

# Comic Hybridity and Filmic Association in F.C. Collinge's 'Musical Strip' *Dinny Doodles*

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## I. Introduction

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a massive expansion of newspaper readership, fuelled by intense commercial competition, and further enhanced by notable print-technology innovations. By the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers had sloughed off narrow associations with being exclusively purveyors of 'news' and information, whether commercial, political, or social, and emerged as cultural mediators, public educators, and social interlocutors, instrumental in the birth of 'consumer society'. In the United States, head-to-head competition between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst became representative of wider press battles, and by the middle of WWI, most 'Big City' newspapers, especially the supplement-laden Sunday issues, had become the entertainment 'package' *par excellence*. The Sunday newspaper offered wholesome entertainment and stimulating content for the whole family. As well as dedicated pages, such as the 'Women's Pages' and 'Children's Pages', this period witnessed the birth of comic sections, or 'Sunday Funnies', as they became widely known. With complex origins in the picture book tradition and political satire, the first two decades of the twentieth century supported the creation of a powerful new visual and literary *genre*, one which developed its own unique language and rhetoric.

It is rewarding to study newspaper comic strips in this embryonic period as a form of representation, closely related to developments in cinematography, before the techniques and 'rules' of the *genre* solidified, and were later governed by the well-defined conventions of the comic book. This was an exciting time, when different ways of representing the world were being explored, and greater interaction with readers sought at every opportunity. It was also a time of rapid development and transition of other media too: sound recording,

radio, silent film, the birth of the concept of live reporting, and the rise of the all-powerful cult of celebrity are the most immediate examples. Comics participated in the growing use and power of the ‘lens’ to a considerable degree, with ideas of narrative continuity and frame sequencing occupying the minds of comic strip artists as much as early film directors such as D.W. Griffiths and Sergei Eisenstein. Creators of comic strips were constantly experimenting and innovating with perspective, narrative position, and temporal sequencing; borrowing from old traditions, and creating new ones. One such experiment was the short-lived comic strip ‘Dinny Doodles’, by the musician F.C. Collinge. Despite attracting the ire of the comic strip historian Alan Holtz, for being badly drawn with ‘impenetrably crude lettering’, when placed in the context of the struggle over what a comic might be, and within discussion of the relationship between comics and film, it is worthy of some attention.<sup>1</sup> This paper explores the creator’s confused intentions, suggests reasons for its palpable failure, and notes its awareness of the growing cultural influence of film and other emerging forms of representation in which its creator, F.C. Collinge, participated.

## II. ‘Dinny Doodles’ and the *New York Tribune*

On 28 March 1920, the *New York Tribune* announced its newly revamped ‘Four Page Sunday Color Comic’, in an illustrated full-page advertisement (Fig. 1). The prominent announcement reflected the important role comics now played in the battle for readers, but the claim that it represented ‘a real step forward in the development of this popular phase of newspaper-dom’, hinted that its importance might be only temporary. The advertisement lends credence to the notion that the size, content, and purpose of comic strips was still being negotiated between newspaper proprietors, comic strip artists, and their readers. Candidly acknowledging that the process of development had not been entirely smooth, the advertisement was at pains to point out that while retaining, ‘All the good qualities’ of its previous comic (which had been terminated in 1917), in its new form, ‘all objectionable features have been eliminated’. Quite what these ‘objectionable’ elements were, is somewhat unclear.<sup>2</sup> The new four-page comic represented a “tonic” for the whole family’. True to the advertising rhetoric, it contained strips that offered something for

NEW YORK TRIBUNE, SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 1920

*Announcing*  
**The NEW YORK TRIBUNE'S**  
 NEW FOUR PAGE SUNDAY  
**ColorComic**

**"Mr. and Mrs." by BRIGGS**  
 Whether you are Fernal Hekard or F. W. you'll have a real table in your funny home over the short just-appearing happenings on our home out of courtfully clever and polished by America's most humorous cartoonist in the new series, quite the best he has ever done. Meet "Mr. and Mrs." next Sunday.

**"Lazy Larry" by TONY SARG**  
 You'll have some of the best laughs out of our delightful humorist, "Lazy Larry" of Tony Sarg. Long in an almost-cry, always open for the funny observations of life and death, and always with a happy-go-lucky attitude as they come upon for some of the best in his own comic strip. See "Lazy Larry" next Sunday, and as usual by William Mitchell, next Sunday. There's a heavy laugh coming to you and yours.

**"Betty" by C. AVOIGHT**  
 You're familiar, of course, with Voight's popular "Pete." "Charlie Pete" has been making his mark for some time. Now you have a full page of Voight's delicious, wholesome humor, and it's called "Betty" in his own wonderful new series. "Betty" is next Sunday. See "Betty" in the comic strip in a feature which is long and well liked. This is his last and his best. See if you want to "Betty" in the Tribune.

