

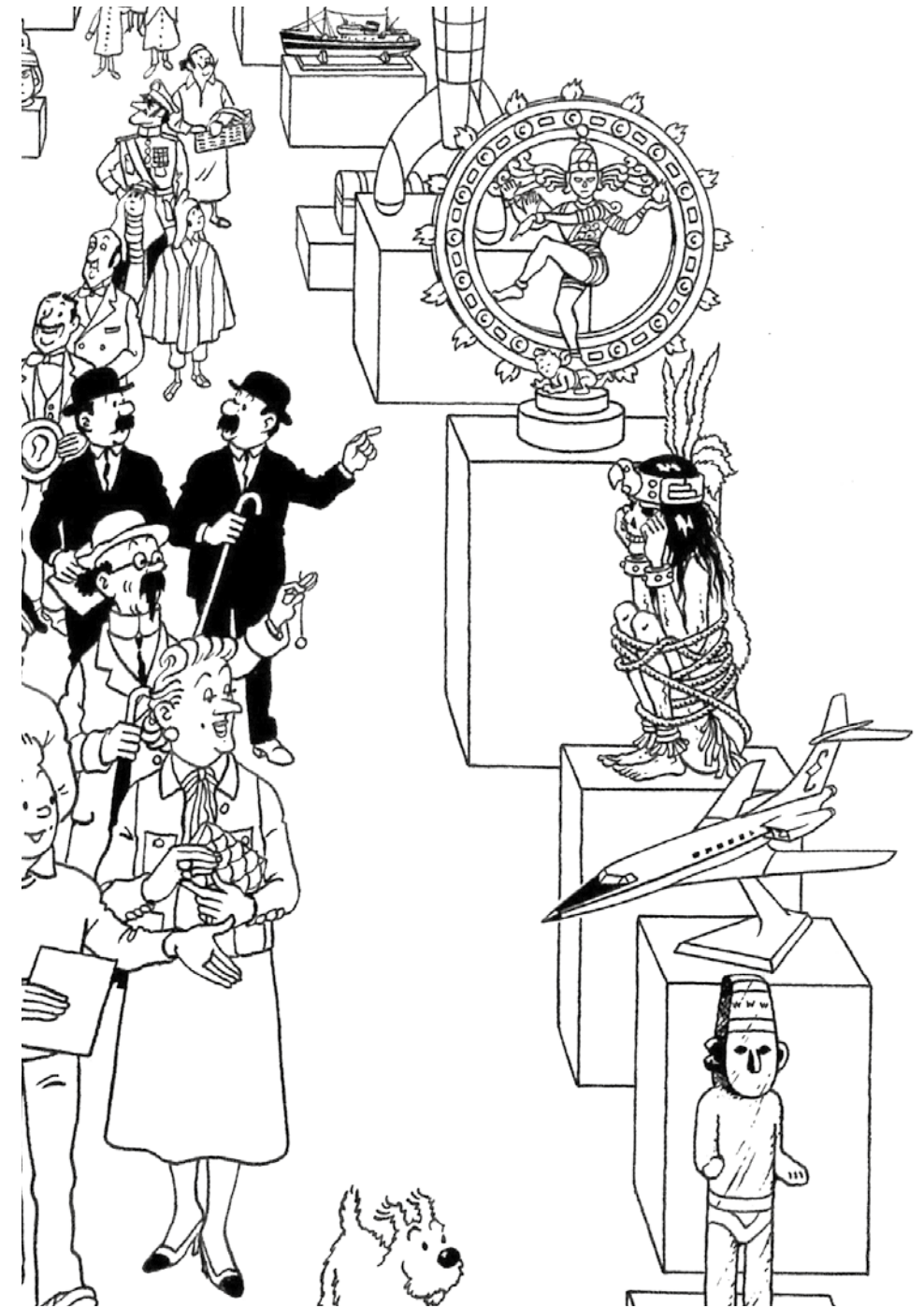
Research Field Station #5
Tintin



by Steven Gerrard

"If my parents are to be believed, I was never really well behaved unless I had a pencil and a piece of paper in my hands. When I was seven I used to make little sketches about a street kid. I could only tell a story through the medium of drawing. In class, during maths lessons, I filled my exercise books with doodles, which I was already laying out in horizontal sequences. This is how it all began..."

Georges Remi (Hergé)¹



Who was Hergé?

Hello. I am a Tintin fan. I hope you are, too. And if you aren't, I hope you will be after you have seen this exhibition.

Ever since I was a kid, and when I was first introduced to the adventures of the ginger-quiffed, young, brave reporter and his white fox-terrier Snowy, I felt that we had something in common. It was not just the red hair. I stayed at home. Tintin was a globetrotter.

He was adventurous. I was not. He had a dog. I did not, although when I did get it, I called it Snowy. Luckily, the dog was white. I saw in Tintin an underdog. That is why I loved his adventures. When I saw where Tintin travelled – the Andes, Russia, America, and even to the moon – I knew I wanted to follow, even to outer space.

I have been to *some* of Tintin's destinations. The moon is not one of them. It was obvious. Tintin was me.

I was Tintin.

I have great pleasure in guiding you through, however briefly, the Tintin story. If you are intrigued and want a further in-depth look, I would suggest three sources for you. The first is Michael Farr's *Tintin: The Complete Companion*, which goes through Tintin creator Hergé's work on a book-by-book approach, and is an excellent piece of art in itself. The second book is Michal Daubert's (trans. by Michael Farr) wonderful *Tintin: The Art of Hergé*, from which many of the illustrations in this exhibition derive. Both, in their own way, show the detailed, painstaking approach to Tintin that Hergé and his team of illustrators undertook, and both clearly illustrate the beauty of this sequential art form, the *claire-ligne* (clear-line) for which Hergé is justifiably famous. And then, of course, there are the books themselves. In the large cabinet (and printed in this booklet) you will find these books laid out in the order in which they were published. You will also find one panel alongside each that I think is representative of the book as a whole.

The story of Tintin is quite amazing, despite its astonishingly banal beginnings. But, it also shows just how these simple, clear-line drawings caught the mood and imagination of millions. From starting off as a few illustrations in a Catholic-run Sunday newspaper's supplement, through to collections of the comic, to great exhibitions and conferences, and even to the megaphone of Hollywood director Steven Spielberg, Tintin has remained *the* literary icon of the 20th Century. Now finding his feet on new electronic platforms, Tintin is even more accessible than ever before. So, let us begin on taking a trip through Hergé's adventures of Tintin...



Etterbeeck, Belgium. May 22, 1907. 7.30 a.m. Georges-Prosper Remi is born. You should remember those initials: G-R. Reverse them, and that is where Hergé got his name: R-G. Say it with a Belgian accent, and you will hear: R-G... Hergé. Here is the man himself, alongside his creation. (1)

The son of Alexis Remi and Elisabeth Dufour, a boy's outfitter and housewife respectively, Georges (as his name was shortened to) was born into a lower middle-class, Bourgeois Belgium family. His early life befitted the Bourgeois lifestyle. Whilst his parents were never found mingling in the hoi-polloi of discrete Belgian society, their Catholic outlook coupled with a comfortable lifestyle, ensured that Georges was always nicely dressed, and early photographs clearly indicate the status that his family were afforded. The two images are of George dressed as a Belgian child circa 1912, and one with his elegant mother, Elisabeth, circa 1914. (2&3)



Georges was an industrious pupil. He was hard-working, diligent, polite and courteous. His early schoolbooks demonstrated that he had an aptitude for drawing, and his scribbles and scrawls reflected the world he saw around him.

The boy had talent. His early drawings, now mostly consigned to archives within the Hergé archives held at Musée d'Hergé, Rue du Labrador, 26 Louvain-la-Neuve, Brussels, were mostly recorded from daily life. The buildings, the streets he walked through, his friends, the countryside, and even drawings of Belgian soldiers marching off to fight in the trenches of World War One adorned his books. But they formed the backbone to Georges' curiosity at not only recording the world around him, but also fashioned within himself a desire to know more about the world that wasn't part of his daily life.

