

{ TINTIN } THE ORDINARY HERO ≈ { HERGÉ } THE INNER SELF

THE BEGINNING Over a period of 47 years, Hergé wrote and illustrated 23 Tintin adventures. The books were translated into 58 languages and have sold over 200 million copies to date, especially in Europe, the British Commonwealth and South America. Although simplistic, with the rich narrative of bedtime stories, the books possessed an undercurrent that dealt with more than mere childish entertainment.

The first of the series was *Land of the Soviets*, an anti-communist story published in 1930.

HAGGARD PROGRESSION With a childhood described as “cruel mediocrity,” Hergé turned to Rev. Wallez (at left in picture) for a mentor. Wallez gave the young Hergé a glimmer of worldly sophistication tainted by admiration of Hitler and fascism. In 1929, he would charge Hergé with creating a Catholic hero for the *Le Vingtième Siècle* (an ultra-Catholic newspaper). Tintin had been born.

SATIRE In 1939, as Europe inched towards another World War, Hergé depicted the belligerence of a country he called “Borduria” — a thinly-veiled reference to Nazi Germany. Gone was the Wallez-induced Fascist romanticism, replaced by a grudging realization that Europe was in danger from Germany. So ardent was Hergé’s message of impending doom that he even added Messerschmitt Me109s into the story — something that attracted the attention of the German Secret Police during the occupation.



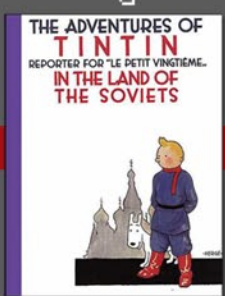
Set within the frame of his incorruptible reporter hero, Tintin, the Belgian Georges P. Remi (better known by his alias, Hergé) (1907-1983) distilled 50 years of human politics, will, war and ordinary life into the roughly two dozen illustrated books that would prove to be his life’s preminent work.

Through Tintin arose a world conjured by ink and color, complete with the working masses, politicians, warlords, pilots, artists, musicians, scientists, soldiers and despots, who lived in a vibrant world filled with cars, planes, trains and boats — details of the 20th Century which jumped off the pages and offered a social narrative unlike anything that had been seen.

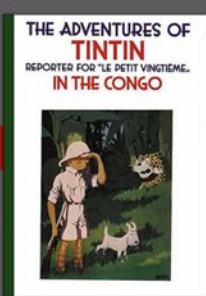
But through this world, Hergé increasingly indulged in self expression as a way of examining his own problematic life — a process through which he was able to reconcile with his flaws and in the act, discover himself as a human being.

“It definitely carries a story. I can see now that the story was a way of expressing myself. That is quite clear.”

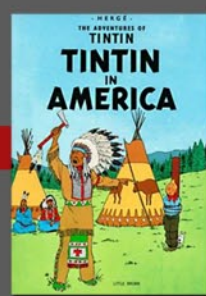
-Herge, 1971



1930



1931



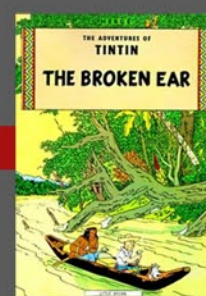
1932



1934



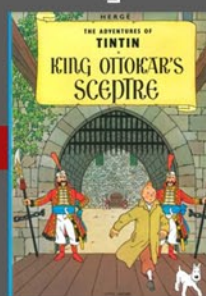
1936



1937



1938



1939

PROPAGANDA The first three official Tintin books were little more than propagandist creations with *Tintin in the Congo* being especially guilty of pedaling a pro-colonial line — and naively stereotyping black Africans as helpless, ignorant natives.



REALITY Hergé’s flirtations with flimsy caricatures came to an end after he received a letter from a distant Abbot forbidding him to stereotype the Chinese. The admonition would produce a frank examination of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. To reinforce his point, the Abbot put him touch with a young Chinese, Chang Chong-Chen (right) — a fellow artist who would have a lasting impression on Hergé and even appeared in the book as Chang, a young boy in need of rescue. Later, the real Chang would be sent back home and lost for four decades in the fog of war.

