

Sequential Mobility in Visualizing Comics

Anjitha C. Ajith

Assistant Professor on contract

Little Flower College

Guruvayoor, Kerala.

&

Priyanka Sidharthan

Abstract

Life is a beautiful journey if we experience it in a distinctive way just as the bee's sucks nectar from the flowers. There are people who stop and smile at the tiny flowers growing out of sidewalk cracks. There is nothing more wonderful than enjoying life to its fullest. Childhood is the best part of everyone's life and it wouldn't have been better without the presence of comics. Comics, a channel to express thoughts through images which are often seen with bubbles to convey messages creates a wonder in both children and adults. This paper presents a combination of comics and absurdity. Life is considered as absurd, and it is this absurdity that give rise to comics. Laughing can be considered as a form of relief to make us remember that there is an order amid the chaos of life. Comics could provide us with meaningful thoughts with the least number of words and characters. They also act the role of sarcasm and generate new levels of understanding on a particular issue. It could turn an absurd mind into a meaningful one and moves our thoughts. Confined within a few boxes, comics invite you into a new world. Hence, this paper intends to portray the transition of ideas in different dimensions that a comic strip can convey through its movements.

Keywords: Comic, absurdity, sarcasm, transition of ideas, meaningful thoughts.

Sequential Mobility in Visualizing Comics

Anjitha C. Ajith

Assistant Professor on contract
Little Flower College
Guruvayoor, Kerala.

&

Priyanka Sidharthan

Comics is a form of sequential art which was introduced by Rodolphe Topffer through his comic strips during 1830s and this became popular after the publication of various comic strips and books such as *The Adventures of Tintin* created by Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi. Though we are familiar with comics in printed form they had its origin in Rome's Trajan Coloumn a tower constructed for Emperor Trajan under the supervision of architect Apollodorus of Damascus at the order of Roman Senate. They can be considered as an early example of narrative told through sequential pictures. We can relate this sequential art form with that of the paintings in Ajanta Caves, the most significant and one of the few survivals situated in Maharashtra, India. However, these works are histories and a source of information to know more about our past and it is from this we can find the origin of comics especially after the invention of modern printing technology.

Our nation is rich with varied forms of culture and art. In that, Comics are a channel to express thoughts through images which are often seen with bubbles to convey messages. Like the sequential arrangements of words in written language, comics are also arranged in an intentional reading sequence. Just as we all enjoy a good laugh by reading comics we can also find catharsis in comical transactions. Though comics may have villains or antagonists there will be no bloodshed in any scene. Comics like 'Tom and Jerry' or 'Tweety Pie' portrays actions like throwing bombs, using axe, hammers, explosives traps etc to kill or hurt their opponents; no blood nor harm happens to them despite of these violence. Different nations had used comics for different purpose. American newspaper comic strips are one such example for non humorous works. Japan has a history of satirical cartoons and comics during World War II. In India, comics are widely known as 'Chitrakatha' and are mainly associated with the Indian culture. It mainly depicts spiritual myth and enhances moral perspectives right from our childhood. We can get a rough idea of good and evil. Depicting Rama with a peaceful smile, godly figure presents the image of virtue where as depicting Ravana with thick eyelashes and moustache gives an image of vice. Moreover comics are a link to history and literature. In India, it is Amar Chitra Katha and Tinkle that have established a vast distribution networks and are read and enjoyed by thousands of children in numerous languages. In the case of comic strips, they too are arranged

in sequential panels and were generally printed in black and white in daily newspaper and special colour comic sections are found in Sunday newspaper during the 21st century. There were also underground newspapers that contained comic strips based on sex and drugs.

Every piece of art has its origin from the background situations that are faced by the artists or writers. A masterpiece originates from the inspirations that the author gets from the things around him which might be good or bad. Hence, comics too can be categorized into two. They don't serve simply for humor but also acts as a source of infotainment and for a social awakening using different genres such as satire, comedy, irony etc. Comics can be considered as a gateway drug to literacy. Even a man who belongs to the lowest strata of a society can expand his vision through comics. They don't need specific set of rules or grammar; they are left free and can spread lots of themes and messages through a single picture. Talking about comics, childhood is the best part of everyone's life and it wouldn't have been better without the presence of comics. Though comic books can entertain and fire up kid's imaginations, certain things seen in comics can kindle the thoughts of adults as well.

Life is a wonderful combination of both happiness and pathos. In fact it is the urge to live that makes us move. Comics present a different arena of life. They document life in a different angle, while the other mediums uses graphics, animation etc comics make use of images, symbols, gestures and so on. Even the well known writer Shakespeare had made use of comics as a source of relief in his great tragedies *Hamlet* (gravediggers scene), *Macbeth* (porter's scene) etc to relieve the tension of the audience. As, if their emotions are numbed they may not be able to appreciate the tragic event that follows. Life is a series of action and sometimes it is a numbness that follows. It is the trance of waiting consciously or unconsciously for some external force to enter our life either for a progress or making a way for transformation. It is this urge to live that creates movement.

