André Franquin, Master of the Ninth Art

Matthew Screech

1. Introduction

Belgian comic strip artist André Franquin (1924-1997) is a leading figure in European popular culture. His comics *Spirou et Fantasio*, *Modeste et Pompon*, *Gaston Lagaffe*, and *Idées noires* appeared regularly in magazines between 1946 and 1990, and were republished as hardback albums.[1] Franquin is translated into eleven languages.[2] Franquin's best-loved characters, Gaston Lagaffe and the Marsupilami, have entered popular mythology. Hergé, creator of the world-famous comic strip hero Tintin, called Franquin "a great artist compared to whom I'm just a mediocre drawer"; the French Minister of Culture paid tribute to Franquin.[3]

Although Franquin's talent is recognized on continental Europe and elsewhere, he remains almost unknown in the USA and Britain. Franquin is not translated into English. Two English-language writers mention Franquin in passing, and he has an entry in one American comics encyclopedia.[4]

In this study I assess Franquin's contribution to Franco-Belgian comics—which are called *bandes dessinées*. I establish Franquin's importance in giving *bandes dessinées* an identity distinct from that of American comics. I hope I shall also encourage a wider audience to know Franquin better. To appreciate Franquin fully, it is helpful to begin by briefly reviewing *bandes dessinées* up to the mid-1940s.[5]

In French-speaking countries, the art of telling stories by combining words with a sequence of pictures can be traced back to the eleventh century Bayeux tapestry and beyond. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century France, humorous images and written text came together in popular illustrated stories like Georges Colomb's *La Famille Fenouillard* (1889) and Louis Forton's *La Bande des Pieds Nickelés* (1908). Colomb and Forton placed explanatory texts beneath their pictures, but when Frenchman Alain Saint Ogan integrated words into his drawings by using speech balloons in *Zig et Puce* (1925), the elements of a modern *bande dessinée* were in place. Speech balloons had already been used by American Rudolph Dirks in *The Katzenjammer Kids* (1897).[6]

Early *bande dessinée* artists looked to America for inspiration: *La Famille Fenouillard* tells of a French family's travels in the USA; *La Bande des Pieds Nickelés* is about a band of swindlers who visit (among other places) America during the Prohibition; *Zig et Puce* depicts two youngsters obsessed with going to the New World, with America portrayed as a mythical country, always just beyond their reach.

1929 saw the first Belgian comic strip artist: Georges Remi, better known as Hergé. Hergé's Tintin, a reporter/detective, had his first adventures in Communist Russia, Belgian Congo, and the United States.[7] Hergé was hugely popular, and Tintin dominated *bandes dessinées* from the 1940s to the 1970s.

In 1934, Disney's *Journal de Mickey* brought Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and friends to French speakers in comic strip form; in 1936, *Robinson* magazine (Paris) introduced Popeye and *Bringing up Father* (called *La Famille Illico*). Growing up in pre-war Brussels, young André Franquin devoured comics, later saying "I read a lot of American strips in *Mickey*, *Robinson*...and also Hergé's *Tintin*."[8]

In 1938, Belgian publisher Editions Dupuis launched the *bande dessinée* magazine called *Spirou*, which continues to this day. World War II and the Nazi occupation of Belgium stopped comic production, and *Spirou* closed from September 1943 to October 1944.

Immediately after the war, *bandes dessinées* remained overshadowed by America, and newly liberated governments were aware of the impact made by US comics. In 1947, the Belgian government used characters from *Popeye*, *The Katzenjammer Kids*, and others in anti-inflation publicity.[9] But in France, comics were mistrusted. On 16 July 1949, the French government passed a law aimed at comics that forbade any "positive depictions of banditry, lying, theft, laziness, cowardice, hatred, debauchery or any act that qualifies as a crime or an offence."[10]

Belgian artists who wanted to tap the lucrative French market had to comply with that law, as Franquin later found out. During the mid-1950s, pictures of revolvers were erased from one of his *Spirou et Fantasio* adventures because of French censorship.[11] The more relaxed attitude taken by the Belgian authorities partly explains why Belgium, not France, spearheaded the *bande dessinée*'s post-war renaissance.

