



# Incorrigibles and Innocents

Constructing Childhood and Citizenship in  
Progressive Era Comics

by Lara Saguisag

## DESCRIPTION

**Nominated for Eisner Award | Winner of the 2018 Ray and Pat Browne Award | Winner of the Charles Hatfield Book Prize from the CSS**

Histories and criticism of comics note that comic strips published in the Progressive Era were dynamic spaces in which anxieties about race, ethnicity, class, and gender were expressed, perpetuated, and alleviated. The proliferation of comic strip children—white and nonwhite, middle-class and lower class, male and female—suggests that childhood was a subject that fascinated and preoccupied Americans at the turn of the century. Many of these strips, including R.F. Outcault's *Hogan's Alley* and *Buster Brown*, Rudolph Dirks's *The Katzenjammer Kids* and Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* were headlined by child characters. Yet no major study has explored the significance of these verbal-visual representations of childhood. *Incorrigibles and Innocents* addresses this gap in scholarship, examining the ways childhood was depicted and theorized in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century comic strips. Drawing from and building on histories and theories of childhood, comics, and Progressive Era conceptualizations of citizenship and nationhood, Lara Saguisag demonstrates that child characters in comic strips expressed and complicated contemporary notions of who had a right to claim membership in a modernizing, expanding nation.

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