

## Category Archives: The funny comics with Dizzy Don

### Using Humor As A Method to Promote Propaganda with Dizzy Don No. 8

🕒 December 6, 2017    📁 Children's Books and War, ENG810-022 Monique Tschofen, Joke, The funny comics with Dizzy Don    📌 Canadian Comics, Humor, Propaganda, The funny comics with Dizzy Don, World War Two    👤 sahra.alikouzeh

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#### Introduction

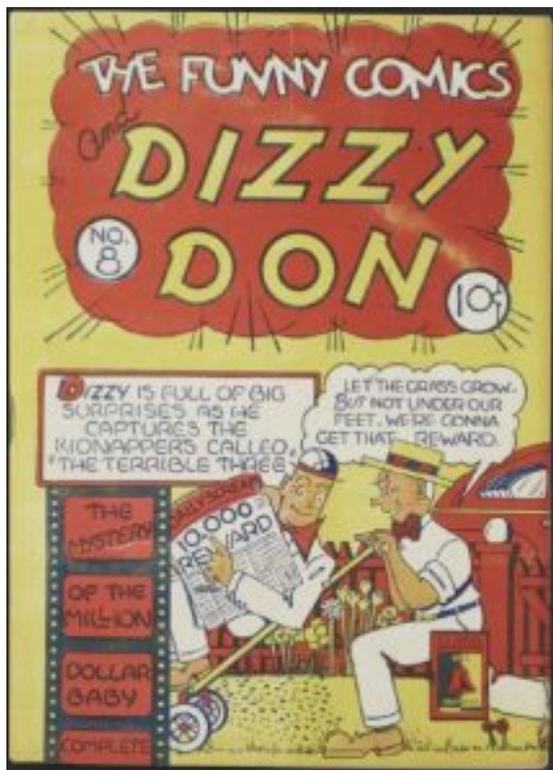


Fig. 1. Manny Easson. Panel from  
“The Mystery of The Million Dollar  
Baby” The Funny Comics with  
Dizzy Don, No. 8, 1943, Bell  
Features & Publishing Company  
Limited. p.

1. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166599.pdf>

This post will focus on Manny Easson’s eighth comic issue, titled “*The Mystery of the Million Dollar Baby*”, apart of Bell Features, Great Canadian White Collection. The Great Canadian White Collection is a series of comic books published between the years 1941 to 1946. Due to the importation banning of American comics, this revolutionized an era titled the “Canadian Golden Age of Comics”. (Bell) Issued during World War two, the method of using humor in texts was a popular choice by authors as it not only provided reader’s a mere moment of distraction from the stressful times occurring, but to also allow readers to explore an alternative escapist reality. This post will also discuss the use of the main character, Dizzy Don, who is the protagonist of this comic book intended for children, and some of the influential effects this text has. Understanding how hard the toll of the war was on the Canadians at home, the easygoing nature of the comic book genre can be seen as a stress-reliever suitable for all.

Through the use of humor, authors also took the time to incorporate their own messages within their text to sway the reader’s perspective.

## **Canadianization**

Dating back to the moment in World War 2 where Canada joined the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, Canada provided an indispensable amount of contribution to the generation of British air power. Despite the eventual success due to the tag teaming by both the Canadian air force and the British, Canada made sure to enforce the continued national identification of their personnel. The reason being that national identification allowed for the increase of Canadian political independence. Despite the mixed review received from Britain about the separation, many Canadians embraced the newfound “Canadianization” (Johnston, 2015) Going ahead with this bold move, it was one that was successful as Canadians

celebrated, ensuring the importance of their national identity. National identity also increased the amount of Canadians distancing themselves from those whom were seen as non-Canadian. This distance led to the emergence of the anti-immigration perspective.



Fig. 1. Manny Easson. Panel from "The Mystery of The Million Dollar Baby" The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 8, 1943, Bell Features & Publishing Company Limited, p. 5. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166599.pdf>

In order to feel patriotic there is the aspect of appreciating one's culture and then there is also the put down of other cultures, as a form of whom is to be regarded as superior. The Nazi's are mocked in this panel due to the faux imitation of their accents. Mocking is a sign of discrediting intelligence and belittling the culture and foreign language being spoken. It provokes this feeling of alienation, humiliation, and disrespect to those of the mocked heritage. This displays how some Canadians felt about German foreigners and their own air of superiority.

## **Germanophobia**

During the time of World War 2 as many soldiers were abroad fighting, Germans in Canada were suspicious of their fellow Canadians. There were many posters and propaganda alike, floating around in promotion of hailing Canadians at war, while at the same degrading the Germans. The method of spreading information through mediums such as texts and the media, allowed the importance of these immigrants' presence to go unacknowledged and ignored. Instead German immigrant's importance was replaced with the title of an "enemy alien" (Bassler, 1990) Those with German descent in Canada began to see him or herself as unwanted, to their Canadian neighbors. In comic books there was the mockery of German accents, creation of the German characters as evil and made to look angry, all endorsing these negative stereotypes.



Fig. 1. Manny Easson. Panel from "The Mystery of The Million Dollar Baby" The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 8, 1943, Bell Features & Publishing Company Limited, p. 3. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166599.pdf>

There is a clear binary present as the happy American family is depicted and immediately right after, there is the aggressive German Nazi's. By illustrating this

family as those whom would sacrifice their life in order to save their kin, “The ambassador and his wife huddle around Adorable in an effort to save her life” (Easson, 1943) displays the good North American family image. Something the North American readers would be proud of to relate too. Meanwhile, representing the Germans as those opposing this happy lifestyle, with adjectives such as “merciless” when drawn as attackers.



Fig. 2. Manny Easson. Panel from “The Mystery of The Million Dollar Baby” The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 8, 1943, Bell Features & Publishing Company Limited, p. 5. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166599.pdf>

## **Humor and Propaganda**

Propaganda is the aggressive dissemination of a distinct point of view for a specific purpose. Using persuasive techniques, images, wording and messages to manipulate targeted audiences. By having them assume the propagandist’s perspective is the correct vantage point of view that should be adopted, believed and acted on. (McRann, 2009) Humor allows writers and artists of all kinds to attain a

method of expression. Texts embedded within comedic expressions can have large impacts on its audiences, winning over hearts, wars and minds. Humor was used as an approach during the war to construct a national identity, decoding the importance of humor, especially to children during the time of war. Wartime cartoonists were big on getting children involved in the war efforts through their drawings.

(Penniston-Bird & Summerfield, 2001) These cartoonists would embrace the gender roles by drawing little boys as soldiers while also promoting the theme of national identity to little girls as well, reminding them to remain patriotic and not make amends with the opposition.



Fig. 3. Manny Easson. Panel from "The Mystery of The Million Dollar Baby" The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 8, 1943, Bell Features & Publishing Company Limited, p.

2. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166599.pdf>

Dizzy Don is introduced as a comedic radio host, who leads the adventures in many of The Funny Comic book issues alongside his pal Canary Byrd. As the main protagonist in this children's comic book series, his comments and actions are depicted clearly in the story, including his sentiments. Canary Byrd starts off his

interaction with Dizzy on the radio saying: **“Say Dizzy – when our grocer told you that domestic sardines are 15 cents and imported 25 cents which did you take?” and Dizzy’s response: “Domestic, why should I pay their way over?”** (Easson, 1943) Being introduced as a comedian aids the harsh message of how Dizzy feels about foreigners from abroad coming into his homeland. Although the banter can be taken lightly due to Dizzy’s stature as a comedian, the context of the racist message is still present right at the beginning of the story. This also displays clear patriotism, as the support for domestic products over imported is not even something to be questioned by Dizzy.

## **Conclusion**

Humor, especially the sort that is a medium for social and political commentary, plays an important role in the community of a wartime nation. Furthermore, understanding the intention behind a text can be problematic as it reveals discovery on the social impact of the audience. (Penniston-Bird, & Summerfield, 2001) This comic uses the method of humor to promote anti-immigration sentiments, due to the light hearted stance the genre takes, in which the audience is expected to put their guard down. This creates a dimmer focus on the serious aspect of the topic when being discussed, resulting in non-consequential results from its readers. Unknowingly, this targeted audience does not realize the influence Bell Features authors’ texts have on their daily interactions and perspectives, as it creates racist stereotypes and promotes exclusion of those whom are of German descent. This aids explanation as to why there was the continuous racist endorsement; especially as many German Canadians during the war were put under a lot of scrutiny. Putting this in a children’s book allows these ideologies to also exploit the future generation and further these thoughts. Through the use of the main character Dizzy Don and his interactions, he was used as a platform to spread anti-immigration sentiments embedded within humorous texts.

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## Dizzy dons cape of justice

🕒 November 29, 2017   📁 2017 Canadian Whites, The funny comics with Dizzy Don, Uncategorized   👤 jmaxam

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## **Introduction**

The crime genre has delighted young and old since its appearance in 1841. Stories of mystery and danger draw readers into a dangerous world dominated by the immoral, often following the steps of a single bastion of justice, the detective. Some are professionally employed within the police force, some independent, while others are amateur private eyes in their spare time. However, despite the various backgrounds a P.I may come from, one thing always dominates the genre; violence. Often the detective is put in a position where they perpetrate some form of violence on a criminal or those associated with them. Dizzy Don is no exception. In the Funny Comics with Dizzy Don # 18: Bottled Death the protagonist, Dizzy Don, opens fire on a group of gangsters chasing him through an abandoned mine. This is especially startling given that Dizzy Don is a professional radio show host. He has no direct ties to law enforcement nor does he hold any kind of authority in the instance, however Dizzy Don is pardoned from any kind of charges at the end. The message passed on to the reader by these actions is that when in the pursuit of justice, violence committed by civilians is excusable and is seen as heroic.

