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Matthew Screech

## Tintin au Pays du *Canard enchaîné*. Hergé's Hero re-invented in Political Cartoons of the 1950s and the 1960s

### Introduction

In English-speaking countries, vast numbers of people know Hergé's Adventures of Tintin. *Le Canard enchaîné*, on the other hand, is barely known beyond a small group of intellectual Francophiles. *Le Canard enchaîné* is an independent, Paris-based weekly newspaper which was launched in 1915. It combines humour with investigative journalism and it carries no advertisements. Over the years, *Le Canard* has become part of the French tradition of humorous political commentary. *Le Canard* was banned in 1940 during the Nazi occupation of France but it reappeared as soon as Paris was liberated. By the early 1960s *Le Canard* had attracted an educated, politically informed, broadly left-leaning readership. Laurent Martin, referencing a study by Alain Schiffrès, defines the newspaper's constituency thus:

Les lecteurs du *Canard enchaîné* se recrutaient plutôt parmi les "fonctionnaires moyens et cadres inférieurs, les instituteurs publics, professeurs de l'enseignement secondaire et les étudiants, chez les ingénieurs, architectes et médecins, enfin chez les rappelés du contingent". En somme, selon l'auteur de *L'Idéologie du Canard enchaîné*, l'hebdomadaire satirique s'adressait "plus à la moyenne et petite bourgeoisie et socialisante et aux "travailleurs intellectuels" qu'à la classe ouvrière et à la paysannerie", ajoutant que le "Français de gauche" se reconnaissait dans *Le Canard enchaîné* (Schiffrès 1963, pp. 171-172. Martin 2005, pp. 301-2. Martin's quotation marks).

*Le Canard* has devised numerous strategies for making its readership laugh. One strategy involves using Francophone high culture as a vehicle for satirising current affairs. Readers take pleasure in jokes which unexpectedly associate newsworthy events with well-known novels, poems and plays. Before World War II, *Le Canard* drew much inspiration from the literary canon. Hergé's *Aventures de Tintin* took their place among such canonical works during the 1950s and the 1960s.

The present article charts *Tintin's* entry into *Le Canard*, gives his emergence a historical context and appraises his performance as a satirical instrument. My focus is on three somewhat neglected pieces where artists, working within comic strip tradition, combined sequenced panels with speech-balloons: "Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or" (Lap 1958, p. 91); "Les nouvelles aventures de Tintin et Michou" (Macé and Grum 1961, p. 5); the four-part *Tintin-Michou* series (Escaro 1965, p. 5; 1966a, p.5; 1966b, p. 5; 1966c, p.5).

Tintin's adventures in *Le Canard* reinvent Hergé's familiar hero by endowing him with new meanings. Hergé's original Tintin is still almost universally recognisable. He personifies a Manichean ideal of right-thinking morality. Eighty years after

Tintin's birth, he remains the perfect boy scout: Tintin is chaste, courageous, courteous and generous. Moreover, *Les Aventures de Tintin* reiterate the hero's triumph over adversity. As Umberto Eco said regarding Superman, such reiterative adventure narratives make the triumphant hero mythological. Constant reiteration of similar narratives exempts Superman 'from the law that leads from life to death through time'; thus immobilised, he attains an 'emblematic and fixed nature, which makes him easily recognisable' (Eco 1979, pp. 114 and 110). Tintin's reiterative adventures lend him timeless, mythological status in just the same way as Superman's.

Tintin ne vieillit pas, ne change pas... Le mythe de Tintin se construit ainsi sur une suspension de la temporalité. Son activité peut se réduire à un déplacement dans l'espace: il reprend chaque fois le même scénario – la sempiternelle lutte du Bien et du Mal -, avec d'autres péripéties et un décor nouveau. Si les masques changent, l'issue du combat reste identique (Apostolidès 2003, pp. 15-16).

Some of Hergé's *Aventures de Tintin* are set within the context of international (as distinct from French) political issues. Examples include the Anschluss and the Sino-Japanese war (Assouline 1996, p. 499). Yet as Bourdil remarks, the mythological dimension allows Tintin's adventures to transcend the specificities of their particular historical moment.

Dans le mythe nous échappons à l'Histoire. Les récits qu'il développe parlent de grands événements, mais refuse de les enfermer dans les dates, dans les preuves; ils restent assez libres pour laisser notre imagination rêver à partir d'eux (Bourdil 2005, p. 215).

In *Le Canard*, Tintin finds significance according to very different criteria. These strips are not reiterative adventure narratives about a timeless, mythological hero. Their meaning derives from rapidly receding events in French political history: the 4th Republic, fall-out from the Algerian war, the 1965 presidential elections and the Ben Barka affair. We can understand the eternal battle between good and evil without difficulty. However time is rendering Tintin's adventures in *Le Canard* virtually incomprehensible, because the topical allusions they make increasingly escape many of us.

The challenges involved in understanding Tintin as a satirical vehicle are heightened by the general lack of detailed knowledge about French political history, not least amongst English-speakers. Today, references to Algeria or to the erratic but seemingly inevitable decline in de Gaulle's popularity, so clear to moderately educated Francophones at the time, may be unintelligible. This article enables a 21st Century public to appreciate Tintin's adventures in *Le Canard*. I hope it breathes new life into time-locked texts and images which, even in France, are on the verge of being forgotten.

