

## ***Comic Monthly 1922: Exploring Form and Themes***

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### **Abstract**

The paper will study the first monthly comic book, *Comic Monthly*, issued in 1922. Thus, this year not only enriched the traditional ‘text’ literature but also witnessed the birth of the modern sequential narrative phenomenon. The analysis of the twelve issues will be informed by a close reading of the texts. The exploration will be done under the broad theoretical framework of sequential narrativity developed by Scott McCloud (*Understanding Comics*, 1992) and Thierry Groensteen (*System of Comics*, 2007) for exploring the themes of gender, race, nationalism, and social politics represented in them through formalistic architectonics and as to how these themes were reflective of the American zeitgeist. The influence of parallel media of expression like film and literature, on the form and themes of these comic books would be calibrated. These influences were relayed in some form or another into the construction of the later day comics. Hence these texts would be explored as the precursors of modern-day sequential narrative formats (David Kunzle, 1990). These texts will give a rare glimpse to the first attempts at sequential narration in a magazine format and how that contributed to the development of the art-form in the long run. Thus, this paper will collate the influences on the narrative structure of the early comic books, and how the themes depicted were reflective of the general socio-economic, political, and cultural nuances (Denis Gilford, 1990). This study will add to the already established discipline of comics historiography (Ashkenazi and Dittmar, 2019).

**Keywords:** Architectonics, historiography, sequential narrative, comics, image-text



## Introduction

1922 witnessed the publication of some groundbreaking literary works throughout the globe. It was in this year that the first comic book was also published in USA<sup>1</sup>. It was named *Comic Monthly*. “*Comic Monthly*, ... long predated *Famous Funnies* as America's first periodic comic book” (Markstein, 2007). It ran from January 1922 to December 1922, published by Embee Distributing Company. These monthly comics were the reprints of the following comic strips published in 1921 - Rube Goldberg's *Mike and Ike* and *Foolish Questions*, Billy DeBeck's *Barney Google* and *Barney Google and Spark Plug*, James Swimmerton's *Little Jimmy*, Russ Westover's *Tillie, the Toiler*, Jimmy Murphy's *Toots and Casper*, C.M. Payne's *S'matter Pops* and Cliff Sterrett's *Polly and her Pals*. The comic strips in themselves were reflective of the socio-cultural changes that were taking place in the USA (Gordon, 9) and it was of this period that Edward Albert notes, “...the spirit of the age is perfectly reflected in its literature.” (Albert, 508). Hence 1922 was not only important for the exuberance of its literary output but also for the branching out of new formats of expressions including comic books. This paper will study the stylistic and thematic influences of comic strips on the development the latter day comics (1938 onwards). However, the importance of this event has not been registered significantly in the documented history of comic books. Hence this paper purports to shed light on this less discussed feature of the development of comics.

While the modern literature that developed after World War I was gloomy and realistic, the American comic strips provided an escapist release from the gloom of the post war atmosphere though the USA itself was not much affected by the war. Actually, the USA had gained in terms of wealth from the war (Lozada, 2005) and the strips reflected the extra leisure time that both industrialization/mechanization and the extra income had brought for the American educated upper and middle class (Hartsell, 2017).

## Definitions

A Comic strip, according to David Kunzle is a, “... series of adjacent drawn images, usually arranged horizontally, that are designed to be read as a narrative or a chronological sequence.” (Kunzle, 2017) In contrast to a comic book, which according to Scott McCloud are, “...juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response. . .” (McCloud, 09). Thus, while the architectural design in comic strips are horizontal (with exceptions of entire pages of comic strips on Sundays), the narratorial shifts throughout the panels in comic books are more textually vertical. This limitation on the comic strips did not allow for character development of the characters for a long time (until the comic strips started to be printed as books) since the events in the strip has to be complete for the day. Comics in comparison always had a wider berth for characterization. Hence, when *Comic Monthly* came out in 1922, it solved one the problems by presenting the whole gamut of the characters in one book. Again, while the major aim of comic strips was to generate humour (Gordon, 6), comic books (with a few exceptions like *Kathy*, *Aggie Mack*, *Bone* etc.) are not strictly about poking fun at its characters. Obviously, comic strips are a part of newspaper entertainment pages, while comic books are standalone texts. The gradual growth of the strips into the comics format can be said to signify the gradual growth of the medium from dependency to independency. *Comic Monthly* was a small step in this growth.