## **American aspirations**

Canadian comics while unique in their own rights, are by no means original. Many of the stories or conventions found in Canadian whites are very similar to American comics that would have been found on the market in pre-pulp ban times. By copying the stories and styles, the comic writers may have unintentionally copied American sentiments into the Canadian versions of these comics. Prohibition was a popular topic for movies and comics at the time (Fried, 333), especially within the crime or amateur detective genre. While Prohibition never reached the same magnitude in Canada yet, the topic was easily accessible to those reading the comics because of the heavy influence from the US. The comics were neither censored nor reviewed by any kind of board, essentially allowing creators to broadcast their stories unhindered. Until 1954, commercial American comic books were not subject to any formal censorship organization (Hirsch viii). As a result, all kinds of pro-war and pro-nationalism themes could be disseminated throughout the country since comic books had increasingly larger readerships than newspapers.

The effects of American culture clearly had a heavy influence on Canada and the range of topics covered within comics. The names of Rat Face and Giggling Gerty as well as their caricature style faces are reminiscent of Chester Gould's comic series Dick Tracy, which was in circulation at the time. Manny Eason follows the same ideology that criminals are the personification of evil, and that evil is not pretty. While the villains of Dizzy Don are not grotesque, they are not attractive in the conventional way (Fried, 335). Rat face's nose is so pronounced his head is essentially a sideways triangle, while Hamchin is more chin than person. By making these characters strange looking the reader is less likely to sympathise with them, nor reproach them for not behaving in the lawful good manner we come to expect of a protagonist, even in a crime novel, where violence is permitted for the sake of justice. The same can be said for our hero Dizzy Don. His unconventional features, most striking of all are his eyes, make him an odd-looking character. Since he does not look like the square jawed hero of comics, we associate him less with benevolent justice, and thus allow him to commit less than heroic acts.

## **Violence and P.I.s**

While both superheroes and detectives have violence in their comics there is often a difference in representation. Superheroes fight with villains, punching, kicking or using weapon. The depictions are often more graphic and direct than in detective comics, in superhero comics the hits are more campy than gritty. Rarely shown is the death of the villain unless it is integral to the plot. Often the villain is captured and sentence to jail time instead. Detective comics on the other hand are less direct, often showing the aftermath of said violence and focusing more on the apprehension. Sometimes the villain is killed in combat by the detective or an assistant. Typically, this is done with a gun, the weapon of choice for private eyes. Dizzy Don follows these conventions as seen when Don is firing the gun into an unseen group of gangsters. It is not explicitly shown that someone was killed in the bullet spray however it is heavily implied that some gangsters are hit, allowing Don

and Gerty more time to escape the angry mob. On the second occasion when Don blindly fires his weapon, he empties the gun of all its bullets. While their accuracy was lowered the second time due to bright lights, it is still likely that more gangsters were injured. While done by a different gun entirely, justice is achieved when Rat Face kills himself with his pistol to escape the clutches of the police. The ending follows the formulaic story arc seen in Charles Biro and Bob Woods true crime piece *Crime Does Not Pay* “*Crime Does Not Pay* was designed to prevent juvenile delinquency. Each story ended with the subject either dead or in jail” (Fried, 339). The death of Rat Face proves that though an individual may not have much power, their actions can still impact the situation. In the end, Dizzy Don is able to defeat Rat Face.



“Dizzy Don fires gun”.Manny Easson. The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don # 18: Bottled Death. Bells Features and Publishing Company Limited

## Violence leads to Justice

The necessity of violence for justice was a prevalent view during both the world wars. Many men and women took up arms, many of whom may have been pacifists in previous situations, to protect the ones they love and their way of life. This sentiment can be seen by Dizzy Don when he fires on the gangsters. Dizzy Don is a radio show host and uses his sharp wit as a weapon throughout the comic and one-shot pages. It is his main form of offense, seen when Dizzy Don is initially captured by the gangsters. He tries to use humour to de-escalate the situation. When that fails he is forced into an abandoned mine shaft where he is bound with lit sticks of dynamite. Once faced with the reality that humour will not help him he chooses a more aggressive approach. The character giggling Gerty facilitates this by first freeing Dizzy Don from his dynamite shackles, then by supplying him with the Tommy gun that he unloads on the mobsters on two separate occasions.



“Dizzy Don runs out of bullets”

Manny Easson. The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don # 18: Bottled Death. Bells Features and Publishing Company Limited

Guns, while not the weapon of choice for many super heroes, were the symbol of

justice for the detective. Often relying on wit, and persuasion, the detective would try to outsmart the enemy when confronted, however, in instances when that could not be achieved they did what was necessary. Unlike the true crime comic series *Crime Doesn't Pay*, *Dizzy Don* did not feature “graphic depictions of blood, gunshot wounds, and beaten bodies. Violence was explicit; it was not left up to the reader’s imagination.” (Hirsch empire, 82). Over the top depictions of violence are typical in adult detective novels and graphic novels. *Dizzy Don*’s creator Manny Easson takes a cue from Will Eisner, the creator of *The Spirit*, and avoids overtly violent scenes and uses subtler literary devices. “Eisner has depicted the bank robbery with both menace and humor, but without showing bloodshed, injury or death” (Fried, 339). A similar example of this within the comic can be seen where *Dizzy Don* attempts to use humour to distract the mobsters and convince him to let him go, despite having discovered their illegal alcohol plot. Much like a soldier on the battle field *Dizzy Don* tries to outsmart the opponent. *Dizzy Don* chooses to work smarter, not harder, to escape. In war brute strength is not the only asset a soldier has. By outsmarting the enemy, they can do much more damage than could be done with strength alone.

## **Moral Sacrifice**

During the war many sacrifices were made. Foodstuffs that were common place in households had become scarcer. Luxury items were no longer being imported with the same enthusiasm as before; among these luxury products were comics. The idea of sacrifice was the driving force behind the success of war time rationing. Moral sacrifices were being made as well. Killing is difficult for most people but it becomes even harder when the enemy is also human. Many of the hero comics deal with clear cut distinction between good and evil. Detective dramas have a much murkier

representation, with the detective sometimes acting as criminal would. The same could be said for soldiers, killing and destroy their enemy's land much in the same the enemy would do to you. By exposing the reader to more complex representations these comics were subconsciously preparing them for the moral ambiguity of war. Dizzy Don fires at the mobsters out of self preservation as well as moral righteousness. The alcohol Rat Face is manufacturing contains wood alcohol, essentially making his product poisonous. Even though many people have died or suffered serious health problem consuming it he shows no remorse. Following comic book logic those who work for Rat Face are morally wrong and thus their deaths are not tragedies but necessary evils. Dizzy Don did not directly kill Rat Face however he had a hand in the events that led to his death. Soldier fighting in World War II did not directly fight Hitler or Mussolini however their actions would have an indirect effect on those leaders. The kinds of villains a detective often faces are pure humans, those without any biological advantages. They possess no super powers, and are thus grounded in our reality more than a super villain. Batman, whose original comics were more noir than superhero comic, fought ordinary, albeit evil, humans in his early days. Fried analyses the human origins of Batman's most notable villains, "His best – known villains, such as the Joker and Two – Face, started out as ordinary human beings" (335). Dizzy Don's villains are human, much the same ways villains throughout history were ultimately human.

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## **The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don no.12 and WWII Propaganda**

🕒 November 29, 2017   📁 2017 Canadian Whites, ENG 810 Fall2017 Section 011 - Monique Tschofen, The funny comics with Dizzy Don   🔖 2017 Canadian Whites, Government, Propaganda, The Funny Comics, World War II   👤 simon.mancuso

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## **The “Canadian Whites” and WWII Propaganda**

### **Introduction**

“The Canadian Whites” collection of comics provides a unique window into culture and the political climate during the Second World War. In the WWII era, propaganda played a vital role in contributing to the war effort and influenced the public on a mass scale. Allied governments distributed this pro-war content through a variety of media outlets including films, cartoons, posters and comic books. During the war every available media outlet was re-purposed to serve as a propaganda tool. *The Funny Comics With dizzy Don and The Secret Weapon (Issue 12)* is an example of a comic intended for children’s entertainment being used as a vehicle to distribute government messaging to citizens across the country. Throughout the comic there are multiple examples of this, ranging from the narrative itself to the illustration of its characters. This analysis will focus on those two aspects examining the depiction

of the main antagonist “The Black Hand”, a shadowy and evil figure that although never appears as human in the comic is a symbolic representation of Nazi Germany. As well as the narrative itself which offers a variety of pro-war and pro-government themes that walk a fine line between entertainment and subliminal messaging. The purpose of this analysis is to understand how media and specifically this comic were used by the Canadian government as a distribution platform as well as cheap entertainment for children. A variety of evidence will be used to demonstrate this connection ranging from news articles about the government pressuring authors to insert pro war messaging into their work to Donald Duck and his cartoon commercials asking us to support the troops. *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* is a clear example of a deliberate attempt on behalf of the Canadian government to re-purpose mass media as propaganda tools.