Our life is a constant struggle all the 364 days to attain the essence of happiness of the 365th day. The comic strip 'Mayavi' can be seen as a best example for this theory. The characters Luttapi, Kuttusan and Daghini despite of their constant failure keep on working for their victory over Mayavi. The comic 'Dennis the Menace' by Hank Ketcham portrays the experiences of Dennis a naughty little boy who attracts problems towards him like a magnet with his utter stupidity. Despite of this freaky nature, his long suffering parents loves him very much. His attempts to help others, enthusiastic nature and youthful energy always lead to troubles wherever he goes. We enjoy Dennis because of his meaningless movements though he feels that he is trying to do something brave. Samuel Becket is also imitating the action of our own existence in *Waiting for Godot*, in which he says "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" through the characters Estragon and Vladimir who are engaged on meaningless waiting, for Godot whose identity they never know nor do they know the real reason behind their own waiting. It showcases the absurd reality of life. Even this situation of absurdity does not immobilize us, as we can see these characters have some kind of motivation to achieve their goals in life i.e., meeting Godot, the unknown. For an instance, they have even thought of committing suicide but they withdraws from their actions as there was a sparkling effect in their

mind that they should attain their life goals before their death. This play could be well picturized in the form of comic strips confined within four or five panels which may depict the absurdity of life to its fullest.

Absurdity is present in art as well as life, hence art reflects life. Let us assume the terms 'Comic' and 'Absurd' as the twin needles of a compass considering the fixed foot of the needle as absurd that pervades gloominess and the other as comic which evokes laughter. Our life though seems to be colourful has its roots in absurdity. In fact comics presents the hard aspects of life that itself is absurd. We can never assure our life to be in our control, it is left as the blank space between both these two elements: comic and absurd. While making a close analysis of the comic strips, one can find that the space left between two columns can be regarded as the uncertainties of life itself. What happens next is always a question left unanswered. As Camus quotes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The absurd arises because the world fails to meet our demands for meaning". Time and space does not change in absurdity, it revolves around itself seeking answers for many questions that remains unanswered. Emptiness prevails despite of all the attempts to create something new, as mentioned earlier absurdity is a chain that cannot be broken. The most important issue of our present scenario is demonetizing, though this created a deathblow among the common folks, it was able to fire up the wild imaginations of our youth in creating many trolls and comics. They were able to handle such a large issue through single images in a comical way. Even the things that we valued the most turned meaningless overnight just as our own lives. Nothing is stable in this world; there is a movement in each and everything. The comics as such regain apparently meaningless details and trials of daily life. In our life we are motivated to find way to make ourselves feel better but striving alone remains.

As absurdity mainly depicts the existential meaninglessness of the human conditions in the doomed universe, he is in a continuous urge to do something fruitful. Lost hope, encircled in a void situation, a crisis with one's own identity were reality turns into an illusion are the basic characteristics of absurdity. In the Malayalam movie, *Joker* directed by Lohithadas portrays the pathetic situation of the clowns who with their comic gestures tries to win the hearts of both kids and adults. Clowns with their repetitive movements and meaningless postures and actions evoke laughter in the audience. They mask their emotions and feelings by painting their faces with live colours. They are dressed up with glittering costumes where even their immobility seems to be mobile for the spectators. We all are familiar with the world famous icon Charlie Chaplin who had won the hearts of millions through his absurd movements; he used humor to grab the attention of the audience. He had made use of his hat and stick to attract the spectators and his costumes were black and white in which black might be indicating his own dark side which he had to endure during the World Wars and white representing the positive attitude which he could spread from it despite of the hardships. Chaplin was able to turn the silence in us into fun using his hilarious techniques. We choose to watch comics for a relief from the harsh realities but Chaplin had used this medium of comic to picturize the absurd reality of life through fun.

One may feel that comics and absurd as two extreme entities that cannot be fused together. Renowned American poet Wallace Stevens in his poem 'Anecdote of the Jar' presents a

different aspect of life through his lines “I placed a jar in Tennessee, / And round it was, upon a hill. / It made the slovenly wilderness/ Surround that hill”. These lines suggest when the jar was placed upon the hill, it attains a focal point and it became the king of the little space. The wilderness around was killed as the jar got the attention when it was placed. Likewise we can consider the wilderness as the absurd fact of life, where the jar represents the life filled with pathos, happiness, dreams, desires and the like; where the human hand placing the jar is a comical intervention of the artist. The art is the only way of deviation from the absurd facts of life.

So far we have come across the various aspects of visualizing comics and its importance in the absurd life of ours, we can relate how it can create a control over the pathetic situation as well as the movements created by the comics. Absurdity and comics are two such realms of reality, in which one may find it meaningless where the other may find it humorous. It depends on how you perceive reality. Life can be viewed in different angles, where each one of us perceives it in a different manner. It is hard for someone to express the way how they viewed life as we cannot look on something through their eyes. Though we may undergo through the same circumstances faced by the others, it will not be the same when it comes to us. We can enjoy a comic only if we have endured the absurdity mentioned in it. It is only because life is filled with absurdity and hard facts; artists were able to create comics and the readers were able to enjoy the same; connecting it with their life. Hence, comics and absurdity can be recognized as the two different movements of life that we experience.

References:

Abrahms, M.H., Harpham, Galt Geoffrey. A Handbook of Literary Terms. New Delhi: Cengage Learning, 2009.