2. Franquin's Early Work

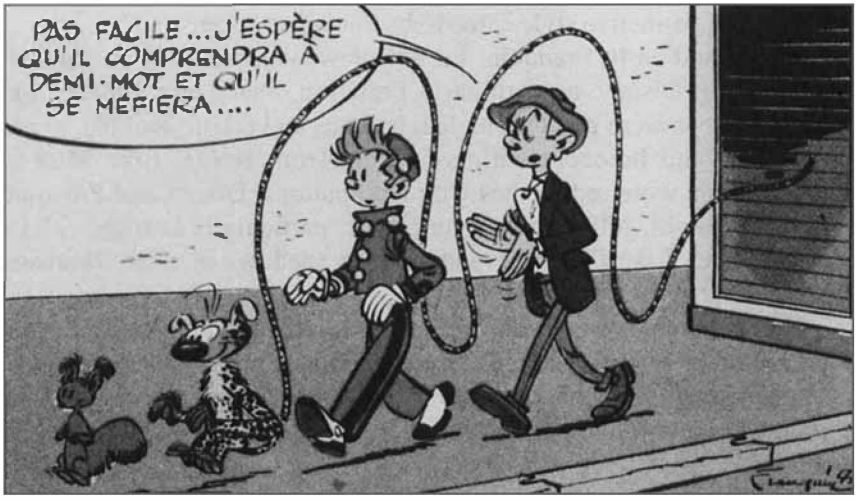
Franquin was born in the Etterbeek area of Brussels, like Hergé who was seventeen years his senior. When he was eleven, Franquin won a children's art competition, and he had two pictures published in a national newspaper.[12] Like Hergé, Franquin studied drawing at the Ecole Saint Luc, Brussels, but Franquin's studies were interrupted by World

War II. In 1944, Franquin got a job in film animation at Studio CBA. When Studio CBA closed in 1946, Franquin was offered work at the newly reopened *Spirou* magazine by Joseph Gillain (known as Jijé). Franquin, Jijé and friends visited the USA and Mexico in 1948/49.

Jijé entrusted Franquin with *Spirou* magazine's star attraction: the comic strip *Spirou et Fantasio*. The hero called Spirou was invented by Robert Velter (known as Rob-Vel) in 1938. Rob-Vel did not have time to develop Spirou before being conscripted. Rob-Vel passed Spirou over to Jijé; Jijé in turn passed Spirou over to Franquin.

Rob-Vel's Spirou, a hotel bellboy, was accompanied by Spip the squirrel. When Jijé took Spirou over, the importance of Spirou's job diminished and Fantasio, a human being, replaced the squirrel as Spirou's best friend. Those changes suggest that Jijé modelled Spirou on Hergé's Tintin: after *Tintin au pays des Soviets* (1929), Tintin's job as a reporter was played down, and Captain Haddock replaced Milou the dog as Tintin's best friend after *Le Crabe aux pinces d'or* (1943).

There were other similarities between Tintin and Spirou. Both were perfect models of youthful virtue who resembled Boy Scouts: they did good turns, thinking of others before themselves. Tintin and Spirou were brave, tough, magnanimous heroes accompanied by funny, fallible friends. Tintin's friend Haddock, like Spirou's friend Fantasio, raised laughs by falling down, knocking things over and so on. Disney had already humorously contrasted the upright hero and gaffe-prone companion with his pair Mickey Mouse/Donald Duck (1934).



1. Spip, the Marsupilami, Spirou and Fantasio, *Les Pirates du silence* 872. © Ed. Dupuis. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

Franquin took *Spirou et Fantasio* over during *Spirou et la maison préfabriquée* (1946), which was a run of visual gags about a prefab house falling down.[13] The first strip Franquin completed, called *Le Tank* (1948), showed a Europe still preoccupied by World War II: Spirou and Fantasio buy an ex-US Army tank, and lose control when they drive it off. They cause all kinds of comical mayhem, but no one gets seriously hurt. When the tank stops, Spirou insists they repair all the damage they have caused. The humor is visual slapstick, and the action takes place against simple backgrounds.

In Franquin's second effort, *Radar le Robot* (1948), Spirou again struggles with a machine: a driverless car tries, unsuccessfully, to run people over. The murderous, driverless car was later used to more frightening and less humorous effect in John Carpenter's movie *Christine* (1982).

Franquin recalled that when his career began, "there were only two great names: Disney and Hergé" (Franquin and Gillain 17).[14] Inevitably, young Franquin was strongly influenced both by Hergé and by Disney. Hergé's influence over post-war *bandes dessinées* was so immense that his graphic style needs defining even though stylistically, early Franquin was much closer to Disney.

Hergé's style grew out of the elegant art-deco of *Bringing up Father* and *Zig et Puce*. Hergé drew beautifully finished panels, the sharp precision of his lines emphasized by absence of shadow. His speech balloons were neat and rectangular. Hergé paid great attention to background detail, setting Tintin in realistic, carefully researched decor. Hergé's orderly, even restrained artwork distanced him from many American cartoonists. His distinctive style came to be known as "clear-line."