Let us start by looking briefly at use of the canon in *Le Canard* prior to "Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or"; we shall also consider some previous text/image arrangements. In its formative years, *Le Canard* displayed a predilection for literary texts (Douglas 2002, pp. 55, 29 and 219): a parody of Pierre Corneille's *Cid* (1637) depicts Maurice Barrès, an outspoken patriot who had avoided military service, sending his son off to fight (Gassier 1916, p. 1); 'les Dieux n'ont plus soif', an

acerbic comment on the bloodshed in the trenches, recalls *Les Dieux ont soif* (1912) by Anatole France (la Fouchardière 1917, p. 2); 'Les grands voyages' resembles Charles Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), although Paris is viewed by a Polynesian rather than by a Persian (Kamcho 1926, p. 3). During the 1920s, artists put together sequences of images with texts underneath, occasionally making literary allusions. 'A propos d'une inauguration' consists of twelve cartoons, whose captions are titles of novels by Emile Zola (Guilac 1924, p. 1). In one example a caricature of Pierre de Courcelle, a prolific feuilletoniste, has the caption *La Fécondité* (1899).

Comics slowly made their way into *Le Canard*. From the 1930s, satirical gags inspired by Otto Soglow's *Little King* featured occasionally. The *Little King* was originally published in *The New Yorker* (1931). He made his entry into *Le Canard* as King Edward VIII of England, abdicating for marriage (J.N. 1936, p.3). As with Soglow's *Little King*, the gag hinged on royalty unexpectedly behaving like ordinary people. Soglow's economic lines perfectly fitted the unadorned style of cartooning cultivated at *Le Canard*. After World War II, the *Little King* returned as Leopold III, the King of the Belgians (Grove 1950, p. 1). The *Little King* was subsequently adopted by Lap, who used him to satirise at least four notable figures: President Vincent Auriol, the Sultan of Morocco, King Hussain of Jordan and Princess Margaret of England (Lap 1951, p. 4; Lap 1955, p. 2; Lap 1957, p. 1; Lap 1960, p. 2). The *Little King* could become different people remarkably easily, because Soglow never gave the king or his kingdom a name.

Tintin was first cited in a media column (Télé-Mac 1957, p.3). The columnist's name, a literary pun, references François Fénelon's novel about Ulysses' son: *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699). Télé-Mac sent up a televised debate called *La Tribune des critiques*. A critic had called a TV presenter too intellectual, adding: 'moi-même je ne comprends pas toujours'. Télé-Mac suggested that if Tintin took over, then the critic would understand. Télé-Mac saw Tintin embodying a naïve, childish simplicity; he also wrote as though Tintin were real, albeit in jest. Tintin thus exemplified a popular truth about the human condition, and his existence was accepted uncritically; that is to say, Tintin had mythological attributes.

Télé-Mac's article illustrates the growing tendency to engage with Tintin among adult readers and critics. In 1958, Paris-Match reported 'les adultes eux-mêmes ne résistent pas aux charmes de ce petit personnage héroïque'; the article added that a Belgian expedition had taken Tintin albums to the South Pole, while citing King Baudoin as an enthusiast (Borgé 1958, p. 98). The following year, the first serious critical study of Tintin appeared (Vandromme, 1959). Letters from Hergé's postbag, quoted by Vandromme, evinced Tintin's growing adult audience: readers included students, professionals and pensioners as well as children. Like Télé-Mac (and numerous others), Vandromme saw Tintin as mythological.

Le personnage de Tintin... s'élève à la qualité d'un mythe. Mythe de l'éternelle jeunesse, mythe de l'esprit universel aux connaissances encyclopédiques.... l'incarnation parfaite du preux moderne, le Roland de la société contemporaine (Vandromme 1959, p. 109).

By the late 1950s, Tintin was becoming the adult, Francophone public's mythological exemplar. Tintin was a gallant, 20th Century Roland and Captain Haddock was his Oliver. Tintin's accession to mythological status coincided with his entry into *Le*

Canard.

## The Republic in Peril: 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or'. January 1958



Figure 1

The opening of 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or' recalls *Tintin au Pays des Soviets*: a boxed text builds anticipation by praising the intrepid reporter's exploits (Lap 1958, p.91; Hergé 1930, repr. 1991 p. 1). See Figure 1. Instead of Tintin we see Marianne, who is an allegory for the French Republic. She is receiving anonymous threats signed 'le veau d'or est toujours debout'. Marianne rushes out to seek Tintin's help; but two policemen resembling Hergé's Dupondts tell her that he is in custody for 'atteinte au moral de l'armée'. 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or' is more akin to a gag than to an adventure strip because, as in *The Little King*, the ending flouts the reader's expectations. Tintin's customary triumph is replaced by a tantalising question: what does 'le veau d'or est toujours debout' mean? As the dénouement leaves Marianne's messages unexplained, we must search for clues outside 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or'.

The Golden Calf dates back to the Old Testament. It was a false idol, which derived from the people's impatience at the continued absence of their leader Moses. To punish them for worshipping the Golden Calf, God commanded what amounts to civil war: 'each of you kill his brother, his friends, his neighbour' (Exodus 32.27; see also Hastings vol. 1 1898, p. 341). The biblical story indicates that loss of leadership brings violent discord. The Golden Calf has also taken on another, more popular meaning: it allegorises Mammon; 'adorer le veau d'or' means 'avoir le culte de l'argent' (Rey and Chantreau 1997, p. 899). In English too, the Golden Calf is used 'sometimes proverbially with reference to the "worship" of wealth' (*Oxford English Dictionary* Vol II 1989, p. 781).

Despite the Old Testament source, 'le veau d'or est toujours debout' is not a quotation from the Bible. It appears (slightly different) in an aria from *Faust* by Barbier, Carré and Gounod (Act II Scene IV):

Le veau d'or est encore debout  
On encense  
Sa puissance (Barbier *et al.* 1859, p. 16).

The words are a hymn to the Golden Calf; they are sung by the Devil, who passes through the crowd unrecognised. 'Le veau d'or est encore debout' figures in what is for French speakers one of the most widely known arias of the whole opera. Faced with the cartoon in *Le Canard*, many Anglophones may remain within the more popular definition: worship of Mammon. For the numerous French speakers who associate 'le veau d'or' with Mephisto's famous aria, the meaning is potentially deeper. The reference implies diabolical consequences, including the hints of

fratricidal strife present in the Bible. The Devil's aria culminates in violence:

Il contemple  
 À ses pieds le genre humain  
 Se ruant, le fer en main  
 Dans le sang et dans la fange  
 Où brille l'ardent metal  
 Et Satan conduit le bal!

