Fig. 1468.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 25 June, 2013.
- Fig. 1469.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 21 June, 2013.
- Fig. 1470.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 7 Sept., 2017.
- Fig. 1471.** Scott Maynard, *Happle Tea*, 19 July, 2013.
- Fig. 1472.** Dave Blazek, *Loose Parts*, 6 June, 2006.
- Fig. 1473.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 26 Dec., 2015.
- Fig. 1474.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 10 Sept., 2011.
- Fig. 1475.** John Zakour and Scott Roberts, *Working Daze*, 11 June, 2012.
- Fig. 1476.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 31 May, 2018.
- Fig. 1477.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 30 May, 2014.
- Fig. 1478.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 16 March, 2012.
- Fig. 1479.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 16 Feb., 2018.
- Fig. 1480.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 28 May, 2010.
- Fig. 1481.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 28 Aug., 2017.
- Fig. 1482.** Dan Piraro, 2003.
- Fig. 1483.** Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 30 April, 2018.
- Fig. 1484.** Mort Gerberg, *The New Yorker*, 20 July, 1998.
- Fig. 1485.** Roz Chast, *The New Yorker*, 22 Sept., 2008.
- Fig. 1486.** Charles Barsotti, *The New Yorker*, 8 Dec., 2008.
- Fig. 1487.** Zachery Kanin, *The New Yorker*, 1 June, 2009.
- Fig. 1488.** Christopher Weyant, *The New Yorker*, 29 Nov., 2010.
- Fig. 1489.** Paul Booth, *The New Yorker*, 24 Dec., 2012.
- Fig. 1490.** Drew Dernavich, *The New Yorker*, 20 May, 2013.
- Fig. 1491.** Mort Gerberg, *The New Yorker*, 21 Oct., 2013.
- Fig. 1492.** Shannon Wheeler, *The New Yorker*, 11 Nov., 2013.
- Fig. 1493.** Bob Eckstein, *The New Yorker*, 27 July, 2015.
- Fig. 1494.** Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 16 Aug., 2015.
- Fig. 1495.** Kaamran Hafeez, *The New Yorker*, 26 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 1496.** Danny Shanahan, *The New Yorker*, 2 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 1497.** Seth Fleishman, *The New Yorker*, 22 Aug., 2016.
- Fig. 1498.** Pat Byrnes, *The New Yorker*, 24 March, 2017.
- Fig. 1499.** Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 18 Feb., 2020.

- Fig. 1500.** Lars Kenseth, *The New Yorker*, 1 June, 2020.
- Fig. 1501.** Benjamin Schwartz, *The New Yorker*, 17 Aug., 2020.
- Fig. 1502.** Mark Anderson, *Andertoons*, Work Cartoon #7042.
- Fig. 1503.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 4 Nov., 2012.
- Fig. 1504.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grim*, 26 May, 2013.
- Fig. 1505.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 20 Jan., 2013.
- Fig. 1506.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 30 March, 2013.
- Fig. 1507.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 14 Aug. 2014.
- Fig. 1508.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 3 May, 2015.
- Fig. 1509.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 6 Dec., 2016.
- Fig. 1510.** Anatol Kovarsky, "Leda and the Swan," unpublished drawings, 1953–1959.
- Fig. 1511.** Frank Modell, *The New Yorker*, 16 Nov., 1968.
- Fig. 1512.** Jason Adam Katzenstein, *The New Yorker*, 14 March, 2016.
- Fig. 1513.** Charles Hankin, *The New Yorker*, 20 Nov., 2017.
- Fig. 1514.** Robert Leighton, *The New Yorker*, 10 Jan., 2005.
- Fig. 1515.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 25 March, 2009.
- Fig. 1516.** Dylan Spencer, *Earth Explodes*, 2013.
- Fig. 1517.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 11 July, 2014.
- Fig. 1518.** Richard Thompson, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 5 Sept., 2018 (reprint).
- Fig. 1519.** Ros Chast, *The New Yorker*, 30 Nov., 2015.
- Fig. 1520.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 23 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 1521.** Mikael Wulff & Anders Morgenthaler, *Wumo*, 6 April, 2019.
- Fig. 1522.** Dave Coverly, *Speed Bump*, 9 Aug., 2020.
- Fig. 1523.** Scott Adams, *Dilbert*, 3 Jan., 2016.
- Fig. 1524.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 2004 and 2016.
- Fig. 1525.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 11 March, 2016.
- Fig. 1526.** Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories: Greece, c. 560 B.C.," *History Today*, 23 April, 2015.
- Fig. 1527.** Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 28 Sept., 2014.
- Fig. 1528.** Peter Duggan, *The Guardian*, 12 Oct., 2015.
- Fig. 1529.** Harry Bliss, illustration from *Bailey at the Museum*, 2012.
- Fig. 1530.** Bill Amend, *FoxTrot*, 5 Jan., 2014.
- Fig. 1531.** Jim Davis, *Garfield*. 2 Feb., 2013.
- Fig. 1532.** Tom Thaves, *Frank and Ernest*, 4 May, 2014.
- Fig. 1533.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 18 Sept., 2016.
- Fig. 1534.** George Herriman, *Krazy Kat*, 15 May, 1919.
- Fig. 1535.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 20 Oct., 1956.
- Fig. 1536.** John McPherson, *Close to Home*, 4 March, 2016.
- Fig. 1537.** Ian Baker, "Exhibition Piece," 22 June, 2008.
- Fig. 1538.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 6 Jan., 2009.
- Fig. 1539.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 8 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1540.** Rea Irvin, Cover to *Life*, 20 Feb., 1913.