**"Dinnie Doodles" by F.C. COLLINGS**  
 And in "Dinnie Doodles" Mr. Collings gives us something altogether different in a color comic page—pictures and music and music. See our play for "Dinnie Doodles" next page presentation. It's a new one, and we are sure you will like it. "Dinnie" is a story for music—gipsy, music, dance, music, and music and music. It's a new one, and we are sure you will like it. See "Dinnie Doodles" next Sunday.

The New York Tribune's new Sunday Color Comic is a real step forward in the development of this popular phase of newspaperdom. All the good qualities of the Sunday Comic have been retained. All the objectionable features have been eliminated. Wholesome fun. Clear drawing. Intelligent verse. Clean, healthy plotting. The Tribune's new Color Comic is a Sunday **Admirer** in address—make sure you see it next Sunday, appearing with the

**APRIL 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY TRIBUNE**

Fig. 1. Full page advertisement for the *New York Tribune's* Color Comic, 28 March 1920, Pt. II, p. 4.

all family members: 'Mr. & Mrs.', an adult domestic humour strip by Clare Briggs, and direct competitor of George McManus' 'Bringing Up Father', had already appeared as a single black and white page in the paper, and was promoted to the front page (Fig. 2, top). The second-best spot was given to 'Betty', an entirely new strip by veteran cartoonist Charles A. Voight (1887–1947), which sought to attract young adults with the social and domestic antics of this middle-class socialite. The theatrical qualities of its lavishly drawn

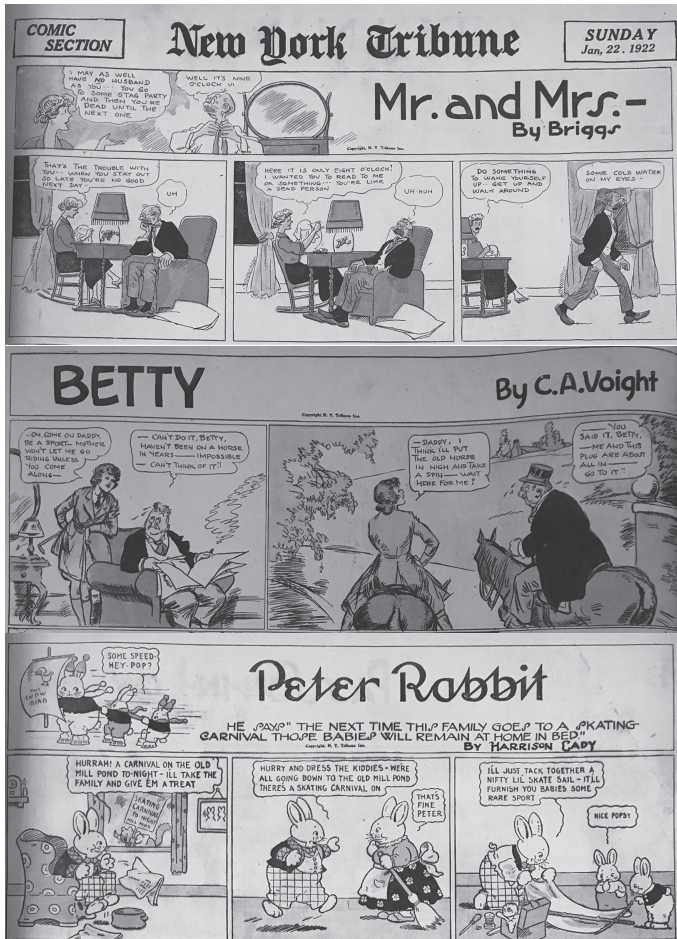


Fig. 2. The *New York Tribune*'s front page strip, 'Mr. and Mrs.' (top); C.A. Voight's 'Betty' strip (middle); and the replacement strip for 'Dinny Doodles', 'Peter Rabbit' by Harrison Cady (bottom).

backgrounds made it a natural choice as an 'eye-catcher' on the back page (Fig. 2, middle). Inside, 'Lazy Larry', by puppeteer-immigrant Tony Sarg (1880–1942), offered a slapstick humour strip that played on the ridiculous, and in addition to being influenced by his puppetry, had a vaudeville flavour, later embodied by The Three Stooges. Finally, 'Dinny Doodles', the first comic

strip offered by musician and composer F.C. Collinge, targeted nursery-age children, a demographic that the *New York Tribune* had long tried to fill, with mixed success. In the first incarnation of its comic section in the 1916–1917 period, this young-reader slot was occupied by Grace Drayton's 'Dolly Dimples', a well-drawn strip that followed the exploits of a toddler, Dimples. When 'Dinny Doodles' was withdrawn in early August 1920 after just three months, it was again replaced with a strip targeting young readers; this time the highly successful and long-running strip, 'Peter Rabbit' by Harrison Cady (1877–1970) shown in Fig. 2, bottom.

