

CONTENT OF COMIC ART

SEMINAR REPORT, SUBMITTED FOR
THE SPECIAL PROJECT TO THE
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CENTRE,
I.I.T, BOMBAY.

BY

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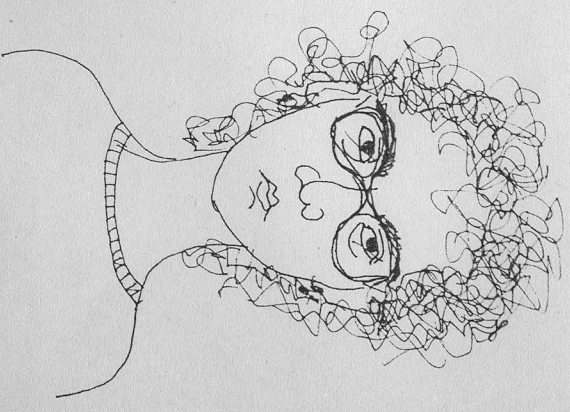
GUIDE : A.G. RAO

OCT, 1985

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I WOULD LIKE TO THANK
MY GUIDE PROF. A. G. RAO
FOR HIS HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS
AND ASSISTANCE DURING
THE COURSE OF THIS
PROJECT.



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Introduction

Comic art is a phenomenon of our times, widely read and practised. Considering that it reflects, even sets the trends of the times, it is important to discover or rather state what comics are saying and how they are saying it.

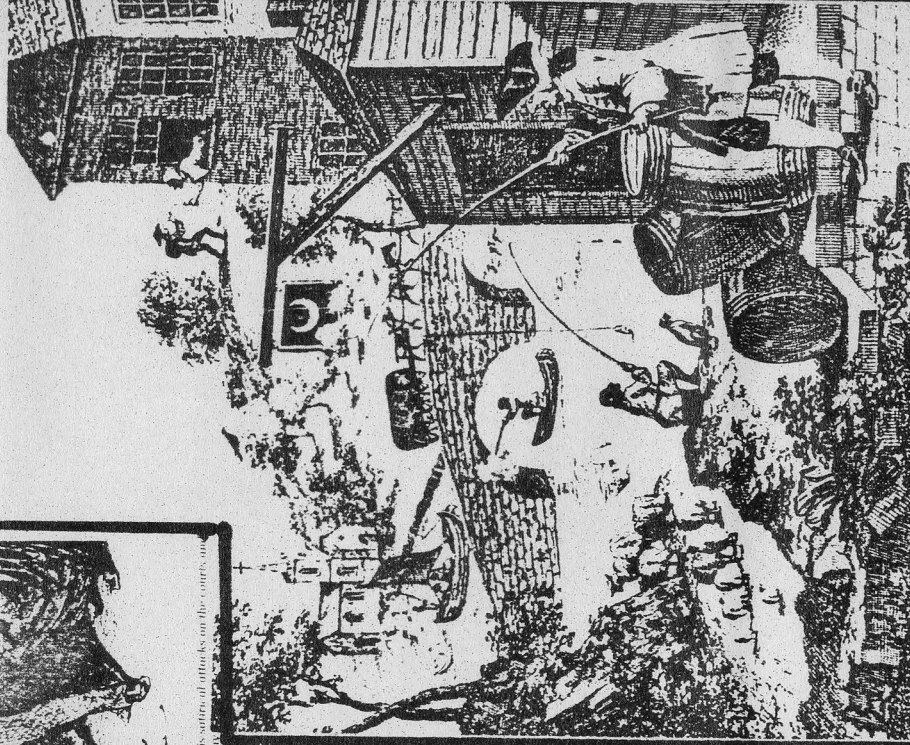
In this project, an attempt was made to identify and define the means by which comic art attracts us. This project was initially titled 'Educational Content of Comic Art'. The term, 'Educational' was dropped because it was decided that the purpose would be best served by studying the art form as a whole. The term was restrictive in the sense that, everything could be regarded as educational or not, depending on whether one means educational as 'schooling' or educational as informative. It was preferred not to define it as either and therefore exploration could be carried out in directions that may not have evolved if one had stuck to 'Educational Content'.

The first chapter deals with Comic Art in general and lists some of its prominent features. The second chapter attempts a categorical analysis of content with an identification of the visual devices that prompt a category.



Honoré Daumier. This 19th century artist at one time spent six months in prison for his satirical attacks on the courts and lawyers of France. This lithograph is entitled, "The Accused Can Now Have His Say."

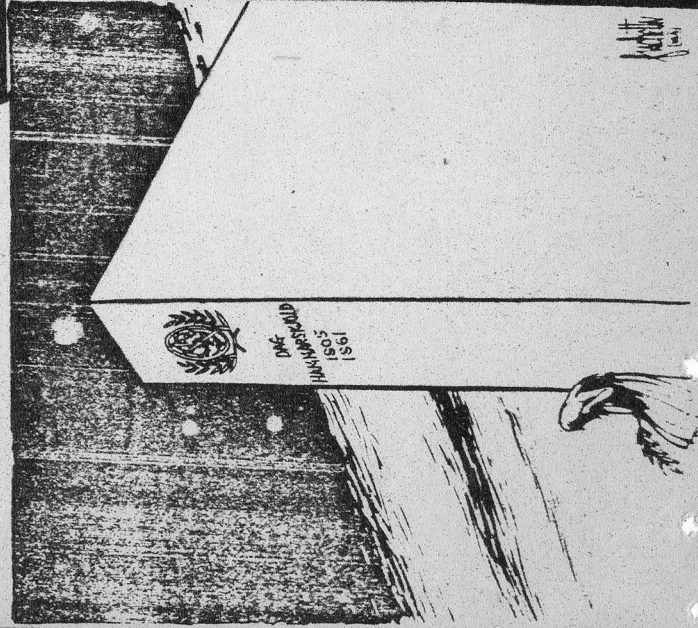
↑ DAUMIER - THE FIRST CARTOONIST



William Hogarth. An early engraving in which Hogarth shows objects placed with perspective. The work is a satirical "Huntsman's Piece" which makes a DESIGN without the knowledge of PERSPECTIVE will be made to such disorders as are shown in this HUNTSMAN'S PIECE.

HOGARTH - ARTIST TURNED SATIRICAL CARTOONIST

"MY SON, MY SON"



WILLIAM HOGARTH
1732-1764

POTENT COMMENT
← BY FISCHETTI

Chapter - I

Comic Art and its Characteristic Features

To begin with, there are three major forms that come under the purview of Comic Art:-

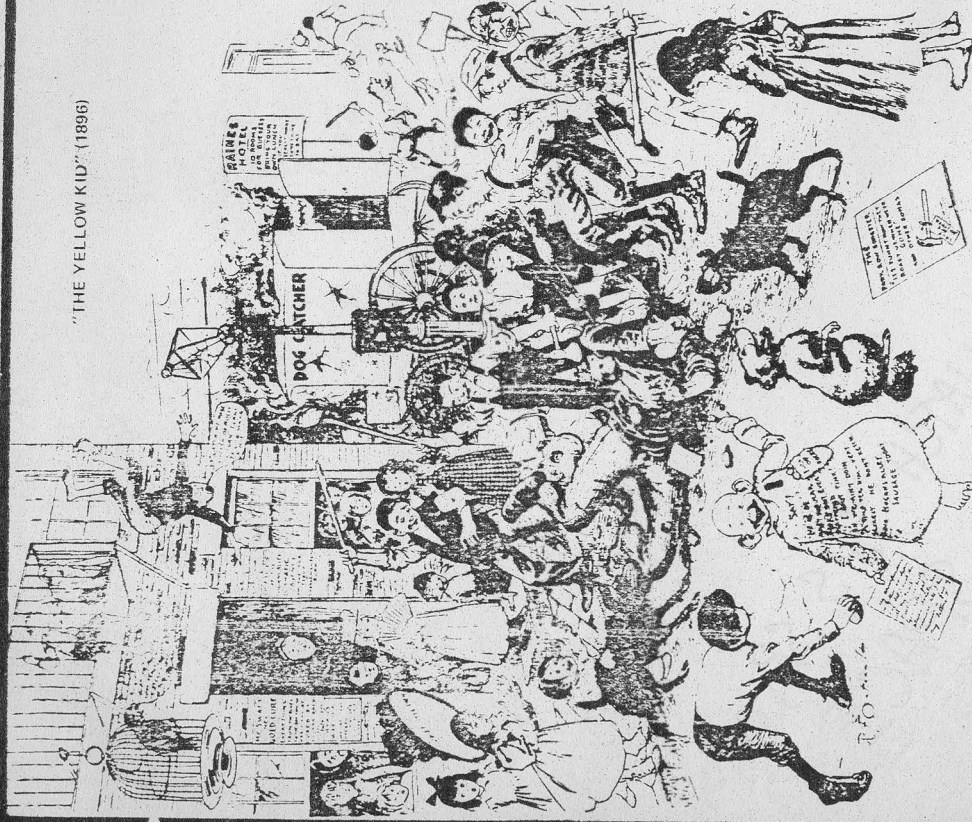
1. The Cartoon
2. The Comic Strip
3. The Comic Book

1. The Cartoon is the oldest form of Comic Art beginning with the first exponent of the political cartoon, Honore Daumier. The cartoon has ever been a potent weapon for social change as can be seen from the fact that Daumier had to fight several suits of libel. It has also attracted several artists, notably, William Hogarth, who found it a potent form for social comment. In its early beginnings it was a form of graphic art which has evolved today into the political caricature, social satire and predominantly, the gag cartoon. In India, the political cartoon is the prevalent form of comic art - each newspaper having its own cartoonist.

However, much has been written about the cartoon as it is a very conscious comment, with a definite message to impart to a defined audience whereas comic strips and books are much more indefinable and hence far more indicative of vacillating popular taste.