In 1921, Georges joined the Boy Scouts at St. Boniface College. Due to his fastidious nature and resourcefulness, he was given the moniker "Curious Fox". He was made a patrol leader of the Squirrels, and recorded the life of an adventurous Boy Scout through his simple and clear line-drawings of *Tracking Game* (4). He found that the life of a Boy Scout was an adventure in itself. He learnt to have strong Christian morals, and his yearning for travel was granted when the movement allowed him to visit France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Austria. They never went to Russia, nor the Belgian Congo. Hergé would save them for Tintin's first two adventures. He even dressed as a Native American, and drew his friends as them (5 & 6), and it is not difficult to see how Hergé saw in himself not just the spirit of adventure that these Native Americans had (albeit from caricatured forms through Western dime novels and early film serials), but that they were underdogs, too. It was quickly apparent that not only was his skills as an illustrator improving, but that his fastidious attention to detail would eventually form the backbone to the realism found in his Tintin comics.



New Horizons: *Totor*, Graphic Design and *Le Petit Vingtième*

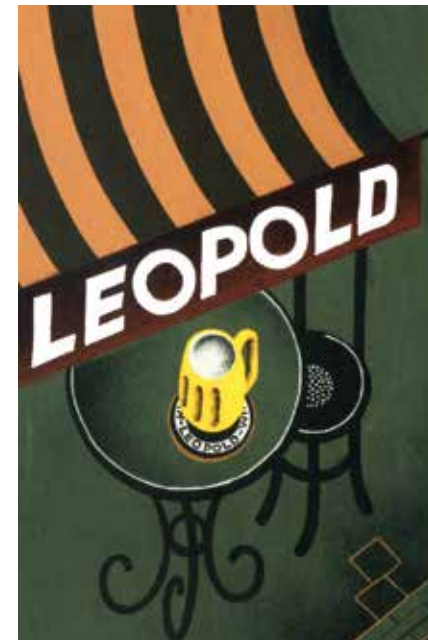
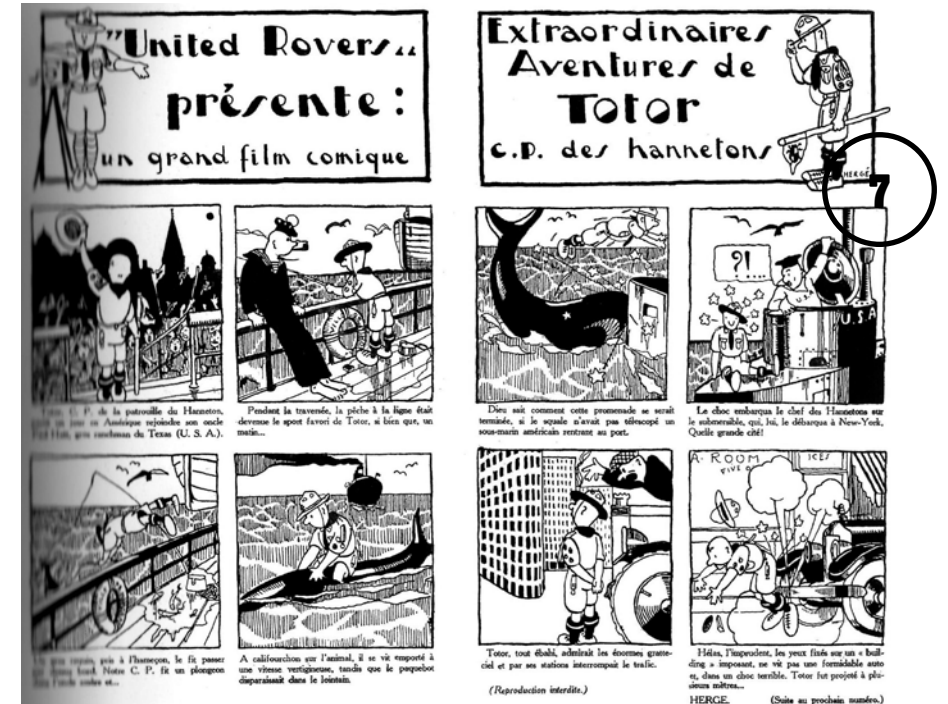
It was not long before Hergé was contributing to the Scout magazine, *Le Boy-scout Belge*. He adopted the pseudonym, Hergé, and admitted to Jacques Chancel that:

I thought that one day perhaps, after much practice, I would become a good artist. Whilst waiting to become one, I hid behind a pseudonym, saying to myself that perhaps one day I would sign my real name."

Hergé

He was nineteen when, in July 1926, his first comic strip was published. It was called *The Extraordinary Adventures of Totor, Patrol Leader of the Maybugs* (7). Advertised as 'un grand film comique', it is not difficult to see early cinema's impact on Hergé. Whilst *Totor* is undeniably a proto-Tintin, where he is only missing his iconic quiff, the story has comic and adventurous aspects, and it does look fairly cinematic. Even though most of the 'dialogue' is placed beneath each individual image, much as intertitles were interspersed with dialogue in silent cinema, there are occasional 'speech bubbles' which contain more-animated exclamations than words. Again, this is almost cinematic in its use of images as a way of communicating meaning – this time, a comical one.

Hergé also worked for the Catholic-leaning daily newspaper, *Le Vingtième Siècle*. It was here in 1928 that he began to create advertisements for various products, such as *Sorange* or local business like Leopold's Brasserie (8) (1933). What these clearly showed was that Hergé had talent.



Tintin Arrives and the Adventures Begin

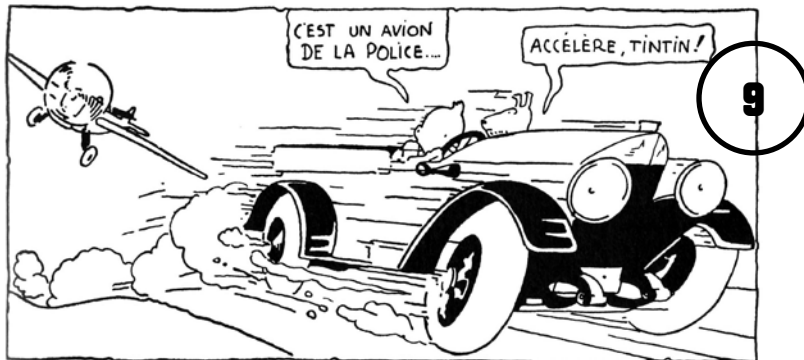
The director of *Le Vingtième Siècle*, Father Norbert Wallez, asked Hergé to run the children's Sunday supplement, *Le Petit Vingtième*. This would have children's games, puzzles, crosswords, and educational articles. It also led to Hergé refining and streamlining Totor's adventures to take on a more-Catholic, Belgium-focused slant.

When *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* made its debut on January 10, 1929, Hergé took as its inspiration the work of Joseph Douillet, entitled *Moscou sans voiles* (*Moscow Unveiled*). Douillet's writing denounced the Communist regime, and as the Catholic newspaper and its owners were anti-Communist too, so Hergé felt that

*"I was convinced I was on the right track. And then I had the blessing of my director..."*ⁱⁱⁱ

You will see an illustration about these anti-Communist sentiments later in this exhibition.

Read on a weekly basis, this earliest of Tintin stories has chases (in which Tintin's hair gets swept back for the very first time – and remains that way in every story since! – see Illus. 9), jokes, and broad swipes at the Communist regime. Despite the naïve treatment of Communism and the Communists, the adventure is genuinely exciting, and places the hero and Snowy in numerous precarious situations. The simple black and white drawings, aided with speech bubbles, clearly show a development in Hergé's refinement of his style. Gone were the detailed drawings and 'under' captions. Replacing them were slapstick jokes mixed into the social commentary that Wallez demanded Hergé write.



Tintin in the Land of the Soviets was a smash hit with children and adults alike. It soon became apparent that the Sunday supplement was quickly outselling its weekday counterpart. Father Wallez decided that after Tintin caught the train at the end of his Russian adventure, an "authentic" return to Belgium should be celebrated. On May 8th 1930, a Boy Scout dressed in Tintin's Russian outfit arrived at the Gare du Nord railway station in Brussels carrying Snowy in his arms. There were hundreds of Tintin fans whooping and celebrating their hero's triumphant return to his homeland (10). Wallez knew that Hergé's Tintin could help keep his newspaper afloat, and decided to create a limited edition 500-copy 'book' of Tintin's first adventure. Individually numbered and signed, the books sold out within days.

Hergé's satirical sweep at the Soviet state was very much of its time. He had not been to Russia, and had only used one reference source for his material. Hergé's main target was Soviet propaganda's attempt at persuading the rest of the world that their economy was booming. Another target was the Russian secret police, the OGPU. Whilst Hergé never really returned to making sweeping broadsides at economies of the world in such a blatant way again (although he did touch upon them in *The Blue Lotus*, *Cigars of the Pharaoh*, and later adventures such as *Tintin and the Picaros*), he did focus on the battle between good and evil, and especially between corrupting forces and Tintin's ideals of fair play and justice, as seen in later outings such as the satirical *King Ottakar's Sceptre* in which an entire country's regime is held to ransom, and the Cold War paranoia of *The Calculus Affair*, where the whole world's safety is at stake.