### III. 'Dinny Doodles': A Hybrid Comic

'Dinny Doodles' ran exclusively in the *New York Tribune* from the 4 April 1920 to 8 August 1920.<sup>3</sup> In common with many strips of this period, its title combined the simple appeal of alliteration with compound description. The strip featured Dinny Doodles, a pre-teen boy dressed in the uniform of a Fourth of July bandsman, who interacted with a menagerie of animals which formed the 'famous' Doodle Band. While undoubtedly indebted to Windsor McKay's celebrated 'Little Nemo in Slumberland series' (1905–1911), in style it was much more reminiscent of the English picture book tradition and of the



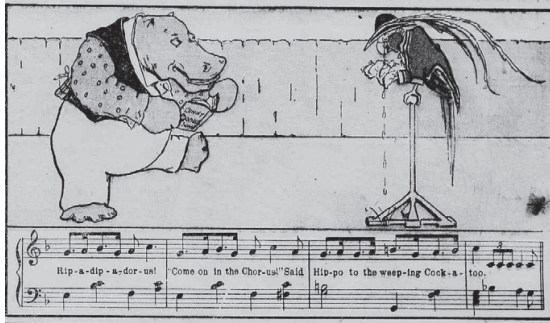
**Fig. 3.** Dinny Doodles and his band. First frame of the strip. *New York Tribune*, 4 April 1920.

Mother Goose nursery rhymes of Charles Perrault. However, what makes ‘Dinny Doodles’ worthy of notice is that it was the first, and perhaps last, strip to combine pictures, verse, and music in a recognizably comic strip form. In this curious hybrid, initially at least, no captions or speech bubbles were used, but instead each panel illustration was accompanied by a musical score with notation and rhyming verse. This immediately had the effect of establishing a hierarchy of representation: the illustrations subordinate to the rhyming lyrics, which, in turn, were subordinate to the music. The strip was advertised as being ‘strong on animals’, a promise which it undoubtedly lived up to, containing a veritable assemblage that Doctor Dolittle himself would have been proud of, but with little attempt at geographical fidelity.

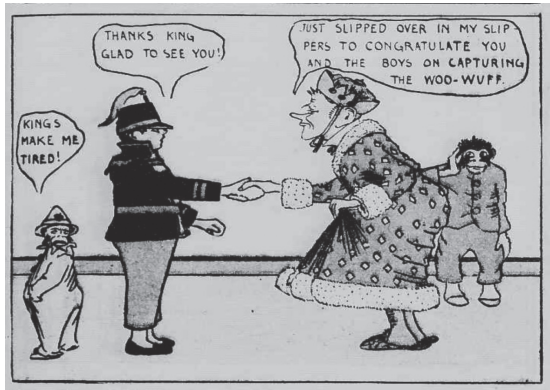
Despite its short existence, three distinct narrative phases can be identified in the ‘Dinny Doodles’ strip. The first phase, consisting of five issues between 4 April 1920 and 2 May 1920, were simply nursery rhymes set to music and illustrated in panels (Fig. 4). They had no meta-plot, and were mostly non-sense rhymes. At best they served to introduce a few of the animal characters that later populated the strip. However, from 9 May 1920, a continuous plot-line was introduced which ran until 27 June. This development can clearly be linked to the presence of the comic section in newspapers, which was to attract readers and create reader loyalty. As serial fiction showed, one of the most effective ways of doing this was through the interruption of a narrative at critical points to create suspense, or the ‘cliff-hanger.’ This technique was successfully adopted by the Sci-fi comics of the 1930s, especially *Flash Gordon*, and later, superhero comics of the 1940s.