- Fig. 1541.** Garrett Price, *Life*, 30 Sept., 1940.
- Fig. 1542.** Left: Attic Black-Figure olpe, ca. 550–520 B.C.E. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology; right: vectorized drawing by Alexandre G. Mitchell, from Mitchell 2009, Fig. 1.
- Fig. 1543.** Attic eye cup from Vulci, ca. 550 B.C.E. Tampa Museum of Art.
- Fig. 1544.** Fragment of an Attic Red-Figure cup, ca. 440–430 B.C.E. Acropolis Museum. From Mitchell, 2009, Fig. 3.
- Fig. 1545.** Attic Red-Figure kylix from Vulci, ca. 500–490 B.C.E. British Museum.
- Fig. 1546.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 3 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1547.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 14 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 1548.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 14 March, 2010.
- Fig. 1549.** Mark Parisi, *Off the Mark*, 5 May, 2018.
- Fig. 1550.** Dave Blazek, *Loose Parts*, 19 Jan., 2015.
- Fig. 1551.** Rob Murray, "Alternative Histories," *History Today*, 2020.
- Fig. 1552.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 19 July, 2008.
- Fig. 1553.** Dan Piraro, *Bizzaro*, 7 Nov., 2010.

- Fig. 1554.** Dean Young and John Marshall, *Blondie*. 12 Aug., 2012.
- Fig. 1555.** Hilary B. Price, *Rhymes with Orange*, 9 April, 2017.
- Fig. 1556.** Mike Peters, *Mother Goose & Grimm*, 12 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1557.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 1 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1558.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 3 Dec., 2014.
- Fig. 1559.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 19 July, 2016.
- Fig. 1560.** Cast of characters of *Asterix*.
- Fig. 1561.** Advertisement for McDonalds, from *Le Figero*, 2010.
- Fig. 1562.** Jack Kirby, *Tales of the Unexpected* #16, 1957.
- Fig. 1563.** John Buscema, cover art for *Thor* #272, June, 1978.
- Fig. 1564.** Chris Browne, *Hagar the Horrible*, 25 Dec., 2006.
- Fig. 1565.** Gary Larson, *The Far Side*.
- Fig. 1566.** Colby Jones, *SirColby*, 27 Dec., 2007.
- Fig. 1567.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 5 June, 2011.
- Fig. 1568.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 30 April, 2009.
- Fig. 1569.** Leigh Rubin, *Rubes*, 4 March, 2014.
- Fig. 1570.** Scott Maynard, *Happle Tea*, 6 Aug., 2013.
- Fig. 1571.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 27 Nov., 2016.
- Fig. 1572.** Carl Barks, Cover and page from *Donald Duck "Lost in the Andes"*, Walt Disney, 2011.
- Fig. 1573.** David Farley, *Doctor Fun*, 3 Dec., 2004.
- Fig. 1574.** Glenn and Gary McCoy, *The Duplex*, 17 July, 2009.
- Fig. 1575.** Lalo Alcaraz, *La Cucaracha*, 13 Feb, 2010.
- Fig. 1576.** Scott Hilburn, *The Argyle Sweater*, 7 Feb., 2012.
- Fig. 1577.** Aztec Sun Stone, ca. 1502–1521 A.D. National Anthropology Museum, Mexico City.
- Fig. 1578.** Anatol Kovarsky, *The New Yorker*, 26 Nov., 1960.
- Fig. 1579.** Leigh Rubin, 24 Jan., 2006.
- Fig. 1580.** Dan Piraro, *Bizarro*, 2 Dec., 2009.
- Fig. 1581.** Tom Cheney, *The New Yorker*.
- Fig. 1582.** Wiley Miller, *Non Sequitur*, 4 Sept., 2015.
- Fig. 1583.** Ballgame scene on a Maya vase K5435; (bottom right) speed depicted by Hergé in 1930 in the Quick & Flupke series - Acroabaties p. 2. (From Wichmann and Nielsen, 2017, fig. 3.)
- Fig. 1584.** Rolled-out view of "Regal Rabbit Pot," K1398, Maya, 693–728 A.D., Private Coll.
- Fig. 1585.** Ray Billingsley, *Curtis*, 23 Nov., 2014.
- Fig. 1586.** Dave Horton, *Hortoon*, 2008.
- Fig. 1587.** Peter Kuper, "This is Not a Pipe," Screenprint, 2008. University of North Dakota.
- Fig. 1588.** Peter Kuper, cagle.com, 21 Sept., 2020.
- Fig. 1589.** Peter Kuper, cagle.com, 17 Sept., 2020.
- Fig. 1590.** Detail from Fig. 288, Stephan Pastis, "The Sad, Lonely Journey of a 'Pearls' Comic Strip," *Pearls Before Swine*, 11 July, 2004.
- Fig. 1591.** Mothers taking their children to the art museum. From Figs. 158, and 223–225.
- Fig. 1592.** The living room sofa. From Figs. 845, 1075, 535, 1494, 1458, 1084, 1546, and 1554.
- Fig. 1593.** Art above the couch. From Figs. 725, 536, and 709.
- Fig. 1594.** Mothers chiding their children. From Figs. 21, 297, 298, 331, 636, 1099, and 1331.
- Fig. 1595.** Disgruntled women. From Figs. 17, 18 1489, 1504, 1519, 1558, 1586.
- Fig. 1596.** Men watching television. From Figs. 505, 551, 618, 1509, 883, and 894.
- Fig. 1597.** Men sleeping in chairs. From Figs. 200, 201, 239, 377, and 504.
- Fig. 1598.** Andrew Toos, 2011.