Originally, Hergé wanted Tintin's next adventure to take place in America. However, Father Wallez coerced him into choosing Russia, instead:

In reality, I would have preferred to send Tintin directly to America following his return from Russia. But Father Wallez persuaded me to start with the Congo: 'Our beautiful colony, which needs our support more than ever, and which we must help by encouraging colonial vocations.' Tarantara! Tarantara! It didn't inspire me much, but I gave in to his arguments, and off we went to the Congo! I came up with the story through the lens of the era, that is to say in a typically paternalistic spirit, which I can confirm was the general spirit at the time.

Hergé^{iv}

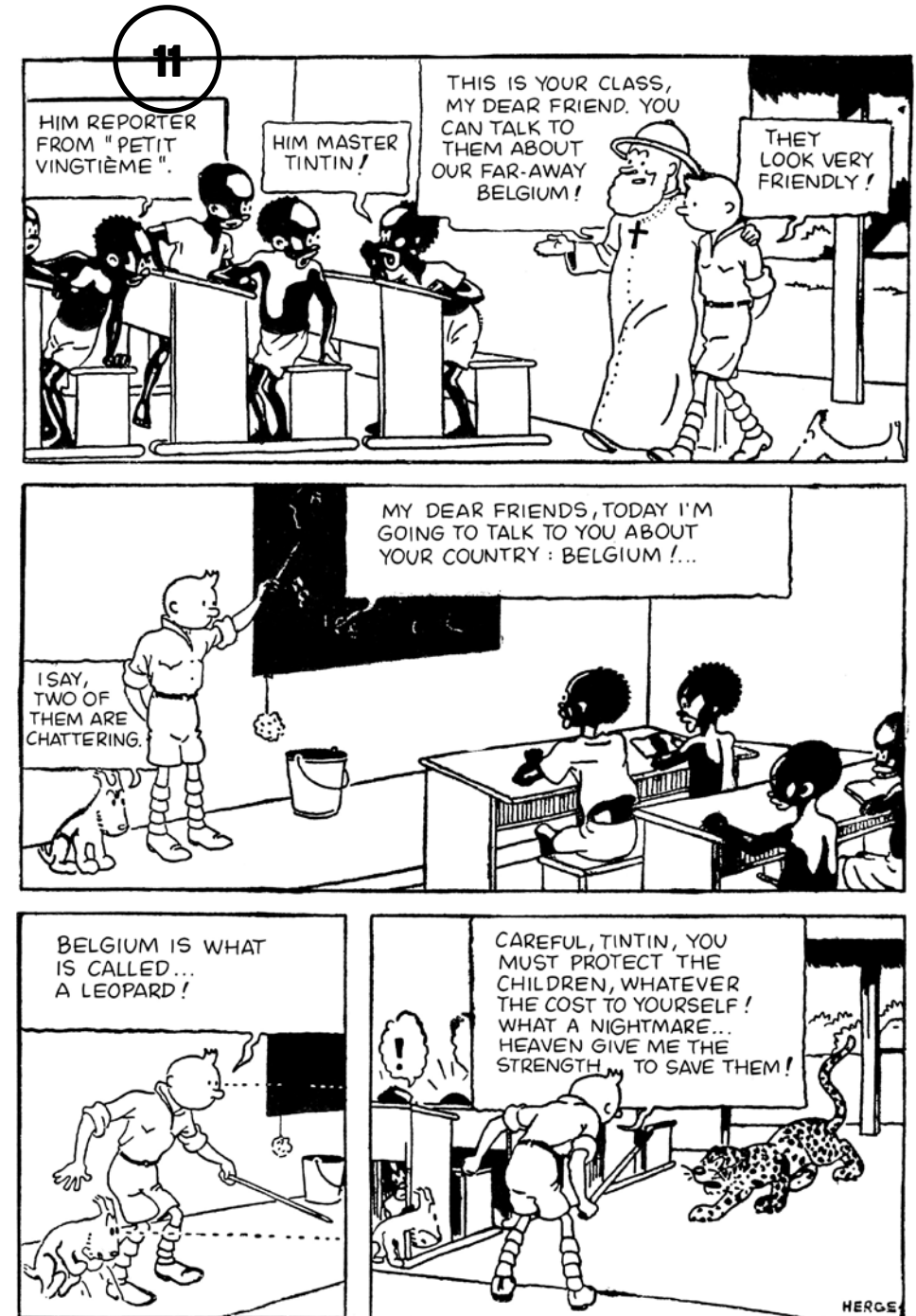
Tintin in the Congo (1930-31) was written at the time of Belgium's colonial days. Belgium's empire consisted of two main areas: Ruanda-Urundi and Belgian-Congo. Wallez wanted Hergé to concentrate on promoting Catholic Belgian values in this new Tintin escapade. Daubert called the book "naively paternalistic" in its treatment of the African colony that was forged by Belgium's King Leopold II, and it was only as late as 2012 that the charge of racism was rejected by the Brussels Court of Appeals.^v You can judge for yourselves, either by looking at the panel later in this exhibition, or reading the book itself – now coloured, and rare to find in its black and white form.

Hergé was plagued with accusations of racism regarding the story. He constantly denied these allegations, and that he said it was the prevalent Belgian attitude towards their colonies that seeped into his latest Tintin escapade:

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, including thinking I'm a racist. That's the way it is! I acknowledge that I drew Tintin in the Congo, but this was 1930. I didn't know anything about the country except what people told me at the time: 'Africans are great big children...Thank goodness for them that we're there! Etc..' And so I drew Africans based on these criteria [] Later on, in The Red Sea Sharks, even if the characters talk petit nègre (a French expression meaning to talk like an African), I think Tintin makes his anti-racist sentiments very clear, don't you? In a nutshell, Soviets and Congo were 'sins of my youth'. That's not to say that I disown them, but in the end, if I had to do them again, I would do everything differently for sure, and then all my sins would be forgiven!

Hergé^{vi}

The adventure is a series of simple exploits, in which Tintin hunts, shoots and kills tigers, lions and other beasts of the plains. At one point, he makes a snake swallow its own tail, whilst he blows a rhino up as it is impervious to his bullets! He also teaches Belgian ideology to the indigenous people, whilst battling slave traders. With hindsight, perhaps the adventure is naïve and paternalistic (11).



To celebrate the success of the adventure, Wallez again tried the same promotional gimmick as he had done the previous year. On this occasion, Tintin arrived at the station wearing a pith helmet, and addressed an adoring crowd from the balcony of the *Le Vingtième Siècle* offices in Brussels on 9th July 1931. The crowds numbered in their thousands. Tintin was a success.

As the Tintin phenomena took hold, so Hergé began to broaden his plucky reporter’s scope. The next adventure saw Tintin in early-30s Chicago, battling gangsters (clearly modelled on Al Capone and his cronies), riding the wide-open plains, and clinging on for dear life to the side of a speeding motorcar. What was immediately noticeable about this adventure was threefold. Hergé’s drawing style had improved over a short period of time. His use of space and depth of field are breath-taking to behold; secondly, that his approach to realism – in his drawings of buildings, cars, fashions, etc. – was being honed to near-perfection; and, finally, that his satirical eye was aiming its barbs in a much more developed way. *Tintin in America* was a portrait of America that was “exciting, hectic, corrupt, fully automated and dangerous, one where the dollar is all powerful.”^{vii}

In other words, it was just as Hollywood portrayed it.

The Players

Every good adventure story relies on its characters. Hergé knew this. He felt that Tintin, his alter ego, was a perfect vehicle to promote his own spirit of adventure. Hergé also knew that his intrepid boy-reporter should have a companion. This became Snowy, a brave, talking fox terrier. They were inseparable. Through the first eight adventures it was just the two of them. And then, in *The Crab with the Golden Claws*, they met the loud, exclamatory, and often drunk, but loyal to the end, Captain Haddock. For the rest of the completed adventures, these three became the strongest of friends, allies fighting for justice around the world. Whilst they may have occasionally fallen out – as most best friends do – they remained steadfastly loyal to one another.