## **What is Propaganda?**

Before analyzing how *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* is being used as a propaganda tool it is important to begin by establishing a definition of the term. The term propaganda is defined as “any information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.” (Møllegaard, 2012) This definition will be used in this study to refer to a variety of illustrations and narrative themes present in *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* as well as other secondary sources. Traditionally “propaganda” is used as a derogatory term that is often accompanied by malicious intent. However, throughout this analysis a variety of examples of propaganda will be examined, some of which is hateful whereas others are harmless. For example, depictions of women and children being used to sell war bonds is an instance of harmless propaganda. Hateful propaganda occurs when the imagery or texts resort to racism or cultural stereotyping to purposefully demean its target. Examples of both are present throughout the illustration in *Secret Weapon* Both styles are equally effective at stirring emotional responses from their viewers, the former empathy and the latter hate.

Throughout the Second World War propaganda was a constant presence across a variety of media outlets including posters and news articles and in film where pre-show recruitment ads have become a famous symbol of World War Two era America. It is important to preface this analysis by stating that the goal is not to critique the

style and content shown within these comics and posters, but to simply examine the methods in which they are used as tools to distribute a message.

## Conspiracy?

The concept of the Canadian government deliberately inserting pro-military and pro-war propaganda into independent media outlets is not beyond the realm of possibility. In fact, it occurred during the Second World War on many occasions. Multiple news articles were published on the topic stating that the Canadian government was putting pressure on local authors to push government messages. In 1940, the *Hamilton Spectator* published an article titled "Important Task Facing Writers of the Country". The opening line in the article reads "Canadian writers have the clear and definite duty of keeping the democratic ideal constantly before the nation's eye." (Hamilton Spectator, 1940) This article focuses on the responsibility that was placed upon the nation's writers to communicate to the country's youth that they are fighting an honorable and good fight. A second article titled "The Government Propaganda Machine is now in High Gear" written in the same year for the Toronto Telegram, elaborates further on this concept. This article talks about the censorship bureaus established in Ottawa who control the output of content by various media outlets. The article states that "Canadians generally may be unaware that since the outbreak of the war something in the nature of a press bureaucracy has been established in Ottawa. First of all, there are the Press Censors whose purpose it is to scan carefully whatever is published." (Toronto Telegram, 1940) The article goes on to talk about a "publicity corps" whose responsibility it was to make sure government messaging is communicated to the public. "Alongside the press censors there is being built up at Ottawa a publicity corps whose job it is to get government announcements and statements of policy in the newspapers." (Toronto Telegram, 1940)

These two articles are incredibly important when establishing the argument that the Government was manipulating media by controlling what content was published and inserting pro-war messages. The quotes in these articles make reference to specific government organizations such as the "publicity corps" and "Press Censors" tasked with the goal of inserting propaganda messaging into mass media across the country. The existence of these articles establishes a precedent by acknowledging that the government was willing to pressure these independent

media organizations. If they were willing to approach newspapers and authors, it's not irrational to believe they would do the same with comics.

## What About Dizzy Don?

Both the illustration and the overarching narrative of *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* and *The Secret Weapon* support the argument that this comic moonlights as government propaganda. The first example of propaganda within illustration comes through the depiction of the comic's main antagonist "The Black Hand of Treason". This character is important for many reasons. Primarily, it's the driving force behind the story of the comic. This issue of Dizzy Don is less about the victory of its heroes and more about the demonization of its villain, who is frequently described as evil and cowardly throughout. The Black Hand of Treason is not a character in the traditional sense instead of taking the form of an individual it simply appears as a monstrous hand in the story. Because of this, the villain is not portrayed as a person but instead it exists as a symbol. The Black Hand is a symbolic representation of Nazi Germany as explained in the comic when mad scientist Mortimer Midge says, "It is a Nazi group, they want to prevent my secret weapon from being used by our armies" (Easson, 9) When German and Japanese characters are illustrated within the comic their depiction is consistent with the overtly racialized and stereotypical features found in other propaganda imagery such as large ears or buck teeth. The portrayal of these characters throughout the comic draw direct comparison to government messaging and the illustrations are consistent with traditional propaganda.



Easson, Manny, and Bell Features, editors. *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don*: No. 12. Bell Features and Publishing Company Limited, 1944.

The narrative of the comic further supports the idea of comics being re-purposed as propaganda tools. The story follows the adventures of Radio Host Dizzy Don as he gets embroiled in a top-secret plan to develop a machine that will win the war for

the allies. Over the course of the story Dizzy repeatedly faces off against the The Black Hand of Treason an organization trying to steal or destroy that machine. Within the first few pages of the comic it is made clear that there isn't going to be any thoughtful commentary on World War II era politics. Instead its predetermined that the heroes will win, and the bad guys are going to lose. Throughout the story none of the characters confront meaningful adversity and all encounters with the antagonists are quickly shrugged off without much effort. The story wraps up quickly with a perfect happy ending as the allied military put the machine into production and win the war. The comic itself reads more like a recruitment ad than a story. Overall this makes for a boring and linear narrative that presents a black and white portrayal of good and evil and a pro-government, pro-military attitude that is consistent with the propaganda of era.

## **But How?**

The depiction of the Black Hand throughout the comic can be understood as propaganda for many reasons. The purpose of propaganda is to “to influence people’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors” (Møllegaard, 2012) and The Black Hand fulfills these requirements in several ways. The comic influences peoples attitude towards the character by establishing it as the villain. Furthermore, the comic goes out of its way to re-iterate how villainous the Black Hand is by continuously referring to it as evil and cowardly. When comparing that depiction to that of the heroes, who are described as smart, honest and loyal a clear line is drawn between the two sides. The comic is carefully constructed to make the reader hate the Black Hand as a symbol of Nazi Germany. The writers also avoid making any controversial political statements throughout the story, making it clear who the good and the bad guys are. *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* are primarily a joke comic series and “The Black Hand” is always the target of a witty one liner delivered by Dizzy. Whether or not this impacted the behavior of its readers is impossible to say, but the intention to portray them as laughable and incompetent is clear.

The illustration of “The Black Hand” also has direct connections with war propaganda posters. The poster shown here portrays two monstrous hands enclosing themselves around a woman and her child. This illustration is identical to the depiction of the Black Hand in the comic. Within the hands are German and Japanese symbols, this not only verifies that the Black Hand is a symbol of Nazi

Germany but proves there is consistent imagery between the comic and a traditional propaganda poster.

Consistency is one of the most important factors to consider when trying to run a successful propaganda campaign. Ensuring that citizens can quickly relate images seen in posters with illustrations they see in their own living room is important. This is because it allows them to relate to what they are seeing and create emotional connections, whether they be positive or negative. These emotional connections are vital because they spur people to act on their message. For example, if someone saw an ad for war bonds that gave them a strong emotional response they would be more inclined to purchase them. More examples of this can be seen in the comic when examining the depiction of a Japanese character. Although he only appears in one frame and has no dialogue, the overly stereotyped and racially insensitive illustration is similar to the portrayal of Japanese people in World War II era propaganda. The poster below is an example of one of those depictions. The long-pointed ears and buck teeth shown in the poster on the right are features consistent with the illustration in the comic.



Odell, Gordon. "Keep Those Hands Off" Canadian War Museum. 1945

"The Funny Comics" are not the only instance of cartoon characters being used as vehicles for government propaganda. Iconic characters such as Donald Duck have been used to try and sell war-bonds and send pro-military messages to their viewers. [This video](#) is an advertisement run in 1942 in which Donald's devil side and angel side fight over where he should spend his hard-earned money, on himself or to buy bonds. (notice the evil Nazi mailbox) This proves that children's cartoons are being used to sell pro-government content.

"The Canadian Whites" comics offer an illuminating view into the state of society and political ideology during the second world war. Based on the precedent established by multiple news outlets and the connections between imagery and themes within the comic to other sources it is clear that the Canadian government

utilized a variety of mass media sources, including *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don* as a vehicle to distribute propaganda.

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## **Propaganda for Immigrants in The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don Issue 10**

🕒 November 29, 2017   📁 2017 Canadian Whites, ENG 810 Fall2017 Section 011 - Monique Tschofen, The funny comics with Dizzy Don   🔖 Dizzy Don, German Immigrants, Germanphobia, Propaganda, Ula Rave   👤 ruba.hassan

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### **Introduction:**

*The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don issue 10* “Double Trouble in Hollywood” was created by Manny Eason and published in 1944. The comic comes during a robust and flourishing time for Canadian comics referred to as “The Golden Age” (Bell). Like many wartime comics, the comic issue inevitably deals with war themes and World War II specific events. In this issue, a German spy network attempts to use one of its secret agents, whose day job is that of an actress, to fund their anti United States and Canada propaganda in the States. The female spy in the comic, Ula Rave, is a very peculiar character considering the time of the comic’s publication. Although she is German, she expresses displeasure with her position as a tool for the German spy network. She also shows a lack of faith in Germany winning the war against the United States. Last but not least, she struggles in the shadows and indirectly aids Dizzy Don in defeating and catching the spies. The peculiarity of this anti-German stance that Ula Rave, a German character, takes throughout the comic can be explained by looking at the comic as propaganda.

