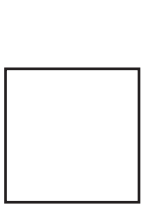
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STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES



Intl. Journal *for the* History *of* Early Comics *and* Sequential Art

#2



signs

STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

Intl. Journal *for the* History *of* Early Comics *and* Sequential Art



Università di Pisa





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Signs - Studies in Graphic Narratives

International Journal for the History of Early Comics and Sequential Art

Welcome back to SIGNs. *This second issue is coming out after a quite long hiatus, since the journal debut in 2007. In the meantime we have published two supplements: the first one (#1/01 2008) was devoted to an* Inventory of the plates of the Maison Quantin's "Imagerie Artistique", *one of the main producer of* images d'Epinal; *the second supplement (#2/01 2010) hosted an essay by Thierry Smolderen, a* Chapter on methodology *related to his book* Naissances de la bande dessinée, *tracing some of the main theoretical and methodological issues emerged from his research on early comics, from Hogarth to McCay.*

Since the birth of this journal, many changes have occurred to the field of Comics Studies. Some new academic periodicals have appeared, such as European Comic Art Journal *(2008),* Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics *(2010),* Studies in Comics *(2010) and online journals such as* Comicalités *(2010) or* The Comics Grid *(2011). More specifically, publications and essays devoted to early comics—or to what others call "Platinum Age", from the birth of the Print Age to the 1930s—have flourished, helping to put into the limelight some relevant moments and elements of the distant past of the medium.*

The path traveled by SIGNs, *a journey on the rediscovery of the historical roots of Comics Culture, is increasingly practiced in Comics Studies, and in the last few years we have welcomed some remarkable works in the field such as David Kunzle's monumental biography of Rodolphe Töpffer (2007), Thierry Smolderen's* Naissances de la bande dessinée *(2009) or Mark Mc Kinney's* The Colonial Heritage of French Comics *(2011). These essays have been accompanied by many reprint projects such as Thierry Groensteen's retrospective on Alain Saint-Ogan (2007), Fabio Gadducci's and Matteo Stefanelli's anthology of Antonio Rubino (2009), or Peter Maresca's selection of early XXth century Sunday comics (*Forgotten Fantasy *2011). We believe that this historiographic trend – as both a cause and an effect of the ongoing redefinition of Comics Culture identity in the Digital Age—will keep going in the forthcoming decade, allowing scholars to improve their research questions: turning points and underlying paths; archeological and theoretical issues; modern and pre-modern viewpoints and paradigms. "Here we are… again", to help our tiny community to keep writing (and re-writing) a more detailed, un-stereotyped, and possibly useful history of comics.*

Due to its inevitably ambiguous identity, as a scholarly journal devoted to an object of study whose knowledge is shared between academics and "connoisseurs", SIGNs *has suffered a lack of organizational support. We believe this is not necessarily a limit: as a labour of love, we still think that a similar forum may be instrumental for investigating—removed from any "publish or perish" pressures—all the different facets of the early history of the medium. Indeed, the contents of the current issue display the wide range of topics that need to be covered. From the imagery of colonial broadsheets to the beginnings of a modern editorial industry in XIXth century Serbia, from the topic of travel in early French comics to a revisitation of Töpffer's role, the thematical and geographical span that is offered here indicates the richness of this field. It is a variety that still differentiates, we believe, our journal in the current editorial landscape.*

There is a lot of work ahead, both documental and theoretical, in the area of Early Comics Studies, in order to re-frame a common ground of historical data, for the increasingly comparative needs of the international community of scholars. We hope that SIGNs *will continue to help in reaching these goals, serving our community and inspiring new researchers and lovers of comics as well.*

Not just Black and White.
Divergent Colonial Period Representations of Africans in French and Belgian Broadsheets (1880-1914)

signs
STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

by: Pascal Lefèvre
Sint-Lukas Brussels University College of Art and Design & K.U. Leuven

The end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of New Imperialism: various European countries and the U.S.A. conquered considerable territories worldwide for exploitation (Bulliet et al. 2005: 750). The popular culture of this period has often been described as a propaganda tool fostering a biased vision towards Africa and its inhabitants: uncivilized savages in need of European help (see, among others, Schneider 1982, MacKenzie 1984, Brantlinger 1985, Nederveen Pieterse 1990, Castle 1996). A Belgian example of this imperialistic vision is a Dessain broadsheet[1] circa 1910, #27 of a series called *Histoire de Belgique* (published for the catholic group L'œuvre du catéchisme en exemple du Père Vincent), which glorifies the work of King Léopold II and his subjects in the Congo. The following is a translated excerpt from this popular print

> *"There is an episode of the reign of Leopold II which is already history: it is the creation of the Belgian Congo. Fifty years ago the center of Africa was populated by savage negroes who ate human flesh. Today, civilization begins to rule there: the cross shines at the top of buildings, and the blue flag with the golden star[2] waves over a land that is more than 900 leagues long. This rapid transformation is largely the work of our country, its sovereign and its missionaries. In 1878, after the discoveries of Stanley, the king founded the International Association of the Upper Congo. In 1885, the Berlin congress established Congo as an independent nation and conferred sovereignty over it to Leopold II. The king, with the help of cardinal Lavignerie, strove to repress the cruel Negro slave trade of the Arabs. Within a few years, the Congo was freed of these hunters of humans. It was a handsome triumph, the honor for which is mainly due to baron Dhanis, who defeated the Arabs in several encounters."*[3]

[1] Broadsheets were known in various countries under different names: in French they were called 'imageries populaires', 'feuilles volantes', 'images d'enfants' or 'images d'Épinal'; in Dutch 'volksprenten', 'kinderprenten', 'centsprenten' or 'mannekensbladen'; in German 'Bilderbogen'.

[2] I.e. the flag of the colony, different from the Belgian one.

[3] The French original reads: "Il est un épisode du règne de Léopold II qui appartient déjà à l'histoire: c'est la création du Congo Belge. Il y a 50 ans le centre de l'Afrique était habité par des nègres sauvages qui se nourrissaient de chair humaine: aujourd'hui, la civilisation commence à y régner: la croix brille au sommet des édifices, et le drapeau bleu à l'étoile d'or flotte sur une contrée de plus de 900 lieues de longueur. Cette transformation rapide est en grande partie l'œuvre de notre pays, de son souverain, de ses missionnaires. Le roi fonda en 1878, après les découvertes de Stanley, l'Association internationale du Haut-Congo. En 1885, par le congrès de Berlin le Congo fut érigé en État indépendant et la souveraineté en fut donnée à Léopold II. Le roi s'employa, avec l'aide du cardinal Lavignerie, à la répression de la traite des nègres, cruellement pratiquée par les Arabes. En quelques années, le Congo était délivré de ces chasseurs d'hommes. Ce fut un beau triomphe dont l'honneur en revient surtout au baron Dhanis qui battit les Arabes en de nombreuses rencontres."

A first version of this text was presented at the IAMHIST-conference Amsterdam 19 July 2007.
I described the representation of Congo in Francophone Belgian comics of the 20th century in (Lefèvre 2008).

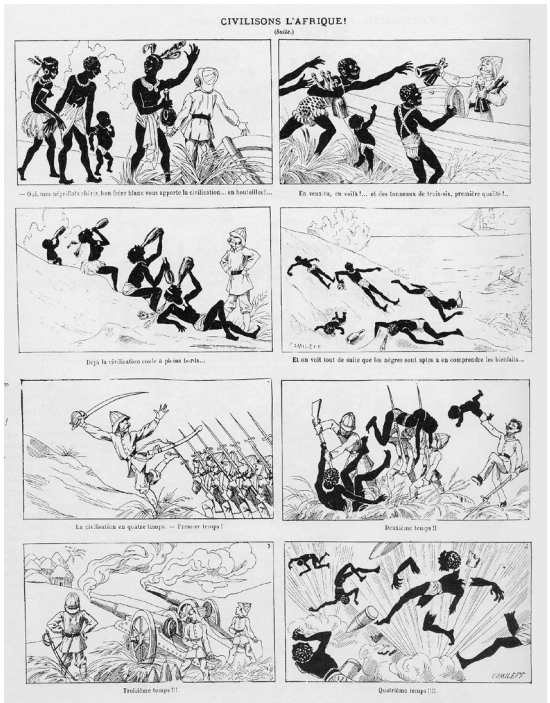


Figure 1.
Camileff, **Civilisons l'Afrique** [Let's civilize Africa], in **L'Image pour Rire** 1893.

This fragment thus conforms to the descriptions in the dominant writings on the colonial imagination of the early XX century (including the scholarship of Schneider 1982, MacKenzie 1984, Boime 1990, Nederveen Pieterse 1990, and Castle 1996). However, in reality the historical situation turns out to be far more complex and ambiguous. While browsing through The House of Alijn collection of French and Belgian broadsheets, I noticed several examples showing a different variety of black characters and telling different stories. This discovery became the impetus for me to begin studying in more detail the representations of the inhabitants of Africa in the popular prints of France and Belgium. This is because at the end of the 19th century both of these countries were colonising vast territories in Africa[4] and at the same time they were also important producers and consumers of colourful broadsheets. I am very grateful to The House of Alijn in Ghent and Sint-Lukas Brussels University College of Art and Design for their generous support of this research.

I. A popular medium for the masses

Though most French and Belgian broadsheet publishers had no direct link[5] with the government or enterprises involved in the colonization, it may be still interesting to consider how their publications represented black Africans in those colonial times. Like other media, prints offer a selective and subjective view of their time, because they are themselves the product of a complex culture AND aimed at a specific, contemporary audience. Moreover, one should also take into account the active participation of their audience in the making of their meaning (McQuail 1994: 256), an aspect which is often forgotten or denied in studies of colonial representation.

Previous studies of drawn images of Africans in European popular culture offer, in fact, contrasting results. For instance, Jan Nederveen Pieterse in *White on Black* (1990) claims that the image of Africa seemed the negative obverse of white cultural identities and that the Western popular culture positioned blacks in a subordinate role. The British art historian David Kunzle (1990: 298-307) in his study of French popular journals, on the contrary, suggests that the political philosophy of the lower middle classes was far from one of uniformly simpleminded jingoism: "*Morally and politically, the strips offer a very mixed, often skeptical view of imperialism, which corresponds to the broad spectrum of and*

[4] Until 1908 the Belgian king Léopold II held a position as sole ruler over the so-called Congo Free State, afterwards the state of Belgium took over the colony.

[5] Except for the Belgian publisher Dessain who published circa 1910 for L'œuvre du catéchisme en exemple du Père Vincent (of the Salesian order) the didactic print n° 27, referred to above, in the series *Histoire de Belgique*. The Salesians of Don Bosco became active in Congo in 1911 after an invitation by the Belgian Foreign Minister. It is not sure that the print was distributed before the sending of salesians to the Congo.

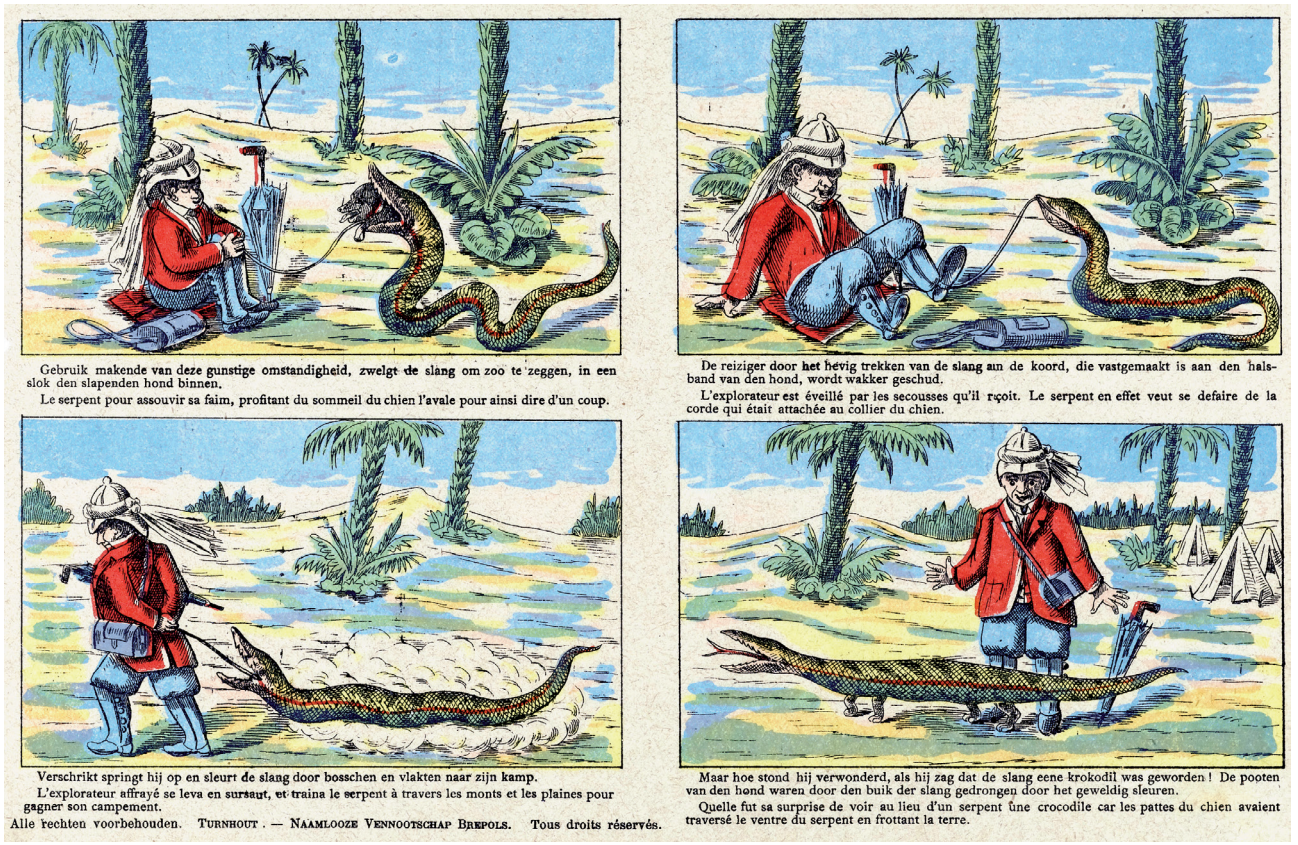


Figure 2.
Anon., **Eene gedaanteverandering / Une métamorphose**
[A metamorphosis], Turnhout: Brepols nº 283, probably first published about 1908 (Vansummeren 1996: 119).

confusion of opinion among the lower classes generally." Kunzle mentions, amongst others, a satirical strip condemning imperialism: Camileff's *Civilisons l'Afrique* [Let's civilize Africa] [Figure 1] published in 1893 in the French comic journal *L'Image pour Rire*. Furthermore, at the turn-of-the-century, views on colonisation varied considerably, something which is rarely acknowledged in studies of colonial representation.

This study will focus on popular prints because, by and large, art historians have neglected to study this terrain.[6] Even among outstanding comics historians such as Groensteen (2000: 18) and Kunzle (1990: 2) these broadsheets are considered of lesser artistic importance than comics in magazines. We believe instead that to discount such a large body of work inevitably implies a partial view of the history of the comics' medium.

While the bulk of popular prints are seen as less 'artistic' and more static than the black and white comic strips in the illustrated magazines, the broadsheets, by contrast, usually appeared in full colour. Sometimes the same artists worked for both media (Sausverd 2007: 21-22). Furthermore, by buying these sheets young read-

[6] Rather than art historians or comics historians, it has been mostly folklore researchers (as Vansummeren 1996), fans and collectors of broadsheets who have studied these publications. But even amongst these numerous publications, industrial prints have been considered of less importance than the older wood- or copper prints (e.g. De Meyer 1962: 16).

ers would have become accustomed to reading visual sequences on paper—that is, accustomed to reading comics.[7] Indeed, these industrial prints might even have inspired later artists of the modern comic strip: for instance the famous gag sequence (a snake swallows a dog, Bobbie, but its feet perforate the belly of the snake) from *Tintin au Congo* (1930) had an antecedent some twenty years earlier in a bilingual Brepols print *Eene gedaanteverandering / Une métamorphose* [Figure 2].

As the first large-scale mass-produced and eye-catching multicoloured images made for a broad public, broadsheets can without doubt serve as an interesting source for historical research. To grasp the importance of popular prints at the end of the 19th century, one can make, to a certain extent, an analogy with television today. Like the many television companies nowadays, the various publishers of broadsheets fought a fierce battle amongst themselves vying for consumers (De Meyer 1962, Lerch 1992, Vansummeren 1996, Duvigneau 1999, Kohlmann 1999, George 2005). Companies that did not invest in new technology and creativity lost market share or went bankrupt. Popular collaborators were lured away and popular formats were copied by competitors. Like today where the same television formats (reality shows, quizzes, and others) pop up in various countries, at the time, publishers produced the same types of broadsheets (among these were types such as, soldiers, fairy tales, and riddles prints).

Broadsheets offered a broad spectrum of content ranging from entertainment (humour, suspense, fantasy) to news, education, religion and propaganda, but in the first decades of the 20th century other media took over these functions and the prints gradually lost their appeal. Broadsheets in their heyday were not only sold by shopkeepers in the cities, but also by itinerant vendors who flooded out into the countryside. In contrast to earlier broadsheets or the new illustrated magazines, which were first and foremost targeted at adults, the popular prints of the late 19th century were aimed primarily at children. Gradually, didactic aims gave in to more entertaining purposes: by the turn-of-the-century growing numbers of humorous prints were being produced. Most prints were about 40 cm high and 30 cm wide, but other formats were also produced. They contained coloured images with text under the panels. Each sheet could tell a complete story or present illustrations about a certain theme.

The elevated circulation figures of such prints indicate that they reached a broad public, many times larger than, for instance the satirical press. No wonder they had some considerable cultural, political and economical influence (George 2005: 108-112).

II. Case study of the Alijn collection

For this study, the recently inventoried collection of The House of Alijn, the folklore museum of the City of Ghent (Belgium), was scrutinized: this collection contains 2977 prints (most of them produced between 1880 and 1920), 80% of the collection coming from the North East of France and the rest from Belgium.[8] With 1648 sheets from Pellerin and Pinot, the collection of

[7] The prints made children dream, as the French writer and Nobel Prize winner Anatole France (1844-1924) testifies: "Les papetiers qui étaient à la devanture de leur boutique des images d'Épinal furent d'abord mes préférés. Que de fois, le nez collé contre la vitre, j'ai lu d'un bout à l'autre la légende de ces petits drames figurés. J'en connus beaucoup en peu de temps, il y en avait de fantastiques qui faisaient travailler mon imagination et développaient en moi cette faculté sans laquelle on ne trouve rien, même en matière d'expériences et dans le domaine des sciences exactes. Il y en avait qui, représentant les existences sous une forme naïve et saisissante, me firent regarder pour la première fois la chose la plus terrible ou pour mieux dire la seule chose terrible, la destinée. Enfin je dois beaucoup aux images d'Épinal." (Perrout 1985: 244)

[8] In 2006, I collaborated with Nele Van Uytsel and Greet Vanderhaegen in the inventorization of the popular prints of The House of Alijn.

The House of Alijn houses almost one fifth of the Épinal production of that period.[9]

What is more, the Alijn collection also contains considerable quantities of the prints produced by the most important Belgian publishers: one third of all the one third of all the Gordinne and Brepols titles. Hence, statistically, the Alijn collection is large enough to give a fair idea of the entire scope of production in Épinal and Belgium. While it is quite easy to identify the publishers of these prints, other features such as dates and the names of authors remain problematic. Most prints are undated[10] and unsigned: usually only the publisher's name is mentioned on the sheets. The Pellerin catalogues, consulted in the *Archives départementales des Vosges* in Épinal, helped to determine the time span in which these prints were published. However, knowing details about the creators is a near-impossible task as, even when the names of the authors can be retrieved, biographical information tends to be scarce or completely lacking.[11]

Consequently, it is not possible to know the intentions behind a particular print. Nevertheless, it is certain that broadsheets were produced by private enterprises with money-making aims: they had to produce commodities that were sufficiently attractive to consumers. Popular prints were without a doubt marketed to a broad public. On examination of these prints, it seems that the audiences of a century ago also liked many things that were inconsistent with, and/or non-reflective of, reality (Schneider 1982: 203). Since mass media are generally

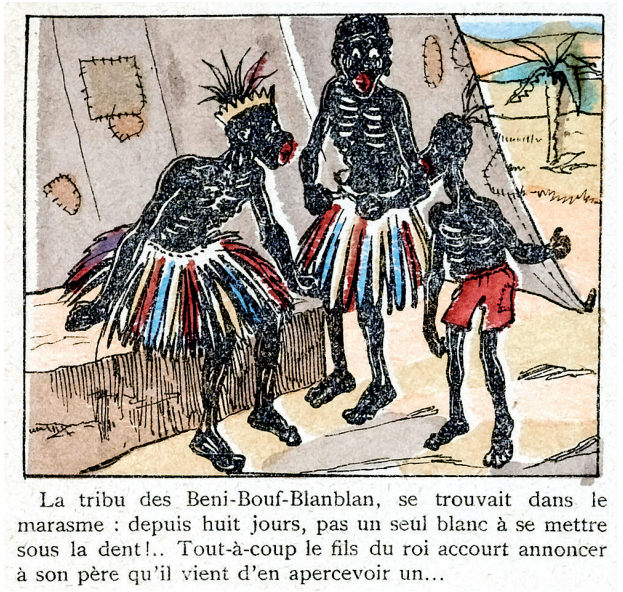


Figure 3.
Augé,
De l'ascendant de la peinture
[About the coming of painting],
Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal
nº 4030,
probably first published
between 1900 and 1910.
Note the name of the tribe,
'Beni Bouf Blan Blan'
[Blessed Food White White].

oriented to the interests of their audiences as 'consumers' of information and entertainment, this reality distortion is evident (McQuail 1994: 257).

A first striking observation is that Africa, or its colonisation, was not, in quantitative terms, a dominant theme.[12] Of the 2977 prints of the Alijn collection, only a very limited number (less than 5%) of broadsheets depict black people. Moreover, only a small number of those broadsheets show explicit colonial preoccupations: there are very few representations of missionaries or settlers.[13] From the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, Africa is mostly used as a backdrop for adventure or humour. I will therefore consider here 'colonial preoccupations' in a quite broad sense. This relatively minor interest in Africa by these popular prints differs greatly from the considerable coverage of Africa in the French press (Schneider 1982: 38).

9 The North East of France (with publishers such as Pellerin and Pinot in Épinal, and Vagné in Pont-à-Mousson) was the most important producer of French broadsheets of the late 19th century. In Épinal alone, some 8691 different titles were produced between 1820 and 1923 (Garnier-Pelle & Préaud 1991: 12).

10 The precise date of creation would be, of course, interesting to know, but, more importantly, popular prints were republished several times, which means that they were not quickly outdated and were sold for several years or even decades.

11 One source of biographical information is Solo (2004).

12 The quantity of broadsheets with black characters is for instance comparable to that of broadsheets with lyrics or religious themes.

13 Missionaries or settlers would become more prominent from the 1930s on in the Belgian comics (Lefèvre 2008).

Various broadsheets of the Alijn sample confirmed more or less the categories of Nederveen Pieterse (1990): blacks as servants,[14] as punishers,[15] as comical cannibals [Figure 3], as ridiculous characters [Figure 4], as fairground attractions,[16] and as slaves of Arabs.[17] The Dutch researcher asserts that such representations say more about the whites producing such images than about the blacks themselves. This might be largely true, but in some cases, those representations do refer to historical facts: for instance, the Arabian slave trade of Africans is no myth but an historical fact; just as there was also a slave trade by Europeans and Americans, and even slavery among Africans (Fomin 2005). To fight the Arabian slave trade was, however, an ideal excuse for Western powers to move into Africa at the end of the 19th century. Most of these classic representations of the late 19th century would survive for decades, well into the 20th century, in the popular culture of Europe and North America.[18]

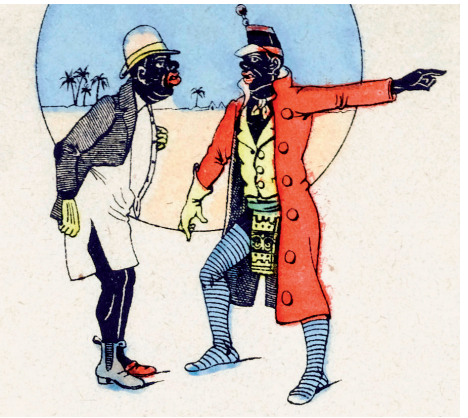


Figure 4.
Anon., **Un duel au Congo**
[A duel in Congo],
Épinal: Pellerin,
Imagerie d'Épinal nº 395,
probably first published
between 1888 and 1910.



Figure 5.
Raoul Thomen,
Marius aviateur
[Marius the pilot],
Épinal: Pellerin,
Imagerie d'Épinal nº 2611,
probably first published
between 1890 and 1910.



Figure 6.
Anon.,
Histoire vraie sur le Dahomey
[A true story of Dahomey],
Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie
d'Épinal nº 402,
probably first published
between 1888 and 1910.

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14 One example is *La mésaventure de Mr Prunaut*, Liège: Gordinne n° 102 (probably first published between 1894 and 1920).

15 See *Le roi de la lune*, Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal n° 932 (probably first published between 1880 and 1887) or *De prinses Christina*, Liège: Gordinne n° 385 (probably first published between 1894 and 1920).

16 See Jules Hénault, *Jour de fête*, Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal n° 364 (probably first published between 1888 and 1910) and *De klimmast*, Liège: Gordinne n° 395 (probably first published between 1894 and 1920).

17 An example being the above mentioned *Histoire de Belgique* n° 27, Liège: Hubert Dessain & L'œuvre du cathéchisme en exemple du Père Vincent, Salésien (probably first published between 1900 and 1914).

18 For instance, in 2007 there was a row in the UK about the English edition of Tintin au Congo. The Commission for Racial Equality claimed that this album contained potentially highly offensive material. The comic dates originally from 1930 but in 1946 Hergé redrew this story, and it is this redrawn version that was criticized. It is interesting to see that Hergé used the same stereotypes as some artists decades earlier: for instance, the stereotype of the black who wants to dress up as a white, but this results in a ridiculous effect.

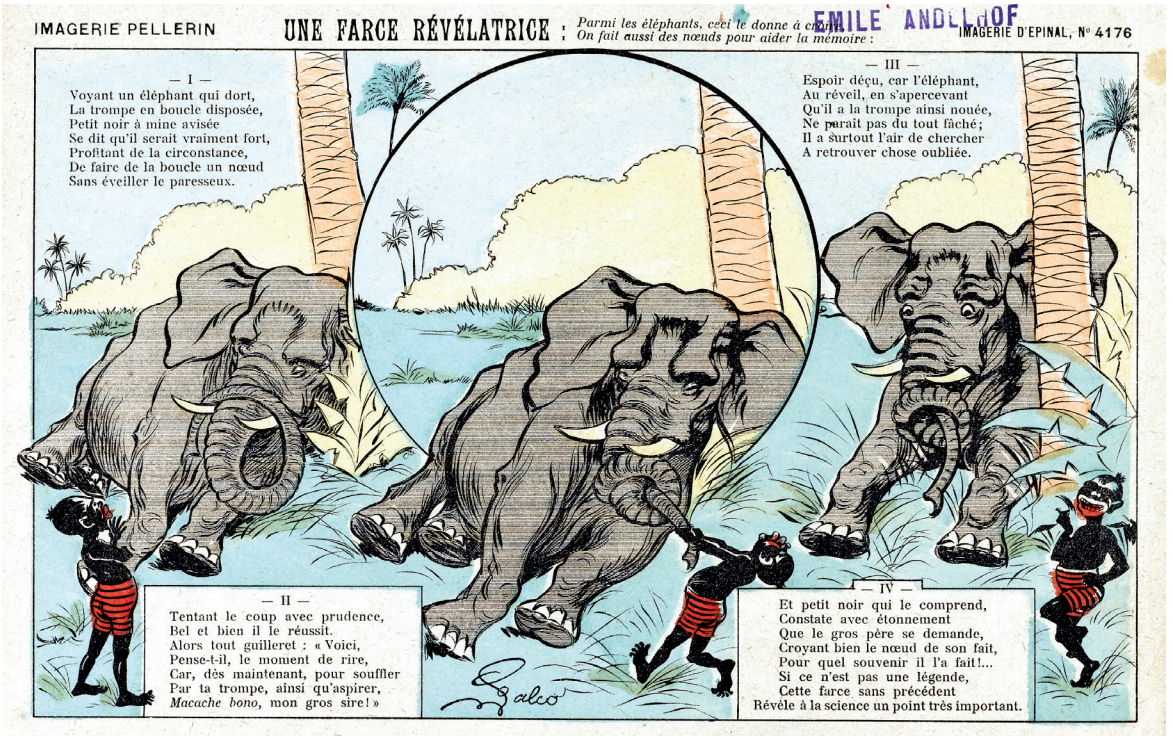


Figure 7.
Galco,
Une farce révélatrice
[A revealing farce],
Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal nº 4176,
probably first published between 1900 and 1910.