Tintin:

So, with his instantly recognisable – and iconic – profile, who is Tintin? Yes, he is a boy reporter, working for a Catholic newspaper. Yes, he becomes an adventurer. But who is he? And how old is he? Perhaps he is his creator’s alter ego. Like Hergé Tintin has no first name, nor no last name. Perhaps he is 19 years old – constantly. One thing we do know, is that he has no family, and that he lived at 26 Labrador Road, Brussels in a small, but tidily kept flat. Down the road was a flea market in which he picked up a model of the sailing ship, Unicorn. And he drank tonic water. His preferred wardrobe was plus-fours, a brown tweed jacket, a blue sweater, and a trench coat. However, he was also a master of disguise and turned his hand to appearing as a Russian peasant, a cowboy, a Chinese citizen, a Scot in a kilt, and even an Inca. It would appear that Tintin is very much a blurred character. What do you think?

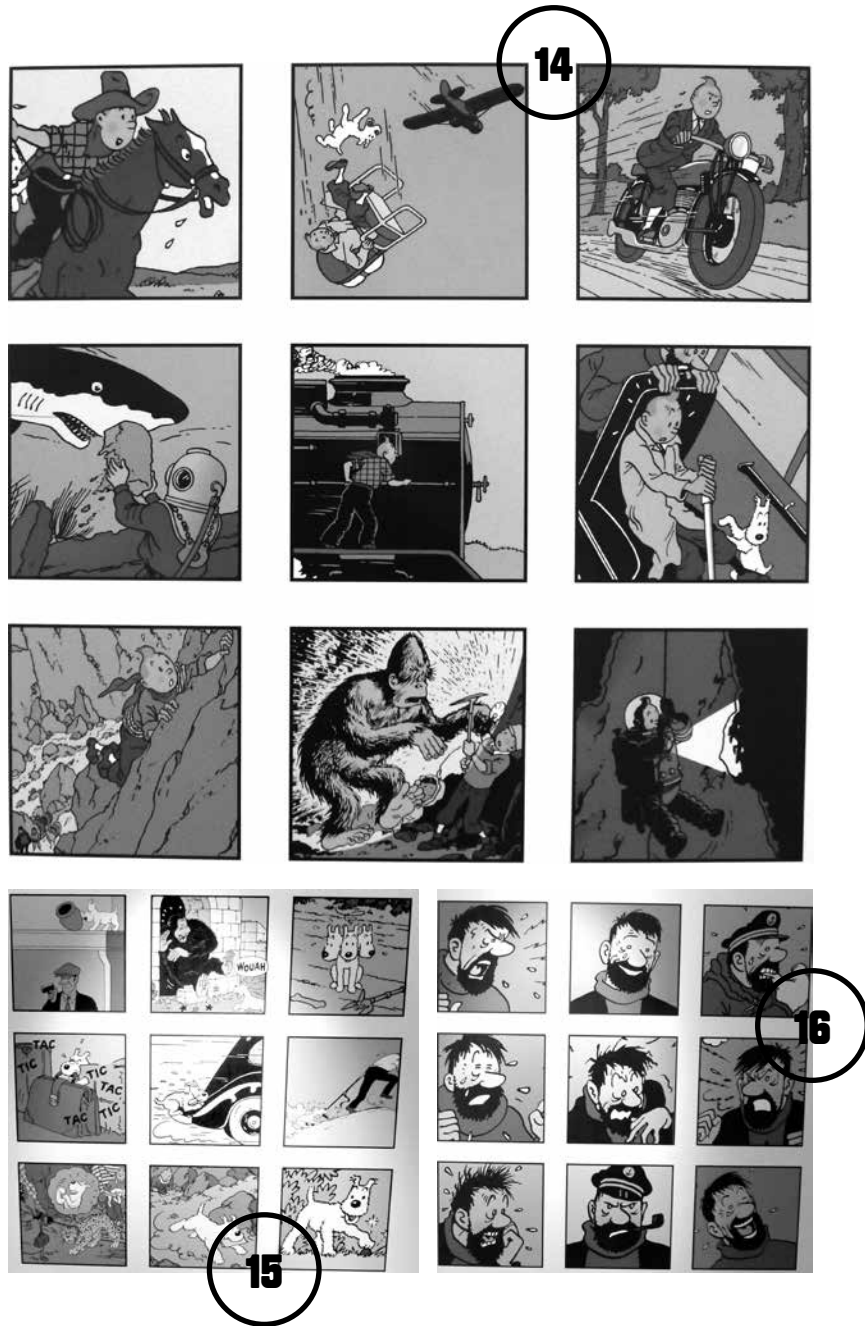
Tintin as Nobody (12)

Tintin’s face is made up of a very few simple features. It is almost expressionless. As it is neutral, it becomes the ideal recipient for the emotions felt and projected by you, the reader.

Tintin as Everyman (13)

Depending on his circumstances, and the adventures he finds himself in, Tintin can be young or old. He can be Scandinavian or Mediterranean, African or Asian. If he can be all these things, then he becomes a universal character. This makes him an Everyman. If Tintin is an Everyman, he is also you. You are Tintin!





Tintin the Adventurer! (14)

Tintin is the symbol of youth, vigour, courage and integrity. He is a daredevil who succeeds in everything he takes on... while you, his readers, are sitting comfortably in your seats!

Snowy the Hero (15)

Snowy barks: "Woah! Woooooah!" But he also talks. Tintin's completely-white fox terrier has genuine moments of human articulation. He talks to Tintin, comments on the action, and speaks to him as an equal. Even though Tintin often doesn't reply, it is quite obvious that there is some form of telepathic link between dog and owner. Snowy adores Tintin, and vice versa. Such is their bond, that Snowy has often saved Tintin's (and others) fate. In *The Black Island* he barks at the giant gorilla, Ranko who is about to kill Tintin; in *King Ottakar's Sceptre*, Snowy finds and returns the titular object to King Muskar XII; when Tintin falls into a crevasse in his Tibetan adventure, Snowy howls loudly enough to attract Haddock; and, when Tintin lies dying in the Himalayas, exhausted from his trek to find his lost friend, Chang, it is Snowy who takes Tintin's note of rescue to the monastery. Beneath his disguise of an amusing sidekick, and despite the fact that he likes to drink whisky, Snowy is a real hero. He almost always saves the day!

Captain Haddock (16)

"The Captain? What does he want? The old drunkard!" said Allan, the First Mate of the *Karaboudjan*, on p.14 of *The Crab with the Golden Claws*. One page later, and Tintin and this old drunkard – Captain Haddock – have met. The Captain, drunk on whisky, somehow helps Tintin escape from Allan, and a lifelong friendship is formed. Haddock became Tintin's indispensable sidekick, and the two are never separated. His frequent outbursts of "Bashi-Bazouks!", "Ten thousand thundering typhoons!", and "Billions of blue blistering barnacles!" coupled alongside such other personal-insults as "Troglodytes! Iconoclasts! Freshwater politicians!" are worthy of an academic work in themselves, but they come to represent a man who, like Tintin, fights in the causes he believes in. Whilst Tintin remains calm, Haddock does not. His face and body constantly prove that he is a passionate, emotive erupting Vesuvius. As such, he remains Tintin's equal, but a lot louder!

Tintin and Realism

It was clear that Tintin was a global reporter. Hergé had never really travelled too far from Belgium, and so his first few adventures were based on what he had read about, or what he had seen at the movies, in newspaper reportage, glossy magazines, and travelogues. However, as his confidence grew, it became clear that Hergé was outgrowing the small office he occupied at the newspaper. Whilst he was still based at the offices of Le Petit Vingtième and the later Le Soir (Le Petit Vingtième was shut down during World War Two), Hergé completed the following Tintin adventures: *Cigars of the Pharaoh* (1932-34), *The Blue Lotus* (1934-35), *The Broken Ear* (1935-37), *The Black Island* (1937-38), *King Ottakar's Sceptre* (1938-39), *The Crab with the Golden Claws* (1940-41), *The Shooting Star* (1941-42), *The Secret of the Unicorn* (1942-43), *Red Rackham's Treasure* (1943), *The Seven Crystal Balls* (1943-46), *Prisoners of the Sun* (1946-48) and *Land of Black Gold* (1948-50).

By 1950, Hergé needed to expand his workforce and his place of work if he was to keep up with the demands that Tintin brought. What was once a cottage industry had now become a business success. Demand for Tintin was soaring. The public's insatiable need for Tintin's escapist adventures took its toll on Hergé. He suffered bouts of anxiety about his work throughout his career, and he simply could not manage it on his own. He had colleagues to help him: other artists, colourists, and designers contributed to the whole Tintin process. However, Hergé still controlled Tintin. It was his. Tintin was him.