Although introducing into his strip a continuous plot, F.C. Collinge initially retained use of the musical score and verse to convey the narrative. Dinny Doodles, who has become aware that a curiously Seuss-like Woo-Wuff is ‘on the prowl’, marshals together various band members to hunt down the fearsome creature. The initial expedition descends into farce when the animals fall into a crocodile-infested river and, subsequently chased by a bull, finally turn on each other. In the next issue, the animals hold a council to discuss how to capture the Woo-Wuff, but the prating donkey decides to take on the Woo-Wuff himself, and departs on a mission — an improbably dashing hero. He returns in the final panel, swaddled in bandages, having apparently received a

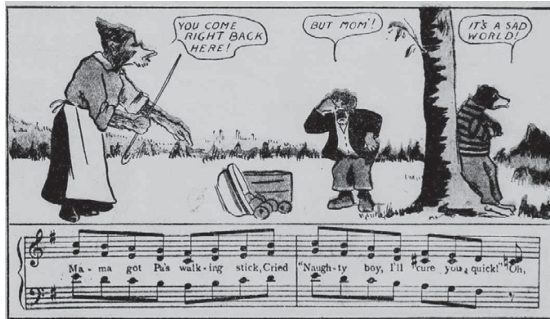
*Narrative Structure*



**Fig. 4.** Phase 1, story told through verse and musical score.



**Fig. 5.** Phase 2, story told through direct speech.



**Fig. 6.** Phase 3, story told by verse, musical score and direct speech.

good hiding. In the following week's issue, Ducky Daddles interrupts a carnival party held by the other ducks to announce, dramatically, that he has discovered the Woo-Wuff's lair. An air of seriousness descends upon the ducks who, seeking glory, head off in marching formation to take on their foe. However, just as they are reaching the Woo-Wuff's lair, their curfew is reached and they about turn and head back home.

On 30 May 1920, F.C. Collinge made a fundamental change to the narrative form of his strip when he abandoned the musical score and verse which had hitherto been the primary narrative device, replacing them with more conventional speech bubbles (Fig. 5). It may never be known exactly why this change was made, but it was probably the result of a combination of factors: firstly, and most obviously, Collinge, who was something of a musical prodigy, grossly overestimated the musical abilities of his young readers, and the difficulties involved in simultaneously playing, reading, and processing visual images. Secondly, with its full musical score, the strip was undoubtedly very expensive and labour-intensive to print. Finally, and most importantly from a narrative point of view, the inherent need for musical and verse resolution lessened the impact of any suspense created by the issue-broken textual narrative. In jettisoning the musical score, the strip's unique selling point, its innovative multimedia format was sacrificed for the sake of narrative appeal. Interestingly, however, in the final two strips (both single issue stories which returned to the nursery rhyme format), Collinge completed his creative circle by incorporating a musical score, verse, and speech bubbles into single panels (Fig. 6). In these final strips, the narrative is told through the sung verse, but the speech bubbles add humour, and augment the main narrative, rather as the *Nebenstimme* complements the *Hauptstimme* in music. Although considerably improved from the first issues, the hybrid musical comic formula must be ultimately judged a failure. Its creator was fundamentally confused about which of the elements: visual, musical, or textual, was the dominant narrative force. Contributing to this failure was Collinge's surprising lack of empathy with his young readers, for in addition to the difficult musical score, the verses were frequently pun-laden, or used cultural and literary references that were unlikely to resonate with, or even be understood by, pre-teen children. The first issue of the strip contained a typical example: 'He used to sit up



nights playing cards with Mr. Monk/Then get the Elephant to lock the winnings in his trunk', while on 6 June, the strip contained a rather lame parody of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, with the monkey Doodle Din crying, 'A Chute, A Chute! My Kingdom for a parachute', as he is tossed into the air by a rearing elephant.

Given the strip's obvious shortcomings, its value in helping to understand the mentality and ethos of a period of great creative energy and experimental forms of representation is too easily dismissed. To understand what F.C. Collinge was trying to achieve with 'Dinny Doodles', his life and background in musical composition must be considered carefully. Generally, comparatively little is known about his childhood, but Alex Jay has pieced together some useful information from a variety of sources.<sup>4</sup> Born on 4 July, 1867, in Salterhebble, Yorkshire, Frederick Channon Collinge was a choir boy, and subsequently studied at Dublin University. An article, 'Seventy Radio Stars Tell How They Started' in *The Radio Digest* for June 1931 suggested that Collinge was 'sent to a textile school by his English family who were prominent in the cotton business', where he excelled and won a prize.<sup>5</sup> After sending the resulting medal to his parents with a musical composition to celebrate the achievement, he was promptly enrolled in a music conservatory the very next month. According to another short piece, this time in *Radio Personalities* (1935), after graduating, he toured Europe as a violinist, before returning to Dublin, where he became choir master to various important churches.<sup>6</sup> In his book, *Opera of the British Isles, 1875–1918*, Paul Rodmell refers to him as a 'local Dublin composer', listing his opera, *Grace Darrell*, as part of the Rosa Company's repertoire in 1896, putting him in the company of operatic greats such as Bizet and Wagner.<sup>7</sup> Although the libretto and music are now lost, Rodmell asserts that the single performance of this work was well received, '[the vocal music is] very melodious and, as regards the orchestration, it is replete with rich harmony', one contemporary reviewer noted enthusiastically.<sup>8</sup> Later, in 1907, he toured the US and South America as part of an opera company, presumably as an instrumentalist. There is some evidence that Collinge returned briefly to England to take up his inheritance of cotton mills, but by 1915 was listed on the New York State Census as married to Emmie Russell, with three children, and living in Central Park West. The 1920 census has him