Disney and early Franquin did not draw with carefully researched realism. With Disney, as with early Franquin, characters, objects and speech balloons were gently rounded, bulbous and elastic-looking, evoking a naïve and innocent whimsy absent from Hergé. Like Mickey Mouse, Spirou wore red clothes with gold buttons. Disney and Franquin used more bright, jolly colors than Hergé, particularly orange, yellow and light blue. Like Disney, Franquin used shadows to create dramatic effects.

Over the course of his career, Franquin adopted numerous devices popularized by Disney, though not invented by him. Examples include: sudden plunging of the action into silhouette, motion-lines creating the illusion of objects moving through space, brightly colored onomatopoeic words.

Disney's influence remained with Franquin until the mid-1970s but it gradually became more attenuated. With time, Franquin evolved his own, original graphic style.

3. Tales of Adventure

Despite stylistic differences between young Franquin and Disney on one hand and Hergé on the other, our three artists' comic strips developed along similar lines. Franquin's first attempts, like early *Mickey Mouse* and *Tintin*, consisted of simple, visual gags. After such efforts, Disney, Hergé and Franquin began drawing longer adventure stories for serialization in magazines. Disney's, Hergé's, and Franquin's longer narratives combined adventures with humor: visual gags were linked into the plot, suspending the action momentarily to provide comic relief. As Franquin repeatedly drew adventure stories until he dropped *Spirou et Fantasio* in 1969, they are worth considering in detail.

Mickey's, Tintin's, and Spirou's adventures share a structure that predates comic strips by several centuries, and is a simplified descendant of the traditional folktale as defined by Vladimir Propp: the plot is a "development proceeding from villainy or a lack, through intermediary functions to marriage...a reward, a gain or in general the liquidation of misfortune"; the hero is "that character who either directly suffers from the action of the villain...or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or lack of another person."[15]

As in Propp's folktales the virtuous, exemplary hero, be he Mickey, Tintin, or Spirou, leaves home and ventures into dangerous places and/or foreign countries. During his adventure the hero is tested, and he may confront the forces of nature as well as confronting wrongdoers. Chance or good fortune help the hero at critical moments, and he does not make serious errors. The hero has exceptional talents and he triumphs because of intelligence, not brute force. Suspense is maintained because the hero never triumphs too easily: victory is only assured after his final showdown with the villains.

According to the conventions of the genre, good triumphs over evil, so the hero defeats villainy and "liquidates" misfortune. In folktales, the hero could be rewarded with marriage upon his triumphant homecoming. Mickey, Tintin, and Spirou cannot marry because they must stay forever young, independent and ready for their next adventure.

Disney, Hergé, and Franquin were not the only comic strip artists to use that narrative structure. One reason for that traditional structure's enduring popularity is its flexibility: artists can adapt tales of adventure to suit their fancy. There were marked differences between Mickey's, Tintin's, and Spirou's adventures.

In Disney's comics, the hero is often prompted into action by the North American national interest. Mickey and Donald are patriots, and the villains are often agents of foreign powers like the Phantom Blot (1939); tyrants, dictators and other such wrongdoers are anti-American,

like in Communist Brutopia and in Unsteadystan.[16] Money also motivates Disney's characters: villains try to steal Uncle Scrooge's money; Donald goes far afield to accumulate wealth for Uncle Scrooge and for himself.

Tintin is not the same as Mickey and Donald. Tintin cares little about money, and his travels abroad are rarely motivated by personal gain. Tintin is neither explicitly patriotic nor pro-American, but early Hergé was influenced by European colonialism.

In *Tintin au Congo* (1930), an adventure that Hergé later found embarrassing, Africans are backward and immature; they need organizing by white, European Tintin. Such notions of European superiority were widely taken for granted in colonialist Europe; after all, Belgium did not lose the Congo until 1960. With time, colonialist influence waned. In *Coke en Stock* (1958), Africans need Tintin to deliver them from slavery, but Tintin is no longer paternalistic and the Africans are responsible adults.

Franquin's first two *Spirou et Fantasio* adventures fall between Disney and Hergé. In *L'Héritage de Spirou* (1948), the first adventure, Spirou is motivated by money: he and Fantasio brave a haunted house to obtain an inheritance. In *Spirou chez les pygmées* (1950), the second adventure, Spirou is perhaps inevitably paternalistic towards pygmies when he visits Africa: Spirou stops a war between two pygmy tribes, one with black skin and one with brown skin, by teaching those with black skin how to wash.[17] When the dirt comes off, both tribes have the same color skin, and the fighting ceases.