## Evolution of comic strips in the US

The comic strips evolved from the traditional (print) cartoons. A "cartoon" was any single drawing generally accompanied by a caption or a legend that conveyed a message (Becker, 2). The instances of proto-comic strips existed (created by, William Hogarth, Thomas Rowlandson and Rudolph Toppfer) since the Eighteenth century. The advent of comic strips in the US was augmented by the development of the colour press in 1893. Initially, comic strips were featured in the Sunday supplement of American newspapers, to attract customers (Gordon, 7). They catered to the 'new reading public' (Gordon, 13) comprising of the urban working class in the eastern cities of the US. In the 1880s, American newspapers slowly incorporated more comic strips as a result of the sales rivalry between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst (Gordon, 14). The popularity of the *The Yellow Kid* (from 1895 to 1898, considered to be the first comic strip) engendered more such strips as competition.

### The publisher

Embee or M.B. stood for the initials of George McManus and Rudolph Block, Jr., who founded the company with Alfred Block, Dr. William Rodgers and Frank J. Rice in New York. The company went bankrupt in late 1922. The publisher was also the distributor Embee Distribution Company of New York City. The company was owned by George McManus and Rudolph Block Jr. (Em for McManus, bee for Block.) Rudolph was also the editor of the magazine. The comic strips were from the King Features and Hearst Syndicate.

In 1904, McManus created the first American family comic strip, *The Newlyweds*. The popularity of the strip prompted the management of *The New York American* to invite McManus to work for their newspaper.

Beginning in 1897, Block edited the Sunday comics section of William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*. He supervised the standardization of the format of the comic strip pages. "He marshalled the chaotic energies of the early comic strip into the unified cohesive format that made Hearst's supplementary comics distinctive and would ultimately define the comic strip itself." (Cole, 27) Eventually, the comic strips were the forerunners of the modern comic books and their form and format were reflected in the comics.

### The artists

#### 1. Rube Goldberg (c.1883-1970)

Goldberg was the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for political cartooning in 1948. Goldberg's first commercial success was a comic strip called *Foolish Questions* (1909 to 1934). It was in connection to this strip that the term 'Goldbergian' came to currency. Goldberg is credited with 50,000 cartoons/comic strips in his career where as a hallmark of his style, he combined seriousness and ridiculousness seamlessly. Rube Goldberg wrote the first feature film for the pre-Curly Howard's version of *The Three Stooges* called *Soup to Nuts*, which was released in 1930. The film featured his machines and included cameos of Rube himself. The latter practice was continued by Stan Lee with his mandatory cameos in the Marvel movies.



*Foolish Questions* (October<sup>2</sup>)

*Foolish Questions* appeared in the *New York Evening Mail* in 1908. It was a persistent newspaper single-panel comic in which people ask ‘foolish’ questions and are given sarcastic answers. It became popular and the readers started sending in their own questions for Goldberg to answer thus providing more content for the strip. This feature of reader-author conversation seems to have been developed into a section of comics where the readers would directly interact with authors through letters. The strip’s architectonics was more in line with the single panel cartoons that preceded it but when a hardcover compilation of “Foolish Questions” was published in 1909, it became one of the first cartoon collections published in USA. However, a reviewer in the *The Bellman* (a literary magazine) criticized the collection of *Foolish Questions* by saying that the strips, “... may have been amusing when issued singly in the daily press, but thrust upon one en masse they become nauseating.” (Tumey, 2012) The medium of comics learnt from this and kept on introducing varieties of foregrounding devices to keep the themes from getting over worn. After all, comic book creators have a tightrope to walk on - on one hand they need to use a well established trope or theme or character and at the same time they have to be innovative enough to not bore the audience. This could be one of the greatest challenges that comic strips introduced to the comics industry. The comics industry replied by using a variety of responses like introducing new characters and killing them off when they had served their purpose. Perhaps the same technique was used by the comic strips when they invited other members to their strips. This technique is still followed. For example - the Simpsons invite guests to their episodes including Michelle Obama (in "Stealing First Base").