There are certainly many things that my colleagues can do without me and even much better than me. But to breathe life into Tintin, to breathe life into Haddock and Calculus, the Thom(p)sons and all the others; I really believe that I'm the only one who can do it. Tintin and all the other characters are me [.]. They are my eyes, my feelings, my lungs, my guts! It's a very personal kind of work, in the same vein as the work of a painter or novelist: it's not an industry! If others were to take up Tintin, they might do it better, or they might do it worse. But one thing is for sure; they would do it differently and so, straight away, it wouldn't be Tintin anymore!

Hergé^{viii}

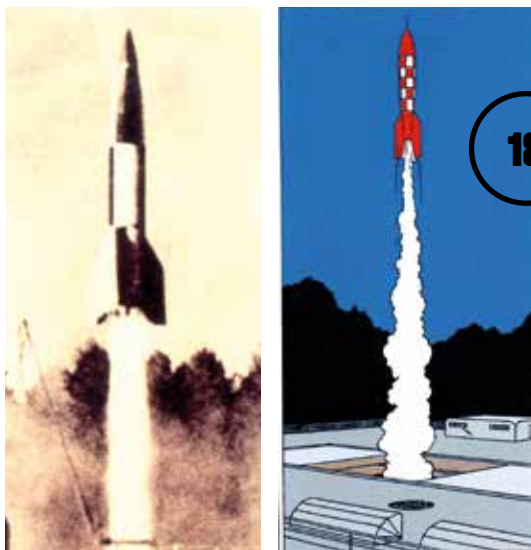
He took a gamble. He founded the Studio Hergé. Here, Hergé and his collaborators – including Jacques Martin, Bob de Moor and Roger Leloup – could re-draw, re-style and re-imagine the older Tintin adventures for a new audience. The move to more-apposite premises meant that the adventures, whilst always bold and striking, could become much more 'epic' in their scope and imagination than before. (17)



It was also imperative that Hergé's stories remained current and topical. Whilst *The Seven Crystal Balls* and *Prisoners of the Sun* were adventures that incorporated Inca curses and a trip to the Amazon rainforests, *The Land of Black Gold* was a satire on European nations rivalling each other for oil supplies across the world. For Hergé, there had to be something real amongst the fantastic. This narrative realism helped to ground Tintin in the everyday events of the world around him. For example, *The Calculus Affair* is a Cold War satire, whilst *The Red Sea Sharks* was a combination of war, espionage and slave trade shenanigans.

To help with this sense of realism, his team of collaborators – Hergé included – would plunder images from magazines, books, and other materials and store them, alongside their own drawings and sketches, in the studio's archives. These would prove an invaluable source of material that served as a backdrop to the adventures.

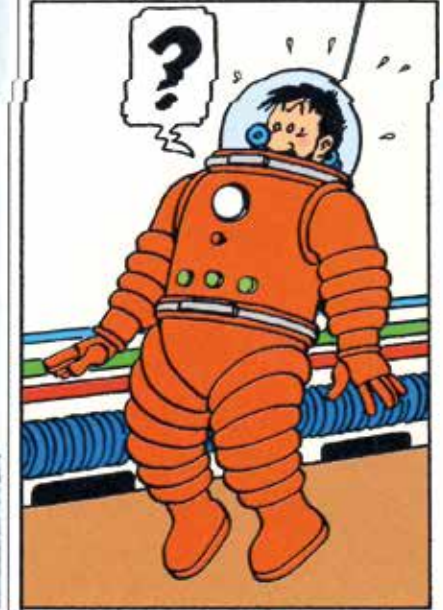
Hergé took this striving for realism to new and unbridled heights of sophistication. For the studio's first work, a two-parter called *Destination Moon and Explorers on the Moon*, the team went all-out for realism. They were twenty years ahead of the American's first landing on the moon, and as such had to look at both past and contemporary rocket designs for inspiration. To get a genuinely authentic 'feel' for this adventure, and bearing in mind the scope that they had conceived it on, the whole team studied the latest design plans for rockets, nuclear reactors, radiation suits, gadgets, and even the work of Werner von Braun's German V-2 rocket became Professor Calculus' X-FLR-6, that takes our gallant heroes out into the cosmos (18). Hergé looked everywhere to make sure his story looked real. From Captain Haddock's space suit to Tintin's sleeping bunk, there was no scrimping on the attention to detail. Even X-FLR-6's Control Cabin was 'mocked-up' as a model, so that Hergé and his illustrators could get everything perfect. (19)



18



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19



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Of course, no-one had ever visited the moon at this point, and so Hergé had to rely on the imagination of others to help him. The illustrations of Chesley Bonestell's lunar landscapes certainly provided inspiration for Hergé, and during the course of the second book in the adventure, they add an eerie, extra dimension to the story. (20)

Of course, this quest for realism had always been there, in its own way, from Tintin's early days. Hergé's original drawings as a young boy clearly showed that he wanted to capture a particular moment in time in as realistic a way as possible. Therefore, his attention to detail and his meticulous, painstaking awareness of getting things right, meant that even a small detail would have to be scrutinised and corrected to guarantee a sense of authenticity.

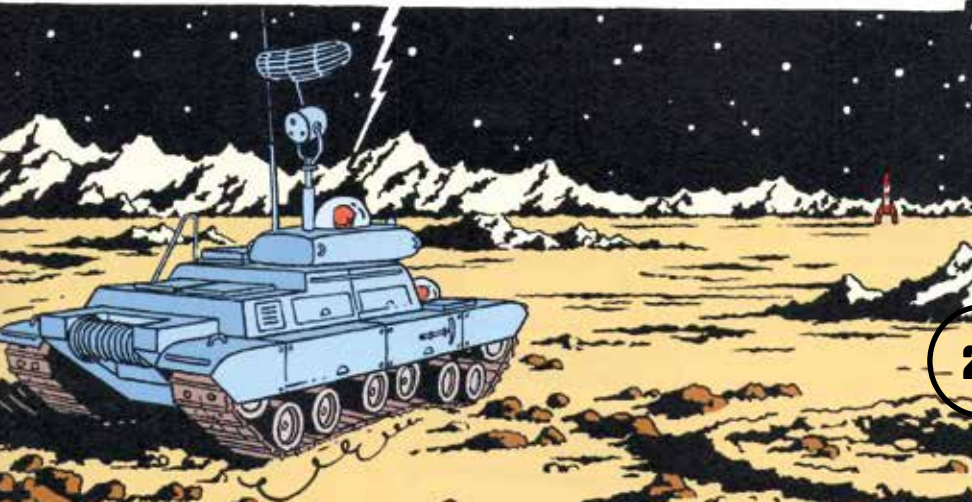
And so, Studio Hergé continued until 1986. During this period, there were another nine fully completed Tintin adventures, and one that remained tantalisingly incomplete at the time of Hergé's death in 1983. They were: *Destination Moon* (1950-52), *Explorers on the Moon* (1952-3), *The Calculus Affair* (1954-6), *The Red Sea Sharks* (1956-58), *Tintin in Tibet* (1958-9), *The Castafiore Emerald* (1961-62), *Flight 714 to Sydney* (1966-67), *Tintin and the Picaros* (1975-76), and *Tintin and Alph-Art* (published in 1986 in incomplete form).

From the very beginning, Tintin was a reporter (although this idea was never truly followed up after the first few adventures, where he reported back to his Catholic newspaper readers). His job was to chronicle the world. To do so, he had to travel. When Hergé began his Tintin stories, the world still seemed a large place. In today's climate of constant e-mail bombardment, mobile phones, satellite television and texts, the world seems much smaller. But for Hergé, a lower middle-class boy, who dreamed of adventures outside Belgium, Tintin would become his 'eyes' on the world, and so through him, his readers could also travel to exotic places.

And travel Tintin did. Through the course of his adventures, he visited the following places (in book order): Russia (Moscow), Belgian-Congo, America (Chicago), Egypt (Cairo), China (Shanghai), Latin America (the fictional city of San Theodoros), Scotland, Middle Europe (the fictional countries of Syldavia and Borduria), Morocco, the Arctic Ocean, Belgium street markets, the Caribbean, La Rochelle and Peru (Callao), the Amazonian rainforest and high into the Andes, Syldavia (and its capital, Sprodj) and outer space, the moon, Geneva, the Arab peninsula and Mecca, Tibet and the Himalayas, Marlinspike Hall, Djakarta and an Indonesian island and Sydney, Latin America and San Theodoros.