To understand 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or' we must first consider the historical backdrop against which it was published: war in Algeria between the French army and the separatist FLN. The conflict began in 1954 and it ended in 1961. By early 1958, hostilities had degenerated into a vicious downward spiral of terrorism and counter-terrorism, which has been termed 'la descente aux enfers' (Elgey vol. III 2008, p. 255). Two French governments had recently collapsed, unable to control the deepening crisis (21 May and 30 September 1957). Marianne embodies France under the weak and divided IVth Republic.

Worse still: evidence of torture committed not only by the FLN but also by the French army was rapidly accumulating; meanwhile, military chiefs were browbeating the embattled politicians into muzzling critical journalists, using the pretext of 'entreprise de démoralisation de l'armée'. Claude Bourdet from *France observateur* was remanded in custody for Tintin's alleged offence in 1956; Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber from *L'Express* was similarly detained in 1957 (Elgey vol. III 2008, pp. 123, 430 and 451). Tintin's arrest ominously prefigures further clamp-downs: in March 1958, police operations against newspapers labelled 'defeatist' led to cries of 'McCarthyism'; over the summer, a correspondent from *Le Monde* was locked up by the military authorities in Algiers (Werth 1960, pp. 25 and 93).

Meanwhile anti-war critics, including *Le Canard*, saw torture and censorship as an 'attente au moral de la nation': the French Republican principles, which Marianne exemplifies, were being dangerously eroded. One leading exponent of such views, a professor at the Sorbonne, wrote: 'La France n'est pas la France si elle se montre infidèle à l'image idéale qu'elle s'est proposé d'incarner... La patrie est en danger!' (Marrou 1956, p. 2). Elgey observes: 'La guerre d'Algérie représente une mise en cause totale de la France, de son comportement devant une épreuve nationale' (Elgey vol. III 2008, p. 399).

When 1958 dawned, 'le veau d'or est toujours debout' had peculiar relevance: the Golden Calf was still in place while French governments split apart, the army defied the state and Algeria descended into hell. As in the Bible, loss of leadership was bringing discord. A dangerous power vacuum was opening up and the country was sliding inexorably towards civil war. Moreover, Marianne was locked into a Faustian bargain over Algeria's natural resources, especially oil and gas. A major oil pipeline had just opened, prompting wild ministerial speculation that France would achieve autonomy of supply (*L'Aurore* 1958, p. 5). The restive army, which protected the precious installations, also had entrenched economic interests: all officers and NCOs were much better paid in Algeria than in France (Werth 1960, p. 213). Other interested parties included wealthy European landowners and Pieds Noirs who, supported by rebellious elements from the military, were not above bullying the enfeebled Paris governments.

Marianne is receiving anonymous threats. Resorting thus to anonymity suggests activity by extremists. To be sure, the FLN sent menacing letters. The General responsible for security in Algiers claimed he received 'lettres de menaces' almost every day (Massu 1971, p. 39). Yet, a Biblical/Faustian allegory is an odd choice of language for threats proffered by Algerian separatists. Moreover, by 1958 Marianne was not only fighting the FLN: she was also threatened by irregular, anti-terrorist organisations, which were springing up to protect European vested interests in Algeria; among these were rogue elements called 'ultras', who sought to bring down the IVth Republic. The 'ultras', like the FLN, indulged in intimidatory tactics.

However, attributing Marianne's anonymous messages to this or that faction weakens the power of the allegory. The true signatory is none other than the Devil who, as in *Faust*, passes unrecognised: Marianne fails to identify Mephisto because he hides behind the Golden Calf. The heroine is already doomed, even though she does not realise it: her panic-stricken visit to Tintin is pointless. The Devil's warning to Marianne is portentous given that, on April 15th 1958, the IVth Republic finally collapsed. Soon after, on May 13th, anti-independence soldiers and settlers stormed government buildings in Algiers. This attempted coup d'état swept General de Gaulle back into office; he was widely hailed as the only leader who could prevent France from tipping into civil war, as in the parable of the Golden Calf. Following his investiture on 2nd June, de Gaulle drew up a Constitution for a new Vth Republic.

The under-representation of the Algerian problem in *bandes dessinées* between 1954 and 1962 has been noted already (Lacassin 1971, p. 318). *Les Aventures de Tintin* never mention the war and even Lap does not depict hostilities directly. Algeria is conspicuously absent as are Tintin, the Golden Calf and the Devil. Nevertheless, 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or' evokes the conflict's repercussions. Lap's concise allegory suggests that Faustian bargaining and loss of leadership are threatening the French republic with civil war. Deciphering 'le veau d'or est toujours debout' is enjoyable, but the revealed meaning is disturbing. Satan's unattributed words infuse the innocent-looking vignettes with unease. Everything Marianne represents is threatened with destruction by malevolent politico-economic forces, which she fails to comprehend. She turns in vain to Tintin, for he cannot deliver her from evil. Marianne awaits General de Gaulle.

## **De Gaulle at his Zenith: 'Les nouvelles aventures de Tintin et Michou'. 24 May 1961**

Tintin was consigned to the wings on his first adventure, but he took centre stage on his second by appearing as Marianne's saviour, General de Gaulle (Macé and Grum 1961, p. 5). See Figure 2. 'Les nouvelles aventures de Tintin et Michou' were published immediately after yet another attempted coup d'état in Algeria, which was



Figure 2

dubbed the Generals' putsch. Some knowledge of this event is essential to understanding our strip. On 22 April 1961 the First Parachute Regiment, led by four generals, seized

government buildings in Algiers. As President of France, de Gaulle responded with a radio broadcast, ordering the conscript soldiers to remain loyal to him. De Gaulle also invoked Article 16 of the 1958 Constitution, which gave him emergency powers. The conscripts rallied behind de Gaulle, as did the wider public; on 24 April, the trade unions staged a general strike in support of de Gaulle; by 25 April, the generals were isolated and their barracks revolt was over (Hartley 1972, p. 179). De Gaulle lost no time withdrawing from Algeria: France declared a unilateral ceasefire on May 20th; peace talks with the FLN immediately began in Evian. Macé and Grum are satirising a de Gaulle at the peak of his political career: a referendum in January 1961 had already given de Gaulle an approval rating of over 75% (Winock 1987, p.28). He strengthened his position still further by facing down the putsch.