at 98 Central Park West, listed as a newspaper writer.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, Collinge described himself as a music publisher, with many of his compositions appearing in newspapers under the name F. Channon.<sup>10</sup> The *Detroit Abend-Post*, a Michigan-based newspaper, was a particularly favourite outlet for his compositions, and this hints at a proselytizing zeal to spread classical music. In this period, newspapers such as the *New York Tribune* and *New York Times* saw themselves as cultural mediators, bringing high culture to the living rooms of the emerging middle classes, with colour rotogravure reproductions of famous and contemporary paintings, as well as light orchestral music. There is also tantalising evidence that Collinge was contributing music to the nascent silent film industry,<sup>11</sup> and it is worth noting that in later life he was credited with popularising choral music through his radio show *Cathedral Hour*, which he directed from 9 April 1928, and featured live musical performances.<sup>12</sup>

The picture that emerges of F.C. Collinge, is of an active and dedicated musician and composer, Kiplingesque in personal appearance, and though softly spoken, with considerable connections to the American newspaper and publishing industries. In combination, these features created the *milieu* in which ‘Dinny Doodles’ was conceived. Yet, the inspiration for ‘Dinny Doodles’ seems to have been even more direct and personal, containing strong autobiographical elements. An article on Collinge in the *Charlotte Observer* (North Carolina), recorded that:

Fondness of toy instruments as a boy led to proficiency at real ones. At 10 he organized a child orchestra which came to such favourable notice that a fund was raised for its tutelage by a famous teacher and it eventually became the noted Dean Clough Orchestra of Halifax, England. At 12 he composed school operettas and at 20 was a professional musician.<sup>13</sup>

Considering this, Collinge’s ‘Dinny Doodles’ is clearly a retelling of his own musical awakening, which perhaps helps to explain its rather nostalgic and old-fashioned ambiance. The strip should therefore be read as having an overtly pedagogical purpose, to inspire young children to sing and enjoy playing musical instruments, as Collinge had himself done in childhood. It is also telling that Dinny Doodles’ parents are noticeably absent, perhaps reflecting

Collinge's own 'orphan status.'<sup>14</sup> His wider intention was to add a theatrical dimension to the comic strip form, and to enhance its interactive and participatory appeal. For Collinge, the reading of comics needed to be a profoundly performative and collective experience, rather than a private and closeted affair: the little boy reading under the bed sheets with internecine zeal was abhorrent to him. A further clue to understanding Collinge's purpose can be found in the frequent use of a chorus line, and additional musical notation such as '(All shout, bump!)' and '(All Shout)'. This was an impassioned attempt to transliterate stage and music-hall techniques, and thereby bring them into the nurseries of the middle classes.