A drawing does not only depict something, but it gives also a visual interpretation of the world (Lefèvre 2007: 8). Consequently, figures can be drawn in great variety of ways. The representations in the samples surveyed are indeed quite varied: they range from the heavily caricatured to the only slightly deformed [Figure 5 & 6]. Simian-looking blacks, as Kunzle (1998) pointed out in his study of late 19th century American comic strips, form rather a small minority. Since the intentions of the creators and the reactions of the public of the time remain uncertain, judging the racist portion of a drawing remains a difficult interpretative act. Moreover, all these images cannot be viewed from the same perspective because some stories were clearly not meant to be taken seriously, while others, like didactic prints, were. Humorous stories imply almost by nature caricatural representations, not only of blacks but also of whites—something that is often overlooked in most content analyses. While Nederveen Pieterse (1990) interprets almost all the images in his study as condescending towards blacks, the Alijn sample seems to offer, on the contrary, various counter examples; the prints also figure blacks as inventive, clever, trustful persons, sometimes even morally and intellectually superior to a white character. Furthermore, some sheets explicitly promote the brotherhood between blacks and whites or an intercultural blending. The most striking examples of these will be analysed below. They come from two publishers: the major French publisher Pellerin in Épinal, and the modest Belgian publisher Gordinne in Liège.[19]

[19] Note that, compared to the enormous production of Pellerin (almost 9,000 titles), the production by Gordinne was relatively constrained (about 750 titles).

III. Blacks as positive characters

A small group of broadsheets uses an all black cast: while some of these prints feature depictions of ridiculed or cruel Africans, other stories present blacks as 'normal' characters—quite comparable to white characters. For instance, in *Une farce révélatrice* [A revealing joke] [Figure 7] by Galco a black boy plays a trick on a sleeping elephant by tying a knot in its trunk: the point is that the awakened elephant then tries to remember what he seems to have forgotten. There seems to be nothing condescending in this representation of the African boy, he is just a little rascal like his fictional European and American brothers (such as *Max und Moritz* or the *Katzenjammer Kids*); mischievous children have been a typical genre of the comic strip for more than 150 years.



Figure 8.
Anon., **Le petit Pierre** [Little Pierre],
Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal nº 1145, probably first published between 1880 and 1900.

Most broadsheets with black characters also figure some whites. Often there is some form of confrontation occurring between the two colours, as in the Pellerin print *Le petit Pierre* [Little Pierre] [Figure 8]. The black character in this print is, quite surprisingly,[20] a fairy who discloses herself to a white boy; he at first refuses her proposal to exchange roles because he does not want to become black and ugly, but in the end he repents and comes to an understanding that it is better to be good but ugly rather than bad but attractive. The prejudice held by the white boy may be an indication of a more or less widespread prejudice of the time. The moral of the story, however, seems quite ambivalent: while the link between blackness and ugliness is not really challenged, the story presents a black fairy as a forgiving and good character who educates a misguided white character.

In *Histoire du petit nègre Moricot* [History of little negro Moricot] [Figure 9] an African boy is kidnapped and brutally abused by Arabian slave traders, but he escapes and becomes the friend of a white captain. Amongst other deeds, the brave boy rescues his captain from a snake. In gratitude, the captain bequeaths his wealthy estate to his dear black friend, who then becomes a rich and respected plantation owner. One could interpret this story also as a form of white imperialism, because the Europeans serve at first as liberators of blacks enslaved by Arabs, and because the white captain educates the black boy. However, in the end, the 'evolved' African becomes his rightful heir. The name of the black boy 'Moricot' sound like the French term 'moricaud' which refers to a person of colour. Despite its title, the character's name and some of the classic stereotypes used, the narrative presents a brave and trustful black friend, who can become the equal of a rich white person. Such a statement regarding black Africans seems rather unusual in the popular

[20] This is the only black fairy in our corpus of prints; moreover comparable coloured fairies appear to be absent from the fairy tales of the period. The artists of these prints did not adhere to the stock characters, scenes or actions of fairy tale texts, and were seemingly free to vary themes and/or chose quite new approaches.

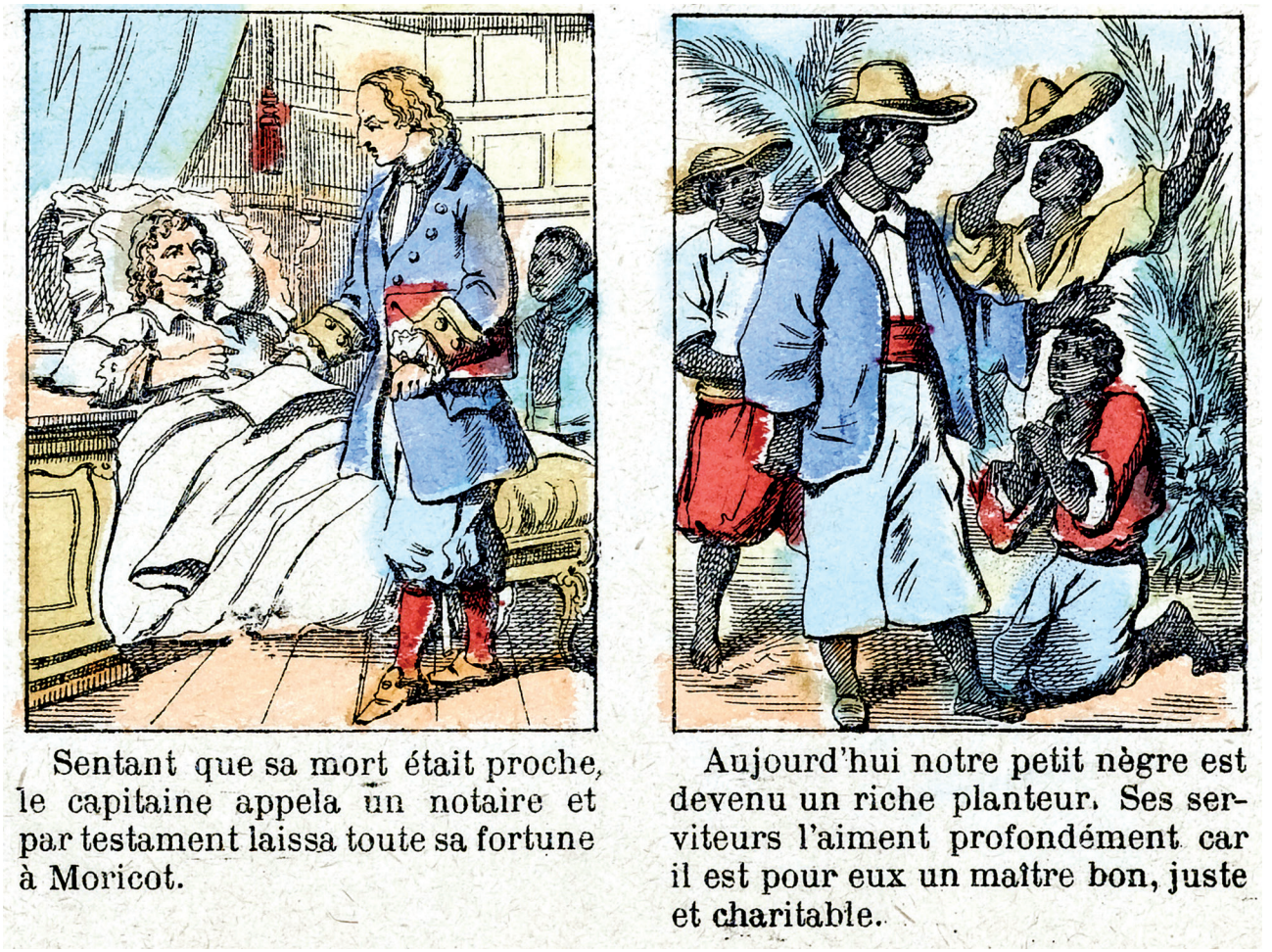


Figure 9.
Anon., **Histoire du petit nègre Moricot**
[History of little negro Moricot], Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal nº 607, probably first published between 1888 and 1910.

culture of this period: for example, Castle (1996) in her study of British history textbooks and children's periodicals does not mention any such potentially positive portrayals, nor does Nederveen Pieterse (1990) in his study, though Schneider (1982: 120) has identified one remarkably dignified portrait of an African ambassador in *Petit Journal* of 1893.

Another interesting example in the broadsheet collection, *Petit noir et petit blanc* [Little black and little white (boy)] [Figure 10], figures a black and a white boy who were both nurtured by the same woman. The opening lines are as follows: *"Anatole, the son of a rich plantation owner, elevated by the European prejudices, disdained coloured people."* In spite of his disdain for blacks the white boy makes an exception in the case of his black friend whom he likes very much. One day the black boy asks Anatole why he looks down on black people. The white boy responds: *"Because we are more intelligent than them"*. In the following panels the two boys are confronted with various life threatening situations: each time the white boy is scared to death and not resourceful, whereas the black boy always comes up with an effective solution.



Figure 10.
Anon.,
Petit noir et petit blanc
[Little black and little white (boy)], Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal nº 857, probably first published between 1880 and 1897.

The black boy clearly knows how to survive in that African context of wild animals and extreme weather conditions.[21] In the end, the pretentious white boy has learned his lesson: he thanks his black friend by acknowledging that his coloured friend is braver and more intelligent than he, and by telling him that from now on he considers him as an equal. While it is not stated explicitly, it may be understood that the white boy will change his attitude not only towards this one black boy, but also towards all blacks. This comic takes a clear stand from the very first sentence onward, noting the evil roots being in the education of the white boy with European prejudices. One might counter this interpretation by highlighting a text fragment that states that the black boy *"as quickly as a monkey climbs a rock"*. Linking blacks to apes is of course a classic racist stereotype,[22] but in this particular narrative context it is rather meant as a posi-

[21] Also Castle (1996: 86), in her study of British juvenile press, noted positive descriptions of the strength, agility or 'native skills' of Africans, skills which would prove invaluable for jobs unsuited to the white settlers, and essential in maintaining services for white emigrants and travellers. On the other hand, she asserts that this placed Africans closer to animals than to the 'advanced' races (Castle 1996: 92).

[22] Nevertheless, sometimes apes are also considered as model animals, see for instance the animated Momotaro-propaganda films (1943-1945) for the Japanese army (Antoni 1991: 166).

tive and remarkable quality than as a negative or condescending one. Another broadsheet, *La légende flamande de l'alliance du Café et de la Chicorée* [The Flemish legend of the marriage between Coffee and Chicoree], [Figure 11] uses human figures as representations of various consumable plant types: a white girl, Chicoree, gets married to a black man, Coffee. This marriage is presented as an ideal marriage because, *"Coffee is a brute which needs to be seduced by a nice bit of Chicoree."* So, on the one hand there is the classical stereotype of an uncivilized brutal black, but on the other hand this story claims that a blending of flavours—visualised as the marital union of a white girl and a black man—is an ideal solution. Interracial marriages were at the time still uncommon. Indeed, even after the abolition of slavery in US, various states voted in anti-miscegenation laws (some of which remained in force until as late as 1967).



The idea of collaboration between various cultures and people is also the explicit theme of *Les bavardages d'une boutique d'épicerie*[23] [Chatterings in a grocery shop]: war is described there as hateful and the concluding moral is that all the people needs each other. All persons are seemingly important in contributing to the world economy. While such a representation may also serve the colonial system, it is important to stress that this didactic print places all people on the same level, with no indication of inequality among them.

V. Conclusion

Since colonization involved economic, cultural and political motives, one could, as earlier studies demonstrated (Schneider 1982, MacKenzie 1984, Brantlinger 1985, Nederveen Pieterse 1990, Castle 1996), expect traces of this New Imperialism in the popular culture of its time: a majority of broadsheets with colonial themes did indeed serve imperialist purposes by promoting the image of uncivilized Africans, but on the other hand, various divergent prints ran counter to this trend challenging courageously the same colonial prejudices by offering more positive representations of black people or even inverting the roles between blacks and whites. The analysed prints showed—typically for that period—a positive belief in development and good moral conduct for whites and blacks alike. Unfortunately, it is quite impossible to know how the public reacted to these types of broadsheets. Nevertheless, there is clearly more to find in these prints than plain and simple imperialist propaganda: it is not just a case of black and white.

Figure 11.
Anon., **La légende flamande de l'alliance du Café et de la Chicorée** [The Flemish legend of the marriage between Coffee and Chicoree], Épinal: Pellerin, Imagerie d'Épinal nº 4209, probably first published between 1900 and 1910.

[23] Anon. *Les bavardages d'une boutique d'épicerie*, Épinal: Pellerin, Série Encyclopédique Glucq, des leçons de choses illustrées, Imagerie d'Épinal n° 3808 (probably published about 1904).

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The invitation to travel in early French speaking comics.
An excursion into the 19th century graphic corpus

signs
STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

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The theme of the humorous journey,[1] be it moving for pleasure, exploration, quest, initiation, or for scientific or health purposes, is the narrative driving force of the great majority of the first comics published in France, both in the album format and when serialized (for periodicals). This is because the 19th century that saw their birth also inherited the scientific and geographical discoveries of the previous century, fueling an ever stronger interest in unknown or unexplored regions. Moreover, technical progress and the development of new means of transport not only gave a taste for travel, but constructed a shared "imaginary of journey" with a large body of literature based on the tales of these journeys, real or imagined.

In many ways, the origins of comics are directly related to the idea of travel. The initiator of this new medium, the Genevan Rodolphe Töpffer, in fact draws his initial inspiration from the narratives of travel, in particular from *The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*[2] that his father had reported on from a stay in England. Moreover, the idea of the image sequence is found in its embryotic form in *Les Voyages en zigzag* [Zigzag Journeys], illustrated stories about trips to the Alps Töpffer had made annually with students from his school. Two of his "picture stories" ["histoires en estampes"] were therefore, as a matter of course, graphic stories of lively and incredible journeys: *Docteur Festus* [Dr. Festus] (1840) sets out on a mule's back for "a long journey of instruction," while in *Histoire de Monsieur Cryptogame* [The Story of Mr. Cryptogame] (1845) the protagonist embarks for the New World. With the im-

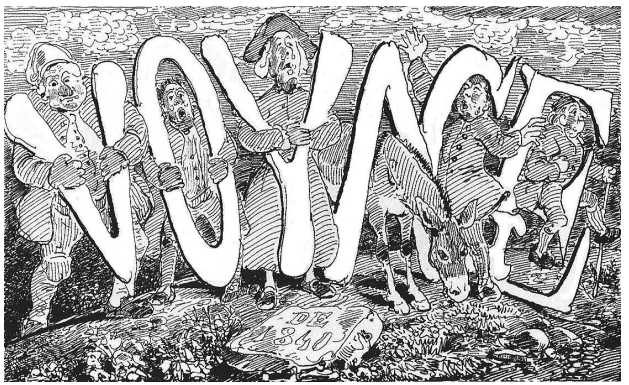


Figure 1.
Cover for the album **Voyage de 1840**,
Rodolphe Töpffer, Genève 1840.

[1] The term is used by Daniel Sangsue to define a literary category opposed to traditional travel narrative, which he asserts begin in the 17th century with the *Voyage* by Chapel and Bachaumont following the tradition until Rudolph Töpffer (Sangsue 2001). In a recent thesis, Suzan Pickford, specifically interested in eccentric travel narratives, defined it as a sub-genre of travel anti-narrative, in the Francophone, Anglophone and Germanophone areas between 1760 and 1851 (Pickford 2006).

[2] Published in 1812, this volume brings together a series of engravings created by the caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson, with accompanying texts by William Combe, originally published in *feuilleton* in the periodical *Poetical Magazine*.

petus of these odysseys imagined by Töpffer constituting models, the travel adventure became the motif that wove the patterns of comics signed by Cham, Gustave Doré, Léonce Petit, Gabriel Liquier and Christophe. The number of journeys in images encountered from the period of the July Monarchy (1830-48) to the end of the century naturally leads to questions about the interrelationship of such works and the basis that so closely binds the new *medium* to this original motif.[3]

The journey as narrative plot

For a means of expression that was, despite Töpffer's theoretical suggestions,[4] still seeking its own specificities, the recurring choice of journey as a theme can be understood firstly in the light of the actual narrative structure that it requires. Indeed the same definition can apply to both travel and narrative. According to Greimas, the narrative is the representation of an event involving a transformation, that is to say the transition from state E to state E'. For the journey, this minimal definition can be enough, if we consider it as moving from place A to place B, with an eventual return to the initial location A. In both cases, the distance between the two states, or the two places, is inclusive of a phase of exposure or preparation, a series of episodes or stages, and an outcome or an arrival—which may be the beginning of a new story or a new journey. Every story that conforms to the canonical narrative schema can thus be regarded as a metaphor for the journey. Conversely, all journeys are commonly reported in this story structure. Therefore, the guiding line of the itinerary allowed the first comics to easily introduce images within the area of "littérature en estampes".[5]

In the 1830s, a decade which saw the birth of the history of graphic narratives, the use of the image remained in fact confined to the field of fine arts, that is, in caricature painting. During this period, the ability to tell stories was still reserved for the realms of oral and written literature, and was not an obvious quality of drawing. The weight of the aesthetic hierarchy, which placed caricatures and engraved images at the lowest level, also weighed heavily on artists, cautious of the idea of combining the two semiotic systems of writing and drawing and in doing so condemning themselves to being looked down upon as mere "cartoonists". In fact, in their Parisian debuts, comics did not have a proper specificity and frequently merged, in their practice, with caricature. An album signed by Cham perfectly illustrates this peculiar to-ing and fro-ing between the art of caricature and that of comics in the 19th century. It is his book entitled *Ah quel plaisir de voyager!* [What a Pleasure to Travel!], published in 1855 by Maison Martinet Hautecoeur brothers.

In a vertical format—and not horizontal as the Töpffer-inspired albums—this album follows the story of a Parisian traveling to visit Brussels. Though never named, the character assures by his presence throughout the journey it is a cohesive story, though one that is not complete. Indeed, if the actantial string maintained by the tourist itinerary requires a causal-deductive development—specific to any narration—some pages of the album operate at a discontinuity, and appear to have been conceived according to the common model of the time, that of image stitching. Many albums[6] by

[3] There would be great value in comparing the corpus of this article, restricted to French stories, with the earliest sequences that developed in England, Germany and the United States. In relation to the close relationships between these different cultural spheres, networking these graphic travelogues would bring new perspectives on their emergences.

[4] See Rodolphe Töpffer, *Essai de physiognomonie*, Cahors: éditions Kargo 2003.

[5] A term used by Rodolphe Töpffer to designate the picture stories he imagined.

[6] This use also perfectly corresponds to the archaic definition of the term "album" meaning "any group of sheets constituting a collection, especially a collection of prints", see (Le Men 1987).

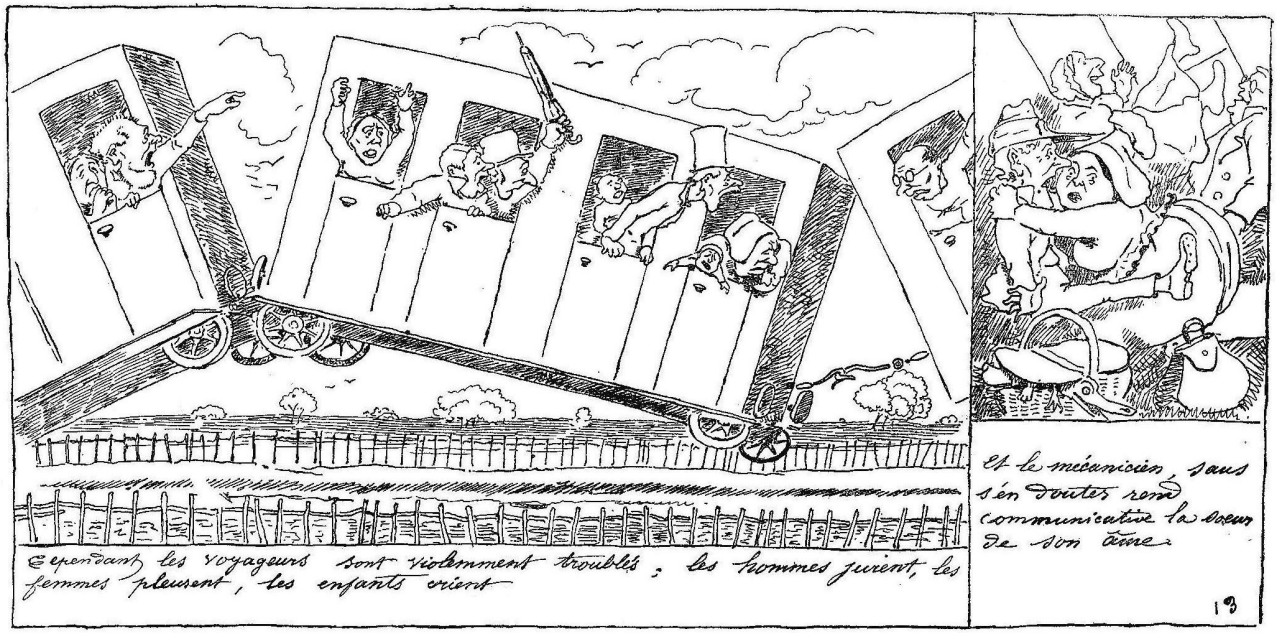


Figure 2.
Les Mésaventures de M. Bêton,
Léonce Petit, page 13,
Librairie Lacroix, Paris, s.d. [1868].

Cham thus provided compilations of images grouped under a common theme without having between them sequential connections. In *Ah quel plaisir de voyager!* the non-narrative use of text reports the salience of this "compilatory" model. In most cases, the written sections are reduced to nominal phrases, infinitives or reiterated in dialogues. Sometimes even a title between an image and a caption reinforces this autonomisation and turns it into the vignette aside of caricature as practiced in the satirical illustrated magazines of the time. Hybrid, this album shows how the picture story both inspired and received inspiration from the graphics based practices caricature and comics, which were experiencing a tremendous boom in the 19th century, thanks to advances in printing. Cham combined these two genres relegating the concept of literature to the background. As we will see in the rest of the corpus examined for this paper, however, the theme of the expedition, in its strong propensity to give rise to a narrative, provides comics with an exclusively narrative status which differentiates them from other forms of expression through images.[7]

The feuilleton of displacement

Despite some struggles, comics had wanted since their debut to tell stories using a combination of words and images. The story would often be that of a Parisian or a provincial, sometimes an animal, embarking on a journey, be it far or near, deliberately or accidentally chosen. Characteristic of the narrative of journey, the *feuilletonesque* structure—that is, a narrative broken down into, and usually published in, installments or episodes—governed the making of most of these earli-

[7] If the narrative status of comics is not an intrinsic criterion of definition, it does describe the vast majority of productions: "the criterion of narrative, which seems so closely pinned to the comic strip that it characterizes more than 99% of the production, describes the natural inclination of the medium more than it does not belong to its intrinsic definition", see Thierry Groensteen, online: http://www.editionsdelan2.com/groensteen/sequence1/definition&origine.html

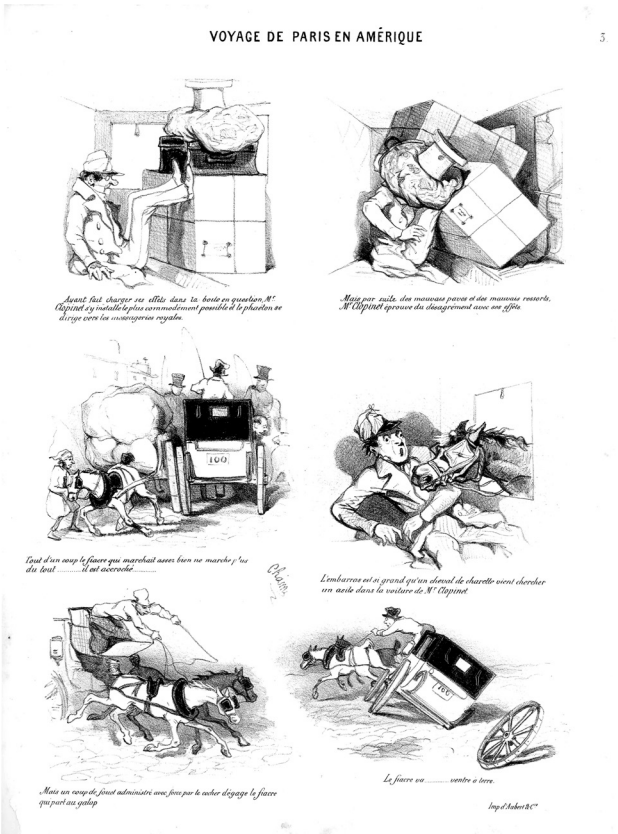


Figure 3.
Voyage de Paris dans l'Amérique du Sud poussé jusqu'au Hâvre inclusivement, Cham (de N...), page 3, Aubert & Cie, Paris, s.d. [1844].

er comics. Through the separation into episodes, made up of chronological, geographical, initiation or locomotive stages, the journey allows comics to approach a genre whose success had been demonstrated under the July Monarchy: the feuilleton-model of the novel.[8] Submitted to the rhythm of publication of the reviews that published them in installments, feuilleton-novels soon attracted many readers, and hence, as many authors. With an aesthetic based on the effects of *découpage*, combined with suspense and surprise, they certainly succeed in captivating a readership who eagerly awaited each following issue.

In the case of the narrative of a journey in pictures, following a relatively similar *feuilletonesque* structure, each of the multiple sequences could achieve a certain degree of autonomy thanks to their either geographical or factual unity. *Les Mésaventures de M. Bêton* [The Misadventures of Mr. Bêton], by Léonce Petit, perfectly corresponds to this idea [Figure 2]. This "comical odyssey"[9] of Mr. Bêton, "taxidermist of the Academy of Sciences of Valognes" can be broken into several sequences, each representing a stage of the global backdrop to the story. Thus, the first half of the album relates to the concerns of Mr. Bêton who is faced with the "emptiness of his existence", a concern which brings him to consult a doctor who advises him to stay in the capital. This is followed by the period of his very chaotic travel. It is described on a dozen plates on which are successively set the scenes of "bal Costant" and that of the "Grand Théâtre des Merveilles de la Nature". This periodisation facilitates the serialization of this album, published by the bookseller Lacroix in 1868, over one year in *Le Hanneton illustré, satirique et littéraire* [The Cockchafer Illustrated, Satirical and Literary], in no less than twenty-eight issues, at a rate of one to two plates per issue.[10]

Inherently breakable, the theme of journey in narrative provided the first comics the opportunity to appear in the press, gaining them increased visibility and a larger readership. This idea convinced Töpffer to pre-publish (that is, to serialize in periodicals or

[8] Published in 1719 in *The Original London Post*, the first serial novel was an exotic travelogue penned by Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

[9] It is in these terms that the album is announced in the *Théâtre-Journal* edited by Alexandre Dumas, on December 20 1868.

[10] It should be noted that the first page is redrawn for the album: originally sporting a nightdress and a nightcap, perhaps too much like Mr Lajaunisse, Cham's first hero, Mr Bêton, wears overalls in the second version. Several newspapers advertised the publication of the album, notably *L'Éclipse* with an extract (in the November 19th issue) and *Le Journal amusant* which reproduces the title page and states that "never has Töpfer (*sic*) done better".

newspapers, before publishing as an album) his *Histoire de Monsieur Cryptogame* after it was redesigned by Cham for the newspaper *L'Illustration* from January 25 to April 21 1845. Shortly before this, the album *Voyage de Paris dans l'Amérique du Sud* [Journey from Paris into South America] by Cham—published by Aubert in 1844—was proposed at the same time for publication in serialized episodes in *Le Charivari*, as a shorter version with the shortened title *Voyage en Amérique* [Journey to America], from December 1 1844 to January 9 1845 [Figure 3]. Presumably, the pruning of journey's episodes was to raise the curiosity of readers and to encourage the purchase of the first album to free itself, because of its journalistic distribution, from the oblong (horizontal) format launched by Töpffer.