While according to Tumey “... the racism in his (Goldberg’s) cartoons is no more extreme than what is easily found in most cartoons of the time.” (Tumey, 2012) thematically, racial stereotypes engendered in the strip found their echoes in later day comics produced not only in the US (especially in the Golden and Silver age comics) but also in Europe (as in Herge’s *Tintin in Cairo*). Now, colour which made the cartoon/comic strips gain popularity, reinforced stereotypes based on colour as in the following figure (figure 1).



Fig. 1. Goldberg, Rube. *Comic Monthly*# 10. Embee, 1922. p. 12.



### *Mike and Ike* (February)

*Mike and Ike (They Look Alike)* was another comic strip created by Rube Goldberg, based on the daily travails of the identical twin characters in the *San Francisco Bulletin* on September 29, 1907. "The identical twin morons were originally done as a half-page Sunday series for World Color Printing Co., which later printed most of America's comic books. (Markstein, 2007)" This strip marked an advance and another step towards comics by putting the panels in a sequence. The panels (figure 2) however, were still not divided by what later came to be understood as gutters. Moreover, while the single panels had more space of narratorial expression, the rectangular panels seemed stiff. The narrative energies were moulded according to the space of these panels. Initially comic artists, who created comics, adapted themselves to these restricted panel structures. Instead of stunting the narrative growth of the medium the artists and writers actually, were compelled to practice economy of expression that in turn allowed them and subsequent creators to tell a lot through a lot less resources.

Mike and Ike anticipated DC Comics' *Dover & Clover*, Terrytoons' *Heckle & Jeckle*. As an influence on comics we can find them to be the prototype of Tintin's Thompson and Thompson. They too were bumbling fools wearing identical clothes. Further, the confusion created out of the situation was recreated in several comics issues where the day was saved by using identical twins. For example, the character of Sam Koeing (and his four identical twins), a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent (Marvel Comics) is often used dexterously to gain advantage over certain antagonists.

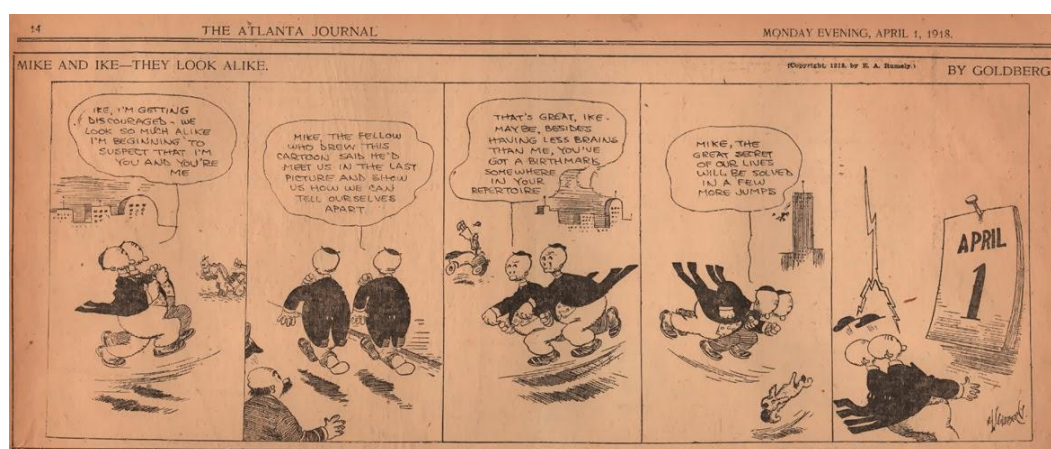


Fig. 2. Goldberg, Rube. *Comic Monthly*# 2. Embee, 1922. p. 03.