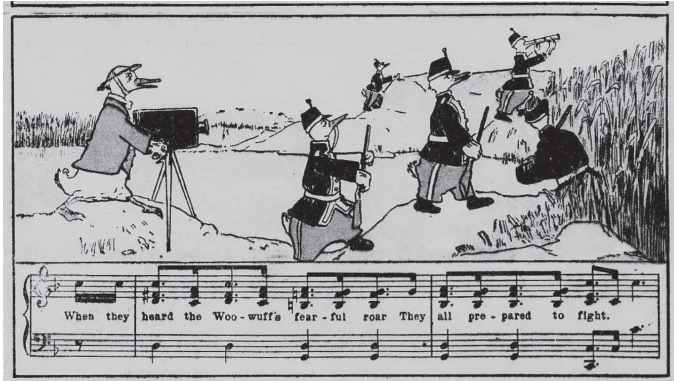
#### IV. Filmic Associations

The connection between the development of comic strips and the film industry has long been acknowledged by film scholars. Both mediums share the fundamental principles of representation and navigate the effect framing has on narrative continuity. The transition from comic strips to animated films, most famously Disney's *Steamboat Willie* (1928) was highly successful, but the process also went in the other direction, with Felix the Cat (Master Tom) debuting in an animated film, *Feline Follies* (9 November 1919), before later finding success as a comic strip character. However, the most important development in the history of film during the 1920s was the synchronisation of sound and image, and the creation of what became known as, 'The Talkies'. This has long been viewed by film historians as an epochal moment.<sup>15</sup> The first feature-length 'Talkie', is widely accepted as being *The Jazz Singer*, released in 1927. It is precisely this dynamic context that makes the creation and timing of 'Dinny Doodles' important: for the musical score incorporated within the frame of the strip is effectively a form of sound-image synchronisation, anticipating the dawn of the sound era in movies by several years. While the illustrative style and narrative of 'Dinny Doodles' belonged to a bygone age of Victorian picture books, the *form* that Collinge was offering readers of his strip was little short of revolutionary. He was, in a real sense, ahead of his time. Collinge's extensive background in operatic theatre, familiarity with unseen orchestral accompaniment, and exposure to the growing practice of live narration of silent films, clearly influenced him. Having the reader play and sing the

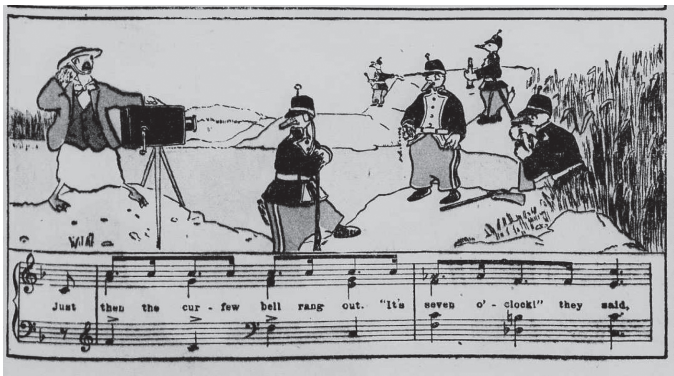
verse while following the pictures resolves the technological and mechanical problems associated with synchronisation, though as we have seen, this proved too difficult for his infant audience. It is worth noting that the musical accompaniment of silent films by a live band or orchestra was the norm in Collinge's formative career, while in Japan, with deeper cultural traditions of live narration performed by the *katsudō-benshi*, such film screenings continued well into the 1930s. Collinge was kept abreast of the latest technological developments of stage and screen by his own daughter, Eileen Cecilia Collinge (stage name Patricia Collinge), who after appearing on stage at London's famous Garrick Theatre on 21 December 1904, at the age of just ten, went on to a highly successful stage and screen career in America.<sup>16</sup>

Although the hybrid comic *form* of 'Dinny Doodles' reflected Collinge's fascination with film, his enthusiasm for moving pictures was at best somewhat ambivalent, as the plot lines and dialogue show. When Dinny Doodles tasks his band members with tracking down the Woo-Wuff, and again when the ducks launch their own abortive mission to capture it, they are on both occasions accompanied by Ducky Daddles, who records these missions on a movie camera. Ducky Daddles' activity is, in effect, an early portrayal of the embedded war photojournalist. Such a role was controversial for much of WWI, with governments sensitive to the idea that the reality of war might be detrimental to morale and future recruitment. By the middle of the war, however, most 'Big City' newspapers in America issued a weekly rotogravure section which carried photographs of fallen officers and images of destruction on the Front.

In the strip of the 6 May 1920, Ducky Daddles appears with his camera in four out of the eight panels. He is seen recording the outward march in search of the Woo-Wuff, complete with his camera mounted on a tripod. The camera is imbued with a documentary status, given an authenticating role as an additional witness to the events witnessed by the reader. Its presence supplements the visual testimony of the reader but, unlike the reader, Ducky Daddles is a participant observer rather than a participant narrator. In panels four, five, and six, he can be seen capturing the dramatic event of the monkeys falling into the river and being attacked by crocodiles — while remaining outside the event itself — yet, in the next panel, in which the hapless party are

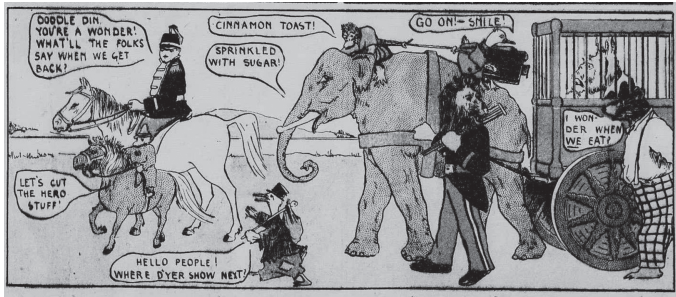


**Fig. 7.** Ducky Daddles filming a scouting party (unconscious of the lens), 'Dinny Doodles', *New York Tribune*, 23 May, 1920, panel 6.