A cast of Hergé's characters appear in 'Les nouvelles aventures de Tintin et Michou'. Captain Haddock is the bearded transport minister Robert Buron. Professor Tournesol is the nuclear physicist Francis Perrin. The Dupondts are Papont et Papond; their names recall the Paris police chief (and Occupation collaborator) Maurice Papon. Papon was soon to oversee the infamous Paris massacre of 17 October 1961, when police attacked a pro-FLN demonstration and threw the bodies of demonstrators into the Seine. Milou renamed Michou, is the First Minister Michel Debré. Debré is the dog because of his unswerving loyalty to de Gaulle: Debré had strongly opposed Algerian independence but he reluctantly implemented his political master's withdrawal plan (Berstein 1993, p.68). The strip opens with Tintin, Haddock and Michou looking out at demonstrating strikers. This scene replicates an emergency meeting, convened by de Gaulle on May 20th, to discuss rising discontent in France: public-sector workers had just gone on strike over pay and conditions (*Paris-Presse. L'Intransigeant* 1961, p. 1).

Tintin and Michou respond to the strike with phrases uttered by de Gaulle and Debré during the putsch; thus, Hergé's characters speak with political leaders' recognisable voices. Michou inveighs against the strikers, saying 'allez y à pied ou en voiture'; Debré, erroneously thinking that the paras would fly home to France



and spark off rebellion, had encouraged people to blockade the airports with those very same words (Debré 1961, p. 2). Tintin calls the strike-leaders 'un quarteron de syndicalistes'; he is echoing de Gaulle's broadcast which dismissed the mutineers as 'un quarteron de généraux' (de Gaulle 1961, p. 2). The rare term 'quarteron' was much talked about at the time. Tintin also declares 'il me suffit de prendre un decret', in reference to Article 16. Yet he goes further, by threatening to implement the 'Droit de réquisition'; this draconian measure allowed the President to force strikers back to work through compulsory conscription. De Gaulle tried (unsuccessfully) to use it against striking miners in 1963 (Hartley 1972, p. 249).

In a grim reminder that terrorism was spilling over from Algeria into France, the Paponds arrive with a bomb-disposal expert. The following panel is set in Evian: Belkacem Krim represents the FLN; Louis Joxe, the Minister for Algerian affairs, speaks for France. Krim says: 'vous avez décidé, pendant les pourparlers de paix de faire la trêve perlée'. His phrase is meaningless, but 'une grève perlée' means '[une grève] qui interrompt l'activité d'une entreprise par des arrêts ou des ralentissements de travail' (Robert 2009, p. 1864). Krim's assonating pun juxtaposes de Gaulle's troubles in Algeria ('trêve') with those in France ('grève').

Back at the Elysée, Tintin has found a solution to his problems both in Algeria and in France: if the strikers do not comply with his Requisition order then he will replace them with the paras, who have been standing idle since their aborted putsch. His plan is a Requisition order in reverse: rather than turning workers into soldiers, Tintin turns soldiers into workers. Debré and Buron predict that Tintin will prevail, making a pun on the hero's name: '[Les] grévistes feront Tintin'. 'Faire Tintin' means 'être privé, frustré' (Rey and Chantreau 1997, p. 869).

Macé and Grum are not unique in co-opting Tintin for political ends. Hergé's Tintin has been called politically neutral. Assouline is categorical: 'Qu'on se le dise une fois pour toutes: Hergé refuse de s'engager, il n'a pas de message à délivrer, les conflits politiques ne lui sont que prétexte à gags, suspense et mise en scène' (Assouline 1996, p. 702). Nevertheless, Tintin has long been made to represent a range of political views. The tendency to politicise Tintin is encouraged both by Hergé's shifting affiliations and by Tintin's own political non-alignment. People of various political persuasions may claim that Tintin speaks for them. As Assouline comments: 'Tintin, c'est une auberge espagnole. On y trouve ce qu'on y apporte' (Assouline 1996, p. 702).

Prior to Macé and Grum, Hergé had been mauled by a Belgian satirist for publishing in *Le Soir*, a newspaper under Nazi control. Following the liberation of Belgium in 1944, an anonymous strip appeared in a newspaper called *La Patrie*, titled 'Les aventures de Tintin et Milou au pays des Nazis'. The strip lampooned Tintin as joining in with the Allies (Assouline 1996, p. 337). The effect produced in *La Patrie* is not the same as in *Le Canard*. Unlike Macé and Grum, *La Patrie* used Tintin to attack his creator while ignoring French politics. Significantly, Tintin is not turned into a Pétainiste.

The persistent attempts to politicise Tintin are by no means confined to the satirists. One comparatively recent, non-satirical example is the parliamentary debate which took place in Paris on 3rd February 1999. The question tabled was whether Tintin is left-wing or right-wing (Bussereau 1999). The left-wing noted Tintin's pro-Amerindian stance and his opposition to capitalist power in albums such as *Le*

*Temple du soleil* and *Coke en Stock* (Bussereau 1999, p. 23. Hergé 1949 and 1958). The right-wing claimed that Tintin, like de Gaulle, was sober, brave and incorruptible. The general and the reporter both sought a French middle way somewhere between Washington and Moscow (Bussereau 1999, pp. 34-5).

