



Krazy and Ignatz, 1927-1928: Love Letters in Ancient Brick

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This volume is one of a long-term plan to chronologically reprint strips from the prime of Herriman's career, most of which have not seen print since originally running in newspapers 75 years ago. Each volume is edited by the San Francisco Cartoon Art Museum's Bill Blackbeard, the world's foremost authority on early 20th Century American comic strips, and designed by *Jimmy Corrigan* author Chris Ware. In addition to the 104 full-page black-and-white Sunday strips from 1927 and 1928 (Herriman did not use color until 1935), the book includes introductions by Blackbeard, vaudeville historian Ben Schwartz and reproductions of rare Herriman ephemera from Ware's own extensive collection, as well as annotations and other notes by Ware and Blackbeard. *Krazy Kat* is a love story, focusing on the relationships of its three main characters. Krazy Kat adored Ignatz Mouse. Ignatz Mouse just tolerated Krazy Kat, except for recurrent onsets of targeting tumescence, which found expression in the fast delivery of bricks to Krazy's cranium. Offisa Pup loved Krazy and sought to protect "her" (Herriman always maintained that Krazy was genderless) by throwing Ignatz in jail. Each of the characters was ignorant of the others' true motivations, and this simple structure allowed Herriman to build entire worlds of meaning into the actions, building thematic depth and sweeping his readers up by the looping verbal rhythms of Krazy Co.'s unique dialogue.

Krazy and Ignatz, 1927-1928: Love Letters in Ancient Brick Details

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From Reader Review Krazy and Ignatz, 1927-1928: Love Letters in Ancient Brick for online ebook

Stephen says

I love comics, and I appreciate slapstick, but this didn't do it for me. I picked it up because of its reputation with fans, where I would normally pass on reprints of early 20th century comic strips. The thing that really throws me out of almost every single panel is the intentional misspellings. I just cannot wrap my head around how these characters are supposed to sound in my head. At least with something like the Katzenjammer Kids, I get that their mispronounced words are Eastern European immigrant and I can hear that in my mind.

Buck says

As T.S. Eliot stepped out of the Lascaux Caves, he was heard to mutter: 'Art never improves' – possibly the most profound thing he ever said.* Nevermind that it's demonstrably untrue: *Hamlet* is a HUGE improvement on *Gorboduc*, just as *The Wire* is way, way better than Hawaii Five-O (though how to explain the curious deadness of *My New BFF* as compared to the irrepressible sparkle, the 'hard, gem-like flame' of *The Simple Life*?)

Well, these comic strips are sort of like the Lascaux Caves of 20th century art. At the very moment when the conventions of the newspaper cartoon were being tentatively codified, Herriman was busy -- oh, God, here it comes, I can't help myself -- *subverting* them. Thus, in a strip from 1927(!) he has a character rewinding, 'as they do in the "movies"', to the first panel in order to find out what was said there. Or else he'll suddenly insert a visual non-sequitur just for the fun of it (in one such interlude, Kat and Ignatz disappear into a puddle of spilled ink, like Wile. E Coyote falling into one of those portable black holes he was always throwing around).

So was Herriman a visionary genius decades ahead of his time? I don't think so. I think he was a talented hack so deeply bored with the set of devices he'd been handed, so cruelly afflicted with the repetitive intellectual stress of having to think up, week after week, new ways for a mouse to brain a cat with a brick, that just for his own amusement, he started adding these little quirks and trills.

And the quirks are interesting, for a variety of historical and aesthetic reasons. Interesting, but not much more. The strips are pungent with period flavour; they move with a loopy comic rhythm; but they're not, to my taste, all that funny. But hey, let's face it, someday they'll be saying the same thing about *The Far Side* and *Calvin and Hobbes* (sorry, they will).

Ah, but as for Cathy, sweetest Cathy... age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety...

* But did he say that? A cursory web search suggests the story is apocryphal. But, damn it, *somebody* should have said it.

Mitch says

Perfect panels emerge from the idiosyncrasy. It looks like Herriman drew whatever kooky landscape came to mind, as often there is no background continuity. The ever-shifting background deemphasizes what does change, the characters' words.

Krazy's dialect charms, and the Spanish, whenever it is thrown in, firmly grounds the characters to the otherwise absent culture of Kokonino. The intermission panel plays with pace so that even your reading is disturbed.

Herriman's tampering with every element of the comic (even its reading experience) gives Krazy Kat its quirky tang. In concentrating all that is constant into the trope of the brick, Herriman creates a Sunday strip unpredictable, the highest feat for a comic strip artist. As for the dailies, I am unsure.

jared Moore says

"~There is a heppy lend fur fur away~"

Mike Jensen says

Sublime entertainment with K. Kat and I. Mouse. It must seem odd to state that Herriman was at the height of his powers whilst creating these fill-length pages since he was at the height for decades, but indeed he was. There are Shakespeare references, too. If you do not know the delights of KRAZY KAT, enrich your life with this book.

Rob McMonigal says

Another two years of brick-tossing mayhem by this duo that had to inspire Tom and Jerry, Sylvester and Tweedy, and other such combinations. The writing seems a little bit sharper this time, as Herriman uses a bit more wordplay to flesh out the jokes.

Things like "Joe Stork, Purveyor of Progeny to Prince and Proletariat" portrayed on the page show that this strip was definitely ahead of its time on a comics page that's always preferred the "Ack" of Cathy to the fine intellectual interplay of Zippy the Pinhead and pals. In its day, I'm sure it stood out rather like "Pearls before Swine" does whenever you open the funny pages. In fact, the comparison holds rather well if you read both fairly close together which I did recently.

There is the slight problem of the gag getting a bit old over time, but Herriman does an admirable job of varying the joke, my favorite being the time Ignatz robs an archaeological dig to get a brick to hurl at Krazy's Kraniaum. But there's also the "door mouse" (literally), rubber bricks, and other visual gags that set this material ahead of what was in the previous volume.

Again, while this might not appeal so much to the casual fan, if you are into old comics, and I certainly am, this is definitely worth grabbing to read. Just watch out for flying bricks! (Library, 02/08)

Trebbys Take: Definitely happy they collected these, a good read for any comics fan.

Emily says

I don't think I will ever love a comic more than this one.