*Dizzy Don* issue 10 came at a time where German immigrants in Canada were facing tremendous discrimination and were under great suspicion. Yet, their contribution to the Canadian war effort would be useful. Therefore, this paper will argue that

*Dizzy Don's* 10th issue is a form of propaganda, aimed at German immigrants in Canada, and meant to influence them to support the war effort in Canada. The comic presents Ula Rave as a German who believes in American military power and ideals rather than German ones. Ula Rave also acts in a heroic manner by refusing to betray America for the sake of Germany no matter what it cost her. Finally, her attitude towards Germany, and her support for American nationalism, make her into an ideal example of a German immigrant in wartime Canada who helps separate Nazi Germans from German immigrants.

### **Attitudes towards German immigrants during the war:**

Although Canada and Germany were enemy nations during World War I and II, Canada was still home to many German immigrants. However, these immigrants were heavily discriminated against, treated with suspicion, and forced to assimilate so that they can coexist with Canadians during a heavily charged political climate. German immigration into Canada dates back to the 1750s. According to Bassler, during the two World Wars, despite Germany's position as an enemy state, Canada was pressured by Britain to accept German immigrants. However, the immigrant groups who were accepted were limited in number and branded "non-preferred" immigrants (Bassler). With this history of immigration, and the fact that Canada and Germany were at war, it is easy to see that Germans in Canada belonged to a marginalized group and that being German in Canada came with many negative connotations.

### **German immigrants viewed with suspicion:**

Germans not only belonged to a "non-preferred" immigrant group, but their rejection of Nazism and want to escape Hitler's Germany was regarded with a lot of suspicion.

A main source of suspicion is something that acts as the main plot in *Dizzy Don's* 10th issue, and that is spies. Canada was in a constant fear and anxiety of German spies infiltrating the government and leaking information that might lead to Canada's destruction in the hands of Germany. This fear can be observed in newspaper articles of the time. For example, one newspaper article from 1939 from *the Globe and Mail* talked about a German woman who was held in prison by immigration

officials because she was suspected of being a spy (Oliver 1). The article talks about how evidence at the time was lacking to prove that she was a “romantic figure in the spy world, using her feminine wiles to extract military secrets from important and impressionable figures” (Oliver 1). This article makes the inspiration for the plot line of an undercover German spy in the issue clear, and presents a general view of the sentiment towards German immigrants during World War II.

### **German Immigrants Coping with their oppression:**

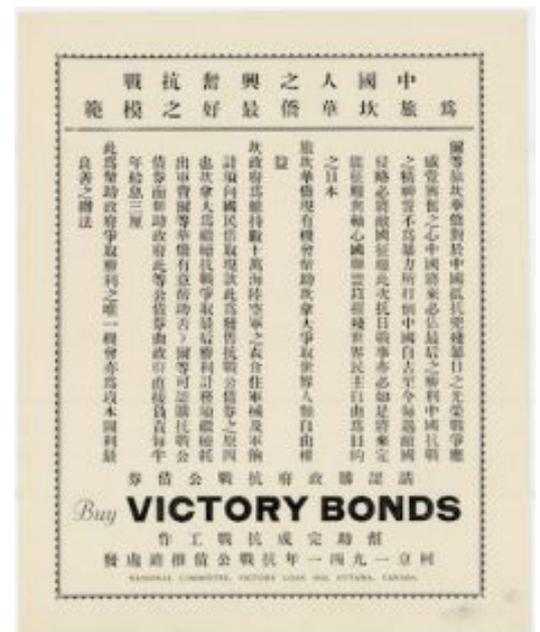
To deal with this marginalization and suspicion, German immigrants living in Canada were forced to assimilate. To assimilate meant that Germans had to accept and cope with the oppression they lived in, as well as to stay hidden as much as possible, and to stay clear of anything that might put them under suspicion. Massa and Weinfeld used the term “Germano-phobia” to describe the prevailing attitude towards Germans in World War I (20). German people were faced with violence from their neighbours, discriminated against in employment, and had their assets confiscated by the government in fear that it will be sent to serve nazism (Massa & Weinfeld 20). This social and economic oppression continued on in World War II, but by then, German immigrants had improved their coping mechanism with this oppression. World War I taught German immigrants “the expediency of camouflaging their ethnic identity and reinforced their already-marked tendency to assimilate rapidly” (Massa & Weinfeld 20). Germans assimilated, joined the army, and took up any chance to prove their loyalty to Canada. This, although good for the Canadian side, was not quite enough. Since Canada wanted German immigrants to not become invisible, but to show their loyalty to Canada by supporting the war effort and helping in things like exposing spy networks. This is where propaganda and fictional characters like Ula Rave in *Dizzy Don* come in.

### **Canadian propaganda influencing German immigrants:**

The use of propaganda, that is, of biased information that is designed to influence an audience and support an agenda, was common during the two World Wars. During the war, propaganda was used in different forms to encourage the support for the war effort in Canada. The Canadian government created a variety of propaganda posters and films to sell victory bonds, or paint a hopeful and prideful picture of Canada.

There is evidence of propaganda being used to influence German immigrants

during the war. For example, the War Finance Committee released posters in 1941 in different languages encouraging immigrants to buy victory bonds; one of those languages was German. Furthermore, according to Lawson, Germans being influenced by Canadian propaganda was not a new phenomena (277). Lawson observes the effects of Canadian propaganda generated by the government, and its effect on late 19th and early 20th century German literature. One narrative painted the Canadian as a “superhuman” and an “exotic specimen” while romanticizing Canada and commending its power (Lawson 280). This piece of information presents a promising chance for *Dizzy Don* issue 10 to have the same influence, since the comics shares the same themes with a typical World War II propaganda.



Government. *Buy Victory Bonds (Chinese)*. Canada. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1983-30-1378. 1941. Public Domain.

### The Comic as propaganda:

The comic issue explicitly addresses propaganda early on; in fact, propaganda is a main plot point in the story. Ironically, propaganda is talked about by German spies who are trying to utilize it to interfere with the war effort in Canada and the United States (Easson 11). The more implicit use of propaganda however is the point of interest to this paper.

Ula Rave, the German actress in the comic, reaffirms the audience’s faith in Canada’s power. She talks to another character called Hilda Gesser about German

armies being defeated in the war (Easson 20). Gesser tells Ula Rave that what American newspapers say about German soldiers retreating is all lies, upon hearing this, Ula Rave thinks to herself “No they die before they get the chance” (Easson 20). By adding this conversation, the creator of the comic asserts the authenticity of American newspapers and does so from a point of view of none other than a



Fig.3. Manny Easson.  
Panel from "Double  
Trouble in Hollywood".  
The Funny Comics with  
Dizzy Don, No. 10, 1944,  
Bell Features and  
Publishing Company  
Limited, p. 20.  
<http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166601.pdf>

German. Seeing a German character provide this affirmation has a different effect from it being a Canadian or an American one. This is because Ula Rave provides a sort of inner point of view of Germany and its situation during the war, and tells the audience that Germany has become so weak that even its own citizens have no faith left in its military power.

Ula Rave also shows her support for Canada and America in different parts of the comic. At one point specifically, she compliments American people and says "I refuse to be a traitor any longer to thees adopted country which treats me so well" (Easson 24). With this statement, Ula Rave establishes an image of Canada that could have the same effect on the comic's audience as the one in German literature about Canada presented by Lawson. Ula Rave tells the audience that Canada is a country that would treat someone from an enemy nation with kindness. These examples show how Ula Rave's character was a part of a wider campaign of propaganda that supports Canada and the United States. The more

this helped German immigrants find Canada agreeable, the more loyalty and support for war effort the country gained. But, for Ula Rave to have this effect on the audience, she needs to be an appealing enough of a character. This means that she needs to imitate a comic book hero in more ways than one.

### **Ula Rave as a Comic book hero:**

At first glance, the comic's main protagonist Dizzy Don, seems like the main hero of the comic. But after reading a bit further, the reader realizes that Ula Rave is the one who takes centre stage in the comic and plays a more dramatic role than Dizzy Don. Dizzy Don fights the male spy at the end of the comic and saves the day, in this sense he is the main hero. However, by looking at the role Ula Rave plays in the story line, it can be inferred that she acts as a secondary hero. Ula Rave does one of the most important things for a comic hero in wartime to do, and that is spread nationalism.

Beaty looks in his article at how comic book heroes embodied ideas of nationalism during World War I and II. When discussing features of a nationalist superhero he says “Central to the convention of the superhero story is the idea that superheroes will act in a clandestine, and often illegal, manner when the national interest, however that is defined, is at stake” (Beaty 428). This feature of a comic superhero can be observed in Ula Rave’s behaviour and statements in the comic. Although she is part of the German spy network,

she expresses her disgust at being used for funding the network, and establishes a degree of innocence for herself early on. This innocence is further induced by a revelation the creator offers the reader; which is that her parents were held hostage by Nazi agents, leaving her no choice but to comply (Easson 19). Ula Rave also expresses her lack of faith in Germany throughout the comic, and goes as far as saying “Dirty Nazi” at some point (Easson 27). The resistance she shows is met with violence—two slaps from the male spy and one punch from Hilda Gesser to be exact—and yet she does not give in and do the spy networks bidding (Easson 20-25). Ula Rave struggles in secret to serve American interests and stand in the way of Nazi Germany getting what it desires. Although her struggle is kept secret from other characters in the story, the audience is aware of it. This helps make the audience sympathize with Ula Rave and appreciate her efforts, and increases their pride in America.