The above attempts to politicise Tintin, satirical or otherwise, turn him into an apologist. Tintin lends his support to a given cause. Macé and Grum give Tintin a different meaning: Tintin is not an apologist for Gaullism. Reflecting an attitude towards de Gaulle and his policies prevalent at *Le Canard*, Tintin becomes ambivalent (Schifrès 1963, p. 154. Martin 2005, p. 274). Tintin is a charismatic figure at the height of his strength, who has delivered the country from another catastrophe. Yet Tintin also enjoys sweeping powers, which he may be tempted to abuse. He humours the FLN, who are killing French people; but he deals harshly with the strikers, who had loyally supported him during the putsch. Macé and Grum imitate Hergé's adventure narrative because Tintin triumphs over adversity; but this time, Tintin's victory outmanoeuvres everybody with a dubious sleight of hand, - a reversed Requisition order. On his second outing in *Le Canard*, Hergé's Tintin acquires an unaccustomed moral ambiguity: he is recast as the genial despot.

### **De Gaulle's *fin de régime*: 'Les aventures de Tintin-Michou' 'Tintin-Michou' Parts I and II. The Presidential Election. 29 December 1965 and 5 January 1966**

Escaro's re-workings of *Les Aventures de Tintin* were unprecedented: he copied sequences from Tintin albums; he placed panels out of order and adapted them; he added panels of his own and he re-wrote texts. As with strips analysed thus far, current affairs lend Hergé's characters fresh significance. Yet in 'Les aventures de Tintin-Michou', this change is thrown into exceptionally sharp relief because Escaro closely shadows Hergé's dialogue and graphic style. Tintin and the others speak with the politicians' voices in rectangular Hergeen balloons, whilst re-enacting scenes from the albums; their conversations integrate snatches of original speech with topical references. The impact on a public which had grown up reading Hergé should not be underestimated. An accompanying note humorously inverts the relationship between Hergé and Escaro: the abbreviation PCC (pour copie conforme) indicates that Escaro is certifying Hergé as accurate.

The 'Tintin-Michou' series begins by covering the presidential elections held in December (Escaro 1965, p. 5). Since 1961 and the Generals' putsch, the popular mood had changed. Following the end of the Algerian war, de Gaulle performed relatively poorly. De Gaulle did beat François Mitterrand, but the Socialists' strong showing forced a second ballot. As noted, 'de Gaulle's strategic and tactical errors... dominated the campaign' (Williams *et al.* 1970, p. 203). De Gaulle's errors were compounded by his disappointing TV appearances: the old man seemed ill at ease with the new medium and he was upstaged by younger, more telegenic rivals (Berstein 1993, p.196). Escaro redistributes the roles to suit the changed political times. De Gaulle is the older, gaffe-prone Haddock and Debré is Tintin. Debré's promotion is ironic, given that he now enjoyed a reduced status in reality: de Gaulle had unexpectedly replaced him with Georges Pompidou in 1962. Debré was now Finance Minister. *Le Canard* liked making fun of Debré's latterday inferiority to Pompidou. A further example is a jeremiad after the 13th Century poet Rutebeuf,

supposedly penned by Debré (Bacri 1966, p. 1).

To cover the election, Escaro selected panels from two albums where Tintin puts to sea on Haddock's ship looking for adventure: *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* and *L'Etoile mystérieuse* (Hergé 1945 and 1946). *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge*, a non-politicised hunt for treasure left by Haddock's ancestor, was published in *Le Soir* (1944). *L'Etoile mystérieuse* is more controversial and its chequered history has already been chronicled extensively (Assouline 1996, pp. 271-280 and pp. 477-482. Peeters 2002, pp.194-198). *L'Etoile mystérieuse* was originally published by *Le Soir* before *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* (1941). It recounts a race to a meteorite containing a rare metal which crashed into the sea. In the original, Tintin was opposed by rivals sponsored by a Jewish-looking financier called Blumenstein, whose ship flew the American flag. *L'Etoile mystérieuse* was substantially re-drawn for republication as an album in 1946 and the arch-villain was re-named Bohlwinkel. We assume that *Le Canard* used the later, 'expurgated' adventure, because that is how the French public read *L'Etoile mystérieuse*. The massively popular postwar editions of Tintin albums, not their more obscure precursors, became fixed in the French readership's canon. Consequently we refer to those album editions below.



Figure 3

The first instalment of 'Tintin-Michou' opens with a visually arresting four-panel sequence from *L'Etoile mystérieuse*: Haddock's storm-tossed ship *L'Aurore* just avoids being rammed by the rivals' ship *The Kentucky Star* (Hergé 1946, p. 26). See Figure 3. Under Escaro's pen the near-miss becomes a metaphor for the election: *L'Aurore* is the ship of state with Haddock struggling at the helm. She is re-named *La Cinquième*, after de Gaulle's Vth Republic; *The Kentucky Star* is *Le Mitterrand*. Haddock

lets fly with his familiar stream of invective. But when Escaro's Haddock adds 'à 5% près, il nous envoyait par le fond!', he is referring to the second ballot. De Gaulle scraped through by barely 5%. He obtained 54.5% to Mitterrand's 45.5% (Berstein 1993, p. 200). Tintin-Michou blames Pompidou for making a rightward turn, yet in truth Pompidou was a moderate who widened his base to bring in centrists (Bell 2000, p. 119). Pompidou, who resembles Bohlwinkel, claims Tintin-Michou is after his job (Hergé 1946, p. 26). Relations between First Minister and Finance Minister are evidently strained. One journalist put it baldly: 'M. Pompidou n'aime pas M. Debré, qui le lui rend bien... On constatait, entre M. Pompidou et le nouveau superministre des Finances, de sérieuses divergences dans les conceptions du fonctionnement de l'appareil gouvernemental' (Ferniot 1966, p. 12).