Franquin came to regret the assumptions underlying *Spirou chez les pygmées*, saying "I personally am not racist.... I draw ridiculous Blacks just as I draw ridiculous Whites" (qtd. in Sadoul 121).[18] Unusually, Franquin cast Europeans as the real villains in *Spirou chez les pygmées*: Spirou outwits white gun-runners who treat pygmies with contempt, unscrupulously selling arms to both warring tribes.

Franquin's most original early adventure story is *Les Chapeaux noirs* (1952). Here, Spirou goes to the Wild West and he gets involved in a gun-toting escapade. A gag where a cactus is shot by mistake and topples onto a bandit was lifted straight out of Disney, according to Franquin (qtd. in Sadoul 99). Finally, Spirou is cornered by bandits, and he is about to be killed. But the reader has been tricked: Spirou was only acting in a movie, and his action-packed adventure was not for real.

Les Chapeaux noirs provides the first example of Franquin's tendency to subvert the conventions of adventure stories: traditionally, the hero's exploits are exemplary and meaningful, but *Les Chapeaux noirs* is nothing but a false adventure, a sham. Franquin's tendency to subvert the

conventions of the genre became more pronounced during the 1950s and 1960s, distancing him from Hergé and from Disney.

4. The Triumph of Spirou

Spirou and Fantasio were not invented by Franquin, but he soon brought his own characters into their adventures. In *Il y a un sorcier à Champignac* (1951), Franquin invented the village of Champignac, and he peopled it with new protagonists, notably the Mayor and the Count.

The Mayor of Champignac's verbose speeches, which are full of comically confused metaphors, introduced a new level of verbal humor. In a later adventure, for example, the Mayor says: "Agriculture, commerce and tourism are two breasts sowing the bread that waters its children."[19] The Mayor had no precedent in comic strips, but his nonsensical pomposity recalls a famous figure from French literature: playwright Henri Monnier's character Joseph Prudhomme, who is best known for having said "this sabre is the happiest day of my life."[20]

The Count of Champignac, an off-beat, scientific genius, became even more indispensable to Spirou's adventures than the Mayor. Eccentric scientists like Franquin's Count recur frequently in twentieth century popular culture. In French-speaking countries, such characters were first popularized by Jules Verne's protagonists: Professor Lidenbrock and Captain Nemo in *Voyage au centre de la Terre* and *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*; Hergé's Professor Tournesol is a later influential example.[21]

Franquin's Count differs from his predecessors in Verne and Hergé, because the Count's miraculous discoveries involve serums made from mushrooms. Franquin's Count is original: in Spirou's later adventure *Le Voyageur du Mésozoïque* (1960), the Count brought a dinosaur back to life over thirty years before Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993).

In Franquin's *Il y a un sorcier à Champignac*, where Spirou meets the Mayor and the Count, nature seems bewitched (for example, pigs turn blue), and the Mayor blames those strange happenings upon gypsies. The plot is a series of false clues that put everyone on the wrong track, until Spirou discovers that the Count's serums are behind it all. As Sadoul points out, Franquin's *Il y a un Sorcier à Champignac* may have influenced the great Hergé (102). Hergé's later *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore* (1963), like Franquin's *Il y a un Sorcier à Champignac*, is structured by misleading clues; moreover, both stories involve gypsies wrongly accused of a crime.

By the early 1950s, Franquin's graphic style was becoming more realistic: there were detailed street-scenes, recognizable makes of car and policemen in Belgian uniforms. Franquin contrasted realism with

colors reminiscent of Disney. For example, the Count's castle is purple with yellow doors.

Spirou et les Héritiers (1952) introduced the Marsupilami, a loveable, yellow and black spotted creature. Spirou and Fantasio go to Palombia, a fictitious South American country. There they capture and befriend the Marsupilami, who returns with them to Champignac.

Like his predecessors the unicorn and the phoenix, the Marsupilami is a mythological creature with exceptional properties. In previous comics, the Marsupilami can only be compared to two equally fantastic animals: the Giff Wiff (*The Katzenjammer Kids*) and Jeep (*Popeye*).[22] Unlike the Giff Wiff and Jeep, the Marsupilami is an egg-laying mammal with a tail 25 feet long. The Marsupilami uses his tail for self-defense and for locomotion, bouncing along on it like a spring. Although small, the Marsupilami is incredibly strong, and in *Le Voyageur du Mésozoïque*, he knocked the dinosaur unconscious. The Marsupilami was hugely popular with *Spirou* magazine's readers, and the funny little animal frequently accompanied Spirou on his adventures. In the later *L'Ombre du Z* (1962), the Marsupilami even saved Spirou's life.