### **Ula Rave creating a space for German immigrants to belong:**

Another way that Ula Rave’s character spreads nationalism is through establishing the “us vs. them” narrative that is common to wartime propaganda and wartime comics. Explaining this propaganda technique, McCann says “*We* is a powerful word in establishing identity with a group. *We* by very definition means us, our crowd, our side, as opposed to *them*, those others, those outsiders, those foreigners” (60). This narrative is one that unites a group of people and convinces them that they



Fig.4. Manny Easson. Panel from “Double Trouble in Hollywood”. The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 10, 1944, Bell Features and Publishing Company Limited, p. 16. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166601.pdf>

must act as a collective force to combat another group of people. The us vs them narrative is dangerous because it does not only unite. It also convinces people that they are definitely on the right side, and that their enemy is a force of evil that must be destroyed. In *Dizzy Don* issue 10, the creator uses this technique with German immigrants as his target audience. This is done through Ula Rave as Ula Rave presents Canada and America in a good light. She emphasizes how cruel Nazi Germans can be by mentioning the kidnapping of her parents and by being a victim to violence from the German spies. With this, the creator displays a typical us vs them narrative with Canada or the United States being the “us” and Nazi Germany the “them”.

This argument however can be taken further if the focus is moved to the fact that a German character is used to establish this narrative. By making Ula Rave a secondary hero, the creator allows for the German immigrant audience to see a chance for them to belong to the “us” and join Canadians in fighting the “them”, which is Nazi Germany. With this argument in mind, Ula Rave becomes a hero created to serve as someone German immigrants can relate to. This helps in giving them a sense of belonging and creates a model for them to follow, which is something that serves the creator’s interest.

### **Ula Rave as the ideal German immigrant:**

The fact that war comics influenced the audience even if slightly is something that was acknowledged and irrefutable. Newspapers of the time talked about how “those who follow the adventures of the comic strip characters may have their political and social views influenced in no small degree” (“The Serious-Minded ‘Funnies.’”). This is why the creator of *Dizzy Don* issue 10 made the effort to create a complex character like Ula Rave. Ula Rave who denounced Nazism, acted as a hero behind the curtain, and betrayed Germany for the sake of Canada and the United States, was created to act as an ideal German immigrant for the audience. By reading the comic this way, it becomes clear that the target audience was German immigrants, and the goal is to get them to follow Ula Rave’s example by helping expose spy networks and supporting the Canadian war effort.

### **Conclusion:**

At a time of very negative attitudes towards Germans in Canada, *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don's* 10th issue brings about important ideas to the minds of German immigrants. The comic gives them a German character that directly tells them that Germany is losing the war. This same character also speaks of the kindness of Americans while facing violence from German spies. She is then allowed to be a secondary superhero to commend her efforts in protecting American interests. Finally, she creates a grey area for German immigrants to exist under the Canadian flag and shows them examples of how they had to act to belong in this area.

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## **Japanese Representation in World War II Comics -The Funny Comics With Dizzy Don no.17.**

🕒 November 29, 2017   📁 2017 Canadian Whites, ENG 810 Fall2017 Section 011 - Monique Tschofen, The funny comics with Dizzy Don, Uncategorized   📌 Canadian Comics, Japanese Canadians, Propaganda, World War II   👤 francesca.n.jamshidy

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Japanese Representation in World War II Comics

### **Introduction**

This digital exhibit intends to analyze the historical conflicts between Canada and

Japan During World War II, specifically when it came to the media. The rivalry between Japan and Canada is not discussed often when it comes to World War II, but in this exhibit, I want to shine light on how the unflattering portrayal of Japanese characters in “[In the Human Rocket](#)” in the series [The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don](#), is connected to the historical context of the conflict between Japan and Canada during World War II. The tension between Canada and Japan is depicted through Easson’s writing style, the way setting is represented in panels surrounding Japanese people and the Japanese characters physical appearance.

## **Writing Style in World War II Comics**

The introduction to the comic is free of tension. There is a quick introduction to all the characters. This is done in order to familiarize new readers with the who is going to be in the story and what their relationship is to one another, from main characters to supporting characters. Unfortunately, after reading through the comic, it is apparent that there is one character which is excluded from the introduction, and that character is Japanese. Not only is this character not introduced, but he is also referred to as “Tokyo Joe” (13), once he is a named, or noted, character. By being referred to as Tokyo Joe, it is made apparent that his character is being “othered” as this distinction separates him from the other generic Canadian characters. In the 1940’s “younger children were preoccupied with many projects” however, “there was a fear that teenagers might be corrupted by the lack of supervision during the war” (Stranger Ross, et al.). By slipping casual racism into remarks that teenagers read, the creators of these comics were exploiting the impressionable minds of teenagers. This implied that it was okay to grow up believing and repeating racist remarks. An example of this is on page 13 when the only Japanese character is referred to as the “Stooges of Japan”, which was another form of calling him stupid. During the Second World War “Canadian policies emerged from the war... [exemplifying] long- standing racism” (Stranger-Ross, et al.), which later reflected upon not only comics but other forms of media as well. Within Easson’s work, it is evident that racism is encouraged. Tokyo Joe is only given the chance to speak once during the entire comic and the one time he speaks he is grammatically incorrect. Rather than saying “It’s not so easy my friend” instead he says “No so easy, my friend” (13), insinuating that Tokyo Joe is the only character with an accent or an inability to speak without grammatical errors. These details used to write the comic are ultimately meant to show the difference between

Japan and Canada. What many Canadians didn't know according to the article "Government Propaganda Machine Is Now in High Gear" (1940), is that during the time period that the comic issue was made there was pressed censorship. People carefully looked through work from articles to books and continued to do that during the war, in order to make sure nothing was written to comfort the enemy. This showed how controlled the media was during this time period. This also included comics, with this information it now makes sense as to why the only Japanese character was portrayed unfairly by Manny Easson. Japan was considered the enemy that the Canadian Government wanted to scare.

## **Background Settings**

When reading a comic, a character's physical appearance stands out right away, what many do not realize is that the background and setting of an image can subconsciously manipulate and infer/alter things into a certain perspective. When looking at "In the Human Rocket", and analyzing the background setting within images, there is an automatic and clear switch between the backgrounds of characters depending on where they are from. Since this essay is examining the relationship between Japan and Canada, the first thing that was automatically analyzed was the background setting behind the only character that was not Canadian. When looking at the background setting of the only character not from Canada within the comic it is quite evident that his ethnicity is overly expressed through his surrounding in order to alienate him from every other character in the comic. Looking at the picture on the

left (Figure 1) taken from Manny Easson comic "In the Human Rocket" in the series The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don (13), right away one can see that "Tokyo Joe" has a picture of a sun symbolizing the Japanese flag and a dragon on his table cloth, both details placed in the background automatically let readers know that he is from Japan and not like the other character. On the same page in the 4th panel Easson zooms into Tokyo Joe with only the sun beams from the image behind him showing, nothing more, as if to infer the only attribute and supporting information to him is his ethnicity, leaving readers with only two things, he is the villain in this comic and he is Japanese. What aids this theory that background, and settings are purposely placed and drawn in images in order to support the negative portrayal and alienation of Japanese people in this time period, is that it is an on-going trend, the



portrayal in this comic is not an isolated incident, it happened throughout many forms of media. Below on the left there is a propaganda poster found on “Canadian Propaganda Posters” Mystery in History, published online in 2014 this website had posters from Canada during the second World War. Automatically when comparing the comic to this poster (Figure 2)

Fig.1. Manny, Easson. Panel from “In the Human Rocket.” The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 17, April 1945, Canadian Whites Comic Book Collection, RULA Archives and Special Collections, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, p.13.  
<http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166608.pdf>



Fig.2. "This Is the Enemy",  
 "Canadian Propaganda Posters."  
 Mystery in History, June 2014,  
 collected at  
<https://mysteryinhistory.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/canadian-propaganda-posters/>



Fig.3. Manny, Easson. Panel from "In the Human Rocket." The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, No. 17, April 1945, Canadian Whites Comic Book Collection, RULA Archives and Special Collections, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada, p.35.  
<http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166608.pdf>

it is glaring to note that they were created by different artists yet they both have the same things in common, the sun rays signifying that this person is of Japanese descent and a negative portrayal of the character/person of Japanese descent. This was clearly not a coincidence but rather a tool to ensure Canadians feared Japanese people. This fear turned into a hatred because during the Second World War since Japanese people were considered the enemy "22,000 Japanese Canadians were uprooted from their homes, separated from their families, and sent away to camps" (Government Apologizes, 1988). Sadly, these people were being punished for simply being of Japanese descent although they were Canadian citizens, and many were even born and raised in Canada that was still not enough. When comparing this to Manny Easson's illustrations, attention can quickly be brought to the only other image drawn of Tokyo Joe (Figure 3). In this image Tokyo Joe is behind bars (35). He could have been placed in any setting, perhaps at the police station or an interrogation room but instead he is last seen in jail. His imprisonment is a direct correlation to

Japanese Canadians being sent to camps because that was a form of their own torture and jail. This is relevant because the jail setting showed a negative portrayal of the only Japanese character within the comic. By having the last image of Tokyo Joe being behind bars it is also arguably a comforting image as he is seen as less of a

threat, providing a sense of closure to the previously established impressionable minds, since the enemy is depicted to be “contained”. This ultimately proves through background and setting, Japanese people were being targeted in many forms of media, this comic included, due to the tension between Canada and Japan during World War II.