The above-mentioned image highlights a sense of self-reflexivity, (a postmodern feature) that anticipates Vladimir and Estragon's (*Waiting for Godot*) hope to meet their maker and being disappointed. (Tumey, 2013) This aspect of self reflexivity was often used in later day comics where the characters broke the third wall and interacted with the readers. For example, Superman often winked (starting in *Superman*# 19. 1942) at the end of the comics affirming the secret (that Clark Kent is Superman) that the reader and Superman kept to themselves.





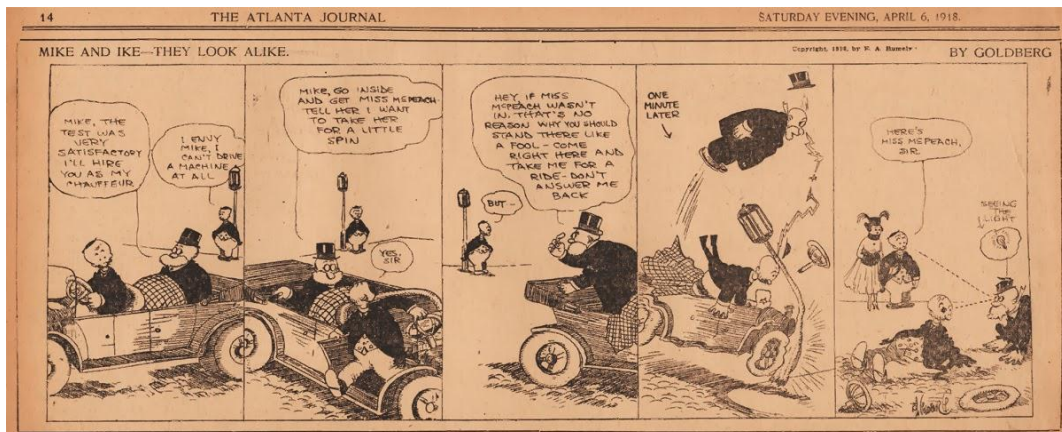


Fig. 3. Goldberg, Rube. *Comic Monthly*# 2. Embee, 1922. p. 08.

Here we find that Mike is hired as a chauffeur, which hints at the class status of the twins and the fact that automobiles provided new avenues of employment. It subverts the popular belief that machines created unemployment. Thus, while industrialization provided new avenues of skill outlets, the unskilled labour force was soon to fall into the Depression of 1929. Rapid industrialization helped create a number of class distinctions. Not only by images but by its language too, which was dialectical and true to life, the chief characters signified their class position (or race) through correct or improper pronunciations. These varied pronunciations, have been the hallmark of American identity and identification.

## 2. Billy DeBeck (c.1890 – 1942)

DeBeck drew with a scratchy line in a 'big-foot' style, in which characters had some exaggerated features. Thus, the hyperbolic musculatures that mark the superhuman body in the superhero comics had its tradition in the comic strip's disproportionate anatomy (Avery-Natale, 73). DeBeck also introduced continuity into the strip which became a key feature in the comic books especially of the superhero genre. *Barney Google* went from being a gag-a-day strip to one in which both humor and suspense kept readers coming back each day, as Google made drastic attempts to get his horse to win a race. DeBeck was credited with introducing neologisms and catchphrases, such as 'heebie-jeebies', 'horsefeathers', 'balls of fire' and 'time's a-wastin' which were adapted by comics and channelized further, for example, 1950s Batman comics abound in phrases like 'holy-moly', 'jeepers' etc.. DeBeck had included another strip called *Bughouse Fables* with his main strip since 1921 and was re-printed in *Comics Monthly* in 1922, September issue.