Seccotine, the first female protagonist, arrived in *La Corne de rhinocéros* (1955), another African adventure. Unlike most female secondary characters in 1950s adventure comics, Seccotine has a strong personality. She is a brave, intelligent professional journalist; Seccotine is far cleverer and far more competent than Fantasio. On returning from Africa, Spirou and Fantasio obtain the "Turbotraction," a 1950s dream-car complete with gobs of chrome and wraparound windshield (see fig. 2). The "Turbotraction" combined pure imagination with contemporary notions of modern styling.

As Sadoul noted, *La Corne de rhinocéros* contains the first example of Franquin directing subtle irony at Spirou (113): when an Arab salesman encourages Spirou to buy a present for his fiancée back home, the suggestion that Franquin's chaste, saintly hero has a girlfriend must be a joke. Franquin's ironic treatment of the hero, which would be unthinkable in Disney and in Hergé, became much more overt in Spirou's later adventures.

Palombia, where Fantasio's cousin Zantafio emerged as the local dictator, got a political dimension in *Le Dictateur et le champignon* (1956). Spirou's adventures became less innocent and more hard-edged with this portrait of third-world fascism. In Palombia, oppression is everywhere; the Palombian national symbol (a parrot) parodies the Nazi eagle, and a man is kicked by the army for failing to salute Zantafio with sufficient enthusiasm. However, the story ends happily because Spirou

uses one of the Count's serums to melt Zantafio's military hardware and prevent war.

Spirou's evident delight in melting Zantafio's weaponry gives *Le Dictateur et le champignon* anti-war undertones almost unknown in 1950s adventure comics, where war was far more likely to be glamorized. In contemporary comics, *Le Dictateur et le champignon* is comparable only to Harvey Kurtzman's non-humorous anti-war strip *Frontline Combat* (1951). Unlike Franquin, Kurtzman used grimly accurate realism to depict the horrors of war. [23]

By the late 1950s, Franquin's graphic style was losing its bulbous, Disneyesque elasticity, but it was not becoming grimly realistic. With his friend and assistant Willy Maltaite, Franquin helped popularize the emerging "style atome," a style he also adopted in his next comic, *Modeste et Pompon*.

In "style atome," shapes became more angular, more geometric, and they were drawn with bolder, straighter lines. In "style atome" cities, elegant buildings of steel and glass filled with shiny, ultra-modern gadgets, suggested financial security and material comfort; sleek, American-looking vehicles (like the "Turbotraction") suggested hi-tech dynamism and effortless speed. "Style atome" glorified the mass consumerism and

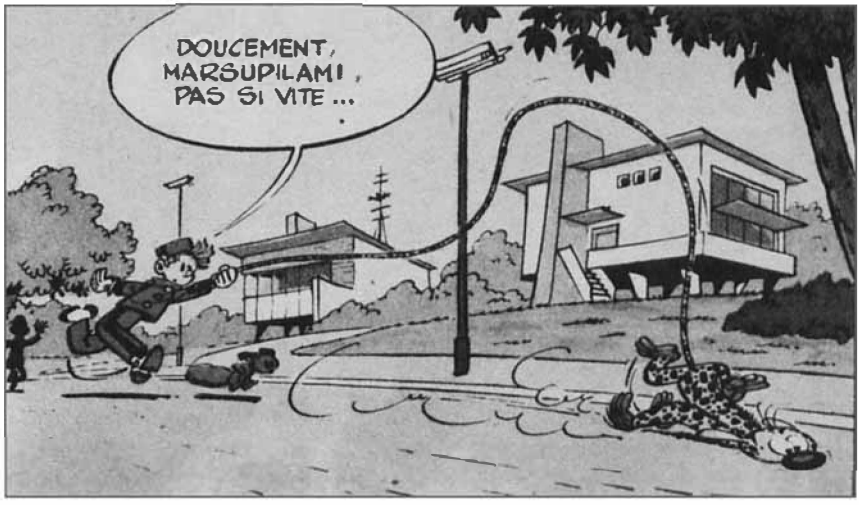
2. The "Turbotraction Mk II," *La Foire aux gangsters* 1137. © Ed. Dupuis. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

the technological optimism of a Europe emerging from post-war austerity.[24] "Style atome" matched Spirou's rising living standards: by the mid/late 1950s, Franquin's one-time Boy Scout had a very expensive car and a modern, comfortable home.