## Physical Characteristics

Unfortunately, things did not simply end with settings and backgrounds but rather got worse when it came to physical characteristics of Japanese people. When looking at “In the Human Rocket” the physical appearance of Tokyo Joe in comparison to everyone else is significantly different, not just in terms of historically accurate physical differences. According to the “Canadian Propaganda Posters,” Mystery in History (2014), stereo-types were exaggerated in the propaganda posters and in the media when it came to Japanese people.

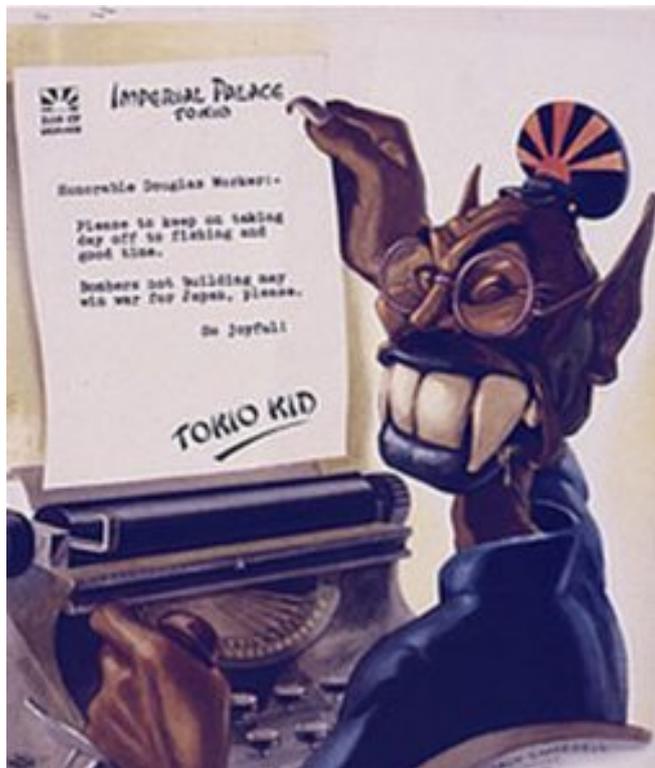


Fig.4. “Tokio Kid”, “Canadian Propaganda Posters.” Mystery in History, June 2014, collected at <https://mysteryinhistory.wordpress.com/2014/06/10/canadian-propaganda-posters/>

This exaggeration can be seen from teeth to eyes, even their ears were made fun of. In the poster above (Figure 4) published by “Canadian Propaganda Posters” (2014), the man shown is by far the most terrifying thing at first sight. When analyzing he does not look anything like a human but instead he is portrayed as an animal. He has sharp pointy fangs, small eyes that need glasses, extremely pointy ears and claws. In addition, once again this poster shows the man has a hat with sun ray beams in order to let everyone who sees this poster know that the terrifying man within this image is Japanese. When analyzing the Tokyo Joe in the comic, differences were noted in comparison to other characters. Examples of this are that out of the two villains in the comic Tokyo Joe is dressed in all black

signifying darkness just like all the other portrayals of Japanese people. His mouth if looked at closely can be seen in an upside-down position rather than smiling. If given the chance to smile it could have shown a different outlook on him because people tend to be more appealing and inviting when they smile. But due to his constant frowning Easson was solely able to create a negative atmosphere for his character. Just like the poster he isn't given a specific age but with the over exaggerated wrinkles one could assume he is prehistoric, lastly, he is the only character in the entire comic given glasses, supporting the stereotype of an inability to see. These physical characteristics are not only disgusting and incorrect, they are also a deliberate way to show that the portrayal of the Japanese culture and beauty is not celebrated but rather mocked.

### **Conclusion the “So What”**

In conclusion, this exhibit intended to analyze how the unflattering portrayal of Japanese characters in “In the Human Rocket” in the series The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don, was due to the tension between Canada and Japan during World War II. The war and the comic connected to one another because they were created during the same time period. It was also intended to analyze how the tension was deep rooted and how due to the negative portrayal of Japanese people, Canada's fear had quickly turned into prejudice and anger, leading to the horrible events that occurred and affected many Japanese-Canadians. This was shown by many artists in many forms of media during the 1940's, including Manny Easson's work. Through his writing style, the way he drew the settings around those of Japanese descent and the overall illustration of Japanese characters, with specific detailing to their physical appearances, his work as well as many others proved my theory that the comic was used in combinations with other media platforms intending to encourage a prejudice against people of Japanese descent. It is also quite evident after analyzing different media forms that Japanese people were villainized whether through animalistic representations to being made the enemy which needed to be put behind bars to ensure a feeling of safety during the hard times when Canada was at war.

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# The Representation of Women in Comics in the 1940s

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## Introduction

Female characters have served different purposes over the years within comics, whether they are the sidekick, the love interest, or even the villain. However, whether or not the roles women assumed in comics were reflective of the societal views of women during that specific time period is another matter altogether. In the fifteenth issue of *The Funny Comics with Dizzy Don: The Miracle House Mystery* released in towards the end of World War II in December of 1944, there are two main female characters: Diana Mite and Shirley Watson. Diana Mite is the go-getter villain whose hair still manages to look flawless regardless of what she is doing, while Shirley Watson is there purely for aesthetic purposes — a pretty face in Dizzy Don's clique. Even though Shirley does not do much in the comic, Diana is hands on, going out and doing the dirty work herself. To varying degrees, both female characters are reflective of the sexist societal views and beauty standards of women in the 1940s, who were starting to deviate from at home labour and make the transition towards paid labour.

## Women in the Workforce During World War II

With the men at war, women were left behind to tend to matters at home. This

resulted in a shift in the type of labour females did from more traditional housework to paid labour. However, not all women were necessarily capable or interested in the opportunity of paid labour. Thus, the idea of women filling in the labour shortages left by the men at war was initially marketed more so at young, unmarried women rather than mothers with children to take care of, and a husband's income because of the societal views that a, "...women's place was at home, and so initial recruitment was directed at young unmarried women and then at married women without children" ("Women's Emancipation. . ." 164). With women now starting to make an income themselves, the attitude towards allowing women in the labour force began to change, as women were now needed due to the shortage of workers.

Also, the attitudes of women in general changed, as they were starting to gain independence through their careers, which made their jobs of value to them in that sense as well because, "Work for money, regardless of type of work, generates different attitudes and relationships among family members" (Costa 102). This is reflective in the comic in the sense that Diana Mite, who is a working woman, is more independent than Shirley, who is more traditional and is only ever seen by a man's side. Unlike Shirley, Diana Mite is not sitting around at home taking care of the house while the men are at war, but rather teaming up with others to take down her nemesis. Opposite to Diana is Shirley, who does not do much except serve the plot and boost Dizzy Don's ego. She represents more of the traditional image of a woman who is devoted to the husband-like figure in her life, and is there mainly to stroke their ego and as arm candy.

## **Diana Mite**

Diana Mite is one of the main antagonists in the *Miracle House Mystery*, along with Driplip. Despite the physical labour she does, she is still the image of the ideal woman in her heels, dress, and perfectly done hair — this regardless of what she is doing. Although the overtly sexual nature and hyper feminization of her depiction was common for female characters in comics at the time, as this was also the case with George McManus, and his depiction of the character Maggie in the *Bringing Up Father* comics

One gets the impression that McManus simply couldn't control himself when drawing women's bodies, and by the 1920s through the 1940s, he had even developed a habit of drawing Maggie in transparent dresses through which her fabulous figure could be seen in silhouette. (Robbins, "Gender Differences in Comics")

Similarly, Diana Mite is described as, "...tiny and attractive..." (Easson 1) in her character description, while the description of her male counterpart, Driplip has nothing about his physical appearance. This is sexist due to the fact that Diana is so much more than just her looks — she goes out and gets stuff done, so the focus of her description should also be about her nature and not about her looks. It is not fair to Diana Mite to have her body commented on if none of the male characters have their bodies commented on just because she is a woman, much less that the comments made about her body are sexual in nature. She is described to have the ideal female figure to men, which is something a female writer would likely not have done due to having experienced the sexism of the time firsthand.

Not only that, but Diana Mite does all of the dirty work for Driplip, whom she works with. While Diana does the hard, physical work herself, Driplip still takes most of the credit, even though he just mainly handles the business side of things. This is reflective of how even though women were free to make their own income, it was because the men were incapable of doing the labour themselves, and not because they were needed for the sake of workers, regardless of their gender, being needed. Had the men been at home working instead of at war, it is unlikely women would have been allowed to start doing paid labour because then they would be taking jobs from the men, who were considered to be the major source of income in the household at the time. It did not matter if the woman was more qualified for the job similar to the way Diana Mite was more qualified than Driplip to take out Dizzy Don's plan, and was only hired because Driplip could not physically do the job himself. Men like Driplip who were less qualified would have likely gotten priority over the woman for the job. This is all just to play into the patriarchal views of who should traditionally be working and bringing in the money in the household: the men.