In *Le Charivari*, it came so that the journey was always the exception in providing opportunity for political satire, indicating the conservative stiffening of the newspaper after the revolutionary days of February 1848. Before their complete publication in the *Revue comique de la semaine* in 1849 (a section that was mostly authored by Cham during this period), the episodes of *P.-J. Proudhon en voyage* are collected in an "Album comique à un franc" [Figure 4]. The socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), the subject of a multitude of caricatures well-received by the readers, becomes under the pencil of Cham a fictional character taken to Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, China and even to the moon. Stereotypes of each country and their governments gives rise to mockery of Proudhon's most criticized ideas about the family or about the property. Born again by the odyssey in images, Proudhon surpasses the figure of the politician to become "our traveller"; put to the test within a comic strip, the political caricature captures the reader's imagination which now decodes more than just one instance of speech among the others, with every vignette fading out the previous one, instead putting much more into the construction of the global sense which produces all the images.

A previously unpublished *feuilleton* where the cartoonist puts himself in the scene, *Voyage exécuté autour du monde par le capitaine Cham et par son parapluie* (1852) [Journey Around the World Performed by Captain Cham and his Umbrella], takes the time to state its lack of any political stance, a position forced on caricature under the Second Empire: realizing that politics, the "mine of caricatures", was prohibited and that caricatures of the "Parisian bourgeoise" were already being heavily used, Cham offers through his pencil "a walk around the world to engage in a search for new subjects".

In order to sustain the interest of readers, the story in pictures must maintain a certain amount of frenzy, even more so when it is *feuilletonesque*. For this reason, the theme of travel provides the author an opportunity to develop a considerable number of twists and turns



Figure 4.
P.-J. Proudhon en voyage, Cham, Bureaux du **Charivari** 1849.



Figure 5.
Des-agréments d'un voyage d'agrément,
Gustave Doré,
panel taken from page 3,
Aubert & Cie, Paris, s.d. [1851].

while maintaining the unity and continuity that supports the itinerary or purpose given to the journey. Insofar as movement creates events, each expedition sees an avalanche of adventures befall the travelers. Thus, the trips undertaken by our paper adventurers are invariably disrupted for unlikely reasons or diverted from their original route, so in this sense we can properly speak of "ex-centricity". A randomness of transport means employed by characters was a dynamic motif that made the action take many turns. In *Voyage de Paris dans l'Amérique du Sud*, Cham used this element constantly, so that each sequence of the album is centered on a specific vehicle. In this story, no less than seven means of transport are used, offering the range of means available at the time: Mr. Clopinet borrows in succession a cab, a convertible, a stagecoach, a mail coach, a steamer and a train, and in the end does not even reach Le Havre and decides to walk back to Paris! If so many vehicles were required for the Paris-Le Havre trip, is because they all ended up having an accident, whether it be losing a wheel, falling in a ditch, being attacked by a gang of thieves, losing the boat's funnel, or colliding with another train. As a true storyteller, Cham managed the effects of disruption and surprise by using adverbial phrases that punctuate the narration. The "suddenly", "but!", or "Patatra!" embellish the *péripéties* [events]—where the Greek root meaning of "falling around, falling on" here is completely intact. A specific use of ellipses also cultivates the effect of falling, as in this caption in which "The carriage goes…belly to the ground".

Tourists and travelers at the proof of caricature

If these trips constantly turn into disasters or never respond to the wishes at the time of departure, it is because they are all carried out by characters who have a common trait: stupidity or incompetence. Indeed, the reduction of the character to the figure of an "anti-hero" feeds the unfolding of the humorous travel narrative, as summarized by Thierry Groensteen, "the vagaries of their wanderings arise out of their inability to adapt to the world, their blindness, their incurable distraction, and for some, a self-complacency directly proportional to their lack of decision".[11] For the loss of landmarks and the confrontation with an unknown universe that this implies, the journey is the ideal topic to highlight this trait of the characters, common to the vast majority of graphic narratives of the 19th century. It starts with the stories and prints by Töpffer, notably with his character Dr. Festus whose "great journey of instruction" is a completely blind one due to means of transport such as a trunk, a haystack, a bag of wheat and the inside of a giant telescope. In addition to having important comi-

[11] Reconsidering the origins of comics, Thierry Groensteen distinguishes three main theme sets: the voyage, the marvellous and the silly. See (Groensteen 1998: 15-29).

cal capital, the silly, naive or inept figure of the traveler feeds into a particular caricature-like representation of tourists,[12] which spread through the world of letters and arts along with the development of this new activity. From the beginning of the century in England, the character of *Doctor Syntax* provided a comic image of the tourist. Undertaking the journey in order to write a travelogue he can publish, Syntax features the same type of ridicule of travelers that inspired Töpffer for his tourist Dr. Festus. In his own travelogues, Töpffer also stigmatized the character of "bad" tourists, especially in the *Voyage autour du Mont-Blanc* [Trip around the Mont-Blanc], where he engaged in a classification of tourist "species", classifying them according to trends that came from physiology and inspired by Sterne's *Voyage Sentimental* [Sentimental Journey]. In Paris, *La physiologie du voyageur* [The Physiology of Traveler] by Mauritius Alhoy and illustrated by Daumier, was published in 1841: on page 5, it states that "Living as a tourist is to live as a three-legged nomad, at the same time reminiscent of a deer for its legs, of a magpie for its warbling, and of a monkey for its inclination towards emulation".[13] The second volume of *Francais peints par eux-mêmes* [French Depicted by Themselves] also included a chapter titled "The Tourist", written by Roger de Beauvoir: there (on page 336 of the 2004 edition), tourists are described as a "distinct class" making them "one of the most entertaining parts of French society".

It is indeed the couple of Vespasie and César Plumet, "recently retired from lace-making" that provide much of the comedy in the album by Doré, *Des-agréments d'un voyage d'agrément* [The Pleasures of a Pleasure Trip],[14] published in 1851 by Aubert [Figure 5]. On the suggestion of Mr. Plumet, they set out on a leisure trip in Switzerland to explore the Alps. While Vespasie faints at the slightest opportunity or cries with her face buried in her handkerchief, César Plumet combines the attributes of the grotesque tourist; first is his small stature with his lack of height emphasized in many panels (for example, we see only the legs of their guide); another is his strange garb—the couple chose "tourist clothing" elements of which, such as the cap visor and walking stick, are overly elongated; but the most important attribute are the poetic "impressions" that he believes he is experiencing—"Here, I blush with a certain shyness at the sight of this immensity. Above me, the Sallanche peaks look like wooden pins, lakes like bowls of milk. My god, make me die, I've seen enough."[15] On two occasions, Plumet invents dangerous and/or exciting adventures which are immediately refuted by a note from the editor: "Deceived by an overly bright imagination, Mr. Plumet has built all of this fatal story on a foot bath that he had taken by slipping on the gravel of the Arve."

[12] Borrowed from the English term *tourist*—a word formed from the French term "tour"—the neologism "tourist" appeared in the French language in 1816 and rapidly took on a pejorative meaning: "initially designating the rich English travellers who crossed Europe, then any traveller moving for his pleasure, and gradually it tended to correspond to the traveller who travels to travel, i.e. without understanding" (Sangsue 2001: 1153).

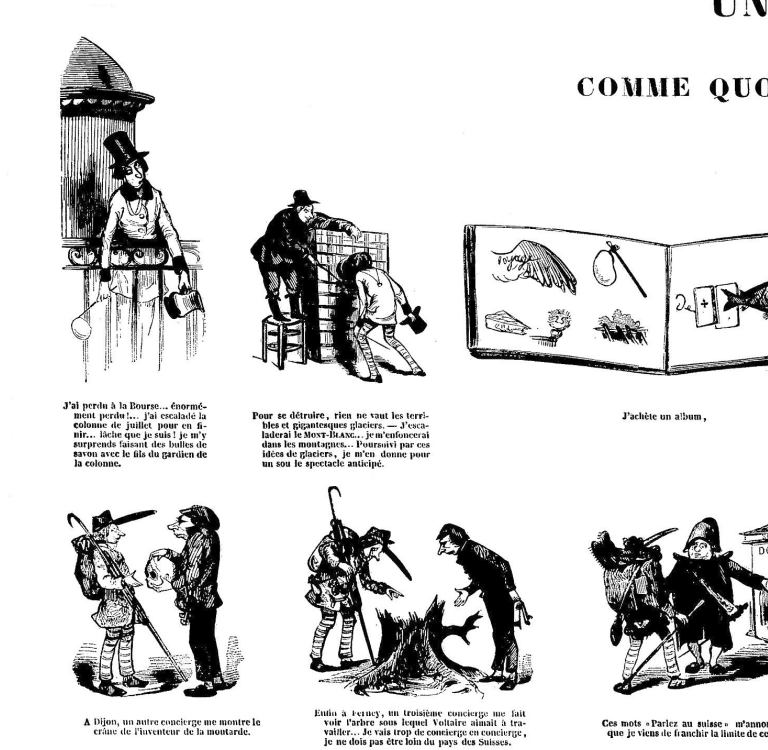
[13] "Vivre en touriste, c'est vivre en tripède nomade, qui tient à la fois du cerf pour les jambes, de la pie pour le ramage et du singe pour son penchant à l'émulation", cited from (Boyer 2006: 186).

[14] According to David Kunzle, this album would have been imagined by Doré following a stay in Switzerland the same year, in 1851. See (Kunzle 1990: 116). It is curious to note that an article appearing in 1834 in the Genevan newspaper *Le Fantasque*, whose signature "T." could be extended to Töpffer since he had already published articles in the daily, is titled *Désagrements d'un voyage d'agrémens en Suisse*.

[15] The first sentence reads "Là, je rougis d'une certaine timidité à la vue de l'immensité. Au dessus de moi, les pics d'Anterne comme un peigne à barbe ; au dessous, Sallanches comme un groupe de punaises de bois, les lacs, comme des écuelles de lait. Mon dieu, faites moi mourir, j'en ai assez vu." As for the second, "Abusé par une imagination trop brillante, Mr Plumet a construit toute cette fatale histoire, sur un bain de pied qu'il avait pris en glissant sur les graviers de l'Arve".

In addition to the behavior and reactions of the tourists, their exploitation of the Swiss population is criticized by Doré. The satire of tourism thus also goes to highlighting some "commodification" of Switzerland, to which page 18 of the album is devoted. Each case presents a new specific "industry" of the country—for example the firing of cannon, the singing of "la la hoo hoo" by "two small Swiss", the fight between "two Tyrolese", and the glass of milk—all imposed on travelers and for which remuneration is demanded. In June 1852, a double page of *Le Journal pour rire* was devoted to another trip in Switzerland designed by Doré, *Une Ascension au Mont-Blanc, comme quoi l'on peut trouver le bonheur sous la neige* [An Assent to Mont Blanc, How One Can Find Happiness under Snow], described as a "fragment of an album from a young fellow, Mr. B***" who, after a financial loss, plans his suicide high among the glaciers. After arriving in Switzerland, the character bitterly notes that local and typical products of the country have been replaced by French imports: the outfit of a coachman of Longjumeau is a Bernese coat, the absinthe in Lausanne comes from Paris, cheese that he is offered as Gruyere is Brie and a mountain cottage turns out to be a reading room where you can browse *Le Journal pour rire*. [Figure 6]

These examples show how the journey was one of the favorite motifs of the satirical illustrated press, which had made a remarkable rise from the 1850s. Though, even more than the tourist excursion, transport itself was the subject of a considerable number of journalistic caricatures. Stigmatizing primarily the poor conditions of transport, Honore Daumier's lithographs are a remarkable testimony of this. In 1839, Daumier created a lithograph depicting a bus, while his first series of "Trains" began in 1843. In the pages of *Charivari* in particular, there were many caricatures by Daumier, Cham or Gavarni which comically underline the material discomfort of wagons, their size or the exposure to bad weather suffered by passengers.[16] In these pictured stories, episodes related to characteristics or key moments of the trip can be found used almost systematically.



[16] At its beginnings, the locomotives used for pleasure trips consisted of three types of carriages and divided into three classes: the coaches of the 3rd class, the least comfortable, were simple boxes with an open roof, assembled on four wheels, and with or without benches. Covered and provided with benches and curtains, the coaches of the higher classes were not heated either. Against the discomfort of the cars of 3rd class, a true press campaign was engaged in by journalists, which led to the decree of February 29 1844, prescribing the covering of the cars and closing them at least with curtains; from 1850 windowpanes reinforced their insulation. See (Vergeade 1990).

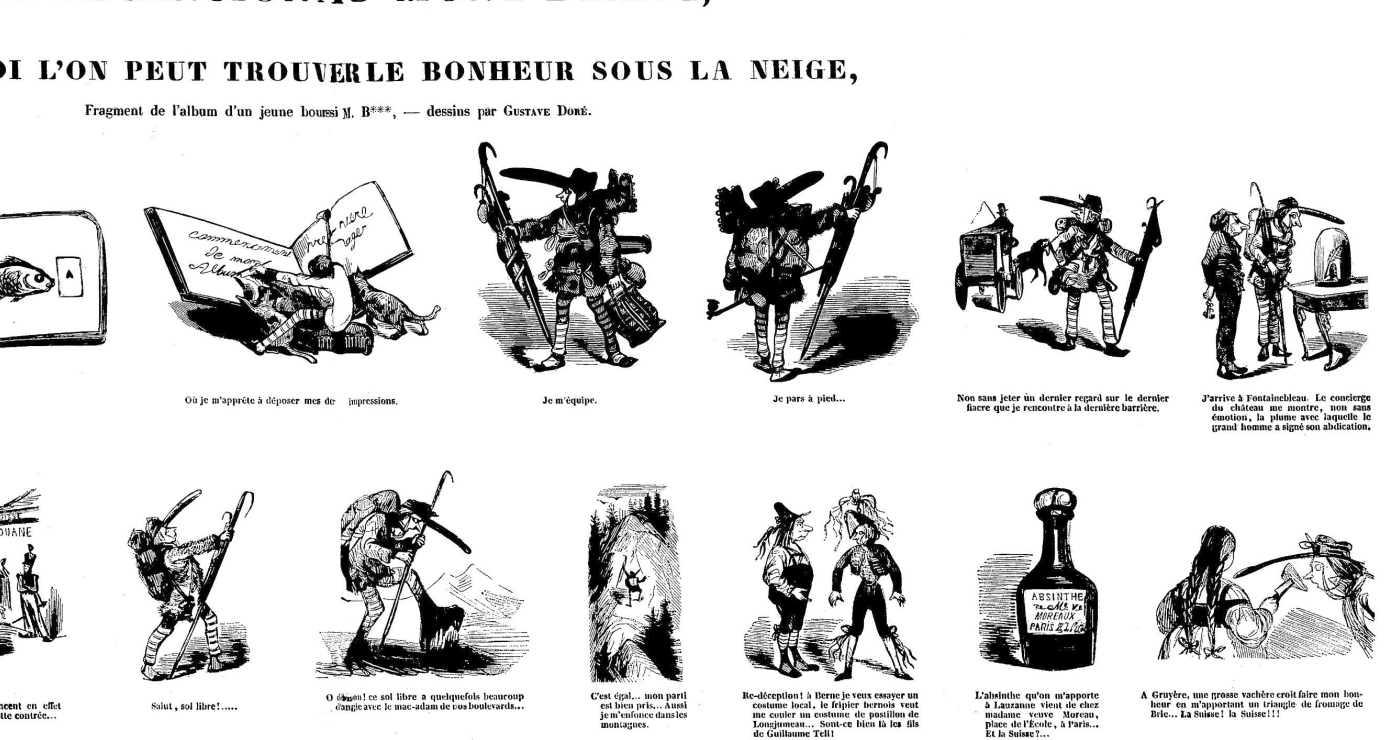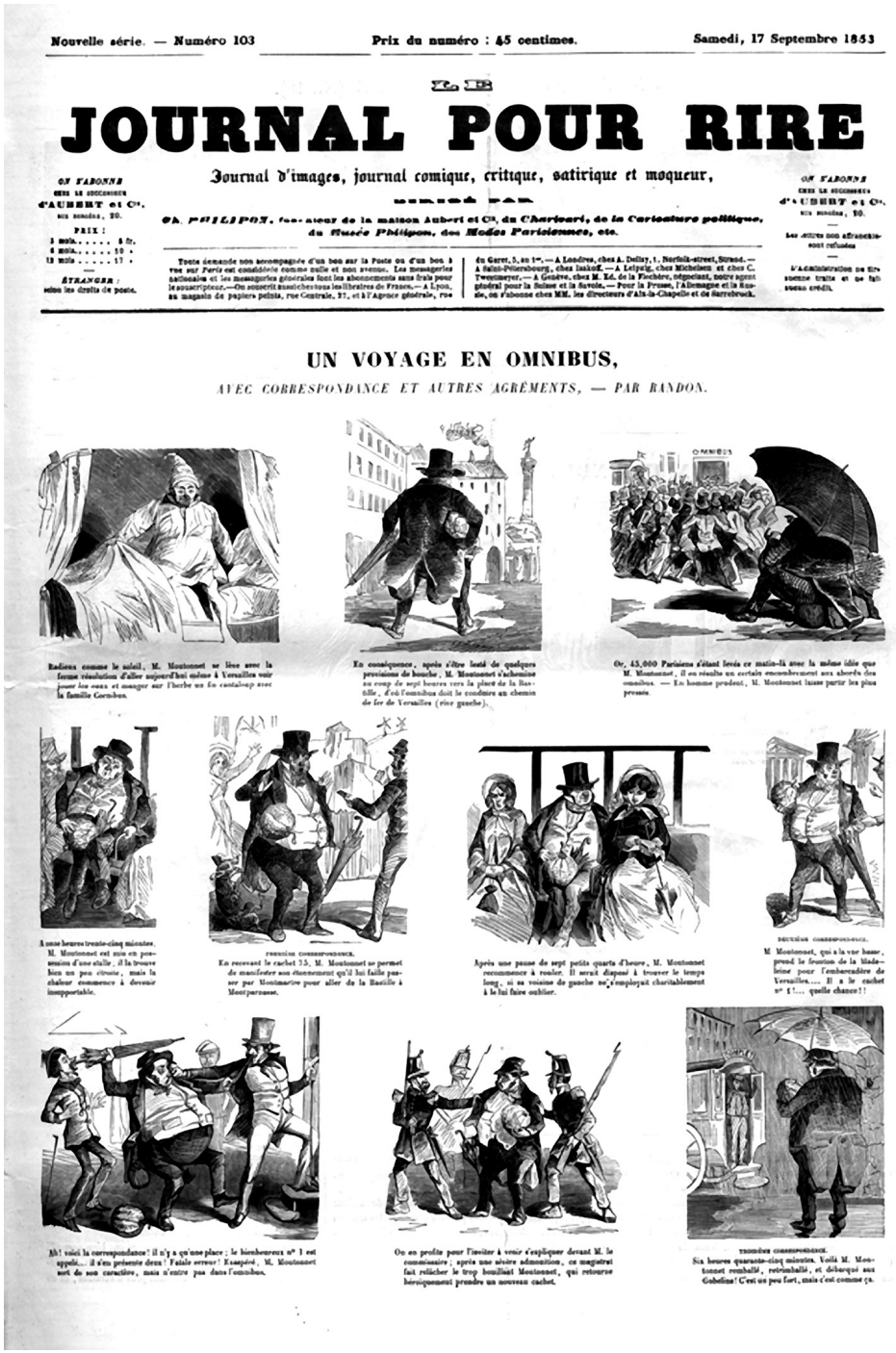


Figure 6.
Une Ascension au Mont-Blanc,
Gustave Doré,
Le Journal pour rire,
nº 37 12 juin 1852.

The themes of promiscuity and close proximity sometimes being badly lived amongst travelers from very different backgrounds, particularly well described in the prints of Daumier, are also found in most albums. In the *Impressions de voyage de Mr Boniface* [Travel Impressions of Mr. Boniface], that Paulin bookstore published in 1844, Cham is ironic about the lack of space in the stagecoach that people take to get to Boulogne-sur-Mer. Several panels show the inside of the vehicle and the comical situations engendered by the forced cohabitation. Hence, Mr Boniface went to "courier Laffite et Caillard" whose coupes, the same way as mail-coaches, offered some comforts to be paid dearly.

The interior of the train used by the character in *Oh What a Pleasure to Travel!* is also the subject of several vignettes, strongly inspired by Daumier's lithographs, which show the array of personalities and characters that come together in a coach. Several situations related to means of transport are repeated in comics in a canonical way: the crush inside the carriage caused by the sudden movement of a train, the speed of coaches leaving no time to take a lunch break, the registration and delivery of luggage, and the payment of tips at the end of the trip. In the *Voyage à 5 fr.* [Journey on 5 francs]—published in *Le Charivari* and in *Punch in Paris* in 1850—Cham is also ironic about the ill-treatment of the passengers by the station staff: "Mr



Nouvelle série. — Numéro 103 — Prix du numéro : 45 centimes. — Samedi, 17 Septembre 1853

JOURNAL POUR RIRE

Journal d'images, journal comique, critique, satirique et moqueur,

PUBLIÉ PAR

OA. PHILIPON, fondateur de la maison Aubert et Cie, du *Charivari*, de la *Caricature politique*, du *Musée Philipon*, des *Modes Parisiennes*, etc.

UN VOYAGE EN OMNIBUS,

AVEC CORRESPONDANCE ET AUTRES AGRÉMENTS, — PAR RANDON.

Figure 7.
Un voyage en omnibus, avec correspondances et autres agréments,
Gilbert Randon,
Le Journal pour rire,
n° 103, September 17 1853.

Potard finds a place in a car where we introduce him with all the consideration due a 5 franc traveler."—he is abruptly and literally kicked into the vehicle.[17] The inconveniences caused by these new modes of transport are thus the subject of a strictly visual satire that the "scripto-visual" *medium* renders particularly well. Thanks to the multiplicity of images placed end to end, comics make it possible to stage and animate situations that caricature fixes into a single image. By drawing in a series of frames that decompose action, the story in pictures offers the illusion of a pantomime or an expressive show fit to render attitudes and body language.

Narrative driven by a serial logic, multiple adventures, caricature and pleasant satire related to the actual conditions of transportation, travel narrative in comics re-

[17] "Mr. Potard trouve place dans un wagon où on l'introduit avec tous les égard dus à un voyageur à 5 fr.".

unites these ingredients making it a type of reading specifically sought after by travelers: "The comic strip and the magazine containing it became a kind of railway literature sold in magazine or album form at station kiosks, mirroring the anxieties and terrors, the stop-and-start rhythms and hectic movement of the railways".[18] The last panel of the *Voyage de Paris en Amérique*, in which another convoy heading straight for that of Mr Clopinet eventually explodes, also makes reference to a tragic accident that occurred on May 8 1842.[19] A lighter tale by Randon, in *Le Journal pour rire* of September 1853, gives readers a reflection on comical misadventures they might encounter through the troubles of Mr. Moutonnet conducting *Un voyage en omnibus, avec correspondance et autres agréments* [Figure 7] [A Bus Trip, with Correspondence and Other Amusements]. In a newspaper like *Charivari*, the picture story in episodes not surprisingly appeared in the Sunday issues, the preferred day for leisure travel.

Exoticism and disorientation

Addressed to a wide readership, the stories were designed to respond to the desire for life abroad and exoticism that still animated the second half of the 19th century. The thrill of being elsewhere and the shock of the new are the emotions that both the readers of graphic voyages and the protagonists of these far away trips sought.

Seeing everywhere railways developing, balloons flying, and steamships being launched at sea, they dreamed of world tours and of foreign countries which were no longer illusory to consider visiting one day. Launched by the Egyptian campaign undertaken by Napoleon at the beginning of the century, which took the form of a scientific expedition, a taste for the Orient and its performances became a component of the romantic movement in painting as in literature. In comics, the theme of the Orient was introduced by Rodolphe Töpffer in an episode set in Algeria, *Histoire de Mr Cryptogame*, created in 1830. Probably inspired by the capture of Algiers by French troops on July 5 1830, a sequence where Cryptogame, Elvira and an abbot are grappling with a tyrannical Dey, figured in the pages of *L'Illustration* at the same time Algeria and North Africa were the focus of political attention. Delivering the archetypal image of the cruel and stupid Arab, this episode was later redrawn by Cham, slightly strengthening the local color. By adding a crescent moon on a turban, by replacing a straight sword with a curved *yatagan* and by emphasizing ethnic characteristics, Cham interprets some of Töpffer's drawings but at the same time responded to the expectations of a readership that had a thirst for the exotic. The pages of *L'Illustration* actually abound with subjects relating to the East, and a section entitled "Scenes from Algeria" was created from the fourth volume.[20] More familiar with Algerian customs, Cham was also the author of a collection of legendary lithographs published by Aubert (initially appearing in *Le Charivari*) and entitled *Moeurs algériennes - Chinoiseries turques* [Algerian customs - Turkish Chinoiseries]; in 1847 he also signed an

[18] (Kunzle 2007: 149). Following negotiations with the Railroads of North, Louis Hachette increased as from 1851 the distribution of his books by opening many kiosks in the principal stations. He also created a collection dedicated to travelers, the *Bibliothèque de chemins de fer* [Library of Railroads], in which appear illustrated guides, French and foreign novels as well as readings for children.

[19] On May 8 1842, more than 750 travelers were returning from the park of Versailles by train. The 17 cars were tractor drawn by two engines, and the rupture of an axle on the first engine and the push of the second one caused a major crash between the cars. The disaster was made larger (55 dead and 109 seriously wounded people) by the closure of the doors of the cars from the outside for fear of imprudence by the passengers (Vergeade 1990: 123).

[20] For more precise references see (Kunzle 1984: 151).

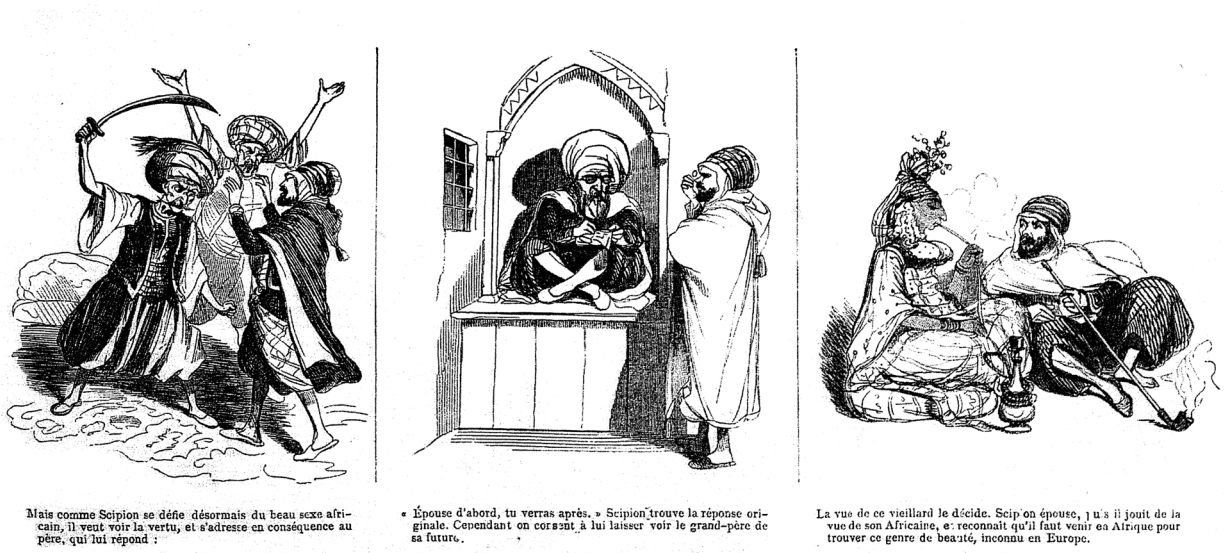


Figure 8.
Les aventures de Scipion l'Africain, Benjamin Roubaud, published in **L'Illustration, journal universel**, panels taken from nº 121, June 21 1845.

album of a story in images situated in Turkey, *La Civilisation à la porte* [The Civilization at the door].

Amused by the extravagant adventure of Cryptogame, the public asked the newspaper's director for a new comic strip. The worsening state of Töpffer's health, however, did not allow him to complete a story he had just outlined, and it was to Benjamin Roubaud that the commission for a new journey in pictures was given. A correspondent in Algiers for *L'Illustration*, Roubaud thus portrayed *Les aventures de Scipion l'Africain* [The Adventures of Scipio the African] who decides to travel to Algiers impelled "by the need to feel emotions that Paris was no longer able to rouse" [Figure 8]. In a relatively short plot, the value of this comic is in its representation of Algerian folk manners, just like the illustrations for *Les Mille et une Nuits* [The Arabian Nights]. The picturesque, by observing the unknown and carrying out a quest for difference, unfolds in scenes that emphasize the local color: Scipio encounters "natives whose costumes astonish his eyes and charm his imagination", he smokes a pipe "in the manner of Orientals", eats "couscoussous", goes to baths, "has a *massage* done in the country's fashion" and also marries a beautiful Moorish.