But what remained at the very heart of these adventures was the idea of friendship. Tintin, Captain Haddock, and of course, Snowy remained friends all throughout these adventures. But they were helped and hindered by others along the way...

Tank calling Base... We're returning at reduced speed. We can see the rocket... Can you hear me?...



The Supporting Cast

Although the adventures primarily focused on our three intrepid adventurers, they had to be helped occasionally. This was done to not only pad out the adventures into a more-rounded and believable world, but also to invest the stories with a series of characters that were, whilst caricatured and stereotyped, helped to aid the narrative progression of the story. After all, Tintin couldn't tackle everything himself, could he? (21)

So, when he needed to travel underwater to search the sunken galleon Unicorn, who else could help him but Professor Calculus. Introduced in *Red Rackham's Treasure*, his huge forehead, tufts of dark hair, moustache and goatee, oscillating pendulum, horn-rimmed glasses and a stiff collar, make Cuthbert the archetypal scientist. But don't let his appearance fool you. His fearsome intellect created a rocket to take people to the moon and back; he created a sonic weapon that could destroy buildings, and with Calca-colour invented television thirty years too late. Hard of hearing, and often prone to misinterpreting others sentences, he often burst into violent action when Captain Haddock asked him "Are you acting the goat?" Thankfully, this was infrequently done. (22)

Tintin also needed help from the police. Finding inspiration in *Le Mirroir*, and linking them to the sublime slapstick of Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy and Charlie Chaplin, two incompetent policemen – the Thom(p)son twins, did on occasion help Tintin out. This was between them handcuffing themselves together, getting frightened at the outline of their bodies in an x-ray machine, using a divining rod to find Tintin who was about four thousand miles away at the time, swallowing pills that made their hair grow and change colour at a moment's notice, and arresting the wrong people. Ah well! Their hearts and attitudes were in the right place. (23 & 24)



21



22



23



24



Alongside these, there was Nestor, who was originally the villainous Bird Brothers butler, but who gladly stayed on at Marlinspike Hall – Haddock’s ancestral seat – when the Captain moved in. Nestor was the sublime majordomo. He welcomed visitors, answered telephone calls (usually wrongly addressed to Mr. Cutts, the town’s butcher), polished antiques, and both served and drank the Captain’s Loch Lomond Whisky as he did so. (25)

Who could forget the Rock Bottom Insurance Salesman, Jolyon Wagg? Insufferable, egotistical, boring, and a real pain in the neck, Wagg causes consternation to Captain Haddock and Tintin in the most unlikely of situations. He barges into Marlinspike Hall during a thunderstorm, invites his entire family to stay, arranges a car rally in the grounds of the stately pile, and he even appears to interrupt Tintin as he chases after Professor Calculus’ kidnappers in *The Calculus Affair*. Based on the Belgian ‘Belgo’, or as Hergé likened them to a Belgian type that wore both a belt and braces at the same time, it is only in *Tintin and the Picaros* (where he inexplicably turns up lost in a Latin American jungle) that he actually comes to the aide of our heroes. (26)

And then, of course, there is the wonderful Bianca Castafiore, “The Milanese Nightingale”, an opera singer who can shatter glass at twenty paces. She serves as the main female presence in the Tintin stories, and is a caricature of an internationally celebrated singer. She first appears in *King Ottakar’s Sceptre*, in which she and her entourage pick up a hitchhiking Tintin. Within seconds of her bursting into song, he beats a hasty retreat back to his hotel. Her later appearance in *The Red Sea Sharks* was only a cameo. But, in the wonderfully constructed *The Castafiore Emerald* she takes centre-stage. She descends on Marlinspike Hall and causes utter chaos to Captain Haddock, who she announces to the world, is about to marry her – much to the consternation of the old sea salt. What makes matters worse, is that she is so oblivious to those around her, that she calls him Captain Hammock, Hassock, Paddock, Padlock and finally Captain Stopcock! (27)



The Adventure Ends..?

By the time Hergé had written *Flight 714 to Sydney*, he was sixty years old. He was in no rush to complete a new Tintin adventure. Tintin had made him famous. But he found that creating a new Tintin story took almost all of his energies, and ideas were getting more difficult to come by. His last fully completed Tintin adventure – fighting alongside the Latin American liberationists, The Picaros – was, after an eight-year hiatus, poorly received. It felt as if Hergé had tired of Tintin. He dismantled his characters in peculiar ways: Tintin's outfit changed from plus fours to jeans; Haddock's first name was revealed, whilst he appears to be allergic to Loch Lomond Whisky; Nestor peeps through keyholes; an old friend becomes an adversary; General Alcazar, a tough-talking Latin American friend, has a harridan wife who belittles him in front of his soldiers, and, despite their best efforts, the adventurers' attempts at changing things for the better remain unsuccessful.

The last panels of *Tintin and the Picaros* remains telling. As Tintin, Haddock, Calculus, the Thom(p)son Twins, and Snowy head back home, the captain turns to his friend and says, "Blistering barnacles. I shan't be sorry to be back home in Marlinspike..." Tintin replies, "Me too Captain..." As the very last image is of their jet heading back across the ocean, with the words THE END in sight, there seems to be a serious message for Tintin fans here. Despite all their best efforts, nothing has really changed in their world. They have reached the end of the line. Tintin's adventures, as brilliant as they were, have come to an end.

But wait... Hergé was not finished. Despite being unfinished at the time of his death in March 1983, his last – uncompleted – Tintin adventure, provocatively titled *Tintin and Alph-Art* has remained leaving Tintin's fate in the balance. Set in the world of Modern Art, the story sees Tintin trying to solve the murder of an artist, uncovering a forgery ring, a hidden sect, and trying to escape being cast as a 'living statue'! Despite being in poor health, Hergé had a renewed gusto for this new adventure. He had worked out the story and the characters, and had formulated some rough ideas about the ending. He had also begun to sketch out his designs for the book's layout. But this took three years, and just three months before his death, he prophetically said:

Unfortunately, I cannot say much about this forthcoming adventure, because even though I started on it three years ago, I have not had much time to work on it and still do not know how it will turn out. I know roughly where I am going...I am continuing my research and I really do not know where this story will lead me.

Hergé^{ix}

The Tintin Books

With *Tintin and Alph-Art* teasing Tintin fans with questions of “What if...?” perhaps it is now time to look at all of the book covers, and some of the pages found within them. Whilst the covers are there automatically, the accompanying image taken from each is a personal choice.

Tintin in the Land of the Soviets (28)

The beginning of the myth. This anti-Bolshevik sketch was first published in the pages of *Le Petit Vingtième* in 1929 and was left unrevised in later editions by Hergé. The only Tintin adventure to remain in black and white.

Tintin in the Congo (29)

Clearly racist or benevolently paternalistic? Some critics judge this trip of the young Tintin to the Belgian Congo of 1930 by the post-colonial standards of the twenty-first century. It is true that this world of “black and whites” can upset the sensibilities of today’s readers. However, it was just the beginning of a long journey in humanity.

Tintin in America (30)

Cowboys, Indians, and Al Capone’s gangsters become, by 1931, the third subject of inquiry by the young reporter. The black-and-white drawings were colorized, with a reduced pagination, in 1946.

Cigars of the Pharaoh (31)

Tintin and Snowy travel to Egypt, a topical destination for the time, and follow clues to an Asian drug-smuggling ring. The book was recast and colored in 1932.

The Blue Lotus (32)

In the sequel to *Cigars*, Tintin comes to grips with the opium connection, discovers Shanghai’s “the poison of madness” and finds a lifelong friend in Chang. Originally published between 1934-35, it was republished in colour in 1946.

The Broken Ear (33)

The globe-trotter switches continents. Tintin travels to the Latin American revolutionary republic of San Theodoros by the theft of an Arumbaya fetish with a broken ear, and meets General Alcazar. The comic was published in 1935-7, and colourised in 1943.

The Black Island (34)

Tintin sports a kilt to confront the villainous counterfeiter Dr Muller, and his King Kong-inspired gorilla, Ranko. First appearing in black-and-white in 1937-38, the book was published in colour in 1943 and 1946.

King Ottakar’s Sceptre (35)

In 1939, Professor Alembick, an eminent sigillographer (expert on seals), takes Tintin to Central Europe and Syldavia. Bordurian forces wait to invade... The colour edition came out after the war, in 1947.

The Crab with the Golden Claws (36)

Published in 1940-41 in the Belgian daily *Le Soir* (the color edition appeared in 1943), Tintin once more confronts drug traffickers, and meets Captain Haddock, who is driven to delirium by thirst.