### Barney Google and Spark Plug (April and November)

*Barney Google* debuted on the sports page of *Chicago Herald* with the name *Take Barney Google, For Instance* in a King Features strip in 1919. It was later re-titled to *Barney Google and Snuffy Smith*. "The storylines reflected the outlook of the 1920s boom years, the Great Depression, and World War II" (Harkins, 70). Thousands of newspaper readers eagerly anticipated the outcome of Sparky's first race. It was one of comics' first national media events. DeBeck, made Spark Plug a permanent part of the cast. It was in this strip that the aspect of gutters were introduced and continued (figure 4). The white space between the two consecutive panels accounted for the lapse of time. It also became a space



for reader participation and anticipation (Gordon, 10). Comics creators realized the potential of the space and incorporated in their pages.

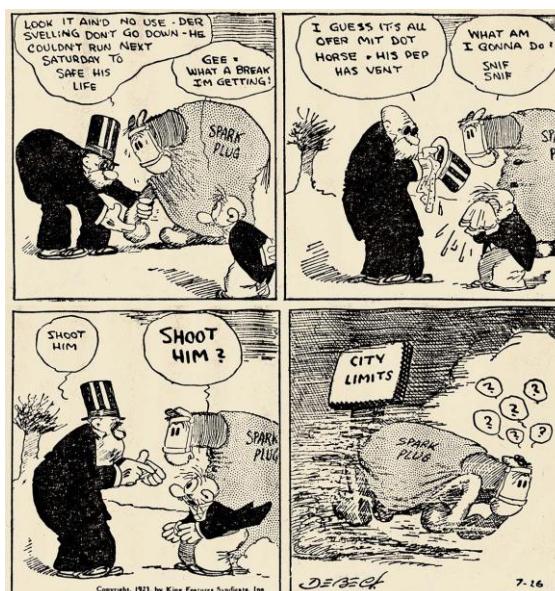


Fig. 4. DeBeck, Billy. *Comic Monthly*# 11. Embee, 1922. p.02.

Interestingly, comic strips did not have children as their target audience (Gordon, 3). And Barney being an unapologetic philanderer broke one of syndicated cartooning's most sacred taboos: comic strip husbands were not allowed to be unfaithful to their wives. Barney, however, got away with playing around. This thematic aspect was lapped up by later day Young Romance (by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, 1947-1975) published by Crest Wood Publications.

### 3. James Swinnerton (c.1875 –1974)

Markstein noted that Swinnerton "drew his strip in a clear, open style, unlike most cartoonists of his time. In this, he anticipated dominant styles of the 20th century, less crowded and more easily read...." (Markstein, 2007)

#### *Little Jimmy* (July)

The *Little Jimmy* strips were the first strips to be designed as a page (Figure 5). The architecture and 'archi-texture' of the comic page - the gutters and the panels of the latter day comic books perhaps have taken their cue from here. Also the device 'meanwhile' seems to have developed from this comic strip. Many comic scripts in their nascent stage carry panel numbers in order to explain the positions of the same in page. *Little Jimmy* used the panel numbers while they lost the gutters thus providing an alternative to comics creators for representing the panels.

The strip first appearing in *The New York Journal* on Feb. 14, 1904, became a regular in the Sunday comics section. In 1915, *Little Jimmy* went into nationwide syndication. In the following strip we find three aspects of American daily life - 1. Daylight crime owing to high levels of unemployment, (it could anticipate the hold up and



tragedy in Batman mythos) 2. The shoddy job done by police (anticipates the birth of extra judicial vigilantism), 3. Racism (in the menagerie show)



Fig. 5. Swinnerton, James. *Comic Monthly*# 7. Embee, 1922. p.13.