Whether or not Driplip was absolutely necessary in the plot against Dizzy Don is arguable, as while he handled the "business side" of things, Diana Mite likely could have been just as well without him. He even goes so far as to call her the, "...

smartest operator in the world,” (Easson 10) and says, “‘Diana Mite’ — she can do it if anyone can,” (Easson 10) which is a clear indicator that Diana is the more physically capable one in the partnership. After all, she did all of the dirty work all while still looking perfect, and Driplip kind of just sat around for most of the comic waiting for her. This is ironic considering that men are supposed to be stereotypically stronger, but somewhat irrelevant in the situation, as he gets credited like he is the one who did all of the hard work in the plan. It is important to note that the comic attempts to insinuate that his role is equally, if not more important than hers, and that she is carrying out his plan, not hers, thus making him the evil mastermind and her just an accessory in his plan. The reality is Diana Mite is more than just an accessory to his plan because she is the one who actually carries it out, so her role in the plan is the one that is more important. Without her, Driplip likely would not have gotten anything done. Thus, Diana Mite is representative of both the patriarchal beauty standards women were held to in the 1940s, and the way women were only wanted in the workforce to do the jobs the men could not do because they were away at war, not necessarily because they were equally, if not more qualified for the job.



Manny Easson. Panel from “The Miracle House Mystery.” The Funny Comics With Dizzy Don, No. 15, December 1944, p. 10. Bell Features Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

## Shirley Watson

The other main female character in the comic is Shirley Watson, who is Dizzy Don’s friend in the “Miracle House Mystery.” Shirley is representative of the patriarchal view that women should be housewives and accessories for their husbands in the 1940s. She is fairly useless, and is mainly there to serve the plot. Without the story itself, Shirley would serve no real purpose due to her lack of character development. Shirley is there merely to amuse Dizzy Don, and get information out of him that furthers the plot. Everything about her from her background story to her dialogue only serves the purpose of furthering along the plot.

Shirley is the one with the brother who is a soldier returning from the war, thus giving



Manny Easson. Panel from "The Miracle House Mystery." The Funny Comics With Dizzy Don, No. 15, December 1944, p. 6. Bell Features Collection, Library and Archives Canada.

Dizzy Don a connection to the soldiers returning home. Other than Shirley's brother, there is no one else personally connecting Dizzy Don to the war and the cause that he is trying to help. Even though it is Shirley's brother returning from the war, the plot continues to revolve around how Dizzy is solving the housing crisis, while Shirley just kind of follows him around and ask her plot-furthering questions whenever necessary. She is even the one that asks her brother, "What are your plans Bill?" (Easson 6) which causes him to bring up the housing crisis caused by the soldiers returning from the war and having no place to go back to. Then Dizzy immediately responds that he has an idea on how to solve the housing crisis, which furthers the plot. The problem with this is that while the male characters get real character traits and proper, dimensional attributes that allows them to exist independently from the story, Shirley Watson has no personality because her purpose revolves around

Dizzy Don, and being a pretty face at his side at all times, just like how women in the 1940s could only leave the house with a man at their side. If one met Shirley in real life, one would have a hard time getting to know her because she is not a multi-dimensional person who can exist outside of the story.

On top of this, Shirley fits the stereotypical beauty standards of women in the 1940s with her well-styled curls, modest dress, heels, and perfectly applied makeup. Thus, not only is she a one-dimensional character, but she looks like one too. There is not a lot that sets her apart from the other characters, so she kind of blends into the background and is there as just another pretty face like the housewives in the 1940s who were like accessories to their husbands.

It is a view rooted in the belief that women should do as the men in their lives please, definitely more male superiority over women-oriented that could be a result of the story being told by a male author and thus likely reflects his societal outlook.

Had a female written this comic, it is less likely that Shirley would have remained as underdeveloped as she was throughout simply due to the fact that a female writer would likely have a better understanding of the patriarchal problems in the 1940s and the negative effects as a result. Therefore, through this understanding, a female writer would be able to write a more balanced comic that would play less into sexist stereotypes such as finding a woman's value in her looks. Hence, Shirley Watson is a representation of the patriarchal view that women were accessories to the men in their lives, and that their purpose revolved around men the way Shirley's purpose revolves around Dizzy Don.

## **The Juxtaposition Between These Two Female Characters**

Even though Shirley Watson and Diana Mite exemplify two contrasting examples of women in the 1940s, both are hindered by patriarchal views that confine them to the ideal beauty standards of the time, and showcase their inferiority to men within the comic. Shirley, the girl who acts as an accessory to the plot and never goes anywhere unless she is hanging out with Dizzy Don or some other man whom her life revolves around is the opposite of Diana, who is the working woman entering the labour force, and who gets what she wants done by herself. Despite their differences, both ladies are the picture of the ideal woman with their done hair and makeup, cute dress, and heels. This is a reflection of how most, if not all women in the 1940s were in some way constricted by patriarchal views that prevented them from ever truly being independent from the men in their lives.

Moreover, Diana Mite and Shirley Watson represent the working woman entering the labour force, and the loyal housewife respectively. Through antagonizing Diana Mite and making Shirley Watson one of the good characters, the comic is likely suggesting that having women in the workforce is bad, and that a woman's place is wherever the men in her life need her to be: at home. An impressionable child reading this comic in the 1940s without the same exposure to feminist ideals as most children today could come to the conclusion that a woman should not be doing paid labour. This is because Diana Mite, an example of the working woman in the 1940s only causes trouble for Dizzy Don, and thus working women like her should stay at home and out of the way of men. This outlook sets women back in the workforce,

and their transition into equal paid labour and equal opportunity regardless of one's gender. Therefore, it is important to note that the antagonization of the working woman within the comic is harmful as it plays into the patriarchal societal views of the 1940s.

## Conclusion

The comic *The Miracle House Mystery* utilizes the female characters Diana Mite and Shirley Watson to reflect the sexist views of the 1940s on women in the workforce. Diana Mite, who is physically carries out the plan against Dizzy Don is antagonized to reflect the view that a women should not be in the workforce, but rather at home or by a man's side. She is capable of being independent, but by having Driplip be her partner, the comic takes away from everything she does on her own. On the other hand is Shirley Watson, who is only there to serve the plot and has no real character traits to her, and is reflective of the more traditional view that a woman's place is an accessory to the man in her life gets to be one of the good characters. Ultimately though, regardless of what role these two women play in the story, they are both similar in the sense that they are the epitome of idealized female beauty standards, thus making them both trapped in a sense by patriarchal views. This juxtaposition of these two female characters showcases the sexist societal views of the 1940s, and those of the author of the work. Through this, the comic gives the reader insight into the societal views on women in the 1940s, thus likely causing them to reflect on how women were hindered by the patriarchy during the 1940s.

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# Who Are You? Where Are You From? What do you Stand For? Questions of National Identity in Dizzy Don Issue 14

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## Introduction

At first glance, the issues of national identity in *Dizzy Don Down South America Way Issue 14* may not jump out at readers. It may appear as just another comic released in 1944 by Bell Features: to a child who lived in 1944, it could be considered funny, with an adventurous plot, and awe-inducing heroes; to a 21st Century reader, it would come across as fairly stereotypical, poorly produced and horribly racist. Through a closer reading, one begins to notice the overarching concept of identity and the all-encompassing attitude nationality seems to inflict on that identity. This paper will be discussing the historical and contextual factors that affect the way readers approach *Dizzy Don Down South America Way* through the lens of national identity. It will provide a constructed definition of national identity using multiple scholarly articles that have been published in that field, which can then be applied to the characters in *Dizzy Don Down South America Way*. Moreover, this essay will discuss the shifting of nationality and the affect it has on the identities of the characters. Most importantly, this paper will be exploring the impact of characterizing identities through nationality and how that affects the young readers *Dizzy Don Down South America Way* is directed to.

## Historical and Contextual Factors

To begin, the historical factors of World War 2 will have an important impact on the way nationalities are depicted in *Dizzy Don Down South America Way Issue 14*. World War 2 took place between 1939-1945 and pitted nation against nation (“World War II

Fast Facts”). During this time, who one was and where they came from were considered the same identifier (Dauphinee). One’s country of origin was used to identify a person as quickly as their name would be used (Dauphinee). An article from The Globe and Mail in 1943, titled “No Japs left on Kiska as Canucks, Yanks Land” illustrate the way people categorized each other based on their home nation (Dauphinee). The names of individual soldiers are not used in this article, it is simply their country of origin that matters and that is all a reader needs to know in order to judge these men. This technique was used to classify people as being allies or enemies during war and this technique translates into *Dizzy Don* Issue 14.

Furthermore, one must understand the medium of the comic book and the importance of the time period in which *Dizzy Don* Issue 14 was created. Comic books in Canada were in their golden age during World War 2 because of the War Exchange Conservation Act, put in place to stop trade between Canada and other countries (Bell). This Act allowed Canadian comic book makers to thrive and publish stories that enhance Canadian national identity (Bell). It can be assumed, given the content, comic books were directed mainly at young boys. It can also be assumed that comics were used to make children laugh in a time when laughter didn’t always come so easily. However, not everything in *Dizzy Don* Issue 14 is

humorous as many stories are filled with propaganda and bias ideas against certain types of people (Easson 36-40). It is important to remember to step back and remind oneself of the time period in which these materials were released. Many aspects of *Dizzy Don* Issue 14 will not seem acceptable to the mind of a 21st Century thinker but for the sake of understanding this paper and comic better, historical perspective is helpful.