This short *feuilleton* of Roubaud knows a filiation though a story "hybrid" by Monta (Henri de Montaut) for *Le Journal pour rire* (1849) and reprinted for a roller of Aubert's *Papier comique* (1851). The *Caravane de M.Bibloteau en Afrique* [Figure 9] [Caravan of M. Bibloteau in Africa] draws up the same image of an East of fantasy though an "excursion de 600 fr. en Algérie". *Scipion* and *Bibloteau* seem to be the ancestors of *Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872) of Alphonse Daudet of whom we can wonder, with Dominique Bernasconi, if he had not seen the earlier drawings.[21] At a time when local colors, advocated by Victor Hugo in his preface to *Cromwell*,[22] invaded the picturesque travelogues and paintings of other places, these drawn journeys, although some-

[21] (Bernasconi 1972: 181).

[22] "Under the wand of art", drama selects what is "characteristic"; the poet revives "any figure […] with its most salient features, the most individual, the most precise", Victor Hugo, preface of *Cromwell*, Paris : Larousse 2001, pp.61-62

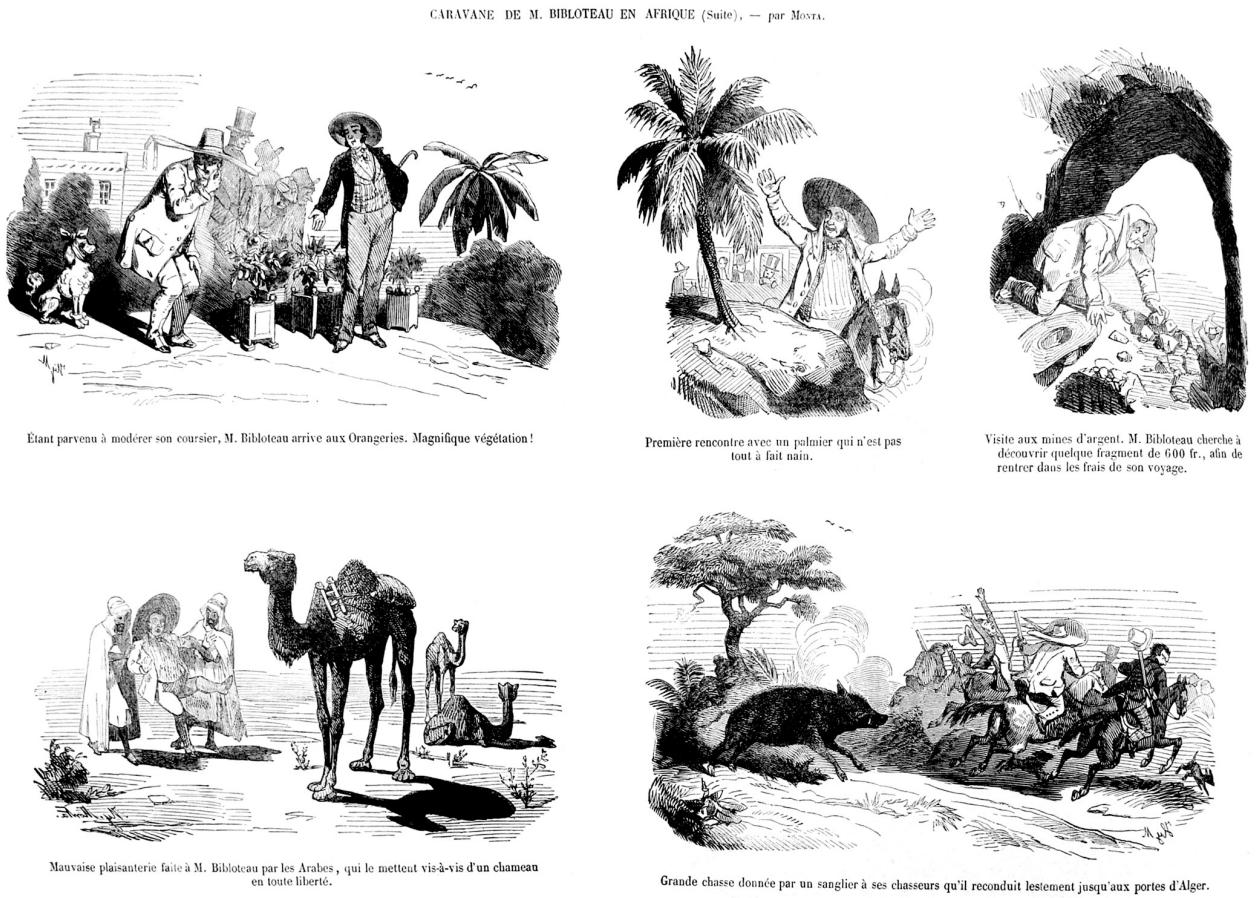


Figure 9.
Caravane de M. Bibloteau en Afrique, Monta, **Papier Comique** 1851.

times almost a comic strip, offer a spectacle of exoticism both in pictures and in narrative. Strengthening and popularizing the myth of the stranger, the travel in images offers however a singular funny vision that is far from the romantic impulses.

In the confrontation with the Other and with Difference, travel in images is also one of the place of the expression of the paradigm colonial of the 19th century. Created in 1890 on the model of *Tour du monde: journal des voyages, journal des explorations* [World Tour: Journal of Journeys, Journal of Explorations] by Edward Charton,[23] *La Terre Illustrée* [Earth Illustrated] was a review of scientific recreation in which summaries are mixed with exotic reports, geographical curiosities and popular fiction. Edited by Louis Boulanger, it welcomes several times in its pages *feuilletons* in comic strip, next to sublime sensational engravings which fill

[23] The 1860s saw the development in France of publications of geographical and anthropological matter, intended for popularization and for answering the thirst for adventure which was born with the great exploration missions.



Le paquebot qui doit les emporter est arrivé. Du quai Ka-li-Ko le regarde par le gros bout de la lorgnette; il le trouve petit comme une coquille de noix. Heureusement Pa-Tchou-li lui montre son erreur, il allait refuser de s'embarquer.

Figure 10.
Voyage du Haut Mandarin Ka-Li-Ko et de son fidèle secrétaire Pa-Tchou-Li, Eugène Le Mouël, Garnier Frères 1885.

the desire for disorientation and for strangeness of a bourgeois readership. Entitled *Voyages comiques—Noirs et Blancs* [Comical Trips—Blacks and Whites], one of them offers to the readers a reflection on the fate of the colonized peoples. The expedition is comical only in its title as it reflects the unambiguous nationalist, racist or militarist prejudices sometimes conveyed by these newspapers. With the idea of "making negroes happy" Sir Etrangle heads for "Nigritia" under the command of three Anglo-Saxon kings. From the first frame, a critique of the will to civilize is apparent—access to civilization which passes over the colonized black people, is in the form of war, rape, ivory and slave trade. Against the English expeditions, this ironic satire tends to give to France an almost providential and protective image: Africans are finally returned to freedom by a personification of the French Republic whose troops fire on the "merchants of human flesh" and they do not forget to say "thank you to France, the great liberator!".

Already by 1846, a comic by Cham published in *L'Illustration* ridiculed the idea of civilizing colonized peoples. With *Épisodes de l'histoire d'une nation sauvage, ou les bienfaits de la civilisation* [Episodes of the History of a Savage Nation, or the Benefits of Civilization], Cham goes much further, since it gives an account of French who landed in North America bringing with

them corruption, alcoholism, slavery and other "benefits of civilization". The tone is boldly colonialist in the *Voyage de M. Pierre Vespuce aux Antilles* [The Journey of M. Pierre Vespuce to the Antilles], signed by M. Guesde for the text and by Edmond Morin for drawings, in *feuilleton* in *Le Journal pour rire*. Predestined by his name and encouraged by his reading, Pierre-Tancrède Vespuce leaves "looking for fortune on the other side of the Ocean"—the islands of the Antilles, a possession of the first French colonial empire, and still in French hands after Napoleon's fall. With his portion of racist ideas, the author (who we suppose to be Mathieu Guesde, an owner of slaves in Guadeloupe in 1848)[24] attempts to demystify the heavenly vision of the life across the Atlantic, with his traveler sometimes missing "Saint-Denis street and the shop of his boss, the trader of stockings".

With much more cheerfulness, Asia is a continent that inspired a number of cartoonists in parallel with the fashion of the "Japonisme" which was stimulated by the Universal Exhibitions, a fashion that drew from Japanese woodblock prints a new artistic sensibility in the second half of the 19th century. *Chinoiseries* were also particularly appreciated, and in 1885 Eugène Le Mouël produced a comic book for "the children" in which two Chinese state employees are charged by the Emperor with taking to France the fame of their land's name. The *Voyage du haut mandarin Ka-Li-Ko et de son fidèle secrétaire Pa-Tchou-Li* [Figure 10] [Journey of the High Mandarin Ka-Li-Ko and His Faithful Secretary Pa-Tchou-Li] begins with an animated and cosmopolitan crossing. In Paris, Ka-Li-Ko loses sight of their objective and things turn out badly. On the other hand, Pa-Tchou-Li returns alone to China with the knowledge he learned on European civilization. He receives honors and the costume of a high mandarin. In accordance with the aims of literature for youth, Le Mouël does not forget the moral lesson:[25] "virtue is always rewarded and the vice punished". One year later, for the *Imagerie artistique* [Artistic Imagery] of the Maison Quantin[26] he also produced some pages concerning the exotic journey as a story, *Le sapeur Gruyer* [The Sapper Gruyer], who prefigures *Le Sapeur Camember* [The Sapper Camember] by Christophe (Georges Colomb). The later is the author of the century's most famous of the journeys in comic strip form, *La Famille Fenouillard* [The Fenouillard Family]. Following up *Une partie de champagne* [A Day in the Country], that appeared in *Le Journal de la jeunesse* [The Newspaper of the Youth], it became an intermittent, yet eagerly awaited publication in *Le Petit Français illustré* [The Small Frenchman Illustrated] from 1889, before its edition in album form by the bookshop Armand Colin in 1893. The same publication process was then adopted for *L'idée fixe du Savant Cosinus* [The Obsession of Scientist Cosinus], a character who would never leave Paris despite his desire to circumnavigate the world along the path of his cousins, the Fenouillards. After their first trips to Paris and on the coasts of Normandy, the Fenouillards became the worthy heirs of Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg in their distant but fortuitous adventure: they accidentally board a transatlantic ship which leads them to America, they encounter many peoples such as the Sioux and Canadian trappers, Japanese, Papuan cannibals and peoples of the Middle East and Spain. Agénor, though he "failed to obtain the fourteenth certificate

[24] He is quoted in (Lara&Lara 2010: 1888). Mathieu Guesde is also the author, in 1862, of a *Histoire anecdotique de la colonisation française aux Antilles*, published by the Academy of Science in Toulouse.

[25] The travel narrative for children takes an appreciably different orientation: its entertaining side did not yet mask the relatively omnipresent teaching objective. This aspect of the journey in images would require a full-fledged study of its own.

[26] For a survey of the output of the publishing house see (Sausverd 2007).

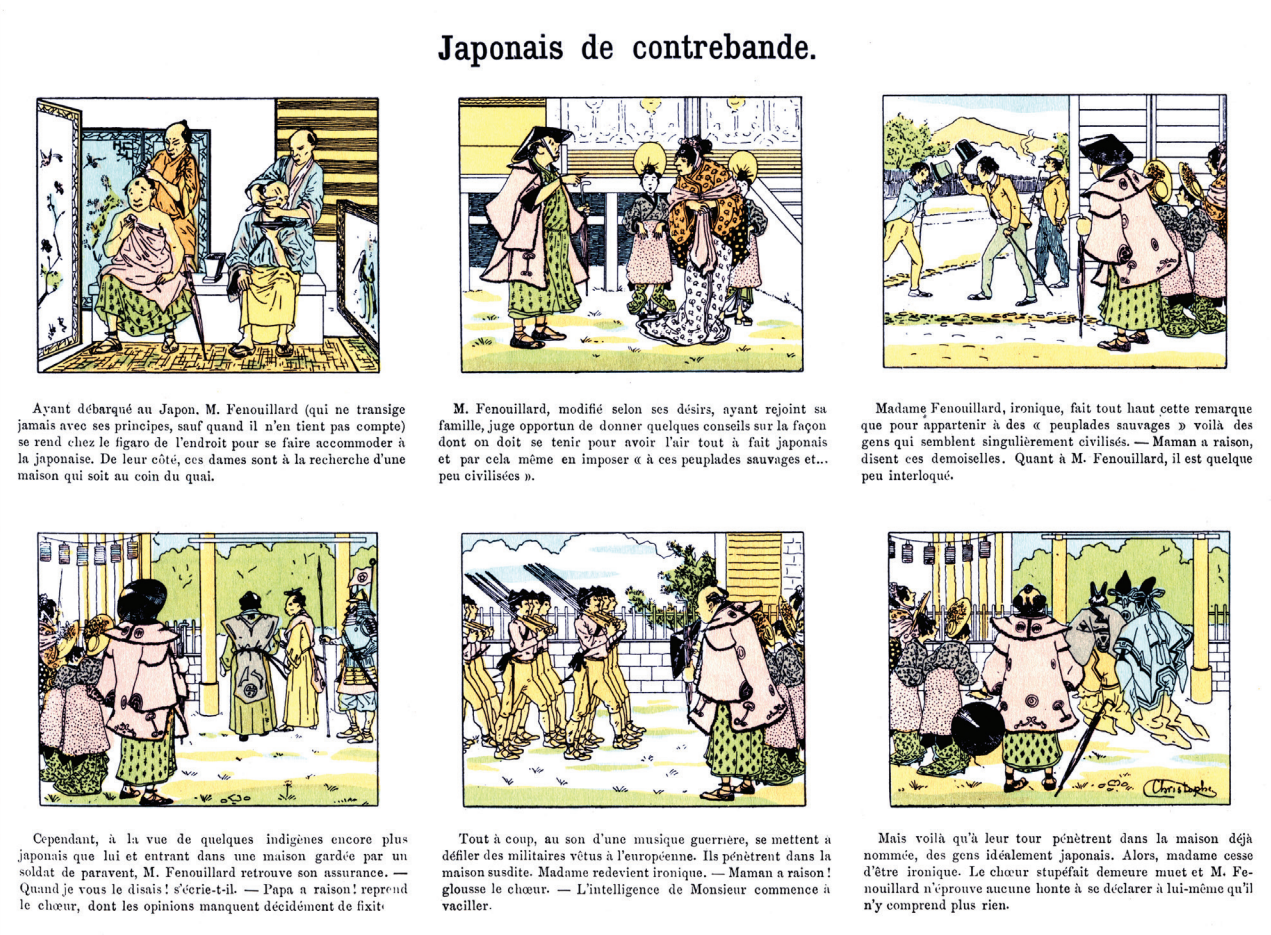


Figure 11.
La Famille Fenouillard,
Christophe,
Librairie Armand Colin,
Paris 1893.

of merit in geography" in his youth, does not fail to make scientific and ethnological observations in each country he visits. Whether dressed as a trapper, in the Japanese manner or with a Persian or Turkish costume, Mr. Fenouillard always seeks to adopt the customs of the country [Figure 11]. The bookseller Armand Colin was also the publisher of the volumes of the *Géographie Universelle* [Universal Geography] and of the journal *Les Annales de la géographie* [Geography Annals], so it comes as no surprise that the introductory text of this album states in a sententious and ironic manner, "Book designed to give French youth a taste for travel".

While mass tourism began to develop at the end of the century, the world tour of the Fenouillard family is to be read as a caricature of the journey undertaken on the premise of social promotion and valorization,[27] as it is suggested by the recurrent opposition between

[27] Undertaken by a "big stockholder of the Swamp", le *Voyage extraordinaire et abracadabrant de la famille Grosmatou* [Extraordinary and Abracadabric Journey of the Grosmatou Family] reminds by many points (by the temperament of the members of the family and progress of the journey in particular) the adventures of the Family Fenouillard. It was anonimously published in *feuilleton* in *L'Image* [The Image] in 1867, and was maybe a source of inspiration for Christophe.

"savage" and "civilized", and the triumphant return of the family in Saint-Rémy-on-the Deule. A daring and new reading of the album by Jean-Michel Hoerner also considers the excursion of the Fenouillards as hypnotic or dreamlike. Based on an analysis of the comic, which he considers "more geopolitical than one may think", and considering the scientific knowledge of Christophe who could not, according to Hoerner, have ignored the work of the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Hoerner asserts that the Fenouillards were put under hypnosis by the character Dr. Guy Mauve.[28] In locating the true meaning to the story, this hypothesis leads him to believe that it is hypnosis as a therapy that would transform Fenouillards into true heroes. The criticism of snobbish and ostentatious tourism, which fuels Christophe's comedy, thus is the main pretext to the false voyages of the family. In any case, we find grouped here the themes of dreams and travel, which constantly fed into each other.

Dreamlike and science-fiction

In some graphic narratives of voyage, the dream was invoked at the end as an explanation and resolution for a journey that had become too fanciful, or even dangerous. It is this ingredient that gives the stories their flexibility, providing a pretext for the invention of totally inconsistent or wonderful routes. Made of mental images, dream scenes were exceedingly well described in a plastic manner; both dreams and journeys have in common that they induce, in their unfolding, a loss of bearings and control often making them into true adventures. In the tour undertaken by Dr. Festus, the role of the dream was already present. After the wild adventures that Töpffer inflicts on him, the character finally wakes up in bed and "thinks he has not left the house and, while contemplating the dawn, he thinks of the beautiful dream that he had". Is it because he saw no tangible evidence of his journey that led Festus to not believe he had traveled? Affirming the parody of the scientific travel story, so fanciful that it has the consistency of the dream, the dreamlike motif seems to have entertained Töpffer to the point he envisaged a continuation in the novelistic adventures of Festus according to which the character would have dreamed of travelling instead of travelling by believing to dream.[29]

Published in *feuilletons* from November 8 1890 to April 25 1891, in *La Terre illustrée,* the *Voyage de M. Blandureau autour du monde* [Figure 12] [Mr Blandureau's Journey Around the World] is an anonymous comic in which the subterfuge of the dream is also used to create one of the most incongruous of odysseys.[30] Mr. Blandureau, a former pharmacist excited by the stories of Stanley and Nordenskjold, decides to "take a tour around the world." He therefore goes to the station of Tripaton-les-Mules where he buys a "trip ticket" for himself and his dog Totor. The ship on which he travels is shipwrecked, yet he is rescued by a diver who brings him to his house "three hundred meters beneath the sea surface" to make him meet his wife "*La Phoquesse*" [Mrs. Seal]. Later imprisoned on a desert island, our adventurer is forced to marry the monkey Gabichette,

[28] "To the extent they resemble the "animals known as hibernates", according to Doctor Guy Mauve who assists them, they would not travel completely in reality, they would only explore their subconscious and would be tourists who never departed." See (Hoerner 2007: 195).

[29] A unique exemplary of the edition of 1833 of the *Voyages et aventures du Docteur Festus* contains this note written by Töpffer on the last pages: "Second volume of Dr. Festus. Opposite data. He sets out, and sleeps somewhere, he dreams of what seems to him the day before. This dream will constitute the second journey […]. By some artifice, he will find himself towards the end on his mule, the day before will bind to the dream, and he would return to his place persuaded to have carried out his great voyage of instruction". See (Kaenel 1996).

[30] The many oniric ravings of Windsor McCay's *Little Nemo* made the fortune of the *New York Herald*, which published them in its pages from October 1905.

daughter of King Singe XIV. After no less wacky adventures, Blandureau finally wakes up, safe in his bed. By representing the mental constructs of the passenger in a dream, this comic proclaims the demiurgic power of drawing and shows how, not requiring an intermediary between the chimeras of the mind and their transcription, it is particularly suitable for dreamlike narratives.[31] Within the newspaper, the *Voyage de M. Blandureau* is an example that satisfies both a curiosity regarding representations of unknown worlds and an interest in adventure stories, a genre in full fashion of which it is a parodic version. Moreover, a previous *feuilleton*[32] serialized in 1874 in *Le Journal amusant* appears to anticipate this story. It is about *Une Aventure au Gagon* [An Adventure in the Gabon] imagined by Gilbert Randon. In it the scholar Bugnalarose leaves an African Country in search of the *macrodontia cervicornis* which is lacking in his collection of beetles. He meets there a "Chimpanzéenne" which shows affection for him, invites him to visit her and accompanies him during the adventure. After various events, including a legion of his desired beetles hurling themselves on the scholar who despairs at not having even a single pin, a terrifying gorilla hangs by a leg the unfortunate scholar, "more dead than alive", down from a baobab tree and loosens its hold and … He wakes up in his bed! As in the journey of Blandureau, an indication of the nightmarish character of the coming trip is already given from the beginning where we see Bugnalarose in his bed, dreaming about the beetles.

The earth was no longer enough, so it was towards the sky and to other planets that our passengers would be sent, in parodic stories that would fall under what we now call science-fiction. Following the success of the novels of Jules Verne, whose *Cinq semaines en ballon* [Five Weeks in a Balloon] (1863) and *De la Terre à la Lune* [From the Earth to the Moon] (1865), an entire body of literature emerged incorporating the latest advances in astronomy to offer extraordinary and cosmic adventure readings. Albert Robida also, author of travel stories and suspense, and founder of the newspaper *La Caricature*, put formidably into images of these technological dreams. While the Swiss Liquier Gabriel—known under the pseudonym of Trick et Trock—invented a comic about an extra-terrestrial trip, *Voyage d'un âne dans la planète Mars* [Figure 13] [A Donkey Journey to Planet Mars] lithographed in Geneva in 1867. An animal, who is the story's narrator, is sent by his father on an educational journey throughout the world. Having met a scientist who studies aerostats, he is then suspended in a "prison balloon" filled with a new gas which brings him up to the planet Mars where

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31 Comics do not always need the oniric pretext to open the door to the marvellous and imaginary, the motif of adventure is enough. It is thus quite natural that Mr. Cryptogame joined, in the digestive current of a whale, an abbot who had remained there for several months. In his *Histoire de Mr Grenouillet* [The Story of Mr. Grenouillet], album published by Arnaud de Vresse, Timoléon Lobrichon also plays with imagination: towed by a whale which bit his hook, Mr. Grenouillet, an unfortunate fisherman, thus traverses 380 miles before arriving on the Kakaïkakouka islands. There he meets the king of the natives whom he takes for "a stick of liquorice", whereas he himself is regarded as "an amphibious monkey of the large species".

32 Spread across several numbers, these stories show that the Töpfferian model continues in spite of the narrative concentration gradually leading to a more dense comic strip. In the last years of the 19th century, narratives were indeed reduced to micro-sequences, often silent, of a single page or of some panels. The journey becomes trivial and limits itself to narrative initiations or funny stories. Newspapers such as *L'Éclipse* [The Eclipse] or *Le Pêle-Mêle* offered a multitude of these, with titles like *Un aéronaute involontaire* [An Involuntary Aeronaut], *Aucun obstacle ne saurait arrêter un vrai globe-trotter* [No Obstacle Could Stop a True Globe-Trotter] or *Ingénieux explorateur* [Ingenious Explorer]. In the drawings which he offered each Monday to *Le Figaro* from 1895, Caran d'Ache still includes the motif in pages like his *La sécurité en chemin de fer* [Safety on the Railroad] or *Carnet de voyage dans Paris* [Travelogue in Paris].

he lives exciting adventures—sometimes as prisoner, sometimes as king—before being brought back on Earth by a cannonball. Once he lands near the scientist, his Martian experience makes him answer to his master, who asks on his deathbed what is the best government, that "it is the one that we do not have". The new techno-scientific utopia that enlivened the 19th century—represented here by the discovery of the scholar who defers the problem of "heavier than the air" to "Mr. Nadar"—is actually the opportunity for returning to a socio-political utopia, which is instead gradually eliminated from our world.

The extraterrestrial adventure had already become the setting of a political satire in Cham's the *Journey of P.-J. Proudhon*. The caricaturist appears to have made the journey his preferred subject, as two manuscripts likely authored by him are still dedicated to the theme.[33]

[33] Although very extravagant, the *Impressions de voyages aériennes et maritimes de Mr.*


LA TERRE ILLUSTRÉE

VOYAGE DE M. BLANDUREAU AUTOUR DU MONDE

Enthousiasmé par les récits de Stanley, Nordenskjold et autres, M. Blandureau, ex-pharmacien, rêve de faire le tour du monde.

Par quel bout prendra-t-il le monde? Par en haut?

Par le flanc?

Ou par-dessous?

Tout droit devant soi! Et à Dieu va!

Et M. Blandureau prend à la gare de son pays natal, — Tripaton-les-Mules, — un billet circulaire pour lui et Totor, son chien.

(*A suivre.*)

SCHAUX. IMP. CHARAIRE ET FILS.

Le Gérant . L. BOULANGER

Figure 12.
Voyage de M. Blandureau autour du monde,
s.n., first page as published in
La Terre illustrée,
nº 1, November 8 1890.

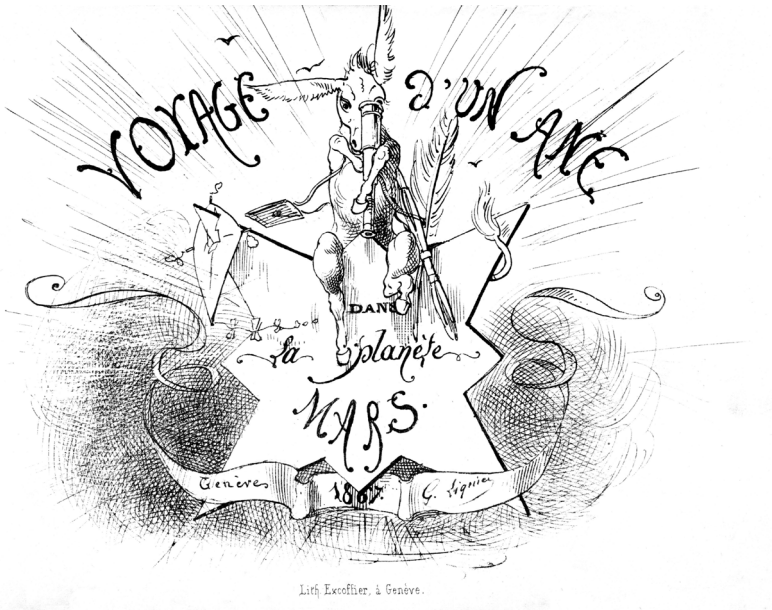


Figure 13.
Splash page of **Voyage d'un âne dans la planète Mars**, Gabriel Liquier, Genève 1867.

Nubis, le voyage dans la lune[34] [Figure 14] [Nubis, a Voyage to the Moon], tells of a balloon flight, that of Mr. Nubis who "reaches the moon" and is then faced with the strange behavior of the "kids" that he encounters there. In *Histoire de Mr Jobard* [Story of Mr. Jobard], which Maison Aubert published in 1840, Cham was already staging an attempted balloon flight, by a character of the same name who had "newly arrived from London", from the Champs de Mars. In the story, after having "burned his cap from being too near the sun", Mr. Nubis' failure to rise causes the disappointment of Mr. Jobard and other spectators who had paid 20 francs to attend the show.

A pretext for a multitude of puns—"tombe à lune" [falling moon / moon grave], "voulant se mettre au lunatique" [wanting to save the mood], "pomme de lune frites" [lunar French fries]—in the manuscript, the cosmic destination animates the narrative journey of a fantasy that recalled the strange visions designed by Grandville for his fantastic exploration of *Un autre monde*[35] [Another World] (1844). The extraterrestrial journey allows the creation of a surreal universe with its own laws (Nubis notes bitterly that on the moon he is paid with "properly given kicks"), and even if drawn from reality, the raw materials transmute (he takes a walk in the "*Jardin des plantes (de la lune)*" [Botanical garden of moon plants]). Constructing a transitional space, the marvelous and astral journey participated at the high point of a culture of strangeness and singularity that pervaded the 19th century, and filled its travel narratives with insane and monstrous creatures. Through comics, this curiosity about the unknown and the inaccessible was fully quenched by opening the visual component to all aspects of the *possible* and the *elsewhere*.