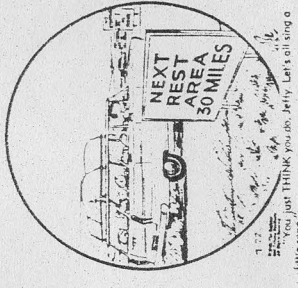
2. The Comic Strip was born from the film whence comes the idea of using a series of frames to depict a sequence. In the beginning of their emergence, they were used as an attempt to build circulation. That they were successful in the attempt can be seen from the fact that the term, 'Yellow Journalism', signifying the dirty tricks of the profession; comes from the bitter wars over the first comic strip, Hogan's Alley. This strip was known as the 'Yellow Kid', because of the patch of yellow on the leading character; the first instance of the use

"THE YELLOW KID" (1896)

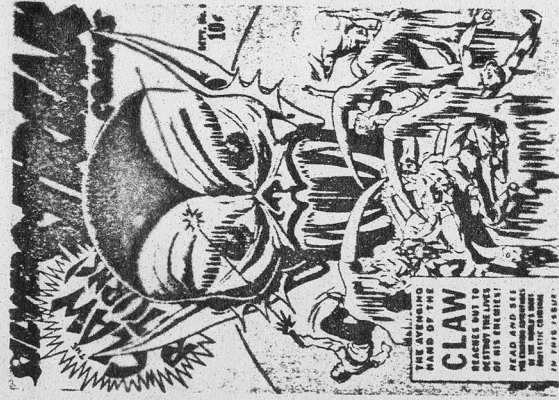


WHAT THEY DID TO THE DOG-CATCHER IN HOGAN'S ALLEY.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bill Keane

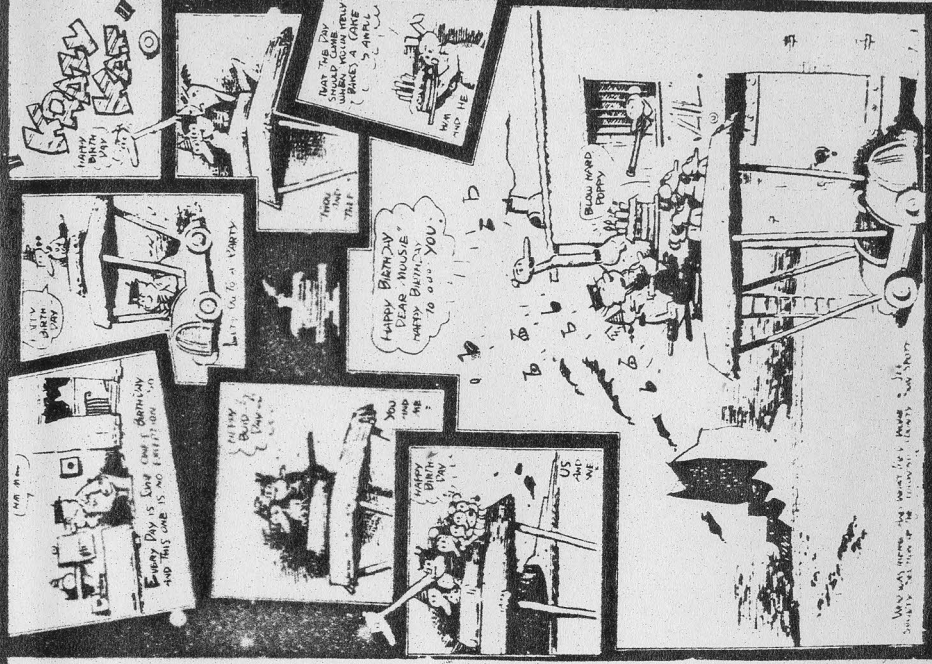


SINGLE FRAME - CIRCULAR



THE SPLASH PAGE

EXPERIMENT WITH LAYOUT IN FRAMED SEQUENCE



of colour in newspapers. Colour supplements, which consisted entirely of comic strips, became regular features in Sunday newspapers. Today, comic strips have gained in respectability and comic strips artists are as famous as cartoonists.

3. The Comic Book was initially the transition of comic strips into serialized form and popular strips were successfully produced in this format. Later, there appeared an offshoot of these; a result of the censorship operating on newspapers. This genre was in the tradition of 'pulp' literature and of a 'sensational' nature, full of implied sex and violence, very similar to trashy fiction. It is not known as to the full range of content, but some of it was science fiction, for example Buck Rogers; Westerns, and violent subjects as depicted in the strips, Dick Tracy and Lil Orphan Annie.

Comic Syntax

Features characteristic of Comic Art:-

1. The Frame
 2. The Blurb
 3. Use of Visual Onomatopoeia
 4. Processes of Abstraction
 5. Creation of Visual Identity
 6. The Use of Colour
1. The Frame: (a) The single frame: Used predominantly for the cartoon, a legacy from the art of painting. In the hand of cartoonists it became a square, rectangle or circle of any size, a device used to merely differentiate cartoon space from the grey matter of a newspaper.

The single frame was later adapted by the comic book to create an effect unique to this medium - the 'splash' page, which was the first page of a comic book, an elaborate tableau much like a film poster, that introduces the characters of the story and gives you its atmosphere.

WHAT I LEARNED IN SCHOOL THIS YEAR



I LEARNED ONLY TO VOLUNTEER WHEN WHAT I HAVE TO SAY AGREES WITH WHAT THE TEACHER HAS TO SAY



I LEARNED NOT TO BE CURIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING THAT ISN'T ASSIGNED OR THEY CALL YOU A TROUBLE MAKER.



I LEARNED IF YOU HAVE A GOOD TEACHER KEEP IT TO YOURSELF OR THEY GET RID OF HER.



FRAMED SEQUENCE WITH-
OUT DELINEATION
OF FRAME
←

SAM'S STRIP

DO YOU HAVE MY SCRIPT READY?



YEAH... AND IT HAS PLENTY OF ACTION JUST LIKE YOU SAID



THE NEXT DAY

LATER...



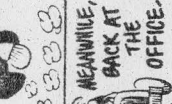
THE FOLLOWING NIGHT



TWO WEEKS LATER



MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE OFFICE..



DO YOU THINK MAYBE THE PLOT WAS A LITTLE JUNKY?



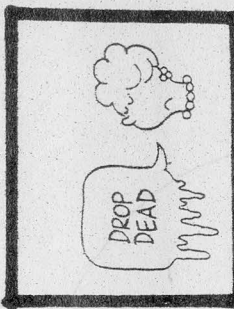
USE OF 'NO-FRAME' IN FRAMED SEQUENCE →

BREAK OF FRAME ↓

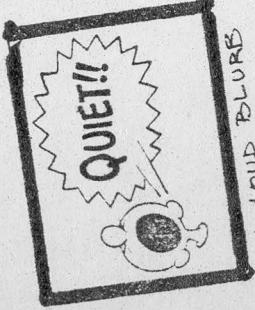
I THOUGHT THAT STORY WOULD BRING YOU OUT - AND THIS TIME YOU'LL REALLY HANG!



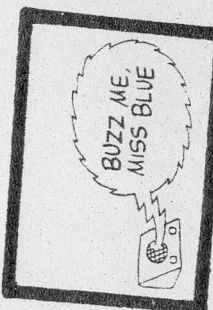
COMIC SYNTAX



THE FRIGID BLURB



THE LOUD BLURB



ELECTRONIC BLURB

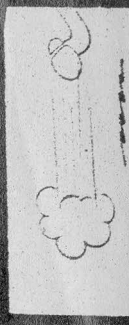


DREAM BLURB

SYMBOLS THAT DENOTE SOUND OR FEELING



FAST MOVEMENT



(b) The strip: or sequence of frames was derived from film, but was adapted by comic artists to serve various purposes. Some used differently shaped frames to create a more effective layout, some deliberately used no frame or no delineation of frame while still maintaining the sequence. Some use a 'no-frame' in a framed sequence for effect.

(c) Action comics which strive for the cinematic effect of the big screen will often break the frame with a character leaping out of it.

2. The Blurb: The most innovative characteristic of comic art, the blurb or talk balloon is also the one device that has permeated all two dimensional forms of art.

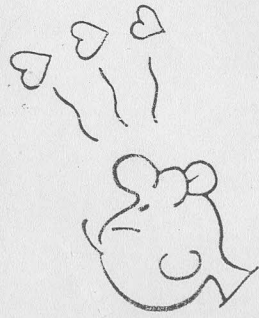
The earliest cartoons and strips always had problems handling dialogue which was usually put below the frame and necessitated a description of the character with his spoken lines, the parallel of the audio track in film. It also solved the problem of integrating written matter with graphic visuals.

The blurb is also used to convey emotions and moods, which is done in film, by the use of tone and inflection of the voice. This is done in cartooning by animating the blurb as in the frigid blurb, dripping icicles for sarcasm, coldness etc. The loud, explosive blurb for anger and shouting. The electronic blurb to suggest a transmitted voice, by telephone, intercom, radio etc. The dreamy, cloudlike blurb for dream thoughts, which incidentally solves the problem better than film where a dream 'thought' becomes ineffective as soon as it's spoken.

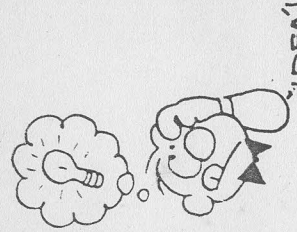
3. Use of Visual Onomatopoeia: or the visual shorthand by which comic strip artists suggest sound, action or sudden thought for example; the saw cutting wood or the string of Z's for snoring. The beea, for the sound of humming.

Puffs of dust or clouds behind lines to show sudden and rapid motion.

VISUAL ONOMATOPEIA



'LOVE'



'IDEA'



'DAMN'



ASTERIX & THE GOths

IMAGINATIVE



USE OF TYPOGRAPHY

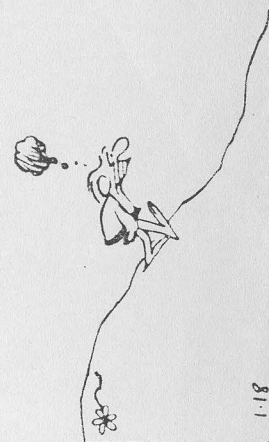
TINTIN IN NEPAL



B.C.



↑ USE OF THICK & THIN LINE.



CHARACTER - THE IDENTITY - THE WAISTLESS TYPES.

A light bulb flashing, for a sudden idea, or the image of a heart pierced by an arrow, for love - from 'flashbacks' to suggest the same thing in films.

Using imaginative typography to suggest identity. For example, in Asterix and the Goths, the speech of the Goths is lettered in the Gothic typeface. Or, the script of some foreign land to show its foreignness as in, Tintin in Tibet.

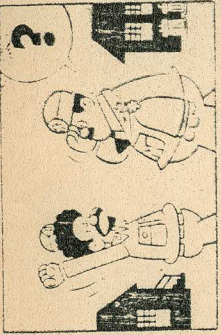
4. Processes of Abstraction: Cartoons and Comic strips have been described as the 'slang' of graphic art. It is true in the sense that there are no conventions in the academic sense operating on the Comic Artist. 'Anything goes', as long as it conveys the gag.

However, most comic artists are excellent draughtsmen; they have to be, in order to convey maximum meaning with the minimum of graphic elements. "Simplicity is more than leaving out, if's knowing what to put in, and how to do so without calling attention to it."

Line has been the most important graphic element for Comic Artists, who even delineate colored characters. It is the use of the thick and thin outline that gives Comic characters their bold and unmistakeable look. Alone, the use of line gives the desired immediacy to a medium where the 'gag' is the most important element.

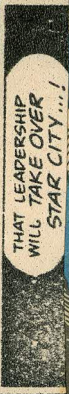
5. Creation of Visual Identity: In all comic strips, books or cartoons, it is the creation of an identifiable character that is most important and a difficult thing to do. The identity of a character is established firstly by his physiognomy, which need not have anything to do with the human body as long as it can be maintained from frame to frame, strip to strip, for eg. the waistless characters of the strips, Peanuts and B.C. Their idiosyncrasies, likes and dislikes, donated by their creator, become the style of the strip - what readers recognize and look forward to seeing.

beetle
by mort
walker

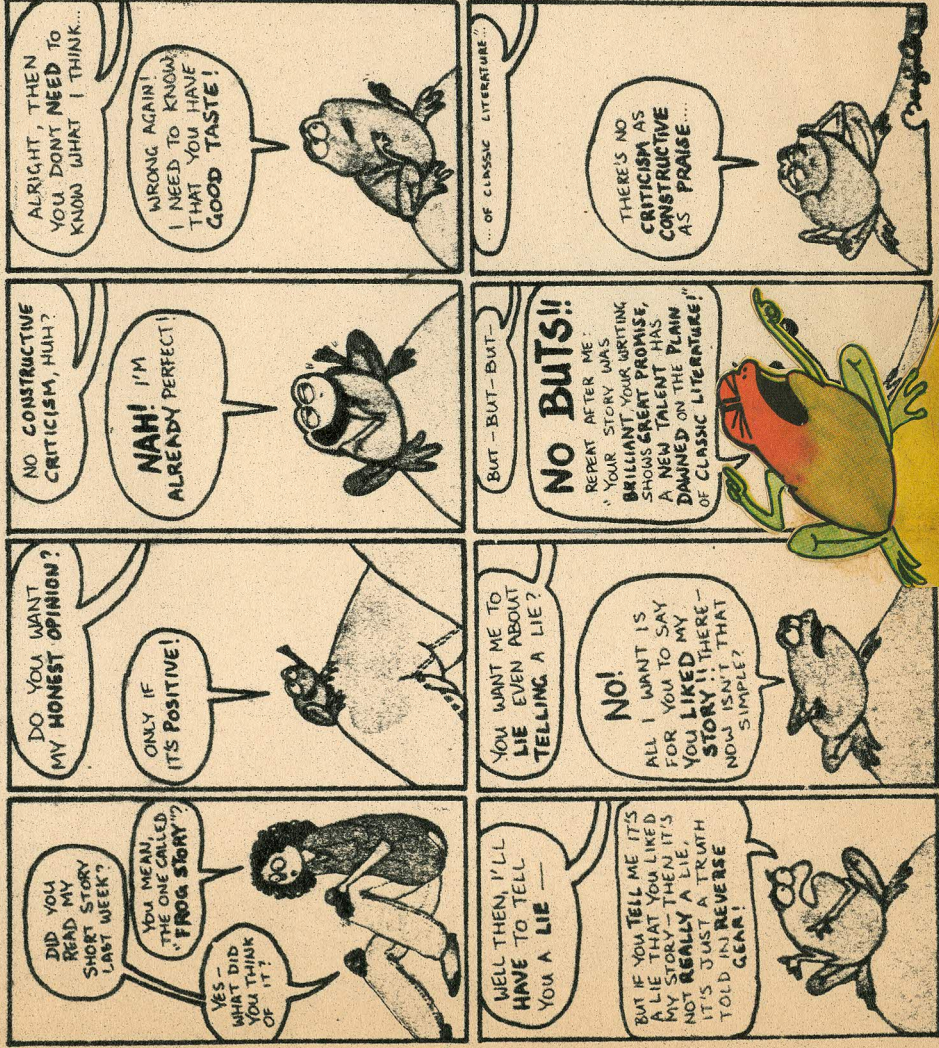


← ETHNICITY

THE EFFECT OF COLOUR
WHEN PRINTED BY LETTERPRESS



AND BY OFFSET



The further identity of Comic Art is brought by two elements:

(a) The indication of the country of origin as manifested through idiomatic expressions in dialogue, the costumes of the characters and the introduction of an ethnic character, for example, the black lieutenant in Beetle Bailey.

(b) The strata of society depicted through the values the characters expound, their economic standing, their occupations and their material belongings like homes and vehicles, for example, America is a two-car per family, society while an Indian character may walk or cycle.

All these elements add variety and interest to a cartoon, strip or book but are sometimes attacked for their depiction of certain characters. Therefore, a lot of comic artists prefer to play safe and restrict themselves to universal situations like; naughty children, husband vs wife, exploitation, etc.

6. The Use of Colour: As mentioned earlier colour supplements were introduced as a measure to increase circulation. These were printed in letterpress, a technique where it's easier to print a flat tint of any colour and half-tones are quite bad. It is probable that this sustained the tendency to strong outline and the use of black for shading, which are the prominent characteristics of the comic book 'style'.

It was not till newspapers were printed by the offset process that half-tones could be printed, so we are beginning to see softly colored characters done with washes of watercolour or ink.

Comic art is known for free and violent use of color, totally different from the self colour of real people or objects, even bluffs are colored to provide impact.

Colour gives an extra dimension to sensational effects for eg. the blood and gore in Dick Tracy and other violent comics.

WESTERN COMIC ART

ADULT



SOCIAL SATIRE

- LIL ABNER
- GILES
- WOODY ALLEN
- WIZARD OF ID
- B.C.
- AGATHA CRYM
- DOONESBURY
- JULES FEIFFER
- MEL CALMAN
- PUNCH
- WAD MAGAZINE

SITUATIONAL HUMOR

- BRINKING VP FATHER
- ANDY CAPP
- MOOSE MILLER
- THE WAMPOLS

ACTION

- DICK TRACY
- JAMES BOND
- MODESTY BLAISE
- AXA
- RIP KIRBY

INDIAN COMIC ART

ADULT

- DOUBLE - TALK
- DEV NADKARNI
- BILLU
- RAVISHANKAR
- ABU
- SHANKAR
- R.K. LAXMAN
- MARIO
- SUDHIR DAR
- BAL THACKERAY
- SABNIS.

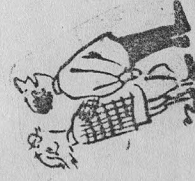


CHART I

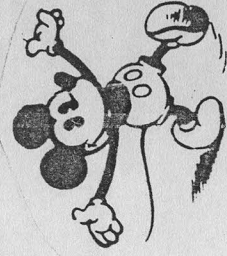
CHILD

SITUATIONAL HUMOR

- LITTLE LOTTA
- RICHIE RICH
- LITTLE LULU
- THE FLINTSTONES

FANTASY

- CASPER/WENDY
- HOTSTUFF/SPOOKY
- MICKEY MOUSE
- DONALD DUCK
- WOODY WOODPECKER
- THE ROADRUNNERS
- YOGI BEAR
- DAFFY DUCK
- PINK PANTHER



CHILD



ILLUS. STORIES

- AMAR CHITRA KATHA
- CHANDAMAMA
- TINKLE
- CHAMPAK
- KISHOR
- SUMAN SAURABH

HUMOR

- TARGET
- LOT-POT
- TINKLE
- MADHUMUSMAN

ACTION

- SUNNY; SUPREMO
- BAHADUR
- RAJAN, IQBAL
- TINKLE
- TARGET
- CHIMPU
- TIGER
- TIM-TIM
- FAULADI SINGH
- KAKATI

I DIDN'T
WANT TO BE
TRAFFICED BUT
THREE
PRESIDENTS
TOLD ME
IT WAS
MY DUTY

AND NO ONE
WILL GIVE
ME A JOB
BECAUSE
I'M A
REMINDER
AND AN
EMBARRASS
MENT

I DIDN'T
WANT TO
FIGHT IN
VIETNAM
BUT THREE
PRESIDENTS
TOLD ME
I WAS
DEFENDING
FREEDOM

THAT'S WHY
I TAKE A
HARD LINE
ON AMNESTY

I DIDN'T WANT TO
LOSE AN ARM
AND A LEG BUT
THREE PRESIDENTS
TOLD ME IF WE
CUT AND RUN
WE'D LOSE ALL
OF SOUTH EAST
ASIA

I CAN NEVER
FORGIVE THOSE
WHO DID NOT
HAVE THE GUTS
TO DO THEIR
DUTY AND
SERVE THEIR
COUNTRY

THEN THEY
SHIFTED ME
HOME AND I
LEARNED
EVERYTHING
THREE
PRESIDENTS
TOLD ME
WAS A LIE.

JOHN
KENNEDY,
LYNDON
JOHNSON
AND
RICHARD
NIXON.

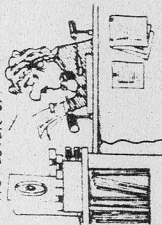
6-2 - BY JULES FEIFFER

DOONESBURY by G. B. Trudeau

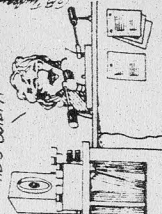
GOOD NEWS,
MIDDIES! TIME FOR
ANOTHER EXCLUSIVE
WIBBY "WATERGATE
PROFILE" TODAY'S
OBITUARY - JOHN
MITCHELL!



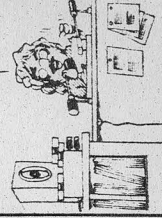
JOHN MITCHELL, THE
FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY-
GENERAL, HAS IN RECENT
WEEKS BEEN REPEATEDLY
LINKED WITH BOTH THE
WATERGATE CAPER AND
IT'S COVER-UP



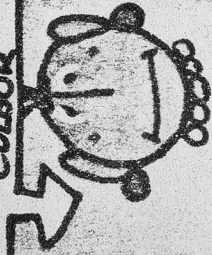
IT WOULD BE A DISSERVICE
TO MR. MITCHELL AND HIS
CHARACTER TO PREJUDGE
THE MAN, BUT EVERYTHING
KNOWN TO DATE COULD
LEAD ONE TO CONCLUDE
HE'S GUILTY!



THAT'S GUILTY!
GUILTY, GUILTY,
GUILTY!



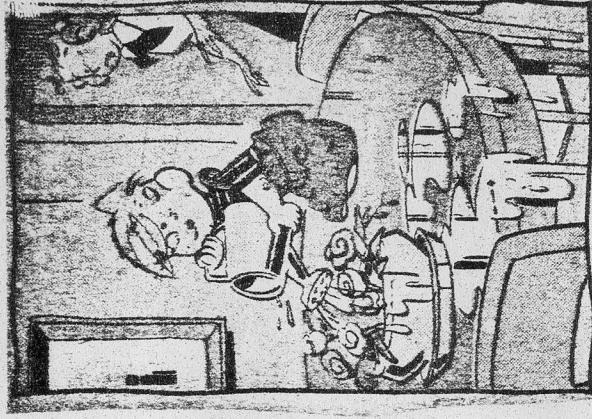
THERE IS ONE GAME
ALL MEN PLAY—
IRRESPECTIVE OF
COLOUR



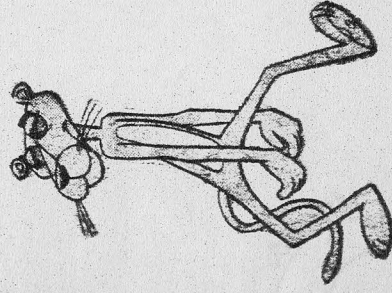
KICKING THE
BUCKET

billu

BILLU IN THE
SUNDAY OBSERVER



DENNIS THE
MENACE →



THE PINK
PANTHER

RICHIE RICH →

Chapter II

Categorical Analysis of Content

When one thinks about the content of Comic Art, one tends to come up with labels of identification and then categories. Though such labels are primarily descriptive, they are necessary for memory, selectivity and choices of our visual and mental stimuli. Therefore, an effort was made to understand why we attach a particular label and whether such labelling applies to all examples of the art.

Category 1: The first categorization (refer to chart I) between Adult and Child Content and their overlap consists of representative samples of Comic Art, and was based on the contention that there is a difference between the reality base of cartoons, comic strips and books intended for children and those intended for adults. To elaborate further - every piece of fiction requires a reality base, i.e. the physical and social environment within which the characters can be situated and which would determine their actions and reactions.

One can also perceive a difference between the content of these two labels in terms of understanding and preferment as is seen by the fact that adults are able to understand all comics for children but not vice versa. Similarly, there exists a content overlap aimed at or preferred by the person between these two groupings, i.e. the teenager or precocious child.

The contention that Content is indeed intended for a child or an adult was arrived at from the following fundamental differences observed in all the representative examples of Comic Art.

Content for Adults

1. Complex Satirical Humor with Puns and double meanings.
2. Situational Humor featuring human characters.
3. Slant towards the Socio/Political comment, informative.

4. Emphasis on dialogue with underplayed action.
5. Preference for expression through facial and subtle body movements.
6. Realistic rendition often in black and white.

Content for Children

1. Simple, slapstick Humor untinged by cynicism.
2. Situational Fantasy often featuring non-human or animal characters.
3. Presents an ethical or moral attitude, educational.
4. Emphasis on action with limited verbal expression.
5. Preference for expression through movement of entire body, rather than face.
6. Characters are distinctively costumed and rendered in bright colours.

Deviations in the Indian Context

In all Western Comic Art there are areas of overlap, that is to say - the content of the comic is structured on two levels, one - the straightforward story and the other - a more sophisticated level which comments or informs about the adult world, for example, Spiderman which has enough action to enthral children yet the hero's personality reflects all the preoccupations and neuroses of present day reality.

In India, where comics are bought to be read by the entire family, there ought not to be a total divergence between the two categories with no areas of overlap. One finds, however, that there is nothing for the person in between - the teenager who has grown beyond childish humor and has yet to attain the maturity that will enable him to understand the political and social satire that is the only other alternative. The only possibilities for an overlap are in situational humor and action comics, which are at such a crude stage in India that one is bound to get disgusted with its faulty drawing and retarded humor.

PURPOSEFUL COMIC ART

POLITICAL SATIRE

WIZARD OF ID
B.C.
AGATHA CRUMH
DOONESBURY
JULES FEIFFER
NEL CALMAN
WOODY ALLEN
GILES
PUNCH
MAD

HUMOR, SOCIAL COMMENT

PEANUTS
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE
ARCHIE
BEETLE BAILEY
ASTERIX
ANDY CAPP
MOOSE MILLER
BRINGING UP FATHER
THE GAMBOLS
LIL ABNER
ANDY CAPP
HI & LOIS
DENNIS THE MENACE
LITTLE LULU

INSTRUCTIVE

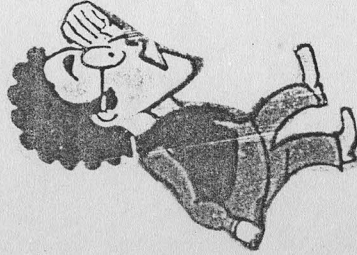
ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS FROM
GREEK & ROMAN MYTHOLOGY
FAIRY TALES &
CLASSIC FICTION
LITTLE LULU
DENNIS THE MENACE
ASTERIX

PROPAGANDA

CHILDREN OF GOD LITERATURE
BARBARELLA (PAPER OF THE FEMINIST
MOVEMENT)

POLITICAL SATIRE

SHANKAR
R.K. LAXMAN
ABU ABRAMAM
MARIO
SUDHIR DAR
BAL THACKERAY
SABNIS
RAVISHANKAR
DEV NADKARNI



INSTRUCTIVE (PROPAGANDIST)

AMAR CHITRA KATHA
TINKLE
CHANDAMAMA
TARGET
CHAMPAK
PANCHATANTRA

?
MANJULA
BILLU

AND YOU THOUGHT.
... NO MORE!
BUT,
STILL IT
COMETH...>

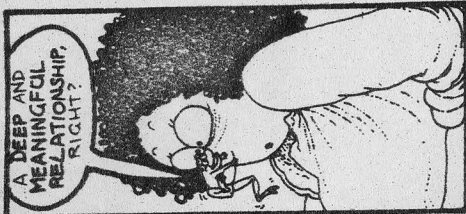
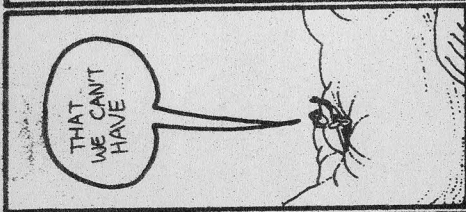
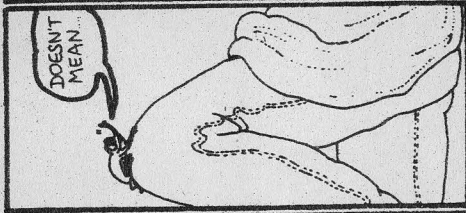
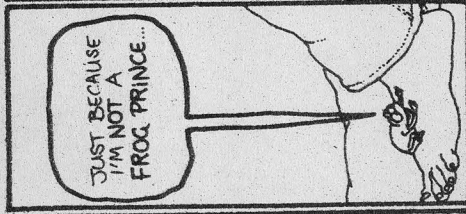
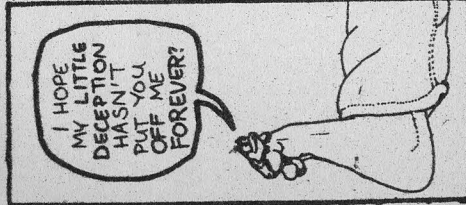
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LI 77123

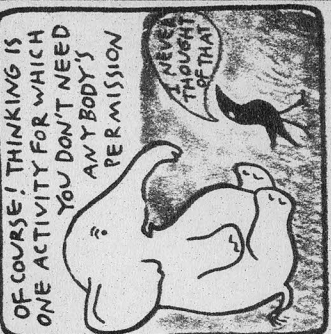
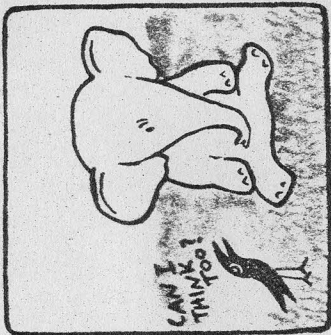
COMETH...>

DOUBLE TALK

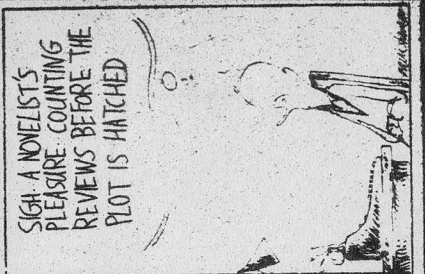
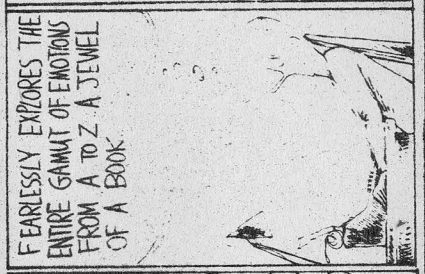
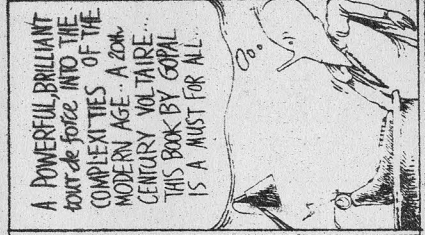
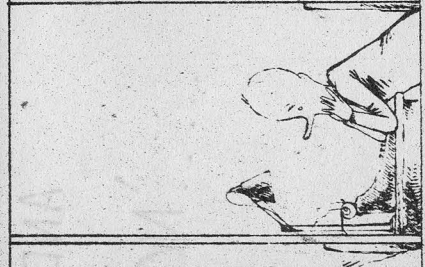
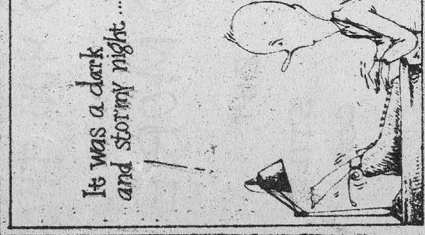
Manjula



SALT & PEPPER



THE LITTLE FAMILY



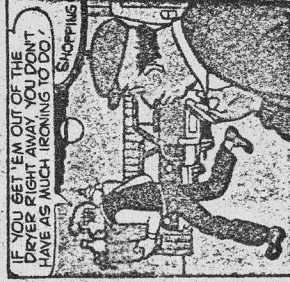
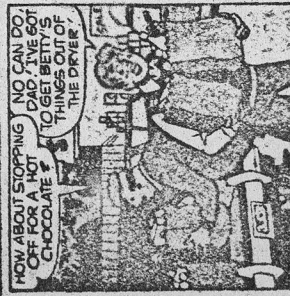
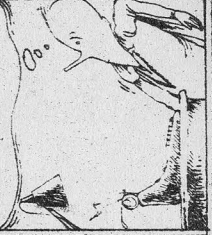
BY RAVISHANKAR

SIGH. A NOVELIST'S
PLEASURE: COUNTING
REVIEWS BEFORE THE
PLOT IS HATCHED

FEARLESSLY EXPLORES THE
ENTIRE GAMUT OF EMOTIONS
FROM A TO Z. A JEWEL
OF A BOOK.

A POWERFUL, BRILLIANT
tour de force INTO THE
COMPLEXITIES OF THE
MODERN AGE... A 20th
CENTURY VOLTAIRE...
THIS BOOK BY GOPAL
IS A MUST FOR ALL...

It was a dark
and stormy night...



TO THE MEN, ESPECIALLY A GREAT & WONDERFUL MIRACLE, HAVE A PLACE—THEY'VE GOT IT! All of us, saved citizens will have a glorious & beautiful & wonderful resurrection! The graves of the saints will burst open & all of the Christians who have already died & gone on to heaven will be resurrected & will be sitting along on clouds, being miraculously translated throughout the Antichrist's reign of terror, will be instantly changed, & will be able to receive their new, glorious, powerful, supernatural, translated bodies (they will already have them) & will be able to stand on the clouds & will be able to see the Lord in the air, riding in triumph, to meet the Lord in the air, riding in triumph victory, come the Son of the Devil & the Antichrist & all of their reach heaven!

← ARCHIE
PORTRAYS
THE AMERICAN
IDEAL.

↑ RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA - OF GOD.
CHILDREN

In fact, except for the recent emergence of strips like Double Talk, Salt and Pepper, Ratland Chronicles etc., India had no strips to boast of. What we have always had in plenty and at a high level of excellence too, have been political cartoons. But the humor in these has never been humor for humor's sake, but a black, cynical sort of humor - may be that was what was needed then and the scene has changed and is improving now, for this art form, as none other except film, has always reflected the requirements and tastes of the mass audience.

Category 2: The previous categorization was based on the intention of Comic Art and the grouping of readers. Another categorization - a rather obvious one - could be made on the literary content of the comic strip, book or cartoon.

There is just one major difference to be observed and that is between comic art which is purposeful and that which is meant purely for entertainment.

Under Purposeful Comic Art (refer to chart 2) would come most adult comic art, educational comics for children, all political and social satire as well as underground or subversive comic output i.e. comic art used as propaganda for a political movement or religious organisation.

Basically any subject in this category is of the sort that would make you think twice and presents an issue to the reader's notice in a short, impact full form. The form is directly related to content and has a definite message to carry, through graphic or entertaining visuals.

To quote some examples, political cartoons are obviously purposeful, in fact all 'cartoons' are, to present anything in a single frame, you have to have a definite message or run the risk of it becoming just a graphic doodle. Even a strip or book like Archie, propagates the American Ideal in home, life, school. Archie and Friends often indulge in social service. This strip, (also Peanuts) have been used to propagate christian ideals.

DON'T STARE
AT BLANK
SPACE.

have been used to propagate Christian ideals. Friends often include in social service. This strip, which represents the American Ideal in home, life, school, and becoming just a graphic doodle. frame, you have to have a definite meaning. In fact all 'cartoons' are, to present anything in a single

entertaining visuals.

content and has a definite message. In a short, impact full form. The form is directly related to the message. Basically any subject in life is of the same nature. Makes you think twice and presents an issue to the public. or religious organizations. output i.e. comic art used as propaganda for a political movement and social satire as well as underground or subversive comic adult comic art, educational comics for children, all political

Under Unpurposeful Comic Art (refer to chart 2) would come most purely for entertainment.

between comic art which is purposeful and that which is meant the comic strip, book or cartoon.

- a rather obvious one - could be made on the literary content of Comic Art and the grouping of readers. Another categorization

Category 2: The previous categorization was based on the intention of the artist and the mass audience. form, as none other except film, has always reflected the requirements and the scene has changed and is improving now, for this art black, cynical sort of humor - may be that was what was needed the humor in these has never been humor for humor's sake, but a high level of excellence too, have been political cartoons. But struggle to boast of. What we have always had in plenty and at a fair, salt and pepper, Hatfield Chronicles etc., I think had no in fact, except for the recent emergence of strips like Double

TURN THE PAGE,

STUPID! →



↓ THE PINK PANTHER



Comic books like Dennis the Menace and Little Lulu carry a lot of informative content. Through the jaunts of their main characters, children learn a lot about other countries, their customs and lifestyles for eg. Dennis' trip to Hawaii or Little Lulu's trip to Paris. Information, especially about the past is provided by comic books like Lucky Luke, about the Wild West; Asterix, about ancient Rome; Lt. Blueberry, about the French Foreign Legion and various Illustrated Classics of literature.

In the Indian Context

When we compare the state of Indian Comic Art with that of the West, we find a conspicuous absence of the kind of versatility exhibited in the comics and cartoons that originate, for example, in America. This becomes a definite lack when we realize that, in India there is a vast audience for comic literature of indigenous origin. This can be seen from the enormous popularity of Amar Chitra Katha comic books, published by India Book House, covering topics from mythology and history to religion and famous personalities of the day.

However, a major problem seen in this series is that their research especially in mythological and historical subjects is not very reliable. This could have serious repercussions; in that children who read these comics rarely read the originals when they grow up and would therefore always hold an erroneous view point of Indian Literature. Moreover, this series carries the same historical slant as the government text books, which is also dangerous, for most children never discover that what they studied in school was an interpretation of History and that there are more ways of looking at the History of India.

Another form which is absent on the Indian scene is Situational Humor or Humor for the sake of humor and not a sardonic comment on life or politicians. Recently though, there are more progressive trends becoming apparent. In children's humorous literature, comic books in Indian languages like Lot - Pot and Madhumuskaan strips in Suman Saurabh like Subbu-Subbi by Prakash, Chacha Jhatpat

THIS WAY →

MAN: WHO? WOMAN: KNOW I DON'T.	MAN: WHO'S THIS? WOMAN: GUESS THE MAN IT FORGE.
MAN: HELLO, HE SAYS DOG WILL THIS. WOMAN: HE'S SOMETHING HE'S TALKING HE STAND TO	MAN: SOMEONE ELSE, WHO WOULD U.S. CANTON BE? JOE DRIVE WOMAN: I'M SORRY, HE'S NOT JOE.
MAN: WHO'S THIS? WOMAN: KNOW I DON'T.	MAN: HELLO, HE SAYS DOG WILL THIS. WOMAN: HE'S SOMETHING HE'S TALKING HE STAND TO
MAN: SOMEONE ELSE, WHO WOULD U.S. CANTON BE? JOE DRIVE WOMAN: I'M SORRY, HE'S NOT JOE.	MAN: WHO'S THIS? WOMAN: KNOW I DON'T.

DOUBLE LINK

WARRIORS

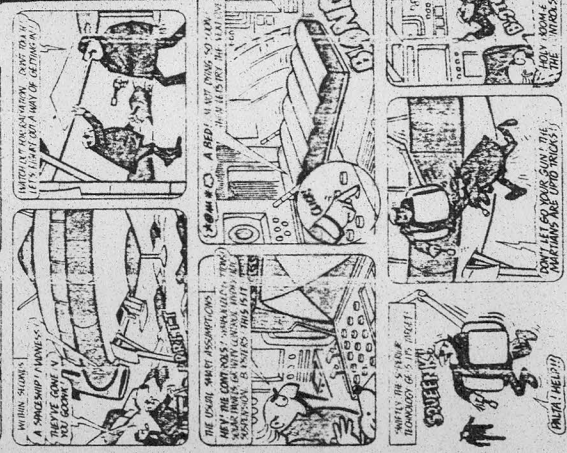
DRIVER

60120

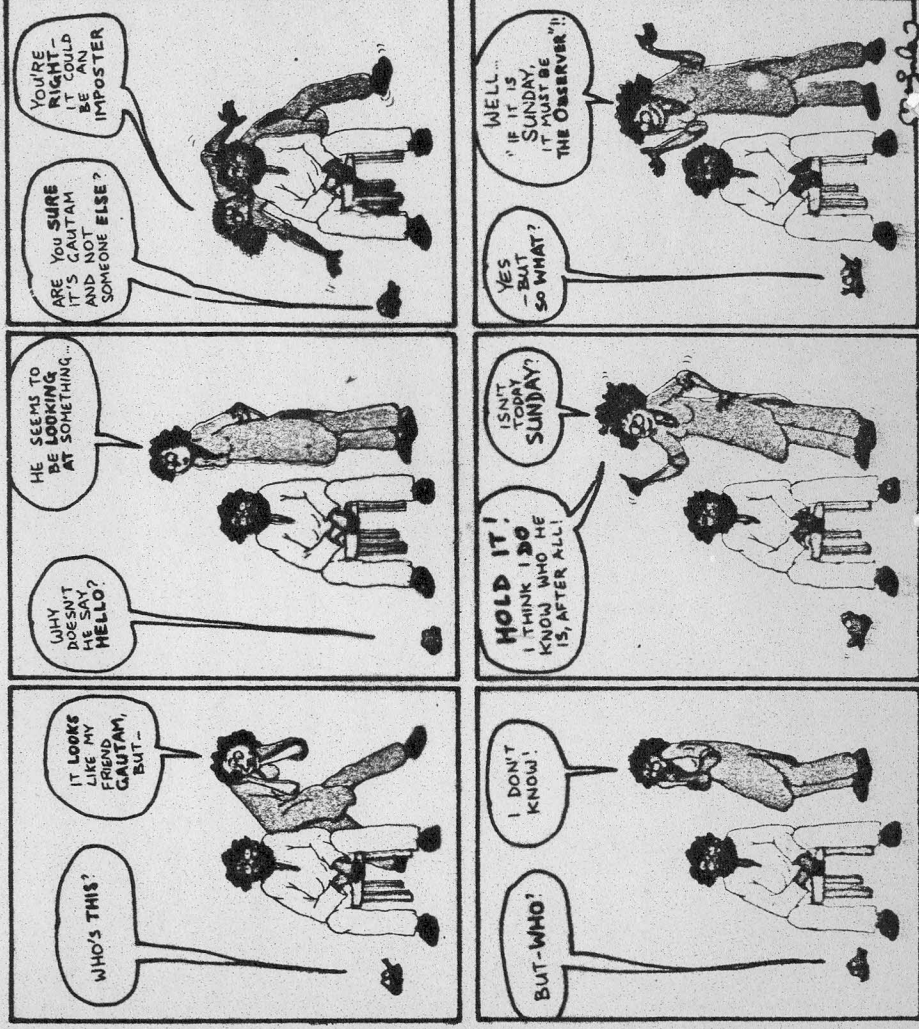
J. K. L. 1968

LEADER IN CHAIRMAN'S HOUSE
K. 2000 L. 2000 L. 2000 L.

"CAN'T ERASE!"
DELETED
DATA
1974



Manjula



by Khalil Khan are genuinely humorous and well - illustrated. Target, the Living Media publication is also a refreshing change from the other smug and moralistic children's magazines (carrying comic strips) published in India, like Champak for example, which, in it's "Brother-Sister Love Special" attempted communal integration about as heavy-handedly as the government's campaign for Family Planning.

There are new possibilities for adult humorous illustration also, especially in Manjula's superbly drawn 'Double - Talk' that propagates it's own brand of zany humor via Suki, its unclassifiable heroine. Even Billu's 'Space-Sage', with its Pseudo - intellectual schoolboy brand of humor exhibits a trend which moves away from the dark and Serio-comic art of R.K. Laxman. Till now, Mario Miranda was the only comic-artist whose work exhibited more veracity in terms of content; but more of his ilk are finally appearing, notably Ravishankar who draws several strips and cartoons for various publications.

Newspapers like the Sunday Observer are providing a platform for the newer trends in Comic Art, unlike the stand of other newspapers who employ only political cartoonists from India and run strips bought from foreign Syndicates.

(Refer to Chart III)

To come to Comic Art meant for Entertainment. Briefly the difference between this categorization and the former is that the comics that come under this category fulfil the reader's need for distraction from reality whereas the former fulfils the need for information concerning reality. This contention is based on the fact that man requires, both to be aware of his surroundings and to be distracted from them. In the first category, the cartoonist is offering his view point which may or may not be accepted by his audience. In the second, the cartoonist is participating in a need felt by his entire audience. This shared need is based on 'wish-fulfilment' fantasies.

The first section of this category - Action Comics-consists of the sensational doings of men. It also includes the concept of a

CHARACTER!

SUPERHERO

SUPERMAN/BATMAN

HULK

GREEN LANTERN

LEGION OF SUPER HEROES

BUCK ROGERS

FLASH GORDON

PHANTOM, MANDRAKE

WAR COMICS

DETECTIVE

RIP KIRBY

DICK TRACY

JAMES BOND

TIN TIN

HORROR

BORIS KARLOFF

TWILIGHT ZONE

WESTERNS

LOVE RANGER

ZORRO

ROMANTIC &
PORNOGRAPHIC
DR. KILDARE
MODESTY BLAISE
STAR COMICS
JULIET JONES/EVE
RAYMOND PEYNET
ESQUIRE/PLAYBOY



ACTION

N A R R A T I V E

ASTERIX

ALIX

LT. BLUEBERRY

HERLOCK SHOLMES

ON PAPA

IZNOGUD

SNURFS

LUCKY LUKE

ILLUS. CLASSICS

CHANDANAMA

LOT-POT

INDIAN COMIC BOOKS

INDIGENOUS HEROES

BAHADUR

SUPREMO

SUNNY



WESTERN INITIATIVE

CHIMPU

FAULADI SINGH

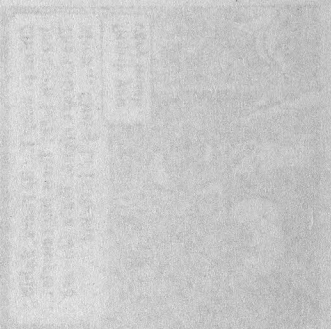
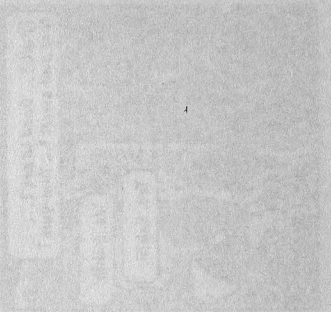
RAJAN IQBAL

KAKAJI

DETECTIVE MOOCHWALA

TIGER.

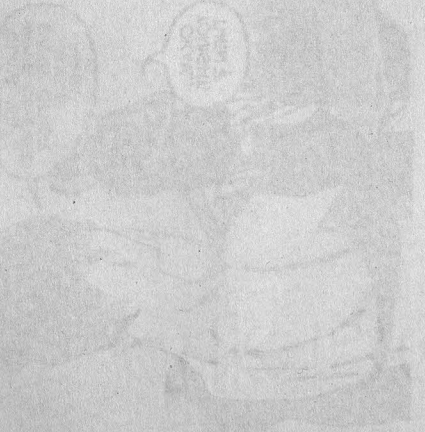
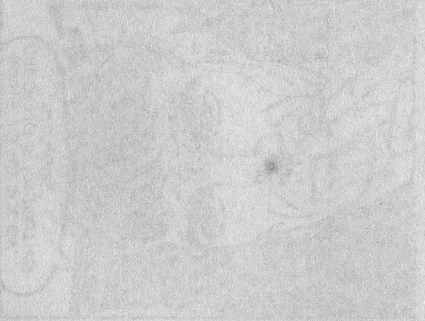




THE LIFE WHEN A QUEENED GLOVES



THE LIFE WHEN A QUEENED GLOVES



THE LIFE WHEN A QUEENED GLOVES

MODESTY
BLAISE

by PETER O'DONNELL

IT
FIGURES,
WILLIE —

STAR

LOVE STORIES
IN PICTURES

No. 943
18p



ROMANTIC / PORNOGRAPHIC ↑

(THE HOOD)

THE TIME WHEN A SUPERHERD OPERATES ↓

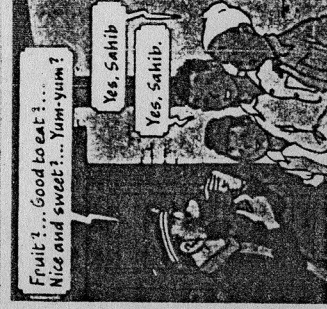


ASTERIX &
THE GOths

ILLUSTRATED

NARRATION

TINTIN IN
NEPAL



Superhero based on the idealization of man and his attributes.

The second section namely The Romantic/Pornographic, consists of the fulfilment of the most common wish fulfilment fantasies of women and men respectively.

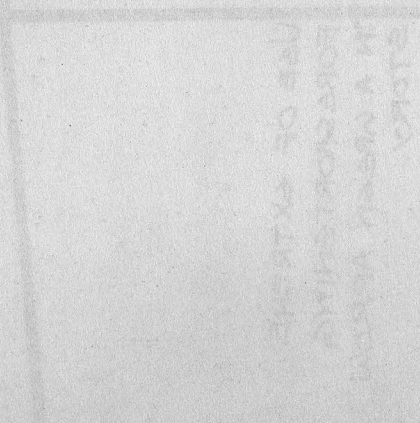
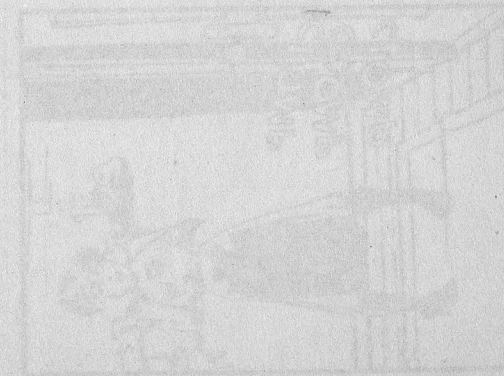
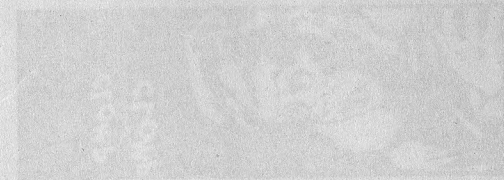
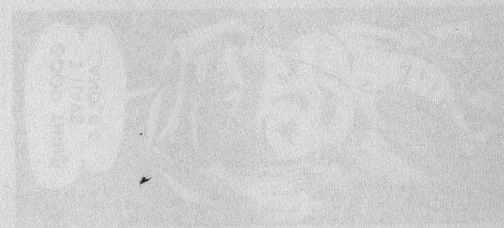
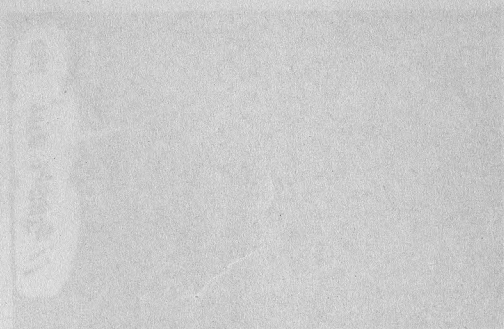
The third is common to men, women and children i.e. it provides the favourite distraction shared by everyone, namely the telling of a story, or an imaginative sequence of events.

Following is an attempt to isolate the devices operating in Superhero comic books. The Superhero (Super man) was created in America during the Depression when people needed a morale-booster and not surprisingly has continuously caught the peoples imagination so that today we have a pantheon of Superheroes, Superheroines and Super-villains. This section of comic books was chosen as it contains in an exaggerated form, all the devices that operate in comic art which combine in this section to make it the most dramatic.

Analysis of Superhero Comic Books

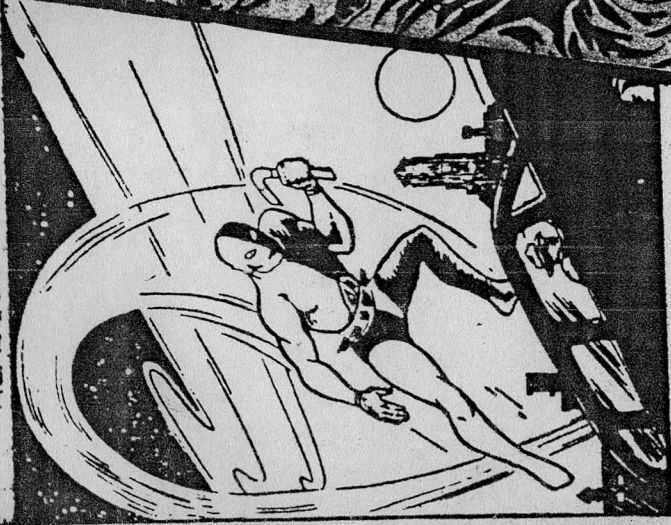
Projection of Super-reality: Presenting of unreal or far from normal reality.

1. Superheroes work at times when normal reality is hidden - twilight, night, dawn, stormy or misty weather, with shadowed buildings or the soft glow of artificial light in the background.
2. Unreal use of colours contribute to unreality of scene - one of Superman's enemies Brainiac - 5, has a green face, as does the Joker, arch foe of the Batman. Shadowgirl, one of the Legion of Superheroes has a blue face.
3. The frames freeze the most descriptive part of an action, the human body exaggerated beyond the capacity of even the best gymnast.



AS THE THUGS LEAVE FOR THEIR HEADQUARTERS...

← ACTION MAN - HERO'S PATH IS OUTLINED.



THE USE OF
HIGHLIGHT & SHADOW
FROM RAYMOND CHANDLER.



PLEASE, ARCHER.
LET ME
DO THAT JOB
FOR YOU!

TO BE CONTINUED!

USE OF EXTREME
FORESHORTENING
IN A GREEN ARROW
STORY.



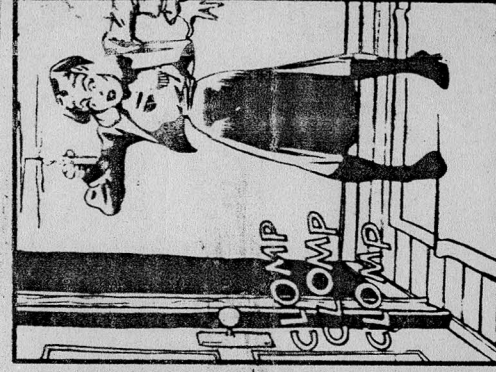
OH... THE LIGHTS!



GOOD THING
I HAVE
CANDLES.



CLOMP
CLOMP



CLOMP
CLOMP
CLOMP

The projection of mood and atmosphere through angle shots, shadows, and even sound effect

FROM A STORY BY WILL ELSNER.

4. The flying or leaping path of the hero is shown as also the trajectory of a fist-blow.
5. The hitpoint is like the flash of a light bulb paralleling the sound of 'dhishum-dhishum' in a film fight.
6. The jagged blurb pops up everywhere, on the cover, around a blast or the final crashing blow delivered to the villain.

Influence of Film

1. The projection of mood and atmosphere through angle shots and sound effects.
2. The establishing shot or 'splash' page that uses extreme perspective and foreshortening.
3. The use of dramatic lighting to throw sharp shadows and high-lights.
4. The 70 mm screen effect is simulated by exploding the character out of the frame.
5. Showing the superhero from below the eyelevel - a device used in film to show the superiority of the character.

Depiction of Superhero/heroine:

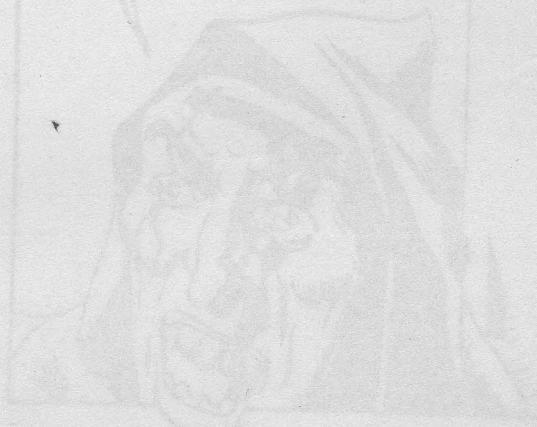
1. By drawing him out of scale, Like Michelangelo's figures in 'The Last Judgement' which were found to be 10 feet tall when reduced to scale.
2. He/She is shown in noble upright poses that show the human body to its best advantage.
3. Their muscles are exaggerated and so is the length of the legs.
4. They are rarely shown as part of a crowd for that would cut them down to size.

THE SUPERHERO COMICS

THE SUPERHERO
 COMICS
 BODY BOILED



THE SHADOW OF THE GALLOW
 THE HANGMAN



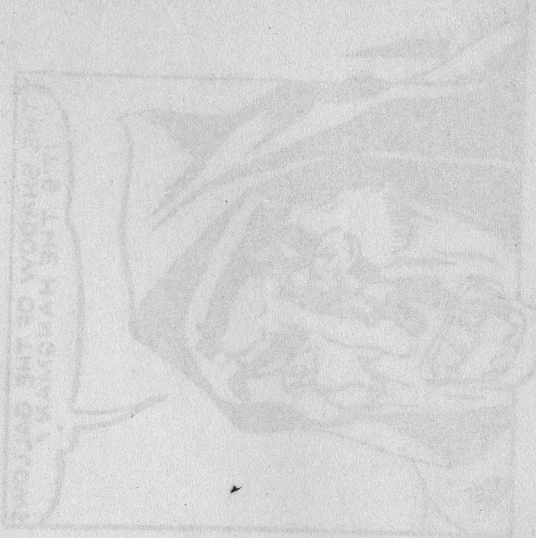
VILLAIN'S EVIL GRIN
 FROM A BANISHMENT STORY



FROM A BANISHMENT
 STORY
 FETTERED VILLAIN



FROM A REFORMATION STORY
ARTHUR'S END - CHURCH

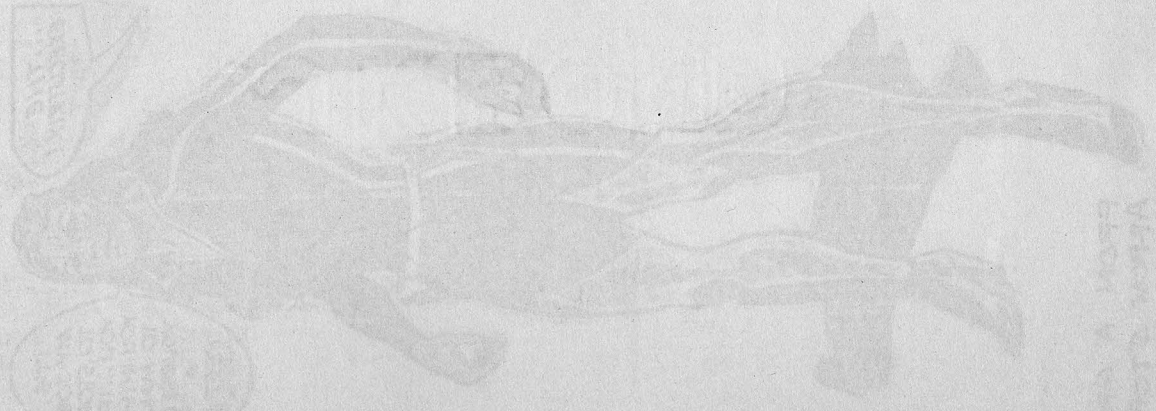


THE THE HANSHAM BENT
THE PRISON OF THE CAPTAINS



FROM A REFORMATION STORY
ARTHUR'S END - CHURCH

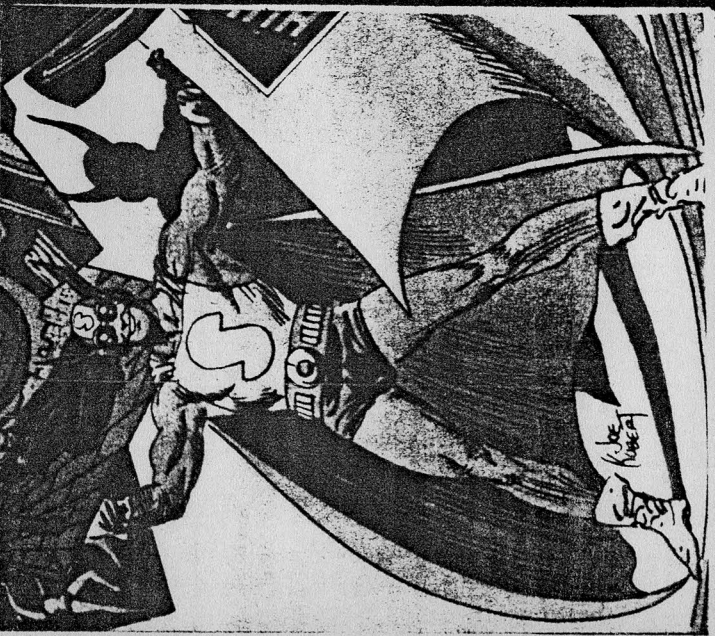
FROM A REFORMATION STORY
ARTHUR'S END - CHURCH



THE THE HANSHAM BENT
THE PRISON OF THE CAPTAINS

FROM A REFORMATION STORY
ARTHUR'S END - CHURCH

SUPERHERO CATALOGUE



THE SUPERHERO
-CAPED, MASKED
& BODY SUITED.
←



...THE
EXECUTRIX!

IT'S
MY JOB
TO STOP
YOU ... IF
YOU INTEND
TO MAKE
YOURSELF
A
PEST!

FROM A GREEN
ARROW STORY.

FEMALE VILLAIN



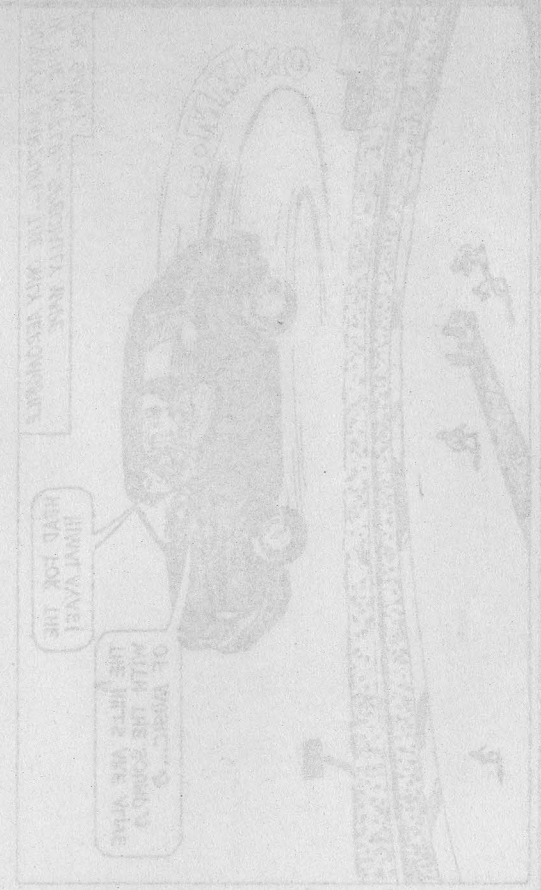
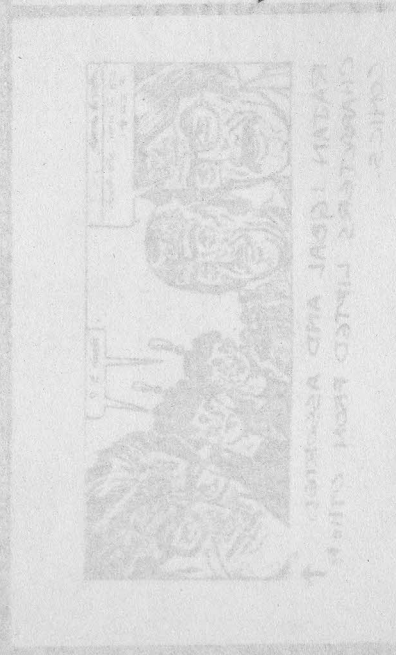
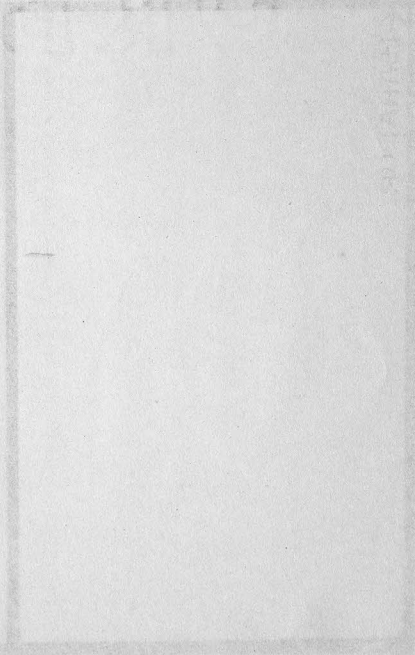
THE SHADOW OF THE GALLOWS
IT'S THE HANGMAN!

VILLAIN'S EVIL GRIN.
FROM A HANGMAN STORY

5. They always wear tight body suits to differentiate between the baggily clothed figures of ordinary people.
6. Shown often with capes that billow in the wind to give an enveloping personality.
7. Often masked to underline their non-humanness also facial expressions are give aways and masks add an air of mystery.
8. The smiles of the hero/heroine are drawn as gleaming bands of white since detailed teeth look grotesque.
9. The female characters are generally shown as Amazons, (Wonder woman is literally a descendant of the Amazons) Man's ideal goddesses.

Depiction of Super Villain: The villains of this genre are also Super or how else could they compare with the mighty heroes/heroines.

1. The body proportions are either scaled to the hero's size or he is given commensurate evil powers.
2. They always have exciting histories of crime and horrifying destruction.
3. Ordinary crooks fight at the behest of supervillains and can defeat super heroes only with the help of poisonous gas or green kryptonite.
4. They are never revolting to look at; Two-Face, half of whose face was scarred by acid is shown half-green or purple and half-white, with only a twisted mouth and no scars on his skin.
5. Their faces are shown in extreme close-up's to show the evil glint in their eyes and wicked grins where every tooth is detailed unlike the heroes.
6. As for female villains, they are the ideal bitch-goddesses who sometimes capture the heart of the hero.



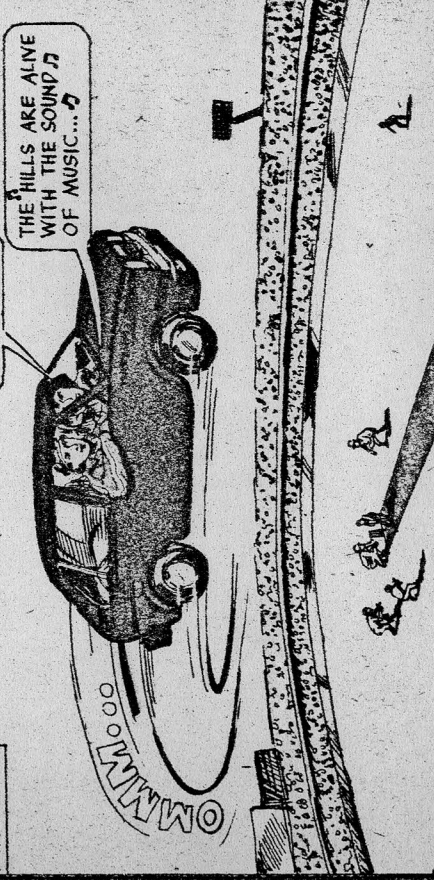
SUNNY, THE TERROR OF BOWLERS AND
WIL-DOERS THE WORLD OVER...



SUNNY AND NOON NOON ARE GOOD
FRIENDS, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME
THEY ARE GETTING TOGETHER IN
AN ADVENTURE.



SUNNY'S MARZUKI--THE ONLY AEROMOBILE
IN THE WORLD--SPECIALLY MADE
FOR SUNNY.



HEAD FOR THE
HIMALAYAS!

AMITABH BACHCHAN
AS SUPERNO.



Supernatural Powers of Phenomenon



RAJAN IQBAL AND ASSORTED
CHARACTERS LIFTED FROM OTHER
COMICS.

BAHADUR

7. The Super-Villain cannot die, he's always put into exciting prisons from where he can stage innovative jail breaks.

Heroes In the Indian Context

Indian comics exhibit an interesting difference in that the ingenious creations are based on real people. However, the tendency of deifying real people could be dangerous. For example, the cricketer Sunil Gavaskar is featured in a comic book called 'Sunny' in which he 'battles bowlers and evildoers the world over'. So we have Sunny hinting that the umpires of Bundookstan (obviously Pakistan) do not play fair; which is an irresponsible accusation to make.

Supremo, the other example in this genre is modelled on Amitabh Bachchan's Screen personality; his comic characterization is based on 'The Phantom' by Lee Falk. This, therefore would disillusion the child as he would be expecting the impossible from real people.

One healthy trend, however is manifested in the Bahadur series from Indrajal Comics. Bahadur appeared about the same time as the film, 'Sholay' which made a hero out of a dacoit and instilled greater fear of dacoits in the minds of the populace. Bahadur then worked as a counter trend, in reducing the impact of this depiction, by battling the dacoits with no superhuman powers. The formation of the Citizen's Security Force - an organization of villagers who were then trained in the martial arts was shown to be sufficient to battle the dacoits.

Bahadur, therefore provides a model worth emulating unlike the Superhuman Western heroes endowed with super powers.

Faults in Indian Comics

1. Imitation: of styling of characters, for example, 'Rajan Iqbal' a detective comic published by Diamond Comics stars two characters whose styling is at the crudest stage of Comic drawing, however these two are surrounded by well developed characters who have been lifted, in toto, from Rip Kirby and various Wild

West comics. Or, 'Chimpu', also a Diamond Comics presentation that lifts entire fairy tales from the Illustrated Classics series and passes them off under Indian names as tales told by Chimpu, the leading character.

2. Drawing Mistakes: are found in almost all regional language comics as in 'Tiger' published by Prabhat Comics - who has not only improbable anatomy but also stands against an environment that obeys no rules of perspective. Or the lifting of head styles, from characters featured in the Asterix series and placed on top of scrawny, badly drawn bodies in the strip found in Suman Saurabh.
3. Errors: One finds grammatical errors in all indigenous comics but some are too terrible to be passed off as idiomatic English. As for example in, Fauladi Singh, also a Diamond Comics character who cheerfully misinforms, that a certain machine is, "made from 140 minerals containing 64 chemicals and some chemical reaction is going on inside".
4. Problems with Typography: Devanagari because of its horizontality is difficult to integrate into a comic strip and one finds several ludicrous attempts from printed dialogues in Lot-Pot to written dialogue on coloured backgrounds which makes it even more difficult to read.

Indian comics also suffer from poor use of colour and out of register printing.

Conclusion

This project has attempted to define and categorize, the form of Comic Art for essentially the following reasons:

1. To enable the designer to pick up usable elements of Comic Art.
2. To locate possible directions for Indian Comic Art.

Possible solutions to the problems found in Indian Comics are that:

1. The publishers should take their responsibility seriously and use better artists and writers for these books. Also, it is upto newspapers to encourage the formation of new styles in Comic Art, either by publishing the work of lesser known cartoonists or by motivating cartoonists to work in new directions.
2. Some standards of excellence need to be set, to this end - the India Book House for example, now that they have established a market, can afford to produce publications of better quality, with more research into the total environment of the characters they depict.
3. It is not impossible to create Indian characters for stories based in India, character types already exists in newspaper cartoons and strips like Mario's Safari Suited business men, R.K. Laxman's common man, Manjula's Khadi and jean clad characters or Bahadur in his orange achkan.
4. The form of comic art which pitches content against device, as used in Mad Magazine, is also absent in India, and could be explored.
5. Another possibility is of basing a strip on the naive, visual depiction of Kalighat and Company paintings of the 18th century in India.
6. In the West, the content of comic art parallels that of film therefore the emergence of the Romantic/Pornographic genre in

Comic Art, it is interesting to note that we have no indigenous examples of this genre in India.

7. There may also be place for esoteric creations like a strip catering to any particular section of the literate masses, for eg. the Business Section.

As detailed in the earlier sections of this report, there are several existing areas of Comic Art which are not seen in India, and since strips and books pertaining to these areas already have an audience in India, it may be a worthwhile direction to pursue. Or one can look for new possibilities which may be applicable exclusively to the Indian set-up.

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