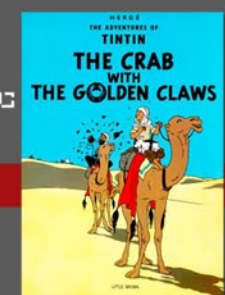


BASHI-BAZOUK In *The Crab with the Golden Claws*, Tintin would meet Captain Haddock, the down-on-his luck, hard-drinking, hard-swearing naval officer who would become his great friend. Arguably, the series took on a more sophisticated tone from this book.

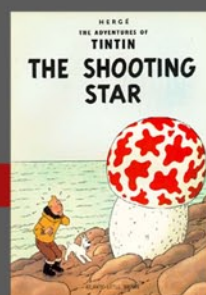
NAZI PRESS Trying to continue his trade during the Nazi occupation of Belgium, Hergé still drew Tintin, mostly for the *Le Soir* newspaper — now under Nazi control — infuriating many Belgians.



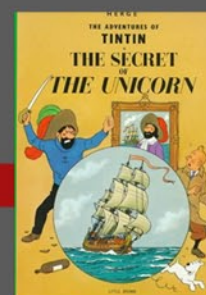
ALTERED PERSONA As the reality of occupation life weighed in on Hergé, his persona began to manifest itself away from the idealistic Tintin and found a place in the embittered and caustic Haddock, whom he had started to resemble.



1941



1942



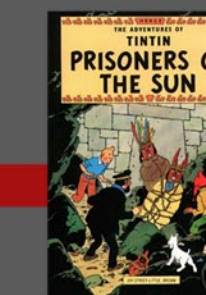
1943



1944



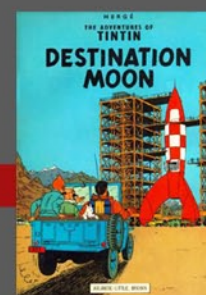
1948



1949



1950



1953



ESCAPE During the dim life of the occupation years, the Tintin adventures changed dramatically and became completely apolitical. During the war years, as the battle for Europe raged towards its climax, Hergé delved into fantastic adventures in the tropics, far away from Europe. Of the hundreds of sequences that he drew, the picture on the left is one of only two drawings that he liked in his career.

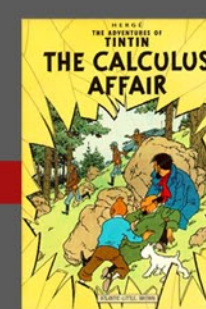
POSTWAR When the war ended, Hergé and the other members of the *Le Soir* newspaper were denounced as collaborators. Now followed years in a spiritual wilderness as Hergé was prevented from working by an official blacklist. He was saved when Raymond Leblanc, a famed war hero, hired him to resurrect *Tintin* for a weekly children’s magazine.



THE TROUBLES By 1960, Hergé found himself at the crossroads of moral crisis, anguished by the breakup of his marriage. By now Tintin had become virtually saint-like in Hergé’s mind, an unreachable symbol of purity described as a “great heart,” a title which Hergé yearned for himself but felt unable to match. The crisis drove him to a Zurich psychiatrist who cryptically told him to “exorcise his demons.” In an artistic form of release, Hergé would pen *Tintin in Tibet*, allowing Tintin to once again save Chang. In 1981, mirroring fiction, Hergé found his long-lost friend Chang Chong-Chen in Beijing. Meantime, critics consider *Tibet* to be Hergé’s *magnum opus*. It also supposedly cured him of his torment.