"Style atome" depicted a prosperous, futuristic world where goodness always triumphed: there was no pollution, no urban blight, no unemployment and no social or moral decay. Incognito City in *Les Pirates du silence* (1958), an adventure where Spirou outwits bank robbers, provides numerous examples of "style atome" (see fig. 3).

With "style atome," Franquin's use of color became more sophisticated and more varied. In *Le Repaire de la Murène* (1957), where Spirou pilots a futuristic submarine, there are subtly nuanced depictions of the vast, shadowy emptiness of the deep.

"Style atome" was peculiar to *bandes dessinées* with no direct equivalent in American comics. Not surprisingly, American artists of Franquin's generation, such as Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, drew adventures influenced by America's (not by Europe's) post-war preoccupations: space exploration, atomic secrets and Cold-War angst. What with the atomic bomb and the space race against Russia, ultra-modern technology was inspiring fear as much as optimism in the USA. The space monsters, evil commie spies and darkly menacing atmosphere of Lee and Kirby had no place in the safe, prosperous and reassuring vision conjured up by Belgium's post-war "style atome."

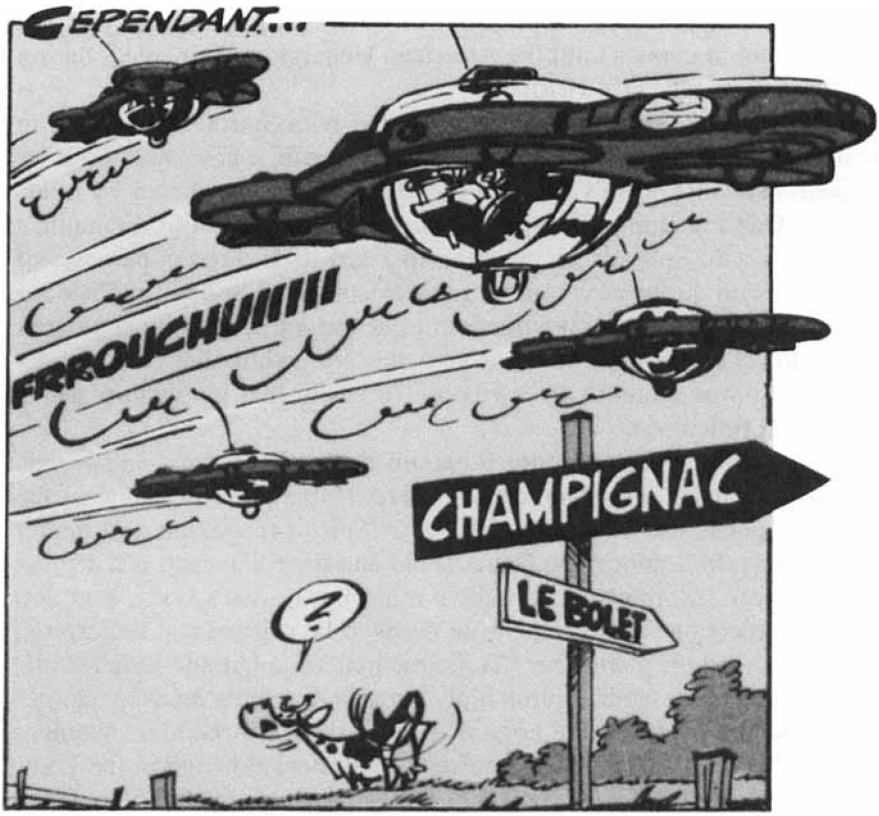


3. Spip, Spirou and the Marsupilami in Incognito City, *Les Pirates du silence* 877. © Ed. Dupuis. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

5. Spirou Undermined

As the 1950s drew to a close, Franquin tired of Spirou. He departed radically from conventional tales of adventure in *Le Nid des Marsupilamis* (1960), which became the biggest seller of the entire *Spirou et Fantasio* series in France.[25] In *Le Nid des Marsupilamis*, roles are redistributed, for Seccotine upstages Spirou: the story consists of Seccotine's documentary about the life, habitat and courting rituals of the Marsupilami, filmed by her in the Palombian jungle. Spirou is merely a spectator in the crowd, having lost the initiative to a woman. Mickey and Tintin could never be sidelined so ignominiously!

Franquin's belittling of Spirou weakened Spirou's status as a meaningful hero. Spirou's status became still less clear with the arrival of Zorglub in *Z comme Zorglub* (1962). Convention dictates that true heroes need worthy opponents, but Zorglub is simply pathetic. Zorglub flies to Champignac in a menacingly futuristic "Zorgocopter" (see fig.