Little Jimmy could also be understood as the precursor of the naughty child trope repeated with Robin, Acqualad, Peter Parker, Jimmy Olsen etc. While the child created trouble the kid sidekicks of the superheroes led themselves into trouble. The unruly children were often found challenging the authority figures with pranks. These pranks were partly to get the attention of the parents who were perhaps otherwise busy. The motivating factor behind the actions of the super villains or anti heroes in the comic books work on the same principle. The super villains seek attention of the authority figures, denoted by the superheroes, by the sheer 'enormity' of their 'transgression' (Pearson and Urichhio, 204).

#### 4. Russ Westover (c.1886-1966)

Westover began *Tillie the Toiler* for King Features in 1921, and the working-girl strip quickly established a wide readership, during the late 1920s, more than 600 papers were carrying *Tillie the Toiler*. When Westover retired in the early 1950s, Bob Gustafson continued *Tillie the Toiler* until 1959. These long running strips opened up the possibility of transition of artists from one story arc to another and the continuation of the characters





long after the death of the creators. Thus art gradually became greater than individual artists. This aspect is hardly possible in other forms of art.

#### *Tillie the Toiler* (May)

Contemporary comic strips about working women abound, but in 1922 the strip carried a novel idea. Tillie (last name Jones) worked in a trendy women's apparel firm. She pursued and was sought after by numerous handsome men. These pursuits formed the bulk of the stories. She did, however, have one steady boy friend, a co-worker named Clarence "Mac" MacDougall. He was drawn as short and bulb-nosed who loved her persistently even though it mostly went unrequited. As far as office romance is concerned, Clark Kent and Lois Lane could have been formed on similar lines. Superman would often be threatened by a new suitor (like Oliver Queen) in the comic books as Mac is threatened by new suitors for Tillie. Her name was echoed in some of the female protagonists Marvel Comics introduced in the late 1940s, such as Tessie the Typist, Nellie the Nurse, Sherry the Showgirl and Millie the Model. Daily Planet (Superman), or Daily Bugle (Spiderman) are corporate spaces which seem to follow the pattern of the offices shown in *Tillie the Toiler*. Especially, in the romance genre (a lady having multiple suitors) where the typified characters are to be found a-plenty. Tillie became the forerunner of the stereotypical woman to be found for a very long time in the comics.

#### 5. Jimmy Murphy (c.1891-1965)

James Edward Murphy Jr. like most of his contemporaries was a self-taught artist who is best known for his family comic strip, *Toots and Casper*. He began *Toots and Casper* in December 1918 for the *New York American*, using his wife, Matilda Katherine Murphy, as the model for Toots. The strip was picked up by King Features Syndicate in 1919, and by 1925, it was being carried in numerous newspapers.

#### *Toots and Casper* (August)

Comics historian Coulton Waugh commented on the strip's portrait of a happy, idealized family life: "Like Blondie, Toots is the picture of contentment, and if all homes were like these, the American Dream would be nearly realized." (Waugh, 108) Domesticity in the American household is also reflected in the comics like *American Splendour* (1976-2008) by Harvey Pekar.

*Toots and Casper* utilized the device of continuity along with *Barney Google and Spark Plug*. This device of continuity was explored and over-exploited by comics which came to spawn their own multiverses. *Toots and Casper* used panel numbers but with time the panel numbers were discontinued. This signified the growing narrative confidence of the strips which relied on returning readers just like the comic books. (Groensteen, 28)

#### 6. Cliff Sterrett

*Polly and Her Pals* (originally Positive Polly) was launched in 1912 in *New York Evening Journal*. By the mid-1920s, Sterrett had turned the daily strip over to others (notably Paul Fung and Vernon Greene). Sterrett also created the Sunday topper strips *Dot and Dash* and *Belles and Wedding Belles*. According to M. Thomas Inge, Sterrett's work was influenced by the abstract art of that decade, and had "striking patterns of abstraction much in the style of cubism and surrealism". (Inge, 82) Coulton Waugh regarded this as an innovative step forward, noting that Sterrett's style "appeared in Polly long before modern art was



accepted by American art critics." (Waugh, 42) when this style percolated into the comics produced a decade later the echo of absurdism echoed as loud as the silent pages of the medium could. The same absurd style was adopted by one of the greatest practitioners of the art medium – Jack Kirby (O'Brien, 2003). Al Capp eulogizes, "To think that a whole generation has grown up worshipping Picasso when the guy who did it far better was Sterrett! Far better than Picasso..." (Al Capp, 101)