In an age fascinated by geography,[36] the journey

A. A. N. Trouillard, épicier de la veille [Impression of Air and Sea Trips by Mr. A.A.N. Trouillard, grocer of the Day] reports an adventure in an hydrogen-inflated balloon. Unfinished, this manuscript (it carries the date 1847-1848) contains a similar sequence in the theme to the *Épisodes de l'histoire d'une nation sauvage* [Episodes of the History of a Savage Nation], mentioned above, which appeared in 1846 in *L'Illustration*. The following year in same newspaper Cham also signed a story of a balloon flight under the title *La Ballomanie, ou infortunes de M. Potard* [Ballon-Mania, or the Misadventures of Mr. Potard].

34 It is a stitched book of twenty superbly watercoloured plates, completely unknown and without date, and preserved at the Musée de la Cité Internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image, in Angoulême.

35 Considered to be one of the first science-fiction novels, *L'Autre monde* by Cyrano de Bergerac (around 1650) already recounts of a journey into space, and to the moon and sun at the same time.

36 The foundation in 1821 of the Société de Géographie is considered by Thierry Groensteen to be like an "act of symbolic birth for this extraordinary passion for the planet's exploration" (Groensteen 1998: 18).

is a motif that made it possible for the first comics to join effectively the cultural and social landscape. By providing a narrative filled with connections, the journey in pictures was readily able to be published in the print media of the period and reflected the emotions and expectations of the readers. At the same time as being amusing, these pictorial travel narratives responded to the desire to see, explore and dream. At a plastic level, the theme of travel also offered the opportunity to further develop the resources of the narratives depicted. The sensation of movement, the passage of time or the specific features of the means of transport generate effects of rhythm, framing and layout that were all, previous to this period, little explored aspects of images [Figure 15]. As a medium based on gaze shifting, comics found in the journey a proper matrix to explore their numerous potentialities.

[*Translated from the French by* Andrea Cuman; *revision by* Ron Stewart]



Figure 14.
Nubis, le voyage dans la lune, attributed to Cham, unpubished, page 2; Collection of Musée de la Cité Internationale de la bande dessinée et de l'image, Angoulême.



Figure 15.
Impressions de voyage de M. Boniface,
Cham, Librairie Paulin, Paris 1844.

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From Zmaj to Mike Miša.
Sketching the First Eighty Years of Serbian Comics

signs
STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

by: Zdravko Zupan
Ratsko Project, www.rastko.rs

Introduction

Before the start of any research dedicated to the history of comics in Serbia, it should be noted that, while the production of contemporary comics (which started in mid–1930s) is relatively well-covered in a number of books and articles,[1] the earlier period is still largely unknown. The main obstacle to researching is the fact that the National Library in Belgrade was destroyed during the April 1941 bombing and has never (as far as its collection of illustrated periodicals is concerned) been fully refurbished. The only reliable sources have been private collections of vintage Serbian magazines and comics, the most extensive of which was owned by Aleksandar M. Popović, who passed away in 1995.

Even when one has access to materials, writing a history of early Serbian comics is not an easy task, because—following a practice widespread in Europe—authors of picture stories would usually not sign their works: not even the artists, let alone the writers. They would often hide behind pseudonyms and initials. Consequently even pinning down the names of these early creators requires a process of comparing and identifying individual drawing styles and handwriting.

Despite these difficulties in researching this early period, this paper aims to take an initial step in recovering its history, and making it more widely know, by drawing on research and materials available at this point in time to offer an English overview of the earliest developments of Serbian comics from the mid–1800s to take-off point of modern Serbian comics 1934.



Figure 1.
Cartoon created by writer and painter Dimitrije Avramović (1815-1855), initiator of Serbian caricature, published in 1850.

[1] See e.g. (Draginčić & Zupan 1986) and, among many others, the recent (Ivkov 1995, Pavković 2003, Bogdanović 2006). See also the articles available online via the Ratsko Project, www.rastko.rs.

Early comics

The end of the long domination of Serbia by the Ottoman Empire came between 1815 and 1830. At that time, it was clearly understood that the development of printing technology was affecting the very modernisation of the country. In 1831 the first printing house was established, and three years later the first Serbian newspaper was published in Kragujevac, quickly followed by others. Some of the newly established publications began then to publish modern cartoons—before that, the only traces of caricatured expressions were to be found in medieval miniatures and details of fresco paintings. The father of cartooning in Serbia was a painter, Dimitrije Avramović (1815-1855). His political cartoons emerged in the times when "Serbian people even had begun to use drawings in order to protect their national and political rights"[2] and were published in popular Serbian publications of the time—such as *Sedmica* [Week], *Šaljivac* [Joker] and *Šumadinka* [Šumadija Girl]. Other than that, as noted by Kolarić in his essay "Early Serbian Political Cartooning" (Kolarić 1954), cartoons by Avramović were also made and distributed among the Serbian population of Vojvodina (then Austro-Hungarian territory) as separated sheets of lithographic prints. These prints were often in a strip form, and in fine calligraphic lettering; sometimes they included extensive comments and dialogues. Many satirical picture stories were published in newspapers and almanacs, especially during the revolution of 1848, but mostly without signature. The first cartoon that "came into focus of the wider public" (Adanja 1968: 11) was then a 1850 piece by Avramović, filled with patriotic pathos, where he poked fun at the pro-Hungarian politician Sava Vuković, who was presented—together with Hungarian authorities—confiscating Serbian newspapers, during the Hungarian national revolution. This



Figure 2.
Cover of the Serbian satirical magazine **Zmaj** [Dragon]. "Zmaj" was published in Budapest and Vienna from 1864-1871. It is interesting that the text was printed in German.

cartoon is also interesting as it features an early version of the "speech balloon", formed as a stream of words that comes out of the speakers' mouth. [Figure 1]

The first humor and satirical magazines

First Serbian humor magazine was *Šaljivac* [Joker], first published in Belgrade in 1850, on November 17th (Julian calendar). Three years later, in Novi Sad, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj and Dimitrije Mihajlović started a humor magazine titled *Mesečar* [Somnabulist], while in February 1861 Dragutin Keserić put out the first issue of the illustrated humor magazine *Komarac* [Mosquito].

[2] (Janc 1968a): unpaginated, but fifth page.

Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, a noted poet, was an important figure of the early Serbian humor publications. For almost three decades, he worked on these magazines as publisher, editor, and very often sole contributor. In *Zmaj* [Dragon], which he published from 1864 to 1871, space was given to many illustrated satirical pieces, some of which offered excellent examples of picture narratives, often translated from various European satirical magazines. [Figure 2] The magazine *Starmali* [Precocious Child], which started in Novi Sad in 1878 and was self-published by Zmaj for another 12 years, hosted some satirical stories in sequential pictures, including one interesting, unsigned comic page titled "An Almost Incredible Thing Has Happened During the Waltz".



Figure 3.
Cover of the humor magazine **Šaljivi astronom** [Goofy Astronomer] founded by Milivoj Mauković in Novi Sad in 1879.
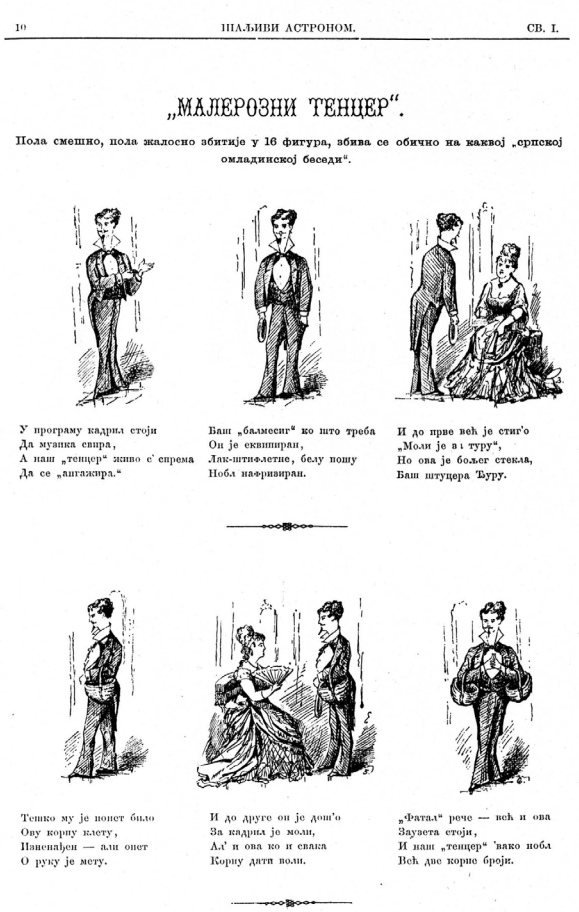


Figure 4.
In the first issue of **Šaljivi astronom** (May 1879), Mauković published a story done in 16 panels **Malerozni tencer** [Unfortunate Dancer].

Examples of signatures on either graphic stories or poem illustrations are rare. Among the few authors who did not sink into oblivion is Milivoj Mauković, a cartoonist who lived in the town of Šid. He passed away at an early age in 1881, but years later was singled out as "the first Serbian professional illustrator" (Janc 1968b). The obituary published in *Javor*[3] stated that

[3] *Javor*, Novi Sad, January 17 1882, 63-64.

«The news about the death of this Serbian artist came abruptly. He died prematurely: just a few days ago we received a copy of a humor magazine that he self-published and illustrated, *Đavolan* [Little Devil]. As a young man Mauković went to Vienna, where he could be often seen in the taverns with his sketchbooks, copying the drawings from the foreign illustrated magazines. He was a self-taught artist… He didn't have a teacher to guide him, yet his artworks were often appearing in satirical and children magazines and books, and his name was known to his people… Kind benefactress Marija Trandafil had sponsored his travel to Munich for art studies, where he had some success. After one year spent there, he returned to his native Šid, where he initiated the humor magazine *Šaljivi astronom* [Goofy Astronomer], for which he also drew illustrations, while at the same time collaborating with publishers of several other magazines and children's books. Lately he had opened a book shop and a printing press in Šid, but he had no luck with *Đavolan*, a magazine that he founded, as only two issues came out before he passed away».

In the first issue (May 1879) of his *Šaljivi astronom* [Figure 3], Mauković published a story titled "Unfortunate Dancer", comprising of 16 panels with versed captions [Figure 4], depicting a young man who left a dance party after having little luck. He ends up in his bed, dreaming of dancing with the lady that he fancied, happy at last…

In the early 1870s, the centre of cultural activities among the Serbian population moved from Novi Sad to Belgrade, and during this period many comics were published in Belgrade's magazines.[4] The last decade of 19th century also saw the appearance of satirical magazines in Niš, Vršac, Stari Bečej and other towns. Along with their political cartoons, the satirical magazines often published ones touching upon social issues or even addressing mere entertainment. These cartoons were not only by trained artists—in fact most of the artwork was crude or amateurish, yet some of it appears surprisingly fresh.

Thanks to the research of Zagorka Janc, the work of another important artist of this period, Jovan Pešić, was saved from oblivion. Pešić (1866-1936) started to



Сл. 2. Из атељеа Ђорђа Јовановића
Fig. 2. L'atelier de Djordje Jovanović

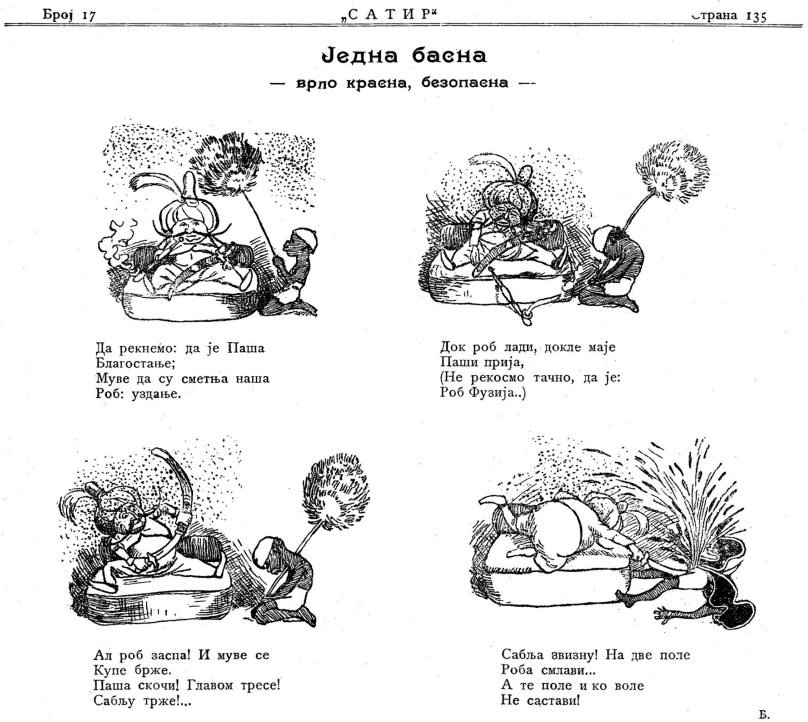
Сл. 3. Из атељеа Ђорђа Јовановића
Fig. 3. L'atelier de Djordje Jovanović

Figure 5.
A silent story created by Jovan Pešić in 1897. It was first published in the **Anthology** of the Museum of Applied Arts in 1969.

[4] In the Belgrade periodicals *Ćosa* ([Bald man] 1881-1883 and 1887-1888), *Era* ([Man fron Uzice] 1882) and *Dar-Mar* ([Chaos] 1881-1882) as well as in the longest-lived satirical magazine *Brka* ([Moustache], published from 1882 until, with some interruptions 1938).

study sculpture in Novi Sad, and continued his studies with the well-known sculptor Đorđe Jovanović, until they had a quarrel. Inspired by those studies, in 1897 Pešić created a silent story in 8 panels, which was published only many years later, in the *Anthology* of the Museum of Applied Arts (Janc 1969). The story is a witty depiction of a pretentious sculptor who makes his clay figure of a nude woman com to life and dance [Figure 5]. Pešić worked for many magazines, and was aware of the international cartooning scene of the time, as he was a regular reader of *Punch* and *Die Fliegende Blatter*, as well as the Parisian magazines *Le journal amusant*, *La caricature* and *Charivari* (Janc 1969: 22).

The explosion of satirical magazines continued into the early 20th century. Among the titles were *Kukurek* [Hellebore], *Satir* [Satyr], *Vragolan* [Wag], *Đavo* [Devil], *Starmladi* [Oldyoung], *Ruža* [Rose], *Humor* [Humour], *Selja* [Redneck], *Zolja* [Vespidae], *Karikature* [Caricature], *Raketla* [Rocket] and *Vic* [Joke]. All were founded between 1902 and 1915, mostly in Belgrade, with exceptions such as *Starmali* [Precocious Child], which was produced in Novi Sad. One of the aforementioned magazines, *Satir*, was founded in 1902 by Brana Cvetković (1875-1942). [Figure 6] He was a colorful personality—known for his work as a theatre director, actor and composer, he also found his own means of expression in painting and cartooning, along with writing poetry and prose! [Figure 7] In fact, Cvetković is mostly remembered also for his illustrated poems for children, influenced by Busch in terms of style and form.


Број 17 „САТИР" Страна 135

Једна басна

— врло красна, безопасна —

Да рекнемо: да је Паша
Благостање;
Муве да су сметња наша
Роб: уздање.

Док роб лади, докле маје
Паши прија,
(Не рекосмо тачно, да је:
Роб Фузија..)

Ал роб заспа! И муве се
Купе брже.
Паша скочи! Главом тресе!
Сабљу трже!..

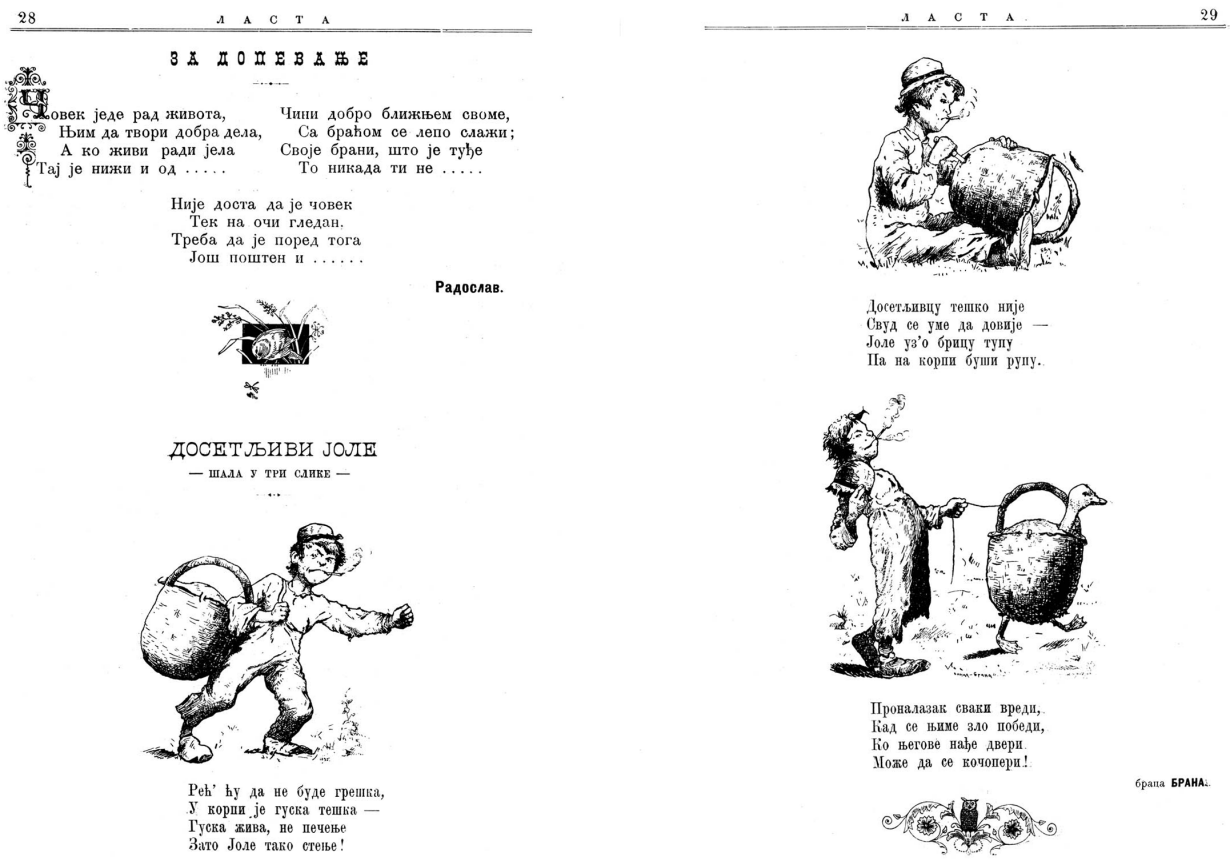
Сабља звизну! На две поле
Роба смлави...
А те поле и ко воле
Не састави!

Б.

Figure 6.
Story by Branislav Brana Cvetković.
It was published in **Satir** [Satyr] in 1902.

Neven

Neven [Calendula] was one of the most important chapters in the history of Serbian children's periodicals (Radikić 1989, Đurđev & Golić 2006). [Figure 8] It began publication in Novi Sad in 1880, and lasted until 1908, with some interruptions from 1891 to 1898. The magazine's founder and editor was Zmaj. *Neven* was a literature magazine for children, so many pages were devoted to poems, but there were also articles—from educational ones to notes about the recent events (political and cultural), biographies of the important figures of the time, etc.—all with plenty of illustrations. Very often, Zmaj would write his poems after the illustrations he found: he would first pick an interesting artwork, and then write verses based on the images. [Figure 9] But there were also examples of the inverse procedure:



28 ЛАСТА

ЗА ДОПЕВАЊЕ

Човек једе рад живота,
Њим да твори добра дела,
А ко живи ради јела
Тај је нижи и од .....

Чини добро ближњем своме,
Са браћом се лепо слажи;
Своје брани, што је туђе
То никада ти не .....

Није доста да је човек
Тек на очи гледан.
Треба да је поред тога
Још поштен и .....

Радослав.

ДОСЕТЉИВИ ЈОЛЕ

— ШАЛА У ТРИ СЛИКЕ —

Рећ' ћу да не буде грешка,
У корпи је гуска тешка —
Гуска жива, не печење
Зато Јоле тако стење!

ЛАСТА. 29

Досетљивцу тешко није
Свуд се уме да довије —
Јоле уз'о бричу тупу
Па на корпи буши рупу.

Проналазак сваки вреди,
Кад се њиме зло победи,
Ко његове нађе двери
Може да се кочопери!

браћа **БРАНА.**

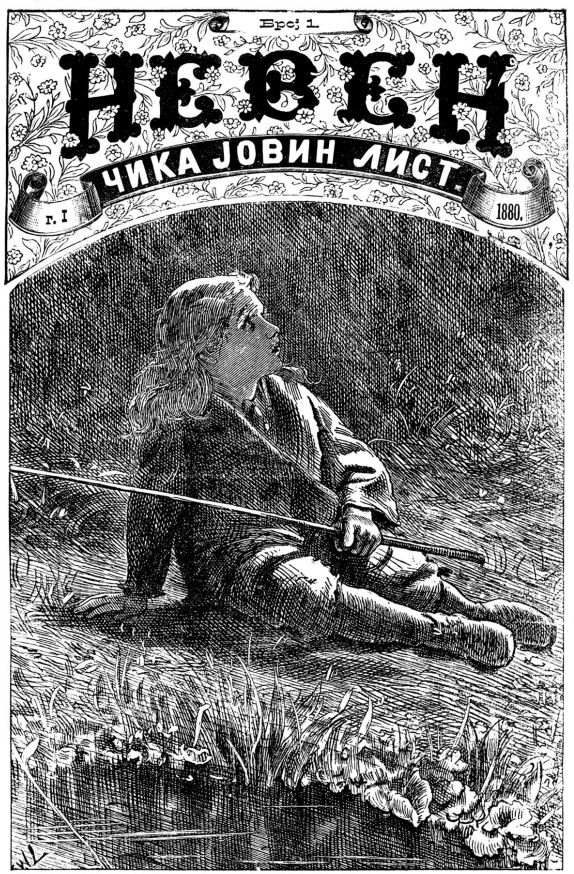
Figure 7.
Branislav Brana Cvetković illustrated this story and wrote verses for it. It was published in the children magazine **Lasta** [Swallow] in 1895. Lasta was published in Belgrade from 1894-1897.

Zmaj's poem "Naš Gaja" [Our Gaja] was illustrated in sequential form by one Uroš Predić, a famous Serbian painter, representative of academic realism. [Figure 10] Among several other illustrators who collaborated with the magazine, Zmaj probably created some of the illustrations himself, or did the preliminary sketches. A number of the comics and illustrations were actually reprinted from foreign publications. Most frequently appearing characters in Zmaj's illustrated poems were animals—cats, monkeys, the ugly duckling, and others. A story titled "Guska pijančura" [Drunkard Goose] introduces a goose that got drunk after consuming *rakija* (i.e., a Serbian brandy). One of the most interesting of these illustrated poems is titled "Kovač i đavo" [A Blacksmith and a Devil]: an adaptation of Busch' story, Zmaj introduced it as "Fictional folly, made for laughs only", emphasizing that it was not educational or moralising in nature. [Figure 12]

Among the magazines that followed in the wake of *Neven* [Calendula], mention should be at least made of *Spomenak* [Forget-me-not], published in Pančevo from 1893 to 1914 (Vitosevic 1984: 33), which later came to offer many graphic stories. [Figure 11]
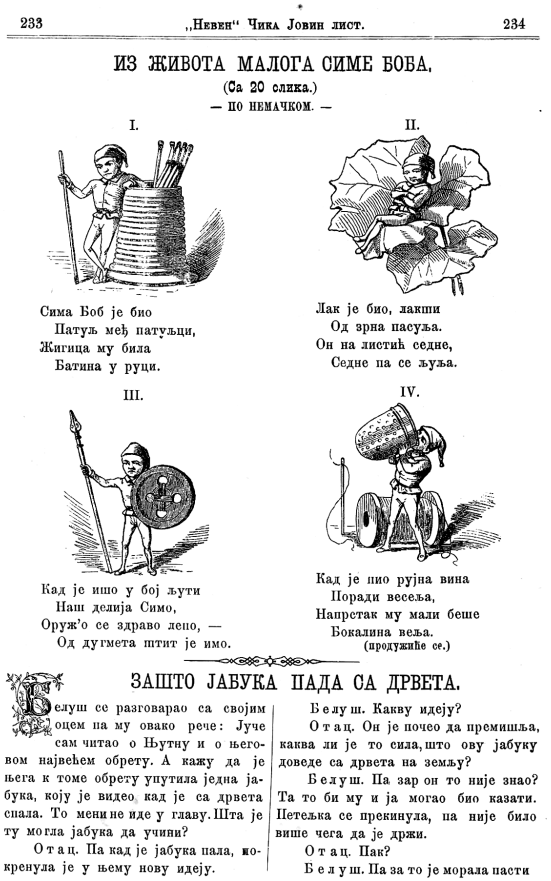
After the First World War

The evolution of comics in Serbia was arrested from the beginning of the 1910s until the mid–1930s. From 1912 to 1918, the country took part in two Balkan Wars and the First World War, with human and material casualties of enormous proportions. After the end of the war, major social, economic and political changes occurred all over Europe, and in the Middle and South-Eastern Europe new states were formed. One of them was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, which was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929.



Рибарче.

Figure 8.
Cover of **Neven** [Calendula], popular magazine for children founded by the famous Serbian poet Jovan Jovanović Zmaj in Novi Sad in July 1880. **Neven** is considered the most important chapter in the history of Serbian children's literature. It was published, with some interruptions, until March 8 1908.



233 „Невен" Чика Јовин лист. 234

ИЗ ЖИВОТА МАЛОГА СИМЕ БОВА.

(Са 20 слика.)

— ПО НЕМАЧКОМ. —

I.

Сима Боб је био
Патуљ међ патуљци,
Жигица му била
Батина у руци.

II.

Лак је био, лакши
Од зрна пасуља.
Он на листић седне,
Седне па се љуља.

III.

Кад је ишо у бој љути
Наш делија Симо,
Оруж'о се здраво лепо, —
Од дугмета штит је имо.

IV.

Кад је пио рујна вина
Поради весеља,
Напрстак му мали беше
Бокалина веља.

(продужиће се.)

ЗАШТО ЈАБУКА ПАДА СА ДРВЕТА.

Белуш се разговарао са својим оцем па му овако рече: Луче сам читао о Њутну и о његовом највећем обрету. А кажу да је њега к томе обрету упутила једна јабука, коју је видео, кад је са дрвета спала. То мени не иде у главу. Шта је ту могла јабука да учини?

Отац. Па кад је јабука пала, покренула је у њему нову идеју.

Белуш. Какву идеју?

Отац. Он је почео да премишља, каква ли је то сила, што ову јабуку доведе са дрвета на земљу?

Белуш. Па зар он то није знао? Та то би му и ја могао био казати. Петељка се прекинула, па није било више чега да је држи.

Отац. Пак?

Белуш. Па за то је морала пасти

Figure 9.
During 1883 a story entitled **Iz života malog Sime Boba** [From the Life of Small Sima Bob] was published in several issues of **Neven**. Jovan Jovanović Zmaj wrote verses for this story.
As it was emphasized in its caption, the drawings were taken from a German magazine.

The nations composing this state were not equal in economic and cultural development, and were at a much lower cultural and educational level than other parts of Europe. According to the statistics of 1921, the Kingdom had 12 million inhabitants and, among the population older than 12 years, the illiteracy rate was 51,5% (Bjelica 1988: 67).