1954



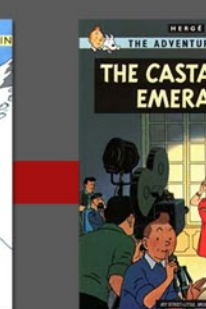
1956



1958



1960



1963



1968



1976

DISSATISFACTION Hergé’s repudiation of Rev. Wallez’s fascist views led to a conflict with his wife, Germaine Kieckens (in photo), who had once been Wallez’s trusted secretary. Hergé later spoke bitterly of being kept under control, first by Wallez and then by Germaine. He would leave her for one of his colorists, Fanny Vlamnyck — resulting in a guilt that drove him further from the ideal that was Tintin.



THE FINAL JOURNEY As he attempted to do other things with his life, more and more time elapsed between Hergé’s books. In *The Castafiore Emerald*, he concentrated the story in Haddock’s ancestral home, Marlinspike Hall, offering a light-hearted, happy mystery set within the fascinating workings of the house. But his last completed book, *Tintin and the Picaros*, contained a large amount of political satire reminiscent of his Pre-World War work and proved unpopular.



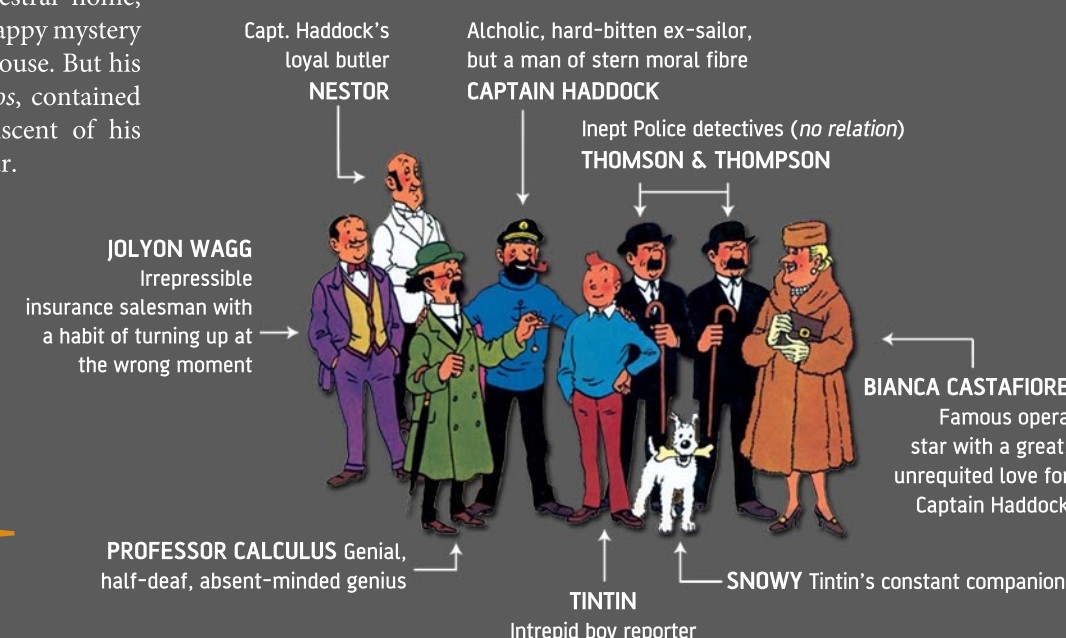
FIN Hergé died on 3 March 1983 at the age of 75, possibly from Leukemia, bolstered by HIV which he had contracted from blood transfusions. His 24th book, *The Alph-Art*, was unfinished.

Known to millions worldwide, **TINTIN** continues to enthrall readers who marvel at the brilliant detail of his living world. But his creator, Hergé, is a man almost lost to mystery. Through his characters he escaped into another life and through them he was able to work through his inner demons, towards a measure of peace.

SOURCES:

Ostergaard, Anders, *Tintin and I*, Point of View, PBS, 11 July 2006.
Farr, Michael, *The Adventures of Hergé*, John Murray, 2007.
Hergé, *The Tintin Series*, 1931-1976 (All images © the Hergé Foundation)

DESIGN by AKHIL KADIDAL, 2011



THE MAIN CHARACTERS