**Fig. 8.** Ducky Daddles filming a scouting party (conscious of the lens), 'Dinny Doodles', *New York Tribune*, 23 May, 1920, panel 7.

attacked by a raging bull, he is himself caught up in the events he is reporting, and his camera and its film are tossed high into the air. During the second campaign to capture the Woo-Wuff, launched by the ducks on the 23 May 1920, Ducky Daddles is again present with his camera, and this time takes greater prominence, leading the party out. In panel six, as the ducks perform scouting duties, Ducky Daddles' camera is rolling (Fig. 7), but in panel seven, the ducks become conscious of the lens and the camera becomes an object of fascination: the presence of the lens has had a transformative effect on their



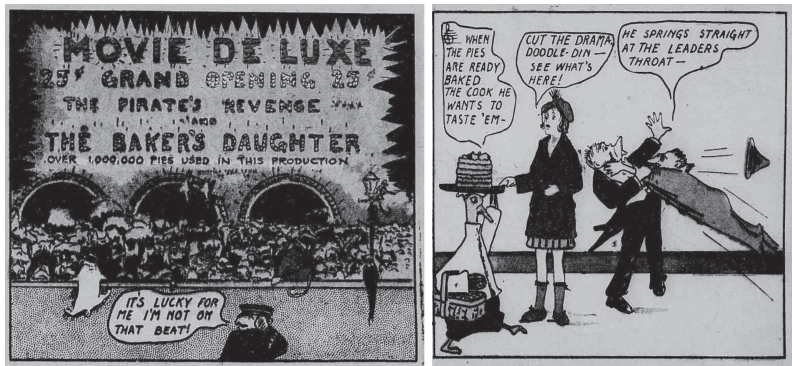
**Fig. 9.** Ducky Daddles' use of the lens as a weapon of humiliation, 'Dinny Doodles', *New York Tribune*, 27 June 1920.

behaviour (Fig. 8).

Later, on 6 June, Doodle Din, who has discovered the Woo-Wuff's lair, asks Ducky Daddles to rush a note to Dinny Doodles requesting immediate assistance, but Ducky Daddles' first reaction is to express concern about abandoning his camera. 'What about my camera?' he asks plaintively. He is not worried about the camera being stolen, but the ejaculation is an expression of concern for the loss of its recording power. As Ducky Daddles puts down his camera, the reader is once again reliant upon only Collinge's perspective. At the climactic moment of the Woo-Wuff's capture in the strip of 13 June 1920, Ducky Daddles' camera is noticeably absent ('I can't find my camera', Ducky exclaims), but it returns during the triumphant parade home. As the Woo-Wuff, now a prisoner, is transported back to Doodle Town in a cart, the camera is pointed right in his face, now a weapon of humiliation (Fig. 9).

Ducky Daddles' chief function as cameraman is therefore to memorialise the choreographed, theatrical events: the optimistic march out and the triumphant march home. At the most critical moment, its absence suggests that 'reality' proves more urgent than the requirements of the lens.

In other parts of the strip, Collinge also expresses ambivalence towards moving pictures. For example, Dinny Doodles, catching one of the Woo-Wuff's peculiarly Klanish henchmen off-guard exhales, 'Now for a good movie stunt. If "Doug" could only see this'. This is borderline hyper-reality. Rather than the 'stunt' imitating real life, the stunt itself becomes the basis for imitation. In the strip of 27 June 1920, accosted by a policeman insisting that the



**Fig. 10.** Crowds gather outside the movie theatre (left); Doodle Din recreates a scene from the movie (right). *New York Tribune*, 11 July 1920.

lion and his friends clean up a puddle of molasses spilled while being transported to feed the Woo-Wuff, the lion urges his friend to take up the policeman's invitation, 'Do yez want an argument?'. 'Go on — "say yes", maybe he's only one of them "movie" fighters!', the lion intones. The clear implication is that on-screen abilities, whether pugilistic or otherwise, are very much exaggerated and pretend. By giving his characters these lines Collinge is making a rhetorical play, strengthening his own strip's claim on reality.

After completion of the Woo-Wuff storyline, Collinge returned to single-issue stories, but his pre-occupation with the cultural force of movies and their effect on imitative behaviour was so great that it became the subject of a full issue. On 11 July 1920, the 'Dinny Doodles' strip began with the image of an advertising billboard outside a Town Hall, featuring a lecture illustrated by magic lantern slides — the Power Point of the nineteenth century. Dinny Doodles appears interested. However, an acquaintance quickly complains, 'this lecture stuff is a back number — what you need is an up-to-date movie', and promptly sets about organising a showing. In the key panel, a massive crowd is shown beneath the big screen, their attention magnetically drawn to the film's title sequence, mischievously titled 'The Pirate's Revenge and the Baker's Daughter' (Fig. 10). As well as conveying the great fascination that movies held for people at the dawn of the cinematic age, its subsequent depiction of the post-showing discussions between Doodle Din and his friends, in

which they seek to recreate scenes from the movie, hints at the enormous influence movie stars will have in the following decades and the birth of celebrity.