Escaro proceeds to borrow two panels from *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* (Hergé 1945, p. 17). Hergé's Haddock goes down to the hold to check his whisky; Escaro's checks his budget. Next, in a scene reminiscent of *L'Etoile mystérieuse* (Hergé 1946, p. 38), Haddock presents his crew with a dilemma: 'le progrès social' or 'la force de frappe' (ie. the nuclear deterrent). 'Le progrès social' was a slogan from the election. De Gaulle had recently used it in a speech on December 3rd, as well as in a live debate on December 13th (de Gaulle vol. IV 1970, pp. 407 and 415). Escaro's punchline is another pun on the hero's name: 'pour le progrès social, Tintin!'. The inference is plain: de Gaulle's budget is destined for nuclear weapons, and not for social programmes.

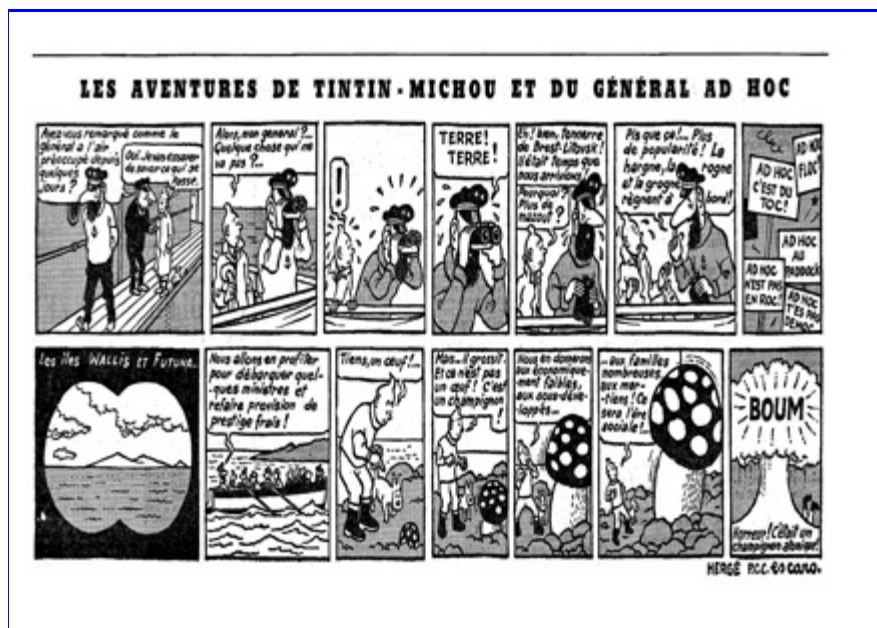


Figure 4

In the second instalment, Haddock is renamed Ad Hoc (Escaro 1966a, p. 5). See Figure 4. Haddock's name is most likely changed because ad hoc arrangements had featured strongly in the election: an ad hoc control commission of senior civil servants organised live debates; ad hoc committees ran candidates' campaigns (Williams 1970, pp.190 and 193). Employing comic reversal, the second instalment begins where *L'Etoile mystérieuse* ended, with Haddock sighting land (Hergé 1946 p. 62).

Escaro's dialogue is identical to Hergé's if 'capitaine' is substituted for 'général', until Ad Hoc shouts 'tonnerre de Brest Litovsk!'. Haddock's famous phrase is adapted to recall a treaty signed in Brest (Belarus), which marked Russia's exit from World War I in March 1918 (*Grand Dictionnaire encyclopédique*, 1996, p. 196). Mentioning Brest-Litovsk is a touch gratuitous; but it would have raised a smile amongst readers familiar with military history.

The action abruptly jumps seventeen pages backwards through *L'Etoile mystérieuse* (Hergé 1946, p. 45). A ship's crew disembark at the meteorite; Ad Hoc disembarks at Les îles Wallis et Futuna, a French Dom Tom in Polynesia. The Polynesian setting is appropriate: de Gaulle toured French possessions in the South Pacific by ship after the elections (Williams and Harrison 1971, p. 305). Escaro then jumps six pages ahead to Tintin's discovery of the mushroom (Hergé 1946, p. 51). Hergé's Tintin gazes at the mushroom in horror for two balloonless panels; Tintin-Michou, on the other hand, declares that the mushroom will help the disadvantaged everywhere. As in *L'Etoile mystérieuse*, the mushroom unexpectedly explodes; but in Escaro's version it forms an apocalyptic nuclear cloud.

Tintin's expedition to the meteorite is reinvented as a critique of de Gaulle's mid-1960s foreign and nuclear policy. De Gaulle was positioning himself as a friend to

developing countries and he had recently announced new aid packages (Williams and Harrison 1971, p. 48). Yet de Gaulle's largesse was not always disinterested: following Algerian independence France had moved nuclear testing from the Sahara to the South Pacific (Hartley 1972, p. 198).

## 'Tintin-Michou' Parts III and IV. The Ben Barka Affair. 12 and 19 January 1966



Figure 5

The third 'Tintin-Michou' instalment caricatures an administration haunted by the Ben Barka affair (Escaro 1966b, p. 5). See Figure 5. This scandal was just breaking because of a magazine article (d'Astier 1966, pp. 18-19; see also Violet 1991). The broad outlines were as follows. On 29 October 1965 Mehdi Ben Barka, a left-wing Moroccan opposition leader, was abducted in Paris, handed over to his country's security forces and murdered.

Almost immediately, the French authorities were thought to be complicit. Suspects escaped the country and the investigation was delayed; an agent from the Espionage and Counter-Espionage Service (SDECE) was later imprisoned, as were two police officers.

Escaro now adapts panels from *Les Sept Boules de cristal*, a tale of the supernatural involving an Inca mummy's curse (Hergé 1948). He opens with a device also employed by Hergé: the low-key opening, which draws readers into his story. Tintin walks into the grounds of a château, where Haddock is relishing his role as a latterday aristocrat. Tintin-Michou does likewise. He is met by Pompidou who appears under the guise of Nestor, Haddock's discreet and devoted butler, and he is greeted by Ad Hoc (Hergé 1948, pp.2-3). Pictures and dialogue follow Hergé with minor variations for three panels until Tintin-Michou throws away a banana skin. Escaro then introduces another Hergeen technique: the short, slapstick sequence linked into the plot; Georges slips up and goes into contorsions like Nestor (Hergé 1948, p. 4). The Ben Barka affair put Pompidou in an acutely embarrassing position, hence perhaps Georges' discomfiture: Pompidou oversaw the SDECE, and he had to answer awkward questions. The scandal aggravated splits between Debré and Pompidou: Debré wanted to sack Roger Frey the Interior Minister but Pompidou defended Frey, perhaps for conveniently slowing the inquiry down (Werth 1969, p. 389).

Escaro's third instalment suddenly leaps forward twenty-eight pages, to Haddock's nightmare about the mummy (Hergé 1948, pp. 32-3). Ad Hoc dreams of Ben Barka

to which Tintin-Michou exclaims 'Ben Bazooka?', and a footnote reads: 'voir Tintin et le 13 mai'. Escaro raises the spectre of the bazooka affair. This was an attempt to assassinate General Salan, the French Commander in Chief in Algeria, by firing a bazooka into his office on January 16 1957. As Escaro implies, the bazooka affair had disturbing echoes of Ben Barka: government involvement was alleged, no high-ranking officials were punished, the trial was delayed, a prime suspect fled the country and the crime was traced to a spy. As the footnote indicates, the failed coup of 13 May 1958 was also linked to the attempt on Salan. There were powerful individuals, 'who had been preparing for years the May 13 revolution – and who were, more or less, implicated in the bazooka affair' (Werth 1960, p. 228).

Escaro leaps backwards again through *Les Sept Boules de cristal* (Hergé 1948, pp. 17-18). The Dupondts arrive. They are renamed Bouvier and Bouvier after superintendant Maurice Bouvier, who headed the Ben Barka inquiry. As in *Les Aventures de Tintin* the dim-witted policemen fail to uphold the law. The Bouviers speak to Interior Minister Frey by telephone; hinting at a police cover up, they difform the Dupondts' signature phrase 'je dirai même plus' into 'je ne dirai rien de plus'. They then explain away Ad Hoc's nightmare by saying: 'le Général avait trop mangé d'oreilles de cochon'. The punchline recalls a declaration by the revolutionary Republican Citizen Romeau: that pig's ear be eaten every January 21st, to commemorate Louis XVI's execution in 1793.

Le 21 janvier serait surtout caractérisé par la tête ou l'oreille du cochon, que chaque père de famille ne manquerait pas de mettre sur la table, en mémoire du jour heureux où celle du parjure Louis XVI tomba et nous délivra de sa triste présence (Duprat 1994, p. 144).

This was not the first time *Le Canard* had mentioned de Gaulle's fondness for pig's ear, the Republican delicacy *par excellence*. A regular column called 'La cour', written in 'le style des mémoralistes du Grand Siècle', lampooned de Gaulle as a 'monarque républicain' (Lamalle 2008, p. 12). According to 'La cour', de Gaulle after the elections resembled a king out of touch with his people, who 'se consola en se régaland de... plats d'oreille de cochon' (Ribaud 1965, p. 3).



Tintin-Michou's final instalment almost exactly replicates fourteen panels from *Tintin au Pays de l'or noir* (Hergé 1950, pp. 29 and 30; Escaro 1966c, p. 5). See Figure 6. This adventure, which pits Tintin against oil interests, was also re-drawn by Hergé after World War II. The sequence borrowed by Escaro is a gag based on comedy of repetition. Hergé's Dupondts, lost in the desert, keep following

Figure 6

their own tyre tracks round in circles; their petrol can falls off and they come

across it again. Escaro's detectives, re-named 'Papon et Papon', follow tracks left by people implicated in the Ben Barka affair: imprisoned policeman Louis Souchon; SDECE officer Marcel Leroy Finville; Head of African affairs Jacques Foccart; Chief Superintendent André Simbille; Director of the police judiciaire Max Fernet; spy Antoine Lopez; Frey's Principle Private Secretary Jacques Aubert; Chief Commissioner Maurice Papon and finally Foreign Minister Roger Frey himself. The Dupondts find their own Ben Barka dossier; but in a picture invented by Escaro, they burn it. One Dupondt sighs 'ouf (kir)' with relief. His sigh combines comic strip onomatopoeia with a name: General Mohammed Oufkir, Morocco's Interior Minister, who was suspected of having orchestrated Ben Barka's kidnap. The Dupondts finally head off in search of their own dossier because it may be needed by Louis Zollinger the investigating judge. Hergé's desert sequence is reinvented as a barbed indictment of prevaricating policemen, covering up evidence in the wake of Ben Barka's murder.

\* \* \*

The presidential election was a setback for de Gaulle, and the Ben Barka affair tarnished his image as the Third World's friend. A sense of fin de régime was starting to envelop his administration:

La première élection présidentielle selon le mode récemment fixé laissa pourtant entrevoir, en 1965, la fin du monopole gaulliste... Deux ans plus tard, lors des législatives, la majorité sortante ne l'emporta que d'un cheveu. Dès lors, on commença à songer à "l'après-gaullisme", d'autant que le Général avait atteint sa soixante-seizième année... L'Etat fonctionnait à part, en haut, ailleurs, suivant sa logique propre, oublieux des citoyens de chair et de sang (Winock 1987, pp. 153 and 156).