One of the prominent publishers to appear on the Serbian scene in the time between the two world wars was Ivan Zrnić (1890-1942), who moved to Belgrade

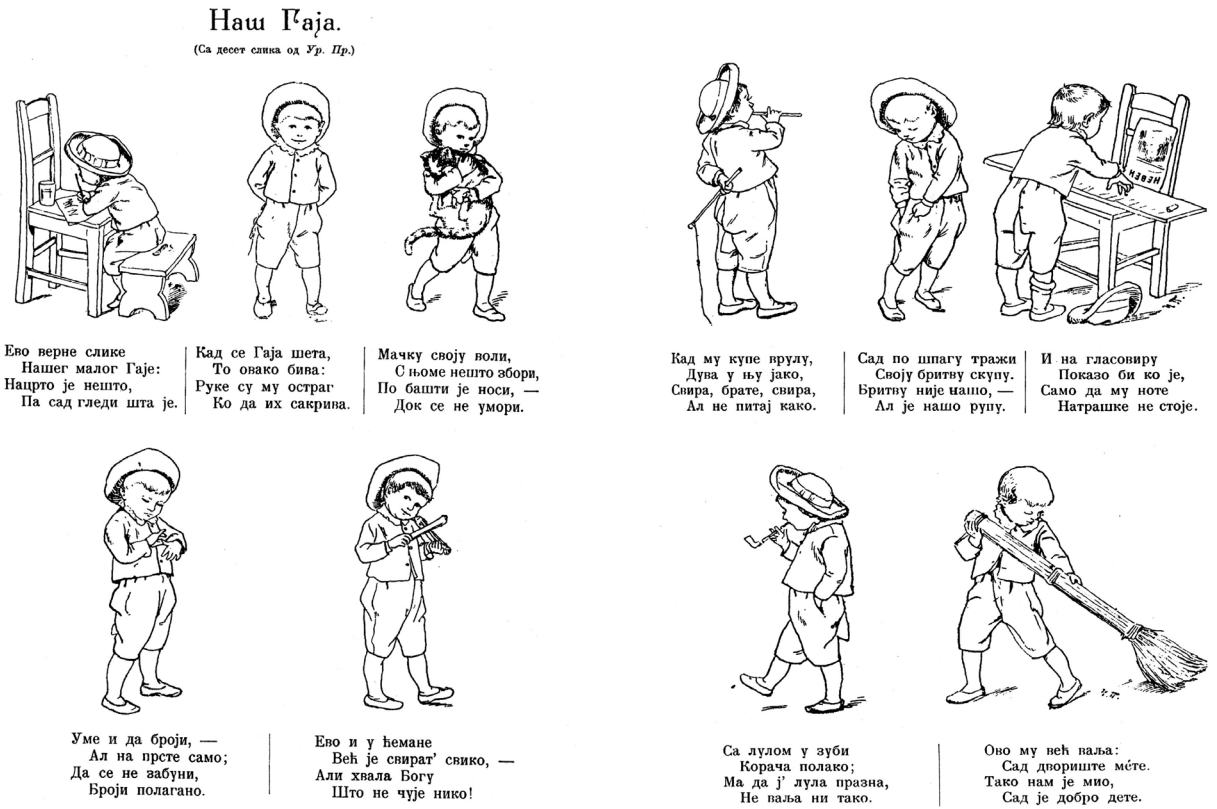


Figure 10.
The original comic strip **Nas Gaja** [Our Gaja].
The pen skecthes by Zmaj for the cartoon also survived.

from Sušak, an island on the Croatian Adriatic coast.[5] His wife Jelena Jovanović (1893-1968) worked in periodicals such as *Dnevni list* [Daily Papers], *Jutro* [Morning] and *Straža* [Watch], as well as *Tribuna,* where she was the editor in chief. In November 1919, Jelena and Ivan Zrnić brought copies of the first issue of their first magazine, *Ilustrovani list* [Illustrated Magazine], from Vienna (where it was printed): they were the sole owners, editors, writers and even peddlers of the publication. In the years to come, the couple founded a number of publications, among which were *Naša deca* [Our Children], *Zabavnik* [Entertainer], *Vesele novine* [Jolly Papers], *Comoedia*, *Žena i svet* [Woman and World], *Jugoslovenske ilustrovane novine* [Yugoslav Illustrated Papers], *Veseli četvrtak* [Joyful Thursday], etc. [Figure 15]

The Zrnić family published the illustrated children magazine *Naša deca* from September 1920 until May 1925. Along with regular illustrations, this magazine gave space to some sequential picture stories [Figure 13], including the first one with recurring characters. It

[5] His love for a daughter of a Serbian Orthodox Christian priest made him change his family name from Kornicer to the more Serbian-sounding Zrnić. Eventually, during the German occupation, he was killed in the Jasenovac concentration camp, made by the Croat fascist regime. All of this information comes from a personal communication from his daughter Maja Zrnić (August 1985).

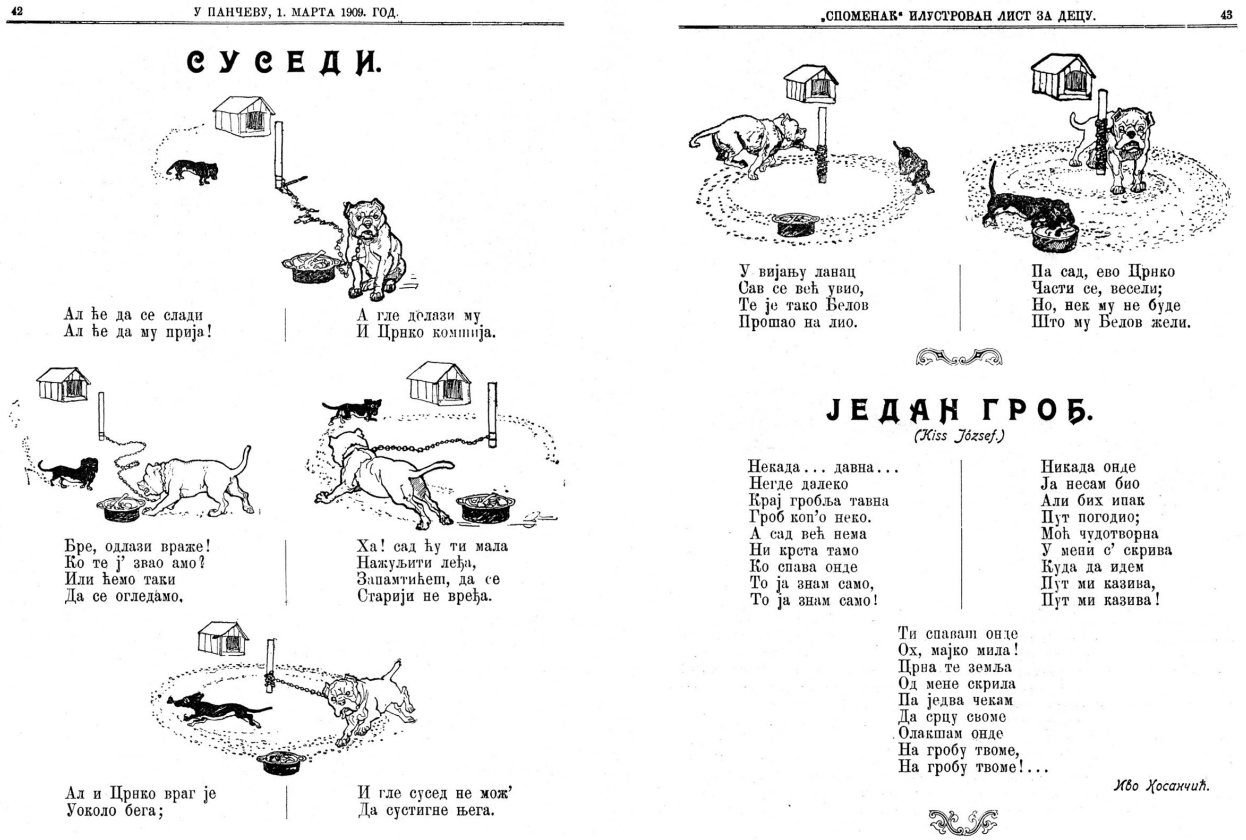


Figure 11.
Children's magazine **Spomenak** [Forget-me-not] published this story on May 1st 1909.

was "Putovanje oko sveta" [Travel Around The World], written by a Bosnian Serb poet, Isaije Mitrović, and illustrated by a Serb from Vienna, the painter Josif Danilovac.[6] The authors created a boy character named Zdravko Obretić, who travelled all around the newly established SCS Kingdom with his friend Čelik-Laza, sometimes reaching faraway countries as well (US, Japan, Australia, China, Egypt). [Figure 14]

However, while the first decades of the 20th Century saw the flowering of newspaper comics in US, in Serbia illustrated sequential stories remained fairly archaic, with versed captions underneath the panels, or even at the bottom of the page, obviously aimed at young children. [Figure 10] Many children's magazines published material of this kind, sometimes without any text, but this period also saw the appearance of some peculiar stories in pictures such as those left with blank captions, meant for readers to insert their own verses, the best of which would receive a prize. [Figure 16]

[6] Josif Danilovac (1877-1928) was a painter, graphic artist and caricaturist. He studied painting at the Academy of Vienna under S. L'Allemand, and graphic art under W. Unger. He worked as a caricaturist in Viennese satirical magazine *Die Muskete* as well as in *Vrač pogađač* [Soothsayer]: cfr. (Miodrag 1962).

КОВАЧ И ЂАВО.

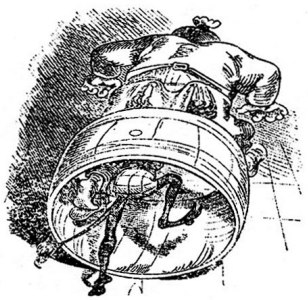
(Измишљена лудорија, да се мало насмејемо. Са 9 слика.)



Један ђаво, средњег раста,
Из пакла се диг'о право;
А био је црне боје,
Што-но кажу: баш к'о ђаво.



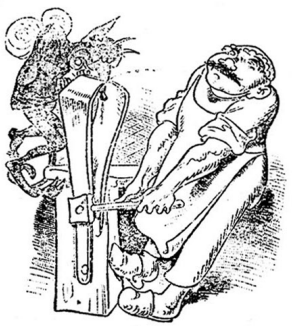
Дошао је ка ковачу,
Јер ту ваздa неће зенсти.
Ковача је задиркив'о
И поч'о му леђа грепсти.



Ту се нашло неко буре;
Ту би ковач да се спасе.
Али ђаво трч' за њиме,
Премеће се, вијуга се.



Ковач седе код шајтова,
Да довршн наручбине;
Ал и ђаво све за њиме,
Хоће да му капу скине.



Ђаво поче шајтов њушкат',
Да л' мирише, или смрди.
Аха, ту си! рече ковач,
Па ђаволу нос заврти.



И то прође, како прође, —
Ал г. д ковач кљеште шчепа
Ђаво виде да ће остат'
Ил без ува, ил без репа.

Figure 12.
The illustrated poem **Kovač i đavo** [A Blacksmith and a Devil] by Zmaj: another witness of Busch' influence on the medium.

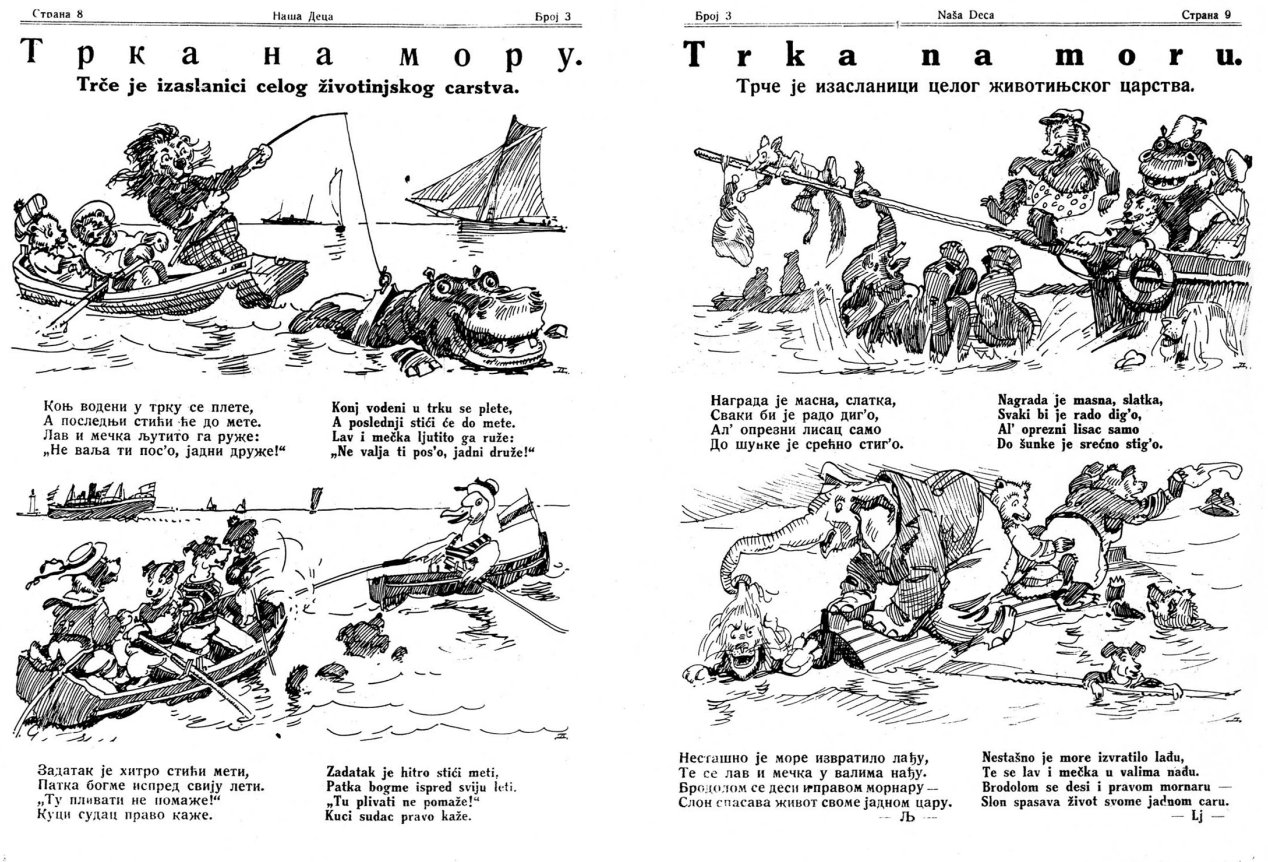


Figure 13.
Josif Danilovac was the author of this story as well as of some other similar stories, published in children's magazine **Naša deca** [Our Children]. This one, published in three issues, was entitled **Trka na moru** [Race at Sea] and the text was printed in both Cyrillic and Latin alphabet.

The early Thirties

Comics were introduced into Serbian newspapers through the childrens' supplements. The first daily paper to have a page dedicated to young readers was *Politika*, starting with the January 16th 1930 issue. This supplement has come out once a week, every Thursday, since then until the present day. It was preceded by a "Children's Page", completely written and illustrated by Brana Cvetković, in 1929, first inserted in the February 21st issue of *Politika*. [Figure 17]

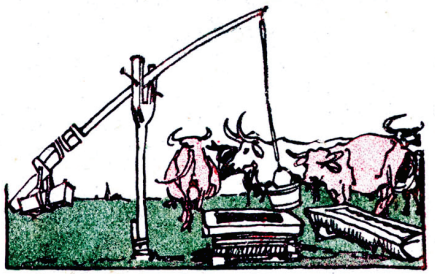
With his versed comics and illustrations, Cvetković made an important contribution to the first decade of the *Politika za decu* [Politika for Children] supplement. During the same period, however, this supplement would also publish works by other authors, including comics biographies (probably created by Vladimir Žedrinski) of prominent (often contemporary) figures such as the Czech politician and philosopher Tomáš Masaryk or the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. In issue 31 of the supplement, published on August 14th 1930, appeared a strip titled "Drski obijač i hrabri Perica" [Ruthless Robber Meets the Brave Perica], which, for the first time, included a speech balloon. [Figure 19] Soon other daily papers such as *Vreme* [Time] and *Pravda* [Justice], and even some weekly magazines, started to publish similar supplements.

Путовање око света.

Здравко Обретић у Бачкој.



Проходећи равну Бачку
Од Дунава па до Тисе,
Често пута зној прокапа,
Често пута ожедни се.



Пукла раван: нигде краја,
А путнике жеђа дави.
Воде! воде! И гле, у час
Пред њима се ђерам јави.



Здравко брже каб'о згради
У зденац га дубок сара,
А Челик се Лава с Лолом
У присенку разговара.



Свуд несрећа оком прежа
И шта беше већ домалка:
Место кове ђерам диже
Обретића у вис Здравка.



Шта помаже ту сад сува
Где досетка тражи брата,
Челик-Лаза Лолу диже,
Лола Здравка зуб'ма хвата.



А Бачвани враголани
Од смеха су попуцали,
И сви редом Обретићу
На јунаштву честитали.

Исаије Митровић.

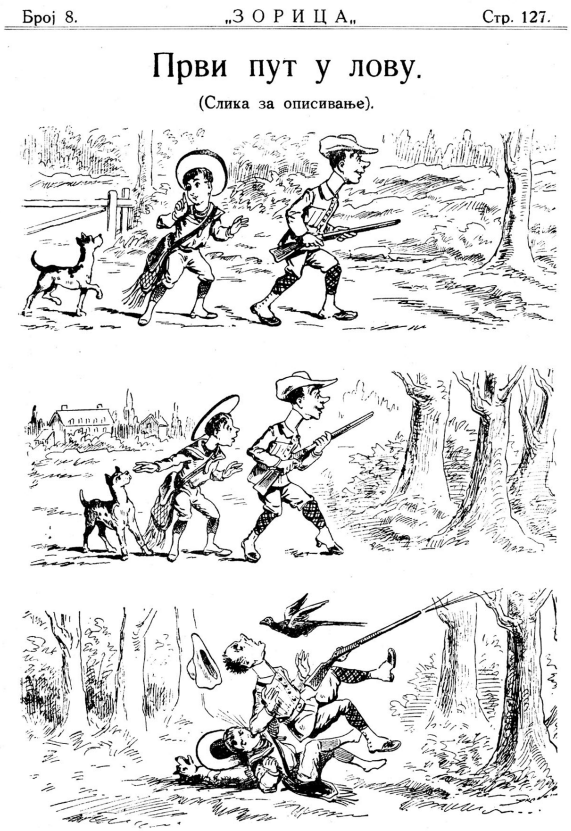
Рукописе и претплату треба слати у Београд, Космајска улица 22. — „Наша Деца“ излазе месечно једанпут, за време школске године. Годишња претплата 12 динара, полугодишња 6 динара. Појединн број 1·50 динара.

Одговорни уредник Иван Зрнић, директор југословенског „Илустрованог Листа“, Београд.

Figure 14.
Putovanje oko sveta
[Travel around the world]
was created by the poet
Isaije Mitrović and the painter
Josif Danilovac.
Unlike similar stories,
this one had a main character.



Figure 15.
Cover of the children's magazine **Veseli četvrtak** [Joyful Thursday], published in Belgrade by Ivan and Jelena Zrnić in 1932-1933.



Број 8. „ЗОРИЦА„ Стр. 127.

Први пут у лову.

(Слика за описивање).

Сваки је почетак тежак, па ни овом ловцу ни његовим пратиоцима није било лако, кад су први пут у лов изишли.

Читаоци „Зорице“ (само из III. и IV. разреда), који истина још нису ловци али знају шта је лов, нека опишу ову слику.

Figure 16.
This story was published in issue 8 (April 1929) of children's newspaper **Zorica**. Editors encouraged only 3rd and 4th grade pupils to describe the pictures.

Inside the *Dečje Vreme* [Children's Time] supplement, the sixth issue on October 6th 1932, the Russian emigrant Sergije Mironovič Golovčenko[7] published the first instalment of his story "Doživljaji Mike Miša i majmuna Đoke" [Adventures of Mickey Mouse and Đoka the Monkey]. The story (including verses written under the panels) continued until late 1933. This was not, however, the first story featuring Mickey Mouse published in Serbia. After his huge success on the big screen, Walt Disney's character was rendered by local artists, who would often use silent panels with verses underneath. This is the case for the first Serbian Mickey stories in the illustrated childrens' magazine *Veseli četvrtak* by the Zrnić family. The first issue of the magazine came out in January 1932, and it devoted considerable space to comics (albeit with no speech balloons).



ПОЛИТИКА
Дечја страна

Божја птица

Ко су, шта су? -- Од снега су

Два ћурана

Читаоци нам!

Чик промаји!

Корњача и куче

Хајде, реши! Не погреши!

Две женишње

Дечји аранжмански оркестар

Figure 17.
The first addition for children in **Politika** [Politics] newspaper was published under the title **De-ja strana** [Children's page] on February 21 1929.

[7] Sergije Mironovič Golovčenko (1898-1937) spent his childhood and early youth in his hometown, Odessa. He came to Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1920s. He lived in Zagreb since 1923 where studied painting. Due to poor economic conditions, he focused on journalism dedicating himself to caricature and illustration. Until his death, he had been a regular contributor of the Zagrebian satirical newspaper *Koprive* [Nettle] for which he created Maks and Maksić, beginning publication on April 4 1925 (and modelled on Busch's Max und Moritz).

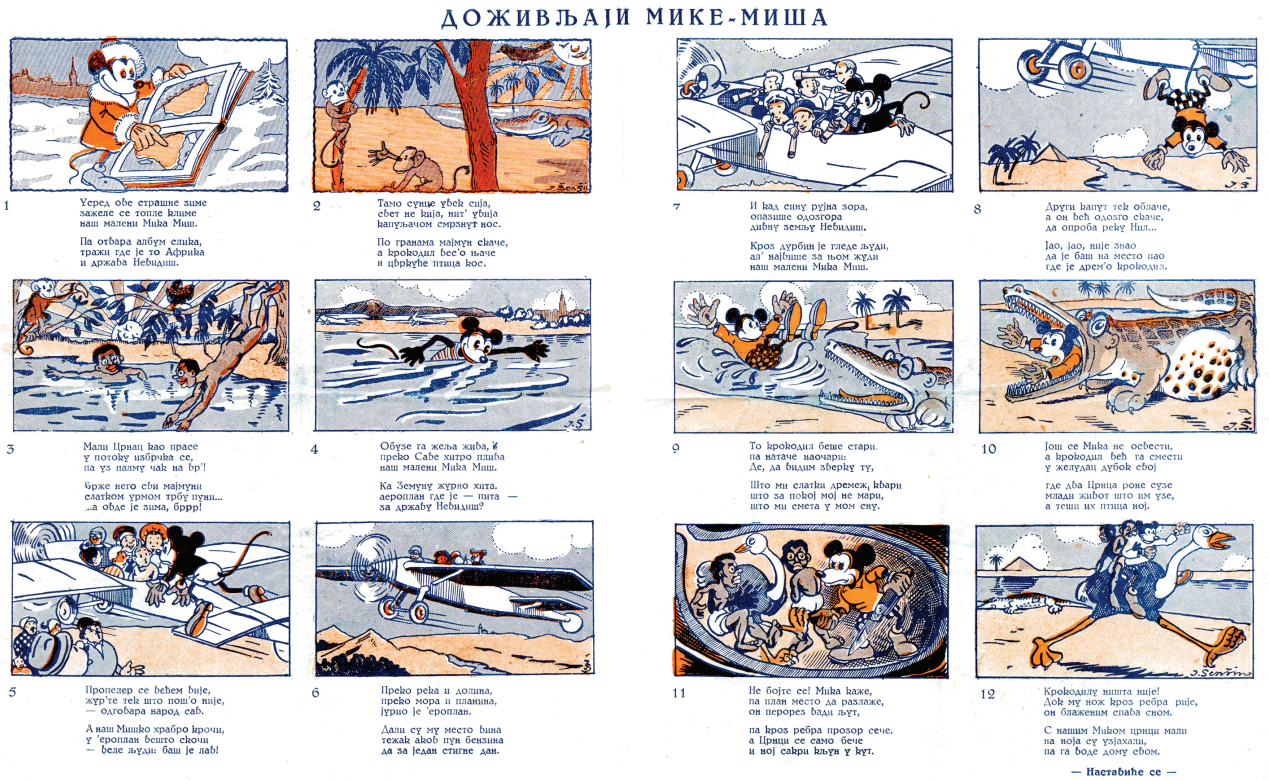


Figure 18.
Mickey Mouse appeared for the first time in **Veseli četvrtak**. It was a rendition created by local artists: cartoonist Ivan Šenšin and writers Božidar Kovačević and Svetislav B. Lazić.

Along with Mickey Mouse, it featured characters such as the Katzenjammer Kids (known in Serbia as Bim and Bum), Felix the Cat (at first named Macan Marko), and Swedish character Adamson (čika Toša). The only domestic product, the aforementioned Mickey Mouse rendition, was created by writer Božidar Kovačević and cartoonist Ivan I. Šenšin.[8] [Figure 18] Kovačević wrote verses for the first 11 instalments of the strip and was later succeded by Svetislav B. Lazić (1896-year of death unknown); Šenšin drew the strip until issue 34 (from January 7th until August 25th), when he was replaced by an unidentified cartoonist, who concluded the story in issue 52 of 1932. The magazine was short-lived: it folded in September 1933, but during its two years of publication it paved the way for later comics magazines.

Although newspapers started to publish comics in the mid–30s, national production of comics was connected with magazines. Once comics found their way to Serbian dailies, the editors preferred to reprint foreign comics, which were cheaper, and generally considered more attractive. Comics by domestic cartoonists were however accepted by dailies, weeklies and childrens' magazines—Belgrade dailies *Politika* and

[8] Božidar Kovačević (1902-1990) was a noted poet, prose writer, translator, critic and essayist; Ivan I. Šenšin (1897-1944) was a distinguished comic artist, who gave large contributions to the field of illustrations for books and newspapers in Serbia, occasionally working also in advertising. Although he is rembered as an realistic artist in the world of the ninth art, he debuted with the caricatural comic strip "Doživljaji Mike Miša" [The life of Mika the Mouse].



Figure 19.
Issue 31 of **Politika za decu** [Politika for Children] contained a strip titled **Drski obijač i hrabri Perica** [Ruthless Robber Meets the Brave Perica]: probably, the first modern use of a speech balloon.

Vreme had leading roles in promoting local authors, not only by publishing comics in their issues and supplements, but also by launching special comics editions and magazines. In 1934, the newspaper publication of "Detektiv X–9" (translation of "Secret Agent X–9") comics, caused a real sensation. It was such a novelty in Serbia that a name had to be invented for the new media. One of the editors of *Politika*, Duda Timotijević, drew on the original English term "comic strip", and adopted into Serbian language *strip* (to this day Serbs and other former Yugoslav nations use the term "strip", pronounced "streep").[9] With this appearance, and the subsequent change of audience, we can mark the end of the pioneering period and the beginning of a closer connection between Serbian comic publishing and international markets.

[9] Đorđe Lobačev, a pioneer and most distinguished comic artist, spoke about the history of the term's usage on various occasions, e.g. in the interview with Veljko Krulčić for the magazine *Istra* n. 6/7 in 1986 (page 10).

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Töpffer Reloaded
A Reevaluation of Töpffer's Invention

signs
STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

by: Thierry Smolderen
École Européenne Supérieure de l'Image, Angoulême

In the Victorian period, picture stories were usually played *against* the complexity of the modern urban world. Töpffer, however, redefined the genre in a radically novel way—as a means of describing the rapid societal, technological and intellectual changes that were transforming the face of Europe. To explore this theme, he customized a new humoristic—and typically polygraphic—form that is generally considered as the first "real" comic strip by late 20th century scholars. At many levels, Töpffer's "comics" seem, indeed, much closer to the modern form than most of the picture stories published in the middle of the 19th century.

To define precisely in what ways they prefigure the 20th century comic strip, however, is a task in which the arrow of time introduces a huge asymmetry.

If we adopt today's vantage point, as most of the scholars instinctively do, the task is relatively straightforward, because we're already pretty confident about our own conceptualization; any similarity between Töpffer's albums and the 20th century comic strip can be seen simply as "pointing in the right direction". But if one approaches the problem from Töpffer's point of view, it becomes clear that calling him the *father*, or the *inventor*, of the comic strip doesn't explain anything about his original intention or conceptualization. The label only reflects what we know in hindsight about the phenomenal success of the comic strip in the 20th Century. The success of the form, however, is precisely what the historian should try and elucidate.

In their book, *Töpffer, l'invention de la bande dessinée* (Groensteen & Peeters 1994), Thierry Groensteen and Benoît Peeters worked very hard to overcome this potential loophole. The only way to connect today's perception of the comic strip (as a flourishing, successful modern medium), to a lone, early 19th Century "inventor", was to make Töpffer the *promoter* of the form "as we understand it"—an inventor motivated by a visionary appreciation of its artistic potential and future success.

The argument is quite attractive—after all, comic strips read transparently for us, and we know how successful and robust the form has been in the 20th Century. It is only natural that we would think someone was *bound* to invent it. In taking that stance, however, one considerably underplays the need to explain *how* the inventor came up with the original idea, and *what*, exactly, that original idea was. In other words, the argument reeks of circularity. It is also factually weak, when one considers how private Töpffer's productions were when he started drawing his albums and how ambivalent he was about diffusing them to the general public, even in his later years.

General Note to the Illustrations

When one realizes that Töpffer's invention was a charge against the original "sequential art" concept itself, the surrealistic madness of his picture stories starts making perfect sense. The whole enterprise can be read as a humorous "thought experiment" that deconstructs Lessing's views on poetry (as exposed in the **Laoccoon**).

The strip format chosen by Töpffer is, in **itself**, a parody of the one-dimensional medium Lessing wanted poetry to be (as opposed to the two-dimensional world of painting). And the foolishness of Töpffer's characters is not an arbitrary kind of folly. Depicted in clinically diagrammatic drawings, their particular brand of stupidity is a clever variation on the stringent limits Lessing wanted to impugn on the poet: Vieux Bois, Jabot, Festus, Cryptogamme and the others are **sequential creatures**, suffering from a kind of cognitive tunnel vision that stops them from conceiving a simultaneous picture of the world around them. «Arrested by a spell, parked in a space without height nor width*», they often travel in a state of stupor (when they are not simply thrown into a box or a sack and transported as a commodity).

Lacking the power of simultaneous vision, these creatures act blindly, monotonously, according to an **idée fixe**. The obey the simple chemical laws of attraction and repulsion, behaving as **human molecules**, subjected to the purely mechanical and materialistic forces of causes and effect (hence the telegraph in **Mr Pencil**, the empty costume of the Mayor in **Festus**).

To sum it up: Töpffer was all but the **benevolent** father of the comic strip. The medium he invented was tailor-made to describe a disenchanted chaotic world where the sequential rhetoric of industrial progress replaced the old and wise culture of **Ut pictura poesis** – a world where the glorious allegories that made a «circumscribed whole» of the universe are disloged by flying telescopes that make no sense at all.

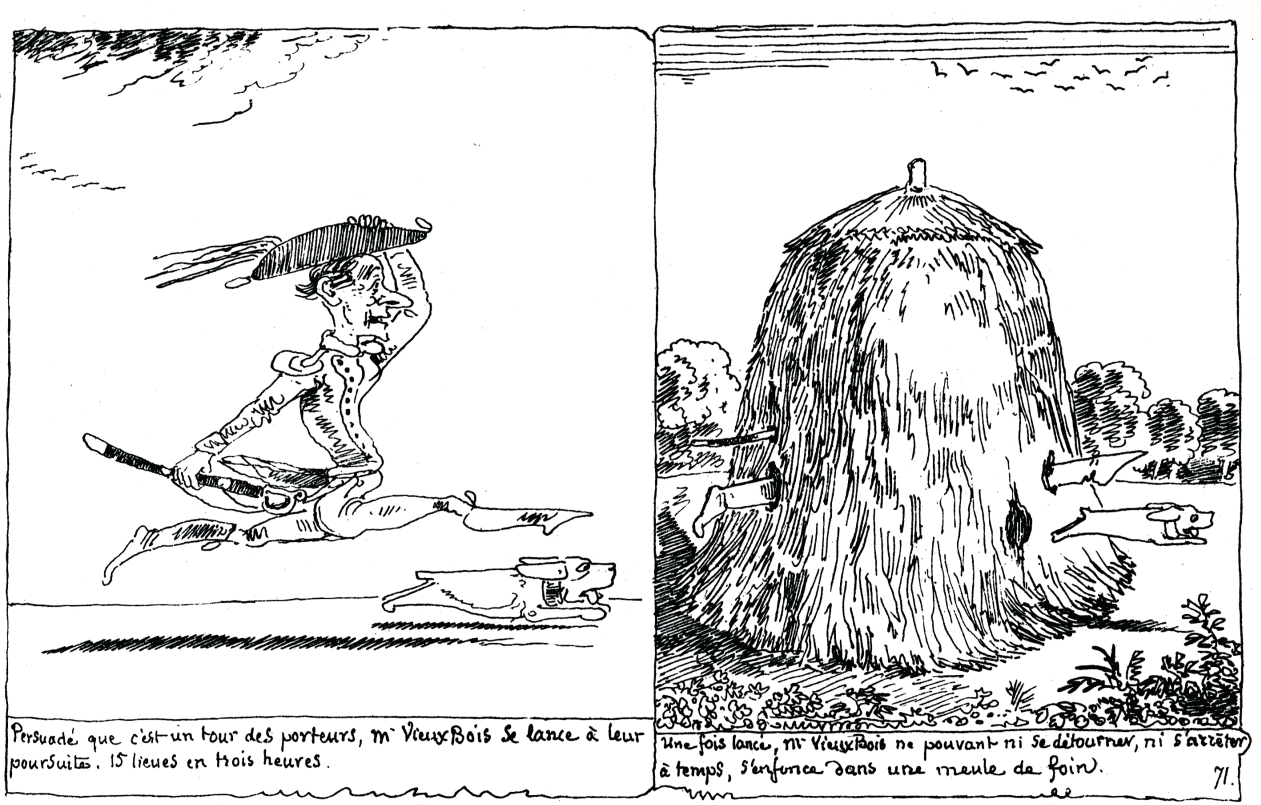
The fact that Töpffer *did* try to promote *la littérature en estampes*, in the most general terms, and clearly saw a future for that genre also complicates the question for the researcher. It is often taken as a confirmation of his ambition for his particular brand of picture stories. I believe this inference is mistaken. On the contrary, I think it is highly significant that whenever Töpffer promoted *la littérature en estampes* (in general)[1], he always made sure that the reader knew he was talking either about the traditional picture stories "of yesteryear" or about the highly sophisticated Hogarthian form, and that whenever he wrote specifically about his own picture stories, he always described them in self-derogatory terms, as idiosyncratic "follies".[2] Such reluctance, I believe, is hard to reconcile with Töpffer's status as the *benevolent* father of the comic strip.

Which brings us back to the central problem of defining in a meaningful manner Töpffer's idiosyncratic approach to visual storytelling. According to Groensteen, "Töpffer was the first artist to experiment the picture story form in the full (modern) sense of the expression, i.e., by combining the analytical *découpage* of action and the syntagmatic *montage* of the fragments" (Groensteen & Peeters 1994: 98). Based on the technical language of cinematography, such a description is—again—easy to make from a 20th century vantage point—it seems perfectly accurate and conceptually

* What kind of poem would we read, ask Töpffer, if the poet was forced to «dismount the winged horse of allegory», to touch the ground and address only the real and visible truth, with no intention of producing the image of a «whole» in the reader's mind? What would the world looked like if a poet accepted Lessing's prescriptions literally, and pushed them to their absurd consequences? «If [this poet] forces himself to advance, then, instead of a poem, we only get sad and ungrateful repetitions of the real and visible truth; in all its slugging succession of numberless incidents without a circumscribed whole, we get fragments connected end to end and no totality, the residues of a circumference and no centre, discarded members and no being, no figure, no life, no beauty. Because, how could it be that so constrained by the rigorous conditions of the real and visible truth, arrested by a spell, parked in a space without height nor width, the aesthetic faculty wouldn't be consequently made inert, sterile, prevented from conceiving, as well as producing, Beauty? Of what use would be the powerful attribute of simultaneity in a work of art that is completely subjected to processes of successive imitation?» (Töpffer 1998: 341-342).

1 See the essays *Réflexion à propos d'un programme* (1836) and *Essai de Physiognomonie* (1845) by Rodolphe Töpffer, reprinted in (Groensteen & Peeters 1994: 144-160 185-225).

2 In (Kunzle 2007: 122-123), David Kunzle enumerates at length the telling "thesaurus" of depreciative terms with which Töpffer described his own comic albums in his writings.



Mr Vieux Bois
«Imagine a man who never experimented the state of flânerie. What is he? What can he be? A stupid creature, wholly materialistic and positive, thoughtless and oblivious to poetry; a creature that runs down the incline of its own life, without ever stopping, changing its course, looking around or beyond it. It is an automate who trails from birth to death like a steam engine trails from Liverpool to Manchester».
La Bibliothèque, Rodolphe Töpffer, **Nouvelles,** Lausanne, L'Âge d'homme 1986.

Oblivious to the obstacles, unable to change his course Mr Vieux Bois runs in a straight line, like an automaton with the swiftness of a steam engine. His single-minded behaviour contrasts with the observant, digressive and meditative moods cultivated by Töpffer in his **Voyages en Zig Zag.** From the start, the railroad-like form of Töpffer's strips was meant to accommodate Lessing's rigid rhetoric of progressive action – as a deliberate antithesis to Töpffer's true system of values in which **la flânerie** played a major role.

sound *given what we know*, but it explains nothing when put in proper historical perspective. In fact, the way in which the terminology of the 20th century comic strip and cinema so perfectly fits Töpffer's picture stories is enigmatic; it begs for an explanation that would truly respect the arrow of time and causality.

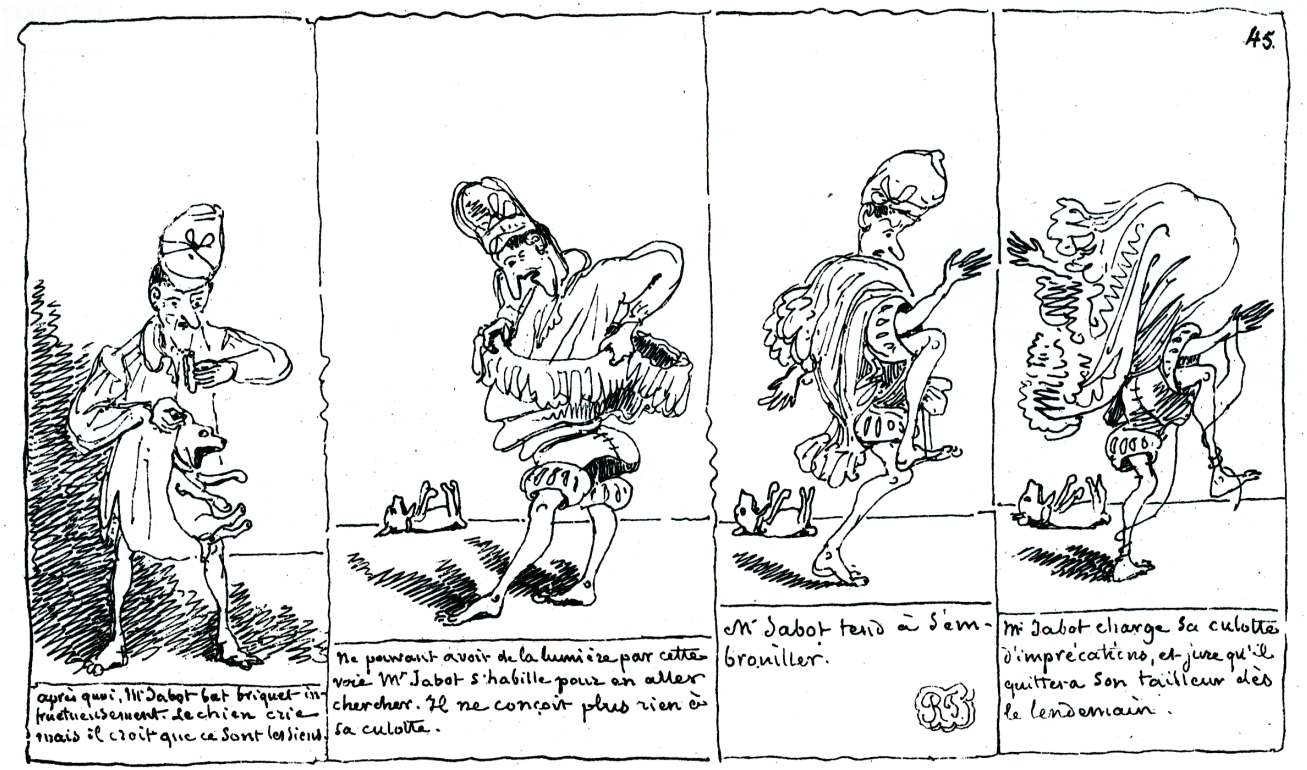
And it also creates other difficult problems for the historian: if it was possible "to experiment the picture story form in the full (modern) sense of the expression" so early in the 19th Century, how is it that Töpffer's interest in creating a visual discourse of closely connected actions absolutely stands out in the production of the period? Nobody came close to him in that department, even amongst his immediate followers. Most significantly, nobody seemed to show a similar interest in pursuing his prodigiously inventive brand of "analytical

découpage" and "syntagmatic *montage*" before the last two decades of the century, when numerous articles and books heralded the recordings of fast-paced action by chronophotographic and kinetoscopic techniques.

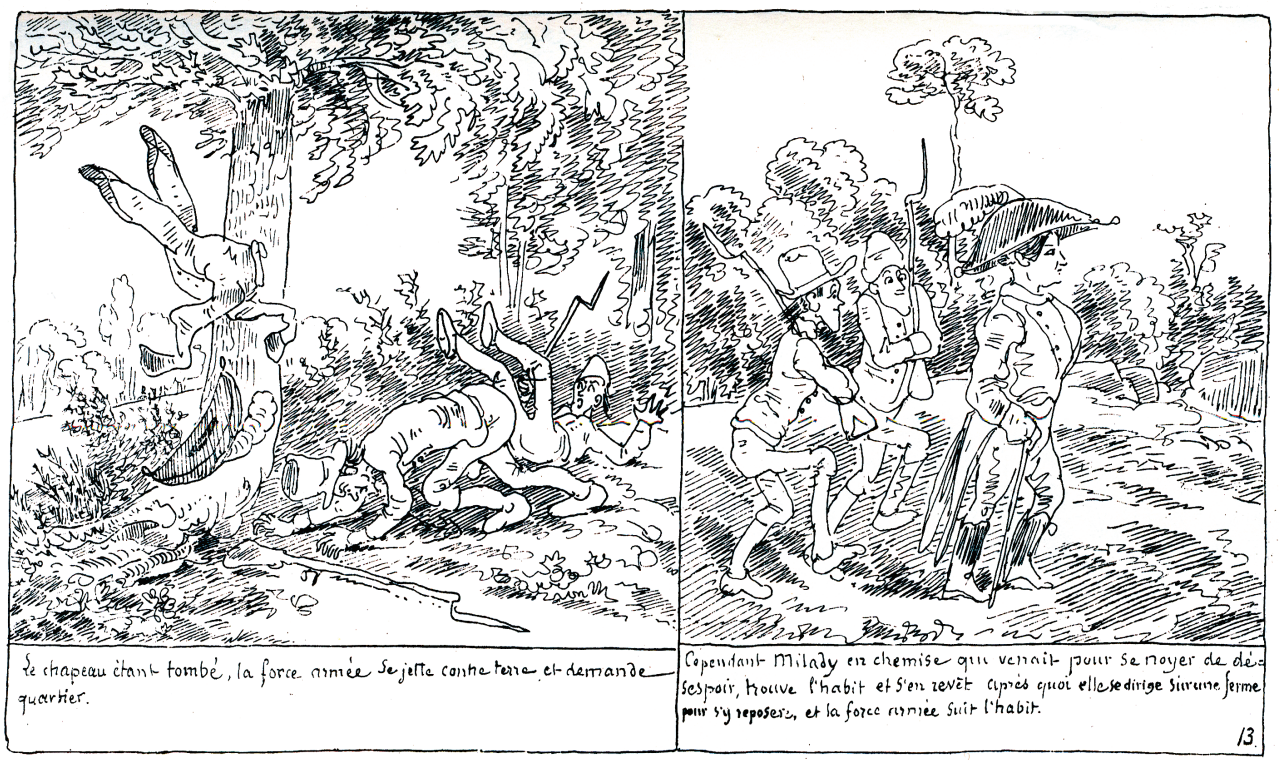
Thus, the main problem in interpreting Töpffer's comical picture stories is to define their highly recognizable way of treating a sequence of narrative events in terms that would make sense for an early 19th Century humoristic illustrator who clearly focused on that problem when nobody else did.

It would be a much easier task, of course, if Töpffer had laid down his own ideas on the matter in writing as precisely as he did on physiognomonic invention, but apart from some tantalizing glimpses into his rhetorical *procédés*, in his *Essai de Physiognomonie*, a survey of all his writings about his comic albums (and *la littérature en estampes* in general) produces few allusions to his very distinctive treatment of progressive action.

Given Töpffer's propensity for theorizing and the striking originality of his approach to the montage and découpage of visual action, his silence on the subject is hard to fathom. It has always been a weak point for those who present him as the enthusiastic inventor and first theoretician of a promising new visual language.



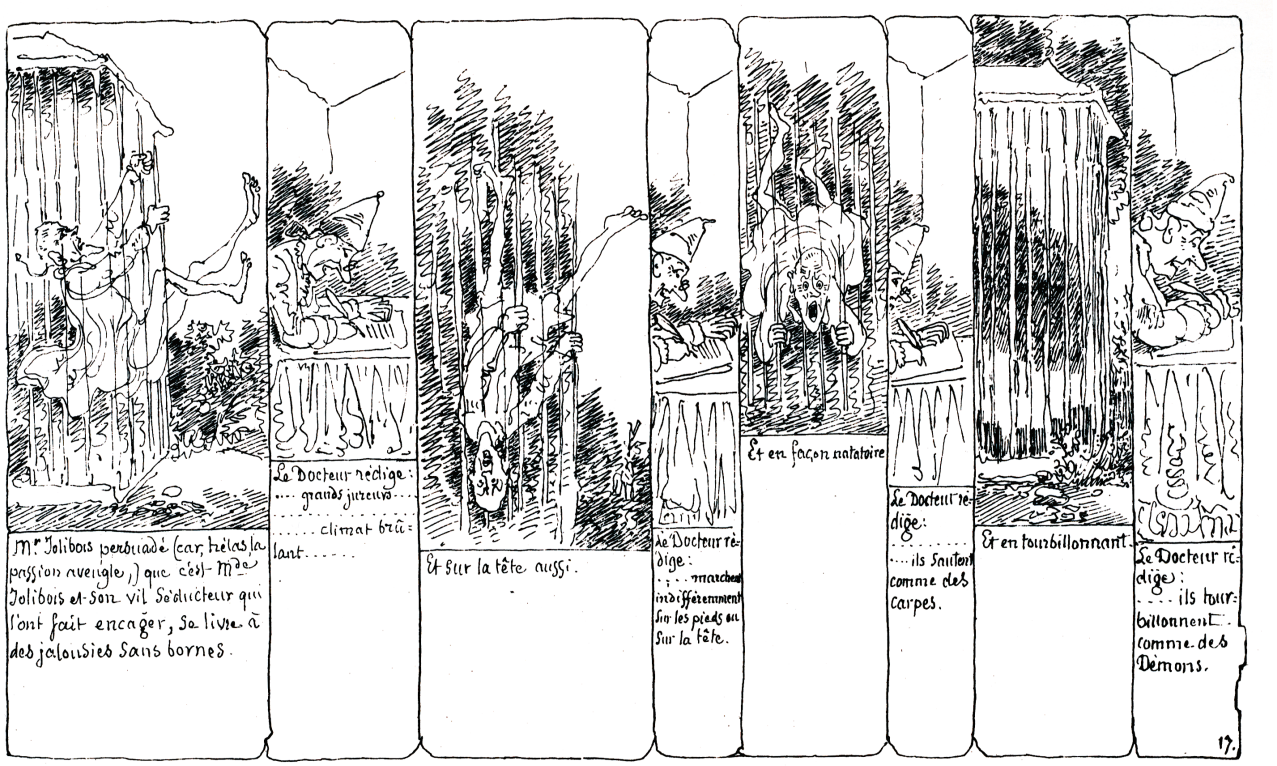
Mr JABOT
Groping in the dark, the clueless Mr Jabot first mistakes his dog for a lighter, then tries to put a woman's dress which he takes for his underpants. Living in the one-dimensional world of pure progressive action, Töpffer's creatures cannot stop and think and observe their surroundings. Trapped in a purely verbal world – «arrested by a spell, parked in a space without height nor width» (Töpffer 1998: 341-342) – they cannot perceive simultaneity: they live in perpetual obscurity and can only discover the true range of their misperceptions after they have acted upon them.



Dr FESTUS
According to Lessing, allegorical symbols and emblems can only appear in poetry if justified as realistic props in a chain of progressive action. In other words, authority ceases to be an idea expressed by a symbol: in Lessing's world, it becomes the costume itself. An inability to grasp the symbolic concept of authority logically results from such constraints, making it natural for the hapless creatures to obey the empty gestures of the mayoral costume floating in the wind, or to follow any impostor.

But this silence is compounded by another fact that has been overlooked by scholars until now. In the 1820s-1830s, any theoretical discussion on the treatment of progressive action would have had to revolve on the ideas put forth in Lessing's *Laocöon* (Lessing 1984). In his essay, Lessing deduces from the inherent limits of language that a one-dimensional string of closely connected actions is the only kind of imitation poetry can meaningfully produce. A close reading of Töpffer's *Essai sur le beau dans les arts* (Töpffer 1998: 341-342) shows his deep disagreement with this reasoning, which he saw as impugning a form of "tunnel vision" on poetry. Töpffer implied that if the poet followed Lessing's instructions, he would be "subjected to processes of successive imitation", "parked in a space without height or width", condemned to depict a "slugging succession of mindless incidents". Can it be a coincidence if this description reads exactly like a critique of his own invention?

The fact that the "Father of the Comic Strip" was a most stringent critic of the original sequential art concept thus presents another huge problem for those who see in him a "benevolent inventor". In truth, it points to a completely different interpretation of his comic albums: what if they were a "thought experiment", a demonstration *ad absurdum* of the kind of "blindness" Lessing wanted to impose on poetry?



Mr PENCIL
The Doctor believes he has captured an extraterrestrial creature, but, of course, it is only Mr Jolibois. Mislead from the start about the nature of the object he studies, the Doctor mechanically applies his (sequential) powers of description, pushing the poor Mr Jolibois to heights of frustration. According to Töpffer, the scientific method, if it is not served by a lucid, holistic, intelligence is all but blind, and bound to fail: it will generate the kind of absurd formulas and sterile behaviours that are the typical by-products of the empty rhetoric of Progress (and progressive action).

In that case, Töpffer's reticence vis-à-vis their diffusion and the derogatory language he constantly used about them would become very understandable. It would also explain his silence about the real theoretical framework behind his invention. From the start, the whole enterprise would have been destined to ridicule the one-dimensional discourse of closely connected actions—the tunnel vision—that Lessing heralded for poetry. For the author of these curious little albums, to explain the "joke" would have been quite awkward and self-defeating.

Sceptics, I'm sure, will be quick to point out one apparent weakness of this interpretation—that Töpffer never mentions the *Laocöon* or Lessing in his *Essai sur le beau*. The last chapter of this book, however, leaves few doubts that Lessing's rational approach to aesthetic—as well as his fundamental distinction between poetry and painting, his critic of allegory, his reduction of poetry to a one-dimensional string of actions—were central targets in Töpffer's mind. Indeed, the conception of beauty that Töpffer defends in these pages seems tailored to contradict Lessing's thought and methodology at every level.

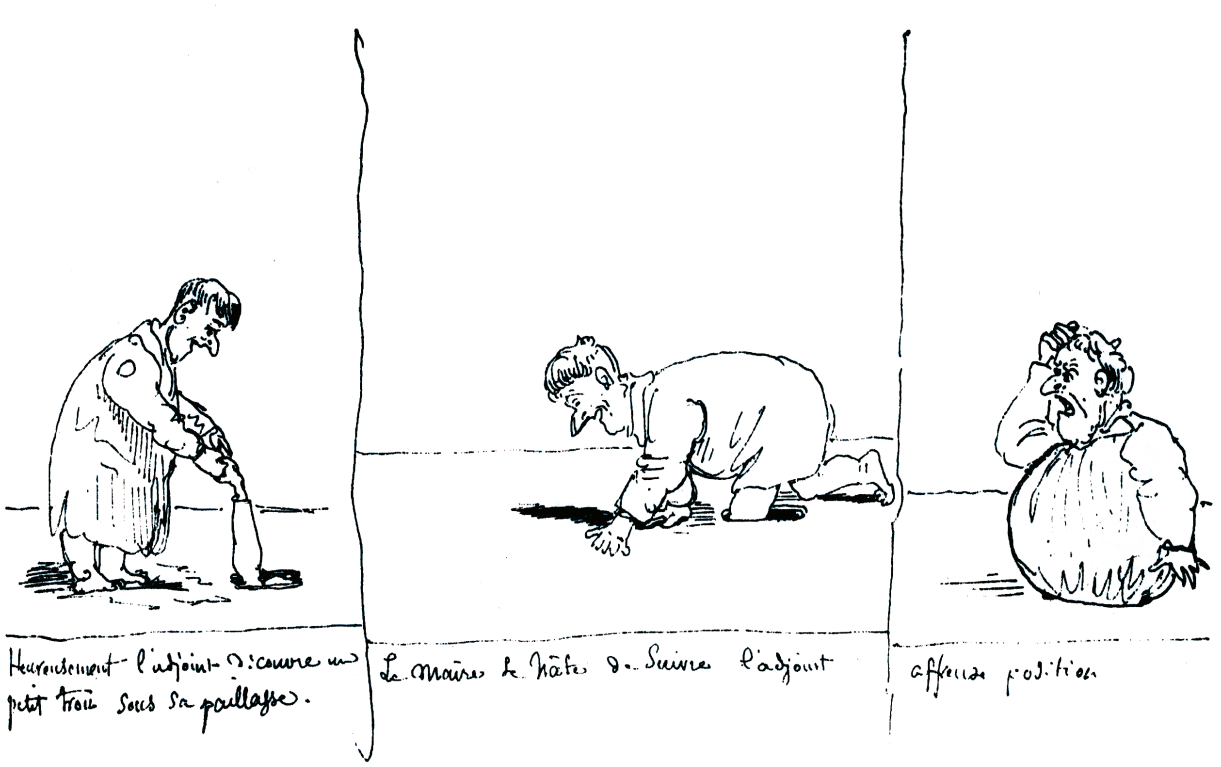
In the crowning chapter of his book, where a direct attack would have made his arguments much clearer, Töpffer thus abstains from mentioning the name of Lessing. What this strategy strongly suggests is that he must have had good (social or personal) reasons not to attack the author of the *Laocöon* frontally[3]. In which case, the central piece of the puzzle—the true origin of his comic brand of *progressive action*—would have had to remain hidden: he would have had no ground on which to describe the "thought experiment" that was at the core of his comic albums. He could only leave a few clues, here and there, and depend on the values he defended in his *Essai sur le beau* to leave the dedicated reader in no doubts that his comic albums were sarcastically modelled after Lessing's ideas and that, as a "new medium", they were to be taken with a huge grain of salt.

Comic strip scholars generally consider Töpffer's most serious writings on the theory of art a completely different subject matter from his comic albums, and I am aware that the new interpretation I have just sketched out needs to be presented in more details before it can put an end to the traditional disconnect. In a further book length essay, I hope to show that once the true relationship between the two sides of his work is understood, Töpffer's objections to Lessing's ideas illuminate many curious and obscure aspects of his picture stories, where the "tunnel vision" theme is developed in all its absurd and graphic consequences. In truth, the most surreal incidents of his comic albums can be shown to make perfect sense when put in that perspective.

Furthermore, what we gain by this interpretation is a historical scenario that respects the arrow of time and causality. Töpffer lived in a culture where it was perfectly natural to try and "visualize" new ideas by doodling schematically. Lessing's radical views on poetry offered a perfect material for this kind of diagrammatic adaptation. Töpffer, however, was not a dry, humourless thinker (or his "thought experiment" would never have had such an impact). His albums were received as an integral part of the culture of caricature and humoristic illustrations because the true engine of his experiment was the "polygraphic toolbox" of the comic illustrator, which he used with a fluency and pertinence that the likes of Grandville, Cham, Cruikshank and others immediately recognized.

Drawing from the illustrated books on theatrical action and gesture, the popular technical manuals, the metaphors of philosophical materialism, the frenetic slapstick actions of Smollett's novels, Töpffer stylized and combined these heterogeneous sources of imagery to lampoon the rhetoric of progress—the core discourse of the industrialized world. In fact, his picture stories were a deliberate, analytical deconstruction of that discourse—a visual manifest that ridiculed (diagrammatically) what he perceived as the coordinated idioms of the modern thought. And if the whole enterprise was based on the common characteristic of these idioms—that they developed sequentially—it was not to promote a new kind of art, rather the reverse: it was to reflect Töpffer's scepticism about the original sequential art concept itself. From the start, the new language of visual progressive action Töpffer invented was ironical. It was based on the deep connection he saw between the rhetoric of progress and the rhetoric of progressive action heralded by Lessing in the Laocoön.

[3] Töpffer was embroiled in a number of intellectual disputes in the 1830s, and Goethe's appreciation of his work must have offered him an invaluable protection against his enemies. But Goethe was also an admirer of Lessing. To contradict Lessing's ideas to such an extent would have been tantamount to frontally contradicting Goethe: such a reckless attitude of disrespect would have opened a serious breach for his enemies to exploit.

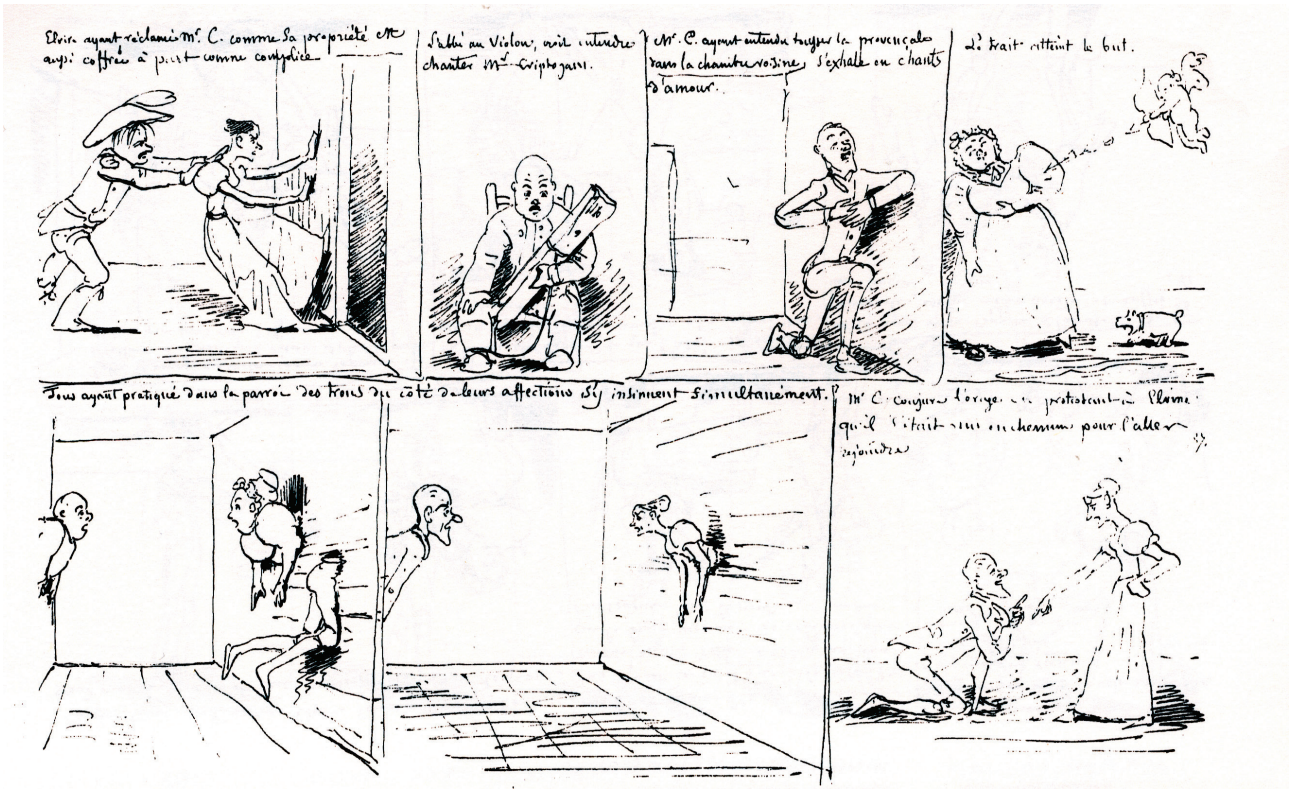


Dr FESTUS and **Mr CRYPTOGAMME** (manuscript segments)
Many of the most surrealistic incidents in Töpffer's picture stories derive from Lessing's postulate that poetry cannot meaningfully describe a «corporeal whole», because the «coexistent nature of a body comes into conflict with the consecutive nature of language, and although dissolving the former into the latter makes the division of the whole into its parts easier for us, the final reassembling of the parts into a whole is made extremely difficult and often even impossible.» (Lessing 1984: 88)
The two examples presented here appeared in the first versions of **Festus** and **Cryptogamme**, respectively, but were cut in the published version, probably because their lampooning of Lessing's theory was really their only justification.

I started the first part of this article (Smolderen 2010) with a declaration of faith: that the history of the comic strip can shed new light on the modern state of the form and change the way we see it—but only if we don't put the axiomatic view of the "sequential art" in charge of the empirical research.

What that research suggests is that the creative force behind the emergence of the modern comic strip is the inventiveness with which the 19th century humoristic illustrators combined and contrasted all kinds of systems of representation in their stylized drawings. To make fun—and make sense—of a thriving modern visual culture, they sometimes resurrected old popular forms like the picture story.

Their polygraphic approach, however, was not limited to the evocation of "artistic styles"—it could also play with ideas and technology. The visual tools used by the thinking engineer and the thinking philosopher were an integral part of their humoristic devices. Töpffer's comic albums are probably best read in this light, as an ironic diagrammatization of Lessing's original *sequential art* concept. In Töpffer's little thought



experiment, all the characters are suffering from a serious case of "tunnel vision". The strictly rectilinear strip form Töpffer chose to tell their adventures was the perfect visual metaphor for the "one-dimensional" prison of progressive action in which Lessing wanted to park poetry. Töpffer's brand of frenetic "montage" and "découpage" was not a language he wanted to promote (the "language of the comic strip"), but a jubilant satire of the blind and soul-less *rhetoric of progress* he detested above all.

Finally, Töpffer's pessimism was both vindicated and betrayed by his own invention. By the end of the 19th century, in a world where science and technology offered all kind of marvellous "new ways of seeing" through instantaneous photography, chronophotography and the kinetoscope, the humoristic illustrators noticed that pure sequential slapstick resonated powerfully with the emerging culture of the moving image and of the recorded voice. In this new spirit of techno-optimism, the rhetoric of the mechanical "chain reaction" that Töpffer attacked as the worse kind of materialist and rationalist stupidity became an "enchanted language"—the language of the mischievous kid and genius inventor in the age of Edison and Lumières; the language of the "Arroseur arrosé" and the Katzenjammer Kids, which led to the creation of the comic strip as an *audiovisual scene on paper* (Smolderen 2006), in the very first years of the 20th century.

Given the pivotal role the comic strip played around 1900 at the dawn of the cinematographic discourse and the constant exchanges between comics and the cinema in the 20th century, this scenario not only suggests

a completely new way to understand the historical relationship between Lessing's theory and the modern media of the 20th century, it also opens a new front of enquiry about the comic strip as a medium; as one reads Töpffer's critique of the original sequential art concept, one has to wonder what was lost, what was gained and what may have been discreetly preserved by the humoristic/polygraphic tradition of the old culture of *ut pictura poesis* when it gave way to the new culture of sequential/audiovisual art.

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signs
STUDIES IN GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

Paola Lombroso.
Tradition and innovation in the planning of *Corriere dei Piccoli*

by: Alberto Carli
Dipartimento di Scienze umane storiche e sociali, Università degli Studi del Molise

Looking back over Italian periodicals of the past, it seems an obvious statement that *Corriere dei Piccoli* was not quite the usual weekly: it was the first and the principal publication targeted at children by the publisher of the daily *Corriere della Sera*, and thanks to this fact it also became the most important comics magazine in Italian history. Even though it ceased publications in 1995, it is remembered and revered as the main venue for Italian "fumetti".[1] Its memorable creations from its early days—between 1908 and the success of American-influenced comics magazines in the 1930s—include popular icons such as *Signor Bonaventura* (by Sergio Tofano) and *Marmittone* (by Bruno Angoletta), as well as visually inventive series such as Attilio Mussino's *Bilbolbul* and Antonio Rubino's *Quadratino*.

There were four people whose involvement was central in the birth of *Corriere dei Piccoli*: the newspaper editor Luigi Albertini, and his brother Alberto; the journalist and writer Silvio Spaventa Filippi, appointed as the first editor of the weekly; and the journalist and psychologist Paola Lombroso who submitted the initial project idea of the magazine to the Albertinis.[2]

Corriere dei Piccoli as a pedagogical revolution

The inception of *Corriere dei Piccoli* represents a true revolution in youth reading habits and materials, as well as in the history of Italian comics. While the *Giornalino della Domenica* [Sunday Paper], edited by Vamba (Luigi Bertelli) and born only two years earlier, can still be regarded as a outgrowth of the conception of children's literature in 19th century, the *Corriere dei Piccoli* pioneered new areas. Importantly, one of the areas where the magazine was trailblazer was from the

[1] The most recent anthology of the periodical is (Gadducci & Stefanelli 2008). An effective critical overview of the magazine is in the catalogue of the 2008 centennial exhibition (Ginex 2009), and unless otherwise indicated we refer to this for all the information concerning the magazine in the present article.

[2] The literature on Albertini is quite large, though mostly not relevant enough to the purposes of this article to warrant listing here. The editorial rein of Silvio Spaventa Filippi received some attention, even if we just refer to (Fava 2003). As for Paola Lombroso, her editorial stance has been less investigated, and also received little attention during the 2008 centennial event celebrating the magazine. It is this lack of recognition for her place in the magazine's history that was in part the impetus for the present short note. The most relevant biographical source for Paola, as well as her sister Gina is (Dolza 1990a), on which we base the data about Lombroso's life: also see (Babini 2003) for her role in the Italian development of child psychology and (Dolza 1990b) for the timeline of her involvement in the origin of *Corriere dei Piccoli*.

point of view of the audience—addressing not only the bourgeoisie but also, at long last, the working class.

This difference is linked to Paola Lombroso, daughter of the anthropologist Cesare Lombroso. She explicitly aimed in her original publishing projects at a weekly magazine with a differentiated target audience, constituted not only by different social classes, but also by children of school and pre-school age. This attention is probably due to her pedagogical experience, developed while working in the public assistance institution "Scuola e famiglia" [School and family], created in Turin in 1896 and aiding the offspring of the working class of this industrial town. This specific orientation was preserved[3] in *Corriere dei Piccoli*, this is despite the fact, as is well-known, that once hitting the stands, the magazine assumed a structure which was very different from the draft originally she had proposed to the Albertini brothers. The correspondence between the publishers of *Corriere della Sera* and Paola Lombroso, often assuming a polemical nuance, attests that she did not willingly accept the "usurpation" of the editing and executive duties of the weekly magazine she had created. Moreover, the correspondence shows that she disagreed vehemently with the drastic reorganization on the basis of arguments about economic and commercial imperatives, reasons seemingly unconnected with philanthropic or pedagogical intentions.

The aim of this short paper is not to cast a light on the literary and social context of Paola Lombroso, the mature and skilled, although unlucky, creator of *Corriere dei Piccoli*. We intend, instead, to briefly sketch the career of "Zia Mariù"—the alias chosen by the journalist Paola Lombroso in answering the readers' mail to the magazine—as an author of children's literature as well as popularizer of science, describing the process that allowed her to start her most important professional experience, between 1906 and 1908, backed by her more than adeguate knowledge and research. Indeed, the roots of her work on *Corriere dei Piccoli* can be found there. After all, the actual long held goals of Paola Lombroso were aimed at finding a resolution between the contradictory positions of biological and social determinism rooted in the positivistic outlook on the world. Such contradiction theoretically stifled the chances of change and dampened confidence in a guaranteed progress. Lombroso focused on the aspects that people's lifetimes are more likely open to undergoing change, social conditioning and childhood, pe-



Figure 1.
Paola Lombroso at her desk around 1910.
From (Dolza 1990a: 246).

[3] It is worth remembering at this point that Paola Lombroso was an expert in child psychology, with most of her works already published by 1906, and that she was a veteran of children's journalism, since she had already actively collaborated with magazines such as *Cenerentola* [Cinderella], *Primavera* [Spring] and even with *Giornalino della Domenica*.

riods during which pedagogic intervention would have more chance to succeed. From these beliefs arose her interest in the world of children and her trust in social pedagogy as a premise for reforming interventions involving the whole society.

The cultural roots of Paola Lombroso and the planning of *Corriere dei Piccoli*

This cultural substrate is essentially represented in one respect by Lombroso's knowledge of 19th century popular and youth journalism, in another by the interest she invested in early psychological science. We can roughly sketch out three stages she passed through as a writer.



Direttore: *Luigi Capuana.*

CENERENTOLA

Giornale pei Fanciulli

Anno I. — N. 14. — 19 Marzo 1893

Abbonamento annuo L. 5 - Semestre L. 3 - Ogni Numero Cent. 10

ESCE UNA VOLTA LA SETTIMANA

SOMMARIO

E. Provenzal, Un'ora con un bambino. — Tolstoi, Un chicco di frumento. — Sofia Peritz, Il povero Idiota. — Il Soccorritore. Povera compagnia! — Liz, Maria. — G. Nerina, Leggenda boema. — Le Spigolature del Mago. - Indovinello.

Un'ora con un bambino

(imitato da Senofonte)

Benvenuto, signor professore, mi disse la signora Giuliani. — Mi dispiace soltanto che capiti quando questi ragazzi son più cattivi; creda che mi fanno disperare. S'è mai visto fratelli che, invece di amarsi come dovrebbero, si bisticciano continuamente, si accusano, si picchiano? Credo però che la colpa sia quasi sempre di Carlo, — aggiunse sottovoce, — perchè è più ostinato; e quando mi metto di mezzo per la pace, è sempre lui il più restio.

— Non s'ingannano anche le mamme qualche volta? — pensai, fissando gli occhioni neri di Carlo; poi dissi: — Ero venuto a chiederle un piacere, signora Giuliani. Vorrei che mi affidasse per un'oretta questi ragazzi; li condurrei un po' a spasso.

— Si figuri! — disse la mamma; — la ringrazio tanto; ma Pippo è un po' infreddato e ora incomincia a far fresco. Se vuol condurre Carlo, mi fa un piacerone, anzi due: mi leva di casa lui e mi fa star buono Pippo. Quand'egli è solo, non dà noia; o si mette a guardare un libro di figure, o si diverte con la scatola dei colori...

S'interruppe per dire:

— Carlo, va a vestirti; prendi la maglia nuova che è nell'armadio di camera tua, e mettiti dentro i lacci degli stivaletti. Bada, che... — Scuterà, eh? — continuò volgendosi a me; — ma se non si dice tutto a questi sbradati...

— Ma le pare? faccia, taccia, — risposi io.

Carlo uscì, e tornò dopo dieci minuti col cappello in mano. Io salutai la sua mamma e ci avviammo.

Fatti pochi passi, domandai a Carlino.

— Mi dici come mai la mamma vi sgrida sempre?

Il ragazzo si strinse nelle spalle.

— Ma dunque?

In the first stage, until at least 1894, Lombroso focused on genre journalism, although she had begun to take an interest in psychology and had published a few popular-science essays. From 1894 (publication of the book *Saggi di psicologia del bambino* [Essays about the psychology of the child]) to 1904 (*Vita dei bambini* [The life of children]) she was exclusively interested in science. The year 1904 marked the beginning of the third stage, a period when she returned to journalism and children's literature. This was thanks to Luigi Bertelli, who invited her to join the editorial staff of his *Giornalino della Domenica*. Paola Lombroso responded to his invitation gladly:

Rispondo molto volentieri di sì all'invito suo per il giornalino. Veramente sono un po' giù di corda perché […] non ho avuto più occasione di scrivere per bambini. Ma questa è sempre stata una delle forme letterarie che mi attirava di più—e credo che potrei fare qualche cosa, adesso.[4]

From 1906 she devoted herself to the invention of *Corriere dei Piccoli*, adopting a journalistic and pedagogic approach that, in one respect, drew her closer again to the host of fervent women of the 19th century who were active in popular fiction and journalism. However, the same approach constituted a new concept in children's journalism, thanks to the groundbreaking educational principles that, in accordance with her intention as a writer, should have been implemented in the new weekly publication.

Paola Lombroso, playing the demanding role of *Corriere dei Piccoli*'s midwife, was certainly acquainted

[4] "I gladly accept your invitation to work for your children's paper. Actually I am a bit in low spirits, because […] for a long time I did not have any opportunity to write for children. But this has always been one of my favourite genres—and I think I could write something, now." See (Ascenzi, di Felice & Tumino 2008: 396, 555).

Figure 2.
An old fashioned cover for an early issue of **Cenerentola**.

both with the logic of popular journalism and with the requirements of children's literature, as well as aware of the obsolete educational psychology framework that characterized still successful works on children's literature dating back to the century which has just passed. Most importantly, "Zia Mariù" firmly believed that similar publications had been unsuccessful, in terms of publishing standards, also because of their chronic lack of funding. This was one of the main reasons leading, during the planning stage of *Corriere dei Piccoli*, to the active search for support from a widely-circulated newspaper. Ferdinando Martini had succeeded in a similar project, although on a smaller scale, almost thirty years before: his *Giornale per i Bambini* [Children' Newspaper] depended in fact on the journal *Fanfulla della Domenica* [Fanfulla on Sunday] and on the Oblieght press empire.[5] Paola Lombroso proposed her projects to some important Italian newspapers of the time: at first, the progressive *Il Secolo* [The Century], which refused, and later the more conservative *Corriere della Sera* of the Albertini brothers. Of course, Paola Lombroso did not neglect the pedagogical role of such a publication. *Corriere dei Piccoli* was intended to become what other weeklies failed to be. However, in terms of the contents and editorial tools that were to be adopted by the magazine, Lombroso's premises were more or less the same as those supporting the children's journalism spanning the 19th and the 20th centuries.



15 CORRIERE DEI PICCOLI

CORRISPONDENZA

Sono proprio contenta. Le lettere dei miei piccoli nuovi amici, le prime lettere che ha ricevuto Zia Mariù sono tutte allegre. Naturalmente! Il Natale ha popolate le case di alberi magici con i rami carichi di cioccolatini, di noci d'argento, di pupazzi, di automobiletti, di bestiole di tutte le specie. Mi avete fatto tanto piacere a descrivermi i vostri regali. Ho ancora negli occhi un barbaglio festoso di candelette rosse, gialle, azzurre, verdi. Nipotini belli, il Bambino è stato generoso davvero! Come? Se conosco il Bambino? Chi me lo domanda? Ah, sei tu trottolino? Come ti chiami?

« Sono Alberto Piontelli di Milano. Ho nove anni. Il Bambino mi ha portato un treno colla stazione. La stazione è bianca e rossa con le finestre di latta. Quanto mi piacerebbe conoscere il Bambino! »

Anche a me piacerebbe, piccolo Alberto. Ma il Bambino ha tanto da fare, tante case da visitare, tanti doni da distribuire, che viene e va con la rapidità del lampo. Brilla una subita luce, si diffonde una breve musica ed è già sparito. C'è però stato un maniscalco che l'ha conosciuto. La sapete la storia? C'era una volta un certo sor Titta così bravo a ferrar cavalli che la sua fama si era sparsa nei più lontani paesi. Ed egli insuperbito si piantava sulla porta della bottega dicendo: « Con due colpi di martello io foggio il ferro rovente e lo riduco a puntino. Chi è capace di fare altrettanto? »

Nessuno era capace; e se qualcuno si provava, il sor Titta lo punzecchiava, lo derideva e intanto si gonfiava di boria, sempre più. Un giorno entrò nella fucina un bimbetto biondo, pallido, con due occhi che parevano due viole:

— Volete darmi da lavorare nella vostra bottega, mastro Titta?

— Oh piccolo presuntuoso, e ardisci spesso di lavorare accanto a me, accanto al più famoso maniscalco della provincia? Non sai che io con due colpi di martello riduco il ferro rovente a puntino?

— E io con un colpo solo, disse il bambino.

— Ah, ti voglio vedere alla prova!

Il biondino dagli occhi luminosi prese un ferro incandescente, e senza servirsi di tanaglie, lo afferrò con le piccole mani color della cera, lo portò sull'incudine e lo percosse con un sol colpo di martello, ma un colpo così destro che il ferro prese la più bella forma che si possa dare. Poi si accostò a un cavallo che aspettava nel cortile, gli scavezzò via una zampa, la portò nella fucina, vi adattò il ferro, tornò nel cortile, accostò la zampa al moncherino e ve la riattaccò con miracolosa facilità.

— Anch'io, anch'io — gridò il sor Titta. Si precipitò verso la fornace, cacciò le mani nel fuoco, ne trasse un ferro rosso, ma subito lo lasciò cadere con un urlo: si era bruciate le dita. Indurito nella superbia, riprese quel metallo infuocato padroneggiando il dolore con grande fatica, lo portò sull'incudine e picchiò, picchiò, picchiò; nonchè due, non bastarono dieci colpi a dargli una sagoma. Furioso per la sconfitta, corse al cavallo, gli spezzò la zampa, la ferrò, ma poi la gamba rotta non si riaggiustò più e sulle mani del maniscalco che si sforzavano invano, grondava il sangue dell'animale urlante

(*Continua a pag. 19*)

Alle buone mamme!

Perchè almanaccare tanto nella scelta di un regalo per i vostri figliuoli? Noi ci siamo almanaccati per voi, noi studiammo sinceramente il modo di poter conciliare i vostri desideri con le vostre forze e perciò da pochi giorni abbiamo posto in vendita un modello di macchina parlante

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Figure 3
The first letter column by "Zia Mariù", split between page 16 and 19 on the second issue of **Corriere dei Piccoli**. Note the large space for advertising: both pages 17 and 18 were just devoted to it.

Yet, the main (and obvious to spot) difference between previous children's papers and *Corriere dei Piccoli* is the educational psychology approach underlying the project. First of all, the journalist has clearly in mind the publication's mission, that is, turning the supply of culture and news information into actual *needs*, having the readers become accustom to make use of them for better and more responsible growth. Inducing

[5] For the data on Martini's and later on Capuana's periodicals we refer to our own (Carli 2007).



CORRIERE DEI PICCOLI 19

di spasimo. Il fabbro si guardò dattorno. Il bambino non c'era più. Una grande umiltà gli entrò nel cuore, conobbe che lo sconosciuto dagli occhi di viola era il bambino Gesù e guarì dalla sua boria.

Cose lontane:... A quei tempi, nipotini miei, voi non c'eravate. Io sì. Io sono vecchia. Mimì Lenzi di Bologna mi domanda quanti anni ho. Tanti; figliuola, tanti! Che viso ho? Ma il viso della tua nonna, cara mia, il viso di tutte le vostre nonne, nipotini miei: capelli bianchi e occhiali d'oro. In tutti questi anni ne ho viste delle cose! Ve le racconterò a poco a poco quando le vostre lettere me ne porgeranno l'occasione. Il mondo è vario, pittoresco, e la vita è infinitamente mutevole. Aveva torto Arlecchino. Arlecchino era cresciuto a Bergamo col suo musetto nero come quello di uno spazzacamino, vestito di scacchetti di stoffa di ogni colore che i vicini avevano dato per carità al signor Battocchio padre e alla signora Battocchio madre e che erano poveri poveri e non avevano panni da vestire il loro rampollo.

Quando Arlecchino divenne un ragazzo lo prese il capriccio di andare per il mondo a vedere le meraviglie che gli avevano raccontato i mercanti di passaggio con le loro mule e i loro carri. Chissà che cosa si aspettava di vedere quel bricconcello! Al primo paese nel quale arrivò, noto che le case avevano le porte e le finestre come nella sua Bergamo nativa.

« Saranno più avanti le novità », si disse. E cammina e cammina e cammina. Eccolo in una grande città. Anche qui case con i tetti, con i balconi, con le porte. « Sono ancora troppo vicino al mio paese », pensò Arlecchino. E via e via e via, sempre porte e finestre, sempre finestre e porte. Fu allora che Arlecchino esclamò desolato quella sua frase famosa: «E' tutto un Bergamo ».

Ebbene, non è vero. Dillo tu, « *piccolo padovano* », che mi racconti il viaggio a Roma, che hai fatto l'autunno scorso. Non c'è forse differenza tra Padova e Roma? Tu mi scrivi: « Quanto mi piacerebbe essere un romano antico e andare in guerra e vedere il combattimento dei gladiatori ». Tu sei feroce, giovine patavino. Ma io ho un piccolo sospetto. Mi dici che frequenti la prima ginnasiale. Ecco perchè vorresti essere un romano antico: per sapere il latino senza studiarlo. Non credo del resto che i gladiatori ti divertirebbero. Io, vedi, ho visto le corride dei tori in Spagna, e ti assicuro che tutto quel macello di bestie e di uomini non mi ha sollazzato punto. Ti descriverei le corride se il De Amicis non lo avesse fatto così bene; il povero De Amicis, quel grande scrittore che voleva così bene ai bambini, ed è morto la primavera scorsa. Ma torniamo a Roma. Dici che ti divertivano i ragazzi del popolo così svegli, « e che parlano così pulito ». Altro che pulito! E hanno un'arguzia.... Senti questa: Un giorno un signore grosso, grasso, sudato, impostava a Roma una lettera. Doveva essere meticoloso. Aveva già accostata la lettera al buco, quando gli venne lo scrupolo di verificare l'indirizzo e lo fece, perdendo qualche secondo; poi con grande esitazione calò la piccola busta bianca nella cassetta, con infinite precauzioni e rimase lì, fermo, ancora, a guardare di sopra e di sotto, se la cassetta non fosse guasta. Un ragazzetto che aveva anch'egli una lettera da impostare e aspettava che l'omone gli lasciasse il posto, perdette la pazienza, e gli gridò: « Oh sor boccio, aspettate gnente la risposta? »

Io come il sor boccio aspetto qualche cosa. Aspetto tante e tante lettere vostre che saranno la delizia delle mie lunghe sere invernali.

Zia Mariù.

Tip. del *Corriere della Sera*. — G. Galluzzi, *respons.*

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these needs meant inoculating their seeds in people from childhood: this entailed a wider target, so that the Milanese publication was required to engross not only the middle class youth (Martini and Capuana addressed mainly this social stratum), but also the lower classes, usually ignored by other periodicals published at the end of 19th century. This turned the *Corriere dei Piccoli* into a training ground for children's literature, a lookout analysing publishing dynamics and a scientific observatory advantaged by the tight relationship with its young readers and their psychology, which was in the focal point of "experimental" science.

To reach a socially broad section of the public Paola Lombroso conceived, among other things, a series of contests with prizes. This was hardly a novelty among publications for youths, but these contests were aimed at reaching readers coming from all social classes. Moreover, they stimulated a wide range of ages and a diverse range of skills: «a content framework suitable for two different age groups, the first being made of "the bigger kids, aged from 12 to 14", the second including "the younger ones, from 6 to 8 years old" […] and cut out for being read by boys and girls, by working class, middle class and upper class children». Planning the weekly structure and drawing up a list of collaborators, "Zia Mariù" thought of her sister Gina for a column about theatre comedies. Such a feature was also typical of many other previous publications, and it definitively points out that Lombroso's journalistic tools were well-known in children's literature. In fact, she had inherited these ideas from her previous experience with other Italian children's papers.

As far as the contents of her literary work, during her collaboration with *Cenerentola*, edited by Luigi Capuana, Lombroso was perfectly at ease with educational realistic short stories tradition, usually perceived

as a training ground by almost all the main figures in 19th century Italian youth literature. Still in 1906 she did not hesitate in frankly proposing her plan for a publication which could «teach while entertaining». This platitude was by this time already overused. Far from being ground-breaking, it had been expressed with clarity and vividness many years previously in the lead article of the first issue of the *Giornale per i Bambini* in 1881, and then turned into a *cliché* marking contemporary and following publications. Also her interest in the foreign youth press, especially in French, British and American papers, might allow her to be considered derivative. Capuana, when editing *Cenerentola*, was already keeping up with the same countries and genre, referring openly to these publications in the lead article of the first issue, and praising them for their outstanding and innovative literary and pedagogic features. In the end, this model was once again inherited from Martini.

Despite of, or perhaps thanks to, its roots in the wider history of 19th century children's literary culture, the aim of reaching a wider public was effective. This was also possible as circulation was supported by the distribution machine of the *Corriere della Sera*. Even if the philanthropic issues were soon left out of the picture, and Lombroso herself moved away from the weekly in 1911, the broad age group encompassing and skill forming pedagogical tools remained a fixture of the magazine. They contributed, as much as the large presence of comics (in the reformatted, old-fashioned style without voice balloons) to the success story of *Corriere dei Piccoli*, shaping Italian "fumetti" halfway between the 19th and 20th centuries towards a modern path.

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