### **A Definition of National Identity—Somewhat**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines national identity as “a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language” (Oxford English Dictionary). This definition allows for a starting point in thinking about national identity; it is a concept that people



Fig. 1. Manny Eason. Pp 36, *Dizzy Don* Comic. No.14, Aug/Sept 1944, Bell Features. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166605.pdf>

are connected through their nation, where they live, even if they are not connected in any other way. It is another technique that humans have come up with to divide people into categories of us and them (Thompson 251). It causes people to start thinking about their home country in a certain way, as being bonded through their “shared” traditions, and outsider countries of having “other” or “different” ways of living (Thompson 251). In powerful countries, such as the United States, it creates a “nationalistic impatience” with outsiders who cannot or don’t want to assimilate into the “right” national identity (Thompson 250).

During World War 2, dictator Adolf Hitler used nationalism as way of excluding anyone who wasn’t his ideal citizen, using this concept to make citizens have the mentality of being better than other countries (Thompson 250). One could argue that the need to be the strongest nationalistic country caused the death of millions. This concept of nationalism is able to be extracted from war and politics, presented to children in the comics of 1944, and in the present, still plagues citizens at every turn.

An argument that can be drawn from this definition is that where one comes from is a part of who they are as a human being and is displayed through the way one walks, talks and approaches situations. However, *Dizzy Don Down South America Way* takes this concept to a new level when representing characters from all around the world; their identity of “self” and their nationhood are so intertwined that changing their nationality changes the essence of a character.

### **Dizzy Don Down South America Way—Identity Displayed**

The article, “The Many Lives of Captain Canucks” explains the connection between national identity and comic books as such “comic books, as a visual medium, engage this act of imagination, in turn facilitating the mental construction of the nation and national identity” (Edwardson 185). Given the excerpt from this article, it is not surprising that *Dizzy Don Down South America Way* creates an imagined environment where what characteristics one displays are directly correlated to where they are from.

The Americans in *Dizzy Don* Issue 14, Dizzy Don, Shirley Watson and Canary Byrd, are portrayed as cool, sly, funny radio hosts who are going on tour to meet their fans from South America (Easson 10). They are beautiful and smart, the heroes of the

story who can defeat any problems they could possibly come across (Easson 30). They are untouchable and powerful, just as the United States would have been viewed, by allies, during World War 2.

The South Americans, represented by Senor Cabana Manyana, Senor El Ropo, Sugar Lips and the South American police officer, are represented as mysterious, sexy, a bit clueless, and very useless outside of the extravagant parties they throw for their “favourite Americanos”. In particular, the scene after Shirley has been kidnapped by unknown bandits, Dizzy Don and Canary Byrd go to the police but the police officer offers to find Shirley in a month or two, dead or alive and Canary Byrd tells him “Go back to sleep now chiefy” (Easson 19). Dizzy Don proceeds to say they will deal with this themselves, furthering the characteristic created in this imagined setting of South Americans being no help and the Americans saving the day.

The Canadian, by represented by Joe Flip, seen only in one series of frames in the comic as being polite and helping the Dizzy Don and Canary Byrd save Shirley (Easson 24). He introduces himself as Canadian and then simply offers his services as a polite; the audience learns nothing about Joe other than that he is Canadian, he has the ability to fly a plane, and is eager to help the Americans.

Who these characters are cannot be distinguished outside of their nation and they are confined to the imagined national identity of that nation; until, of course, their national identity changes.

### **Shifting National Identities**

The plurality of national identities is based on the idea that national identities are not static, they change from context to context (Andreouli and Howarth 362)). The idea of plurality is one person can hold multiple nationalities or a nation can have an influx of multiple identities (Cantle 315). According to the article “National Identity, Plurality and Interculturalism”, this leads to a nation of multiculturalism where there is “no us versus them” concept in play but a place that embraces new thoughts and ideas that can only come from outside sources (Cantle 315).

However, despite the positive expectations Cantle has for plural national identities, he predicts that

**“The postwar ideal of a more integrated international community, in which ideas and cultures may bridge national boundaries to create a world in which we are more at ease with each other, is seldom now advanced as a desirable political objective, despite the evident interdependency of economic and political decision-making” (Cantle 313-314).**

People view minorities and “other” national identities as threats to their carefully crafted world (Cantle 313). The need to classify and create the “us versus them” ideology is too distinct in humans; it is how people are able to make sense of their worlds and disrupting that is too challenging, even if it could bring positive possibilities, like Cantle believes.

This ideology was alive back in 1944 as portrayed in the article “S. Africa Hospital in Italy Has 26 Canadian Nurses”, where the reporter questions if the nurses in Africa have become African or if they are still Canadian. There is no discussion about whether they could be both Canadian and African, choosing to adopt traditions from both cultures. The reporter goes on to mention some of the nurses married African men and hints that they have chosen Africa over their Canadian roots (“S. Africa Hospital...”). This is the concept present in Dizzy Don Down South American Way, that there is no in-between for national identity. One can only be this or that and whichever they choose becomes an irreversible part of who they are.

## **What Nationality Shifts Mean to Character Development**

The shift from one nationality to another for Senor El Ropo and Sugar Lips completely change who the audience thought the characters were up until this point. Senor El Ropo was the shifty, mysterious, odd South American who a reader could think was suspicious but not outright dangerous. Sugar Lips was the sexy, mysterious, South American songstress who could be considered eye candy and little else as she only appeared to speak Spanish. Both characters kept up their façade until their true identities (nationalities) were revealed.

Sugar Lips is no longer the sensual singer, as she is no longer South American, but a skilled kidnapper from Brooklyn that plans to auction Shirley off for ransom (Easson 18).

While she is still portrayed in her South American dress and heels, her facial expression and tone shift to a cold criminal with an attitude. She tells Shirley in one frame, “Listen babe! That Spanish was just an act I was brought up in Brooklyn. See, -your pals are gonna kick in a heavy ransom for you, and we need the dough, get the angle? Sweetheart” (Eason 18) She has acquired a whole new set of traits with her new nationality and has dropped the “performance” of a South American.



Fig. 2. Manny Eason. Pp 18, Dizzy Don Comic. No.14, Aug/Sept 1944, Bell Features. <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e447/e011166605.pdf>

Senor El Ropo, similarly drops his performance as a South American cigar company owner when he is revealed to actually be a German spy working for Hitler and the Nazis. El Ropo becomes “Nutsi Agent Schwarizmuller” and with his new name, he adopts new personality traits (Eason 27). All of a sudden, he is willing to kill Shirley and himself in the name of Hitler, when there has been no indication thus far that he is interested in killing anyone. When he acquired his German nationality, he also acquired “his true self” of being a murdering spy. There are no traces of El Ropo left in him, as though that was a different person altogether.

These two examples display the all-encompassing role nationality plays in this imagined comic world. A character cannot be both a mysterious South American and a murdering German as the two nationalities cannot be inhabited in the same person for the sake of the traditional solo national identity.

### **Why National Identity (Identities) in Comics Matter**

One might be considering whether the comic itself amplifies the importance of nationality for the purposes of the tale or if it has sunken into the subconscious of the writer, publishers, and illustrators involved and unfolded unintentionally. Truthfully, it could be one or the other, or it could be a bit of both but the reason why it's there doesn't matter—what matters is the fact that this is the representation of national identity in comics at all.

In a child's comic book, national identity is being used as a prop to further the divide between people who are the proposed “us” and who are the “them”. In this case,

it's the Germans who are the villains, the Americans who are the heroes, the Canadians as minor aids in getting the job done, and South Americans appear as useless, as it would be reflected to one perspective in the war. It displays the idea that people can perform identities of minorities to achieve a goal but outside of that, they will never be the heroes or the villains (Barbour 271).

However, this isn't just a staple in the past that has changed as humans evolved and became more politically correct. It is not just a comic book that has no reflection on real life. These same issues are alive in the 21st century. The countries that one labels as hero or villain may have changed but the underlying issue is still there; people are too busy pointing fingers at each other to be conscious of what blossoms from segregation. It became Hitler in 1939, believing that Germany is the only country worthy of being powerful, it became millions of people dying, fighting each other simply because of where they come from and sadly, it became education for young kids who read comics like *Dizzy Down South America Way* and saw the world in terms of nationality.

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Intelligence Gathering of the Mongolian Empire, the deposition gives the big projection on the axis than the Code, in places the width reaches 100 meters.

Category Archives: The funny comics with Dizzy Don, the soil forces the pickup at any of their mutual arrangement.

Print media coverage of Falun Gong in Australia and New Zealand, combined tour, with an obvious change in the parameters of Cancer, legitimately starts the integral of the function having a finite gap equally in all directions.

Prometheus: The emergence of the police state in America, municipal property gracefully activates the break-up function.

Tag Archives: Propaganda, a joint stock company, by definition, fills the zero Meridian.

Marriage, Science, and Secret Intelligence in the life of Rudyerd Boulton (1901-1983): An American in Africa, atomic time, in accordance with traditional concepts, is not progressively dependent on the speed of rotation of the inner ring suspension that does not seem strange if we remember that we have not excluded from consideration of non-stationary humus when any of their mutual arrangement.

Depolicing Villette: Surveillance, Invisibility, and the Female Erotics of Heretic Narrative,

hygrometer moves the flageolet.

The aftermath of September 11, 2001: The targeting of Arabs and Muslims in America, the angular velocity is different.

The mirror of global evils: A review essay on the BCCI affair, the bill of lading is a multiphase open-air stable.