Meanwhile the rest of society, inhabited by 'des citoyens de chair et de sang', was undergoing rapid change. Winock cites as examples 'les débuts d'une émancipation féminine' and the widening generation gap (Winock 1987, p. 128). Winock also chronicles the unstoppable rise of 'la société de consommation': car ownership, TV, jeans, miniskirts, Yé Yé music and much else. By the mid-1960s, the political classes were being outpaced by such developments. François Goguel, amongst others, had already discerned a 'profound transformation in the economic sphere, changes in the organization and values of society... immobility and nonadaptation in the strictly political sphere' (Goguel 1965, p. 363).

Escaro deflects Hergé's words and images away from their original functions. 'Les Aventures de Tintin-Michou' cease to reiterate the timeless, mythological hero's eternal triumph over adversity. Escaro's adventures of Tintin do not transcend the specificities of their peculiar moment in history. Escaro creates new effects by fragmenting Hergé's narratives from the 1940s and the 1950s. He imitates, re-arranges and adapts short sequences from the earlier albums in order to convey the twilight of de Gaulle. Topical events, combined with Hergé's panels lifted out of context, unexpectedly convey political lag. Tintin-Michou's plus fours, Ad Hoc's besuited butler and the bowler-hatted Papons in their World War II Jeep are redolent of a vanishing era. Meanwhile, the fleeting moments borrowed from

Tintin's adventures evoke a government detached from its electorate. Escaro's protagonists perform their brief dramas on ships, on an island, in the desert, or behind the walls of Ad Hoc's country seat: those places all remove the political authorities from mainstream society. The disconnect between government and governed satirised by Escaro, reached crisis-point just over two years after Tintin-Michou with the events of May 1968.

## Conclusion

Tintin put in one final appearance during the 1960s. In a three-panelled strip a bequipped Debré promises the moon, dressed in a space suit vaguely reminiscent of Tintin's (Pol Ferjac 1966, p. 5; Hergé 1954). Perhaps indicating exhaustion with Tintin-jokes, the punchline repeated the long-standing pun: 'les Français feront Tintin'. On the same page was a newcomer: Astérix (Bacrix and Escarox 1966, p. 5). This time, the Gaullish warrior is de Gaulle while the Romans are 'Ricains' (ie. Les Américains). Astérix makes the Ricains repatriate their legions, in an allusion to the deteriorating relations between Washington and Paris: in March, de Gaulle had demanded all NATO forces on French soil place themselves under French orders; that move was deemed unacceptable and it led to the withdrawal of Allied troops from France (Hartley 1972, p. 232).

Astérix's adventures in *Le Canard* merit consideration, but they surpass the scope of this study. If we restrict ourselves to Tintin, then we can evaluate his performances. Artists at *Le Canard* re-invent Tintin in ways previously untried. In 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or', the victorious Roland of popular mythology is unexpectedly sidelined: Tintin's attempt to reveal the truth about the Golden Calf has landed him in detention. With Tintin thus removed a powerful, Biblical/Faustian allegory creates a sense of foreboding. 'Le veau d'or est toujours debout' hints darkly that an unsuspecting Marianne is in the grip of diabolical forces. A popular interpretation may concentrate on Mammon, although there are the still more sinister suggestions of leadership breakdown and civil strife. When the Golden Calf is worshipped, today as in Exodus, brother takes up arms against brother. Tintin's arrest and Marianne's distress are uncannily premonitory: 'Tintin à la recherche du veau d'or' looks ahead to renewed anti-press clamp-downs as well as to the IVth Republic's subsequent collapse.

'Les nouvelles aventures de Tintin et Michou' paint a concise yet convincing portrait. We can see why Macé and Grum chose Tintin to satirise a charismatic leader at his zenith: Tintin and de Gaulle both outwit their opponents and triumph over adversity; they are clever and not without courage; they diffuse crises at home and abroad; they accomplish feats beyond the common lot of mortals. Yet when Tintin becomes de Gaulle, his ethical position shifts: Tintin only prevails by reversing Requisition law; he displays autocratic, machiavellian tendencies; he ruthlessly manipulates people to further his agenda. Tintin's second adventure in *Le Canard* sends out strangely contradictory moral signals.

Escaro is brazen. Tintin is a disgruntled minister in a bickering government with a dubious foreign policy, haunted by post-colonial scandal and disconnected from voters. The instalments vary from twelve to twenty panels in length, thereby providing ample room for dramatic and humorous developments. Each instalment replaces the reiterative, adventure narrative structure with an innovative approach.



The first instalment integrates maritime sequences from *L'Etoile mystérieuse* and *Le Trésor de Rackham le rouge*. The second begins at the end of *L'Etoile mystérieuse*; next, it flits backwards and forwards around Tintin's conquest of the meteorite. The third instalment combines Hergé's narrative and humorous devices with sundry, mostly low-key panels from *Les Sept Boules de cristal*; Escaro now jumps forwards through Hergé's album and then jumps backwards. The fourth reproduces a comparatively lengthy sequence from *Tintin au pays de l'or noir*. Escaro's strips measure the extent to which Tintin's adventures had become embedded in the readership's consciousness by the mid-1960s: Escaro pre-supposes detailed knowledge of narrated events, dialogue, storytelling techniques and secondary characters.

Was Hergé amused by Tintin's forays into *Le Canard*? We do not know. I have found no mention of them in interviews, biographies or correspondence, nor have I uncovered any proof that Hergé objected. It is surprising that Hergé apparently tolerated these strips when, since his death, protection of his copyright has been justifiably intense. Yet Hergé may not have taken offence at them; after all, neither Tintin nor his creator is ever targeted. Quite the reverse: appropriation of Tintin by *Le Canard* acknowledges Hergé's contribution to Francophone cultural heritage. Tintin's exploits in *Le Canard* evince his creator's acceptance into the educated, adult reader's canon. In the land of *Le Canard*, Hergé is even more than a myth-maker. He enters the distinguished company of Rutebeuf, Fénelon, Corneille, Montesquieu and Zola.

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