*Polly and her Pals* (January and December)

Debuting on December 4, 1912, in the Hearst chain of newspapers, Polly is regarded as the first of numerous comic strips about flirting pretty girls, including Edgar Martin's *Boots and Her Buddies*, and Chic Young's *Blondie*. Archie Comics' Betty and Veronica also spring from similar narrative base. *Polly and Her Pals* is ranked alongside Krazy Kat as the epitome of the Art Deco style in comics. (Waugh, 38)

Like Tillie, she is always dating and always late because she takes a lot of time getting ready. This is a gender stereotype that was reinforced through these strips and repeated in the *Comic Monthly*. The following figure institutes another stereotype that women (especially older ladies) cannot handle machinery well (figure 6).



Fig. 6. Sterrett, Cliff. *Comic Monthly*# 01. Embee, 1922. p.11.

The device of signing the artist's name at the end of each strip established the ownership of the artist firmly. Curiously, US comic books initially did not have the names of the artists on them which led to many feuds (Greenberg, 2012) between the publishing companies and the artists. Yet, interestingly artists who created cover pages for Indian comics had their signatures on them. For example, the first issue of Nagraj (named *Nagraj*, 1986, Gen1# 14) carries the name of the artist, Pratap Moolik, on the cover page

Again in *Polly and her Pals* the servant appears to be an African-American. He being shown as a servant and being ignorant of many things appears to be natural. However, Sterrett doesn't paint him in dark hues though he is presented with similar stereotypical traits as stupid or greedy for money. Interestingly, like most of the comic book writers, a large number of comic strip artists were people of Jewish decent. Hence, the dynamics of racial representations take on an interesting turn when one persecuted race



represented another in a stereotypical format. While the types like women with slim waists and handsome men with blonde hair continued well into the comic books later, the short or the tall or the fat stereotypes were turned into shady characters when they evolved into comic book antagonists. For example, there are many deformed characters in the Batman lore, who almost always turn out to be negative characters.

### Formalistic influence on comics

Other than the formalistic influences of comic strips on comic books discussed above there are a few more perceptible influence of comic strips on comic books. “Though it didn’t use what later became the standard format for comic books,...” (Markstein, 2007). *Comic Monthly* did provide a guideline or a broad format to be followed by regular comics. The strip was printed in monochrome, but the cover was in red and black. The book was 8 ½ inches wide and 9 (or 10) inches high and contained 24 pages. It seems that the format of the comics have not changed much since. (Carrier, 46) The standard dimension for a Comic Book is usually 6-5/8 inches wide and 10-1/4 inches high, though there is no set standard for the dimensions as such. Hence, this first monthly magazine did set the terms for the size of the latter day comic books. Furthermore, the architectonics of the comics binding remained almost the same since *Comic Monthly* pinned the pages together with staples. Since the volume of the books did not exceed twenty eight pages, they did not need sturdier binding. Until longer and more durable versions of comics and graphic novels were produced, this binding system remained common. The comic books were part of ephemera which did not require careful preservation. However, with time comics have now become not just a cheap product to be enjoyed as a leisure activity but a full blown industry (Reid, 2021) in itself with its own value of auctionable first prints.

In the following panel we can observe how comics learnt to ‘show’ sounds to the readers. Here loud sounds are represented (self-reflexively) by larger fonts which was adopted by the comics medium and later elaborated into several variations.