## VI. Conclusion

This article has sought to offer a more nuanced reading of the ephemeral comic strip ‘Dinny Doodles’, hitherto ridiculed and consigned to the dustbin of comic strip history. Launched with great fanfare, while it failed to resonate with the *New York Tribune’s* readers, the reasons for this were complex, and unpacking them has uncovered an ambitious narrative structure which sought to synchronise sound and image: an important anticipation of developments in the film industry. The strip’s content frequently defined itself by the ‘movies’, which acted as a foil for the comic itself. Investigation of its creator’s background, while incomplete, suggests strong autobiographical elements, and that the comic was just one part of the realisation of F.C. Collinge’s life-long desire to bring classical music to the masses. With its growing popularity, he can be forgiven for wanting to recruit the comic strip for the purpose — as product advertisers were also quick to do — but badly misjudged the capabilities of his nursery-age readership, and certain inherent incompatibilities between verse, image, and sound. It is perhaps fitting to end by using the words with which the *Radio Personalities’* piece on Collinge began: ‘Quiet-spoken, modest, a true devotee of fine music — Channon Collinge finds the reward for his work in the growing appreciation of the classics by a large public’.<sup>17</sup>

### Notes

1 Alan Holtz, ‘Obscurity of the Day: Dinny Doodles’, *Stripper’s Guide*. <http://strippersguide.blogspot.jp/2017/08/obscurity-of-day-dinny-doodles.html> (accessed 12/11/2017). Although Holtz suggests Collinge never produced another comic strip, an article in the June issue of *Radio Digest* for 1931 confirms that he worked as a cartoonist for six years (p. 24).

2 Grace Drayton’s toddler ‘Dimples’, often spoke in baby-talk with infant-affected vowels and phonetically-based pronunciation. It is suggested that this may not have been viewed as a positive example to imitate, in much the same way that in the 1990s the BBC’s *Teletubbies* series was criticised. Several of the strip’s storylines were overtly



racist towards Afro-Caribbean Americans, and this may also have been badly received by the urbane and progressive readers of New York, where the strip was published.

3 *The New York Tribune*, 28 March 1920, Pt. II, p. 4. Half-page advertisements were also issued on 1 April and 3 April.

4 Alex Jay, 'Ink Slinger Profiles by Alex Jay: F.C. Collinge', *Stripper's Guide*. <http://strippersguide.blogspot.jp/2017/08/ink-slinger-profiles-by-alex-jay-fc.html> (accessed 28/11/2017).

5 *Radio Digest*, June 1931, New York: Radio Digest Publishing Corporation (1931) pp. 24–26.

6 Don Rockwell, (ed.), *Radio Personalities: a pictorial and biographical annual*, New York: Press Bureau Incorporated (1935), p. 45.

7 Paul Rodmell, *Opera in the British Isles, 1875–1918*, London and New York: Routledge (2013), p. 234.

8 Cited by Rodmell, *ibid.*

9 Jay, 'Ink Slingers', *op cit.*

10 F.C. Collinge published ten compositions as F. Channon in the *Detroit Abend-Post* between 24 December 1916 and 3 March 1918, and three compositions in *Der Deutsche Correspondent* between 22 April 1917 and 24 June 1917.

11 F.C. Collinge, 'Adolescence', *Belwin Folio of Characteristic Concert Pieces*, New York: Belwin (1917), pp. 13–15, Silent Film Sound & Music Archive: <http://www.sfsma.org/ARK/22915/tag/collinge/> (accessed 27/11/2017).

12 [Lucile Fletcher], 'Serious Music on the Columbia Broadcasting System: A Survey of Series, Soloists and Special Performances from 1927 through 1938', New York: Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., p. 2 (c1939). Unpublished type-script.

13 Jay, 'Ink Slingers', *op cit.*

14 F.C. Collinge's parental background has not been traced, but a profile piece in the *Charlotte Observer* (cited by Alex Jay), mentions that he, 'has been an orphan as long as he can remember', *Charlotte Observer*, 24 July 1932.

15 Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: America Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926–1931*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press (1999), pp. 1–18.

16 'Patricia Collinge', *Reel Classics: the classic movie site*, <http://www.reelclassics.com/Actresses/Collinge/collinge-bio.htm> (accessed 28/11/2017).

17 *Radio Personalities, ibid.*, p. 45.