4. Zorgocopters over Champignac, *L'Ombre du Z* 1296. © Ed. Dupuis. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

4). He makes a pompous speech and he promptly falls down a ladder. Zorglub wants to rule the world, but his main achievement is writing "Coca-cola" backwards on the moon. Depressed and lonely, he exits ingloriously on an old bicycle.

There is an ironic contrast between Zorglub's failure and the glittering modernity of his equipment. Unlike any of his contemporaries, Franquin used "style atome" futurism to question the prevailing post-war optimism in *Z comme Zorglub*: Zorglub's state-of-the-art technology merely provides incitements to consume, and even then it goes wrong.

In *L'Ombre du Z* (1962), Zorglub is more dangerous: aided by Zantafio the thuggish dictator, Zorglub enriches himself by hypnotizing poverty-stricken Palombians into buying absurd quantities of toothpaste. Franquin's humor turns corrosive when the Palombian army, chanting Zorglub's advertising slogans, beats up its own citizens and tries to grab all the toothpaste for itself. Of course, Spirou foils Zorglub's plans, but the disturbing suspicion remains that insatiable consumerism conspired with fascism in Palombia. Franquin's uncomfortable association of rampant consumerism with oppression in developing countries was not found again in comics until the American Underground emerged, during the late 1960s and early 1970s.[26]

By the mid-1960s, Franquin was bored with Spirou. He wanted to concentrate on his new character, Gaston Lagaffe, who made two brief appearances in Spirou's adventures.[27] Ill-health, exacerbated by overwork, made Franquin interrupt *QRN sur Bretzelburg* (1966). Franquin's weariness with Spirou's adventures expressed itself through parodies of the genre and through ever more ironic treatment of Spirou. In *QRN sur Bretzelburg*, Spirou restores freedom to a starving east European country. Soldiers attack him, but their grenades are nothing but cans of vegetables. Spirou triumphs over villainy so easily that his victory seems somewhat ridiculous

The last Spirou adventure Franquin drew, *Panade à Champignac* (1969), collapsed the adventure narrative. Nothing really happens: the opening pages are set in the offices of *Spirou* magazine and depict Gaston Lagaffe's antics; the Count is old and tired; Fantasio is a depressive neurotic; Zorglub has a baby's mind but a man's body, a notion which borders on the obscene as he needs to be washed and fed; Spirou has exchanged his glamorous "Turbotraction" for a humble little Honda; there is a chase in which Spirou hotly pursues Zorglub's runaway pram.

Send-ups of adventure comics were unknown in *bandes dessinées* before Franquin's later *Spirou et Fantasio* stories, although in the USA, Harvey Kurtzman's *Mad* (1952) had already parodied Superman (Superduperman) amongst others. But Franquin's parody was not the same as *Mad*'s. In *Mad*, lampooned heroes

became self-conscious commentators on their own formats, which they talked over with themselves, their peers, and the readers. They were aware of the fact that they existed in a narrow frame, and seemed to resent it. (Daniels 68)[28]

Spirou never became a resentful, "self-conscious commentator" on his own format. Quite the reverse. Humor was generated because Spirou persistently acted the virtuous, exemplary hero, blissfully unaware that the adventure narrative was collapsing around him.

In 1969, Franquin passed Spirou over to Jean-Claude Fournier, and Spirou's adventures became more conventional again. *Spirou et Fantasio* continues to this day.

Franquin was a harsh judge of his own work, later claiming he was dissatisfied with all the *Spirou et Fantasio* adventures; Franquin even called Spirou an old-style hero who was too much like Tintin.[29] Nonetheless, *Spirou et Fantasio* struck a chord with the public. By the mid-1950s, *Spirou* magazine was one of the most successful *bande dessinée* magazines in Europe, selling over 150,000 copies per issue (Filippini XVI).

Younger artists imitated Franquin. The Marsupilami, in particular, inspired a number of fantastic animals. One comic, *Cha'apa et Group Group*, shows how hard French publishers of the 1950s and 1960s were struggling to compete with Belgium (Filippini 105).[30] Group Group looks like the Marsupilami, except he has green and black stripes and a squirrel tail. Like the Marsupilami, Group Group lives in a South American jungle, and he accompanies a human back to civilization.