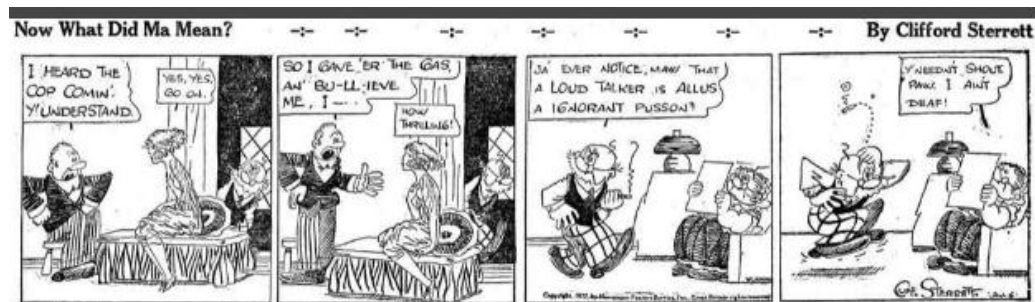


Fig. 7. Sterrett, Cliff. *Comic Monthly*# 12. Embee,1922. p.18.

Yellow kid had the narration on the dress which became an extra space for narratorial voices to appear. According to Ian Gordon the speech bubbles were introduced by the writer of *Gasoline Alley*, Frank King (Gordon, 45). While the white space of the speech existed already in the comic strips, the sharp tail leading to the mouth of the respective speakers were invented in *Gasoline alley*. This format of the speech bubble was adopted by the comics and is still in play although with many variations.



## Influence on/of Movies

“... there is strong evidence that early comic strips and the New York stage contributed to the development of film narration and possibly were themselves influenced by movies.” (Armour, 24) Both the movies and the comic books are primarily visual media. While one has to use a separate method to fuse voice, the other seems to have hardwired the system of dialogues within itself. The silent movies of 1900s might have provided the cue to expression of narratorial or speech energies. Thus, what may have been borrowed from the celluloid has become more organic and integral to comic books.

Incidentally, the film of the movies as they were put in the projector was much similar to the format of the comic strips. The movies are called so because the frames move giving us a sense of movement but they are a number of frame put in succession to each other. Comic strips were then static movies. The eyes moved over them and a sensation of movement or lapse of time could be felt.

The comic strips and the comic books had to incorporate the dialogues between the characters but of course the comics had no sound. Speech bubbles were invented to separate the spoken word from the narrative frame which appeared occasionally. Whereas movies successfully allowed the characters to speak, the comic strips allowed for the characters to lay bare their thoughts through thought bubbles (Carrier, 30). While riding on the wave of quick technological breakthroughs, film went quite ahead of the comic strips and eventually comic books, the latter medium, dependent on the skill and talent of the writers and/or artists slowly adapted itself to technological enhancements.

## Conclusion

The paper, through a close reading of the selected texts, thus registers the point of convergence of comic strips and comic books within the pages of *Comic Monthly* in the significant year of 1922. The magazine comprising twelve issues created a prototype to be followed by *Famous Funnies* in 1933 and later by such comic book publication houses as DC, Fawcett and Marvel. These issues held within themselves the traces of devices and systems which came to regular features of later day comic books like enclosed speech bubbles, gutters, continuity, colour management and so on and so forth. Thus, the magazine contained within itself the basic building blocks of comics which were later developed by such creators as Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Bob Kane into features that characterize modern comics. These early devices (thematic and formalistic) were found diffused in the various strips created by various writers and acted as a repository of ‘comics language’ for the comic book creators to draw upon. Significantly, the children who had read or seen these ubiquitous images re-encountered them when they grew up to buy them for their children. Though the characters weren’t identical yet the familiar colours, panel architecture, and print texture were reason enough to be trusted by a generation who grew upon the elder arts of comics. *Comic Monthly* can be posited as a crucial yet forgotten juncture in the transition from comic strips to comic books which certainly warrants more research and this paper is a small step towards that direction.





## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*The Wizard* was also launched as a weekly British comic strip story paper on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1922, published by D.C. Thompson and Co.

<sup>2</sup>The years in the parentheses refer to the month in which the magazine was issued.

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