The Shooting Star (37)

A meteorite crash lands in the Arctic Ocean. Tintin and a team of scientists rush to find what treasures await. Published in the pages of *Le Soir* in 1941, and then colourised in 1942, this is the first to have been published directly and is 62-pages long.

The Secret of the Unicorn (38)

Tintin’s quest for treasure takes him and Haddock from a street market in Belgium to the Caribbean. This book, which gives Haddock’s distinguished historical background, appeared in 1942-3 and then in book form in 1943.

Red Rackham’s Treasure (39)

This sequel to *The Secret of the Unicorn* appeared in *Le Soir* in 1943 (in book form in 1944) and marks Professor Calculus’ first appearance in the Tintin adventures.

The Seven Crystal Balls (40)

“A little more to the west,” says Calculus, as he, Tintin, Snowy and Haddock become embroiled in an Inca curse. The adventure, which began to appear in the pages of *Le Soir* in 1943, was suspended by the liberation of Belgium in September 1944, and in book form in 1948.

Prisoners of the Sun (41)

Tintin and Haddock land at Callao, the main port of Peru. Helped by the Indian boy Zorrino, they trek through the Amazon to the temple of the Incas. The comic was published between 1946 and 1948 in the new Tintin magazine; the book came out in 1949.

Land of Black Gold (42)

The sinister Dr Muller is blowing up oil pipelines in the Middle East. Tintin and co. are on his trail. Recast several times following its first appearance in the pages of *Le Petit Vingtième* in 1939-40, the story was interrupted by the war and then resumed in *Tintin* magazine, starting in 1948. Published in book form in 1950, it was republished in 1971 without the references to the British mandate in Palestine, which were considered to be outdated.

Destination Moon (43)

Calculus is in charge of the Atomic Research Center at Sprodj, Syldavia’s capital. He plans to land a rocket on the moon. Evil agents try to sabotage his mission. This adventure introduced the topic of space travel to its readers when it first appeared in *Tintin* magazine in 1950 and then 1953 as a book.

Explorers on the Moon (44)

The red-and-white checked moon rocket holds Tintin and his friends in their most deadly adventure yet. And who is the spy in their midst..? The adventure was published first in 1952-3 and then in book form in 1954.

The Calculus Affair (45)

A storm thunders over Marlinspike Hall. Glass shatters. Calculus is kidnapped. Can Tintin, the Captain and Snowy piece together the jigsaw that could either save or destroy the world? Publishing took place between 1954-56, at the height of the Cold War.

The Red Sea Sharks (46)

Haddock gets called away on official navy duties. Tintin uncovers human trafficking. Published in comic form during 1956-58, the book was released in 1958.

Tintin in Tibet (47)

A plane crash in the Himalayas. Tintin’s friend Chang is presumed dead. Our intrepid heroes set out to find him. And is that the Abominable Snowmen looking at them..? This wonderful adventure was first printed in *Tintin* magazine between 1958-59 and then in book form in 1960.

The Castafiore Emerald (48)

A stolen jewel, a band of Romany gypsies, Captain Haddock’s broken leg, and a marriage proposal are just some of the highlights of this low-key, but still brilliant, Marlinspike Hall-set adventure. It first appeared in *Tintin* magazine during 1961-62, and then as a book in 1963.

Flight 714 to Sydney (49)

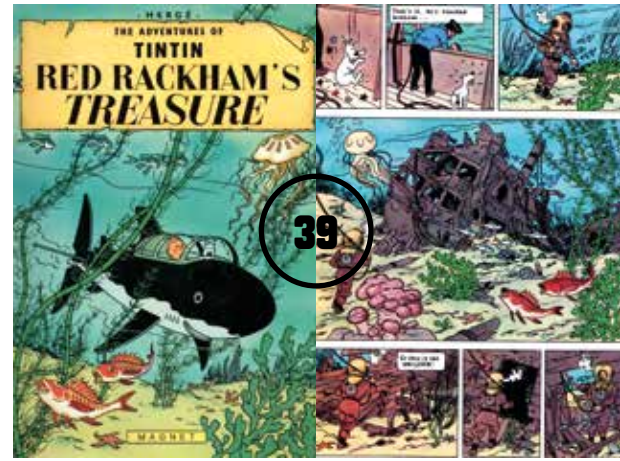
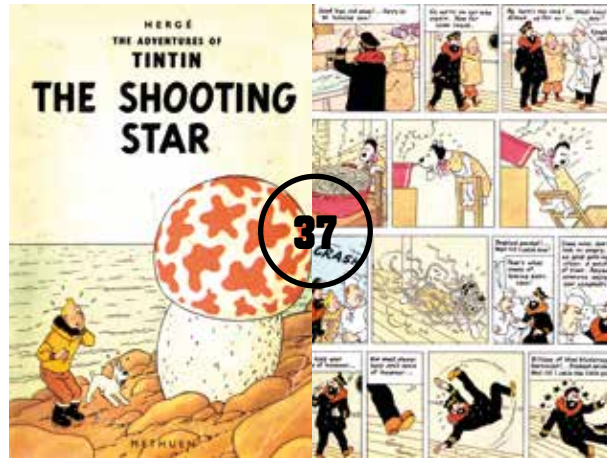
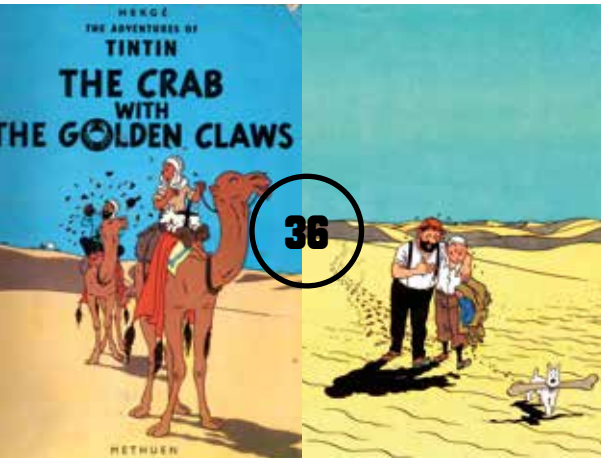
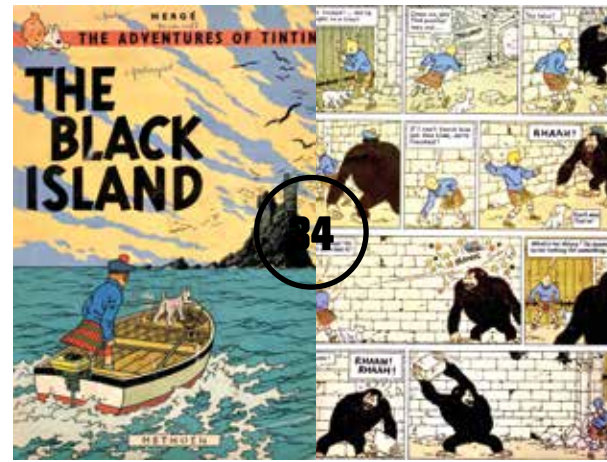
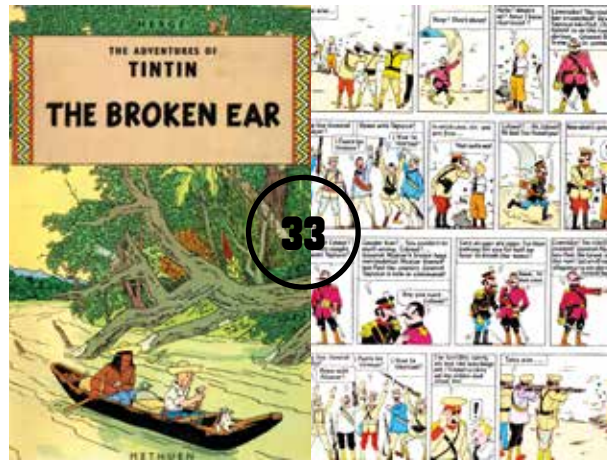
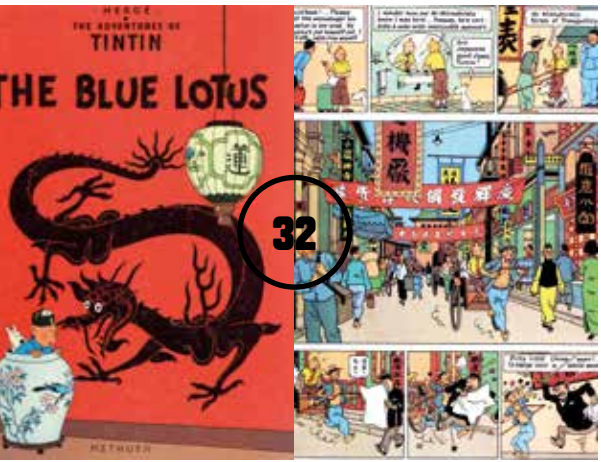
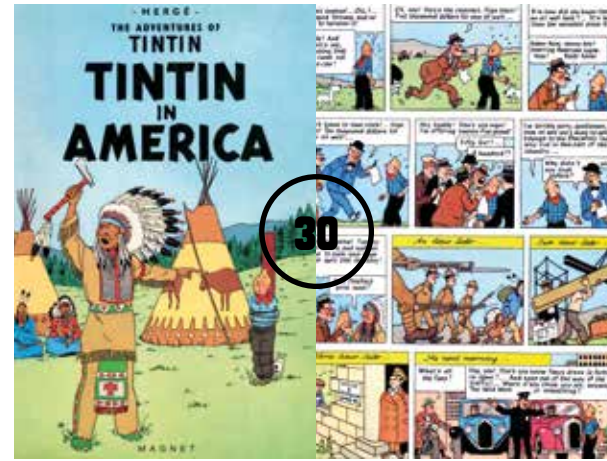
After a gap of four years, Tintin returns to find an old enemy, a plane hijacking, a trusted friend, and even a flying saucer on an Indonesian island. Written in 1966-67, this most-fantastical of all Tintin adventures was published in book form in 1968.

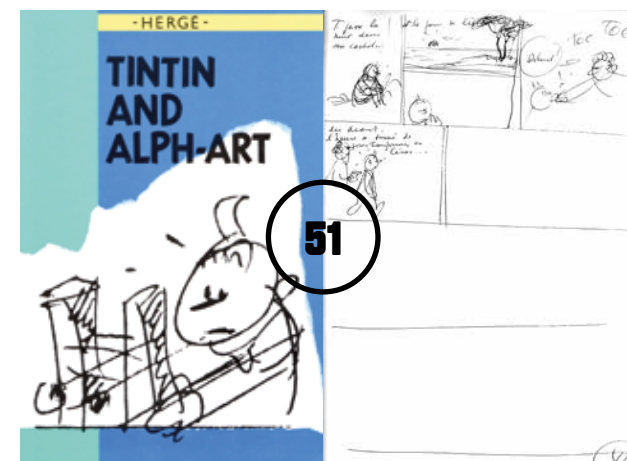
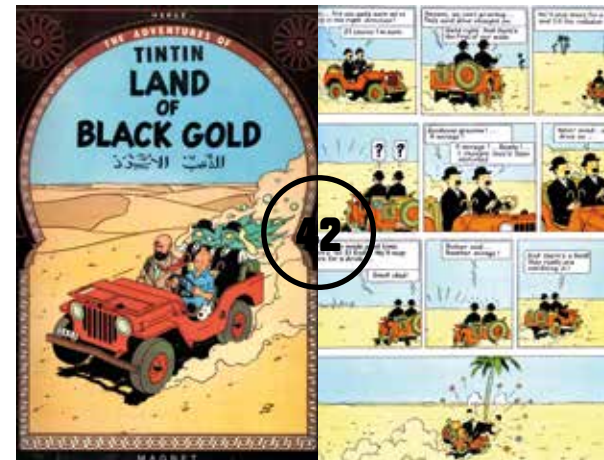
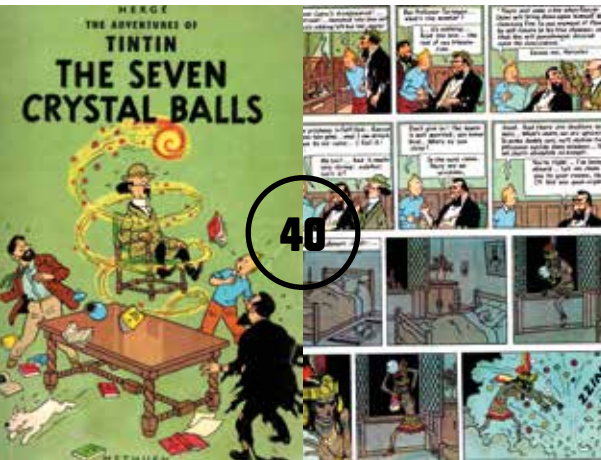
Tintin and the Picaros (50)

The end of Tintin’s fully-completed adventures sees our intrepid traveller and friends travel to Tapiopolis to quash a revolution. There, they meet old friends and old enemies. After a hiatus of eight years, Hergé finished the story for *Tintin* magazine during 1975-76, and saw the adventure published as a book in 1976.

Tintin and Alph-Art (51)

What will you make of this, Tintin’s final adventure? Unfinished, but still enticing, Hergé’s spirit of adventure – this time set in the world of Modern Art and forgery – leaves a tantalising glimpse of things that may have been. First published in 1986 as half book/half transcript of a partially-completed text, it was a best-seller.





Conclusion

It has been nearly forty years since Hergé died. But Tintin's legacy lives on. The 24 albums have sold over 200 million copies worldwide, and been translated into 90 languages. There have been cartoon series, live-action films, and even Steven Spielberg got in on the act by making a CGI-version that was as close to a living, breathing Tintin that one could hope for (or was that *Raiders of the Lost Ark...?* After all, isn't Indiana Jones really Tintin in disguise?).

Tintin boutiques have sprung up – the first in Covent Garden, London – selling all manner of Tintin goodies: the books, postcards, posters, key rings, figurines, jigsaws, jumpers, bags, T-shirts – you name it, Tintin is on it. And that is the key to Tintin's success. He is a genuinely universal figure. Loved and adored by millions, and from humble origins to spectacular success, Hergé's creation is *the* iconic literary creation of the 20th Century, much as Sherlock Holmes is to the 19th, and Harry Potter is to the 21st.

This is why Tintin is so important. His adventures are not simple, they are complex. They are contemporary yet timeless. The characters are brilliantly created and designed, their nuances there for all to explore. And above all else, these adventures are fun!

Even though *Tintin and the Picaros* left our heroes seeking comfort back at Marlinspike Hall, perhaps it is best that we let the final images in *Tintin and Alph-Art* slowly fade into the distance. It is up to you, the reader, to decide Tintin's fate.

After all, Tintin is you.

“Tintin! C'est Moi!”

Hergé^x

End notes

- i. Georges Remi (Hergé) taken from an interview with Hergé in *Libelle-Rosita*, 24th February 1976, cited in Dominique Maricq (2008) “A talent is born: Pencil and Paper” in *Hergé in His Own Words* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2008) p.7
- ii. Hergé, quoted in “Radioscopie”, March 9, 1979, on France Inter, in *Hergé, objectif* radio, 2-CD set (INA, 2003), cited in M. Daubert (trans. M. Farr) *Hergé: The Art of Tintin* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2013) p.62
- iii. Hergé, quoted in *Entretiens avec Hergé* (in 1971) by Numa Sadoul (Brussels: Casterman, “Bibliothèque de Moulinsart”, 1989) cited in M. Daubert (trans. M. Farr) *Hergé: The Art of Tintin* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart) p.74
- iv. Hergé quoted in *Tintin and I*, Interviews with Hergé and Numa Sadoul, Casterman, 1975, cited in *Hergé in His Own Words* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2008) p.23
- v. M. Daubert (trans. M. Farr) *Hergé: The Art of Tintin* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart) p.78
- vi. Hergé quoted in *Tintin and I*, Interviews with Hergé and Numa Sadoul, Casterman, 1975, cited in *Hergé in His Own Words* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2008) p.25
- vii. Michael Farr, *Tintin: The Complete Companion* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2001) p.38
- viii. Hergé quoted in *Tintin and I*, Interviews with Hergé and Numa Sadoul, Casterman, 1975, cited in *Hergé in His Own Words* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2008) p.45
- ix. Hergé, quoted in Michael Farr, *Tintin: The Complete Companion* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2001) p.203
- x. Hergé quoted in *Tintin and I*, Interviews with Hergé and Numa Sadoul, Casterman, 1975, cited in *Hergé in His Own Words* (Belgium: Hergé/Moulinsart, 2008) p.40



The Snowman looks on in the final illustration of Tintin in Tibe



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