Over the years, the Marsupilami has gone from strength to strength, becoming more popular than Spirou. The Marsupilami has spawned innumerable cuddly toys and a hit record.[31] A statue of the Marsupilami was erected in Charleroi, Belgium (1988), and in Brussels, the *Musée des sciences naturelles* devoted an exhibition to him (1996). The Marsupilami's fame even crossed the Atlantic. Walt Disney Company made a cartoon about the Marsupilami (1992), although Franquin was unenthusiastic.[32] New Marsupilami comics, signed by "Franquin et Batem," are still being published today by Marsu Productions (Brussels).

6. Modeste et Pompon

Modeste et Pompon was the result of a brief financial dispute between Franquin and Editions Dupuis in 1955. Dissatisfied with his publisher, Franquin briefly went over to *Spirou* magazine's rival, Hergé's *Journal de Tintin*, who commissioned the strip for five years.

Modeste et Pompon, unlike *Spirou et Fantasio*, consisted of short, self-contained gags lasting about eight panels. Franquin recalled that in

Europe, adventure comics were the norm, and that few *bande dessinée* artists were drawing short gags during the 1950s.[33] Short gags were chiefly popularized in Europe by George McManus' *Bringing up Father*. They make readers laugh by flouting expectations and they generally have a three-stage structure: the first stage presents a fairly neutral situation; the second develops the action towards a logical outcome; the third suddenly delivers the unexpected ending. Much of the humor in *Modeste et Pompon* and *Bringing up Father* arises from domestic concerns, and jokes hinge on the hero's desire for a quiet life being thwarted. Like Donald Duck, Modeste is often disturbed by his three mischievous nephews.

Some gags in *Modeste et Pompon* are very similar to those in *Bringing up Father*. For example the hero, be he Jiggs or Modeste, sets off to an engagement.[34] On the way, he becomes embroiled in an argument with a passer-by. On arriving at his engagement, the hero discovers that the passer-by is none other than the person he is scheduled to meet.

Although it clearly shows Franquin's influences, *Modeste et Pompon* is not plagiarism. The society depicted in *Modeste et Pompon* is less matriarchal than that of *Bringing up Father*; Modeste's female companion Pompon, unlike Maggie (Jiggs' wife), is not a domineering snob. Pompon is wiser than Modeste, but she exerts a calming, moderating

5. No peace for Modeste in his "style atome" interior, *Tout plein de gags* 183. © Le Lombard, 1997.

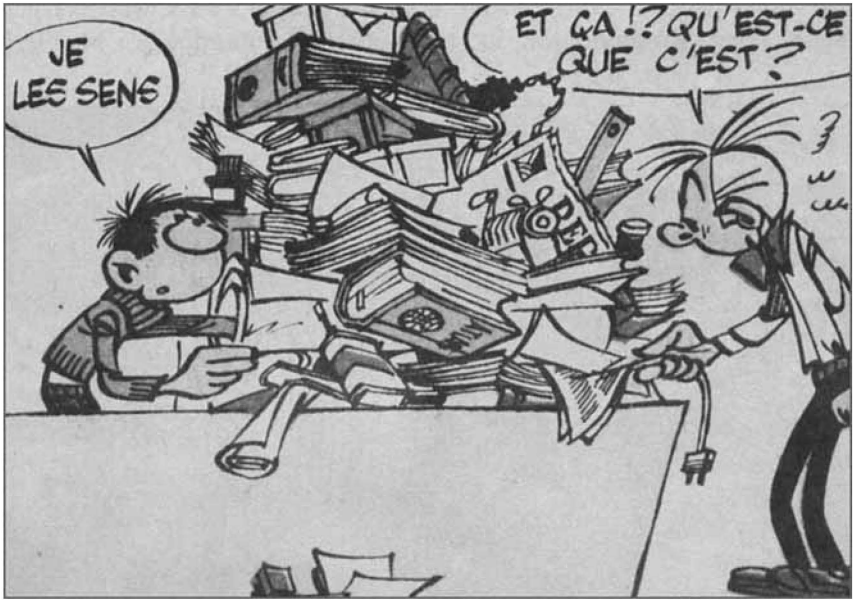
influence. Félix the incorrigible salesman, who tries to sell up-to-date gadgets to Modeste, has no equivalent in *Bringing up Father*. Anticipating later technology, Félix even touted a remote-control zapper for changing TV channels ten years before the zapper was first marketed in Europe.[35]

Both *Bringing up Father* and *Modeste et Pompon* are very much of their time. *Bringing up Father* depicts a *nouveau riche* family in an art-deco style that evokes the pre-war era. *Modeste et Pompon* depicts post-war suburbia in "style atome": prosperous villas, neat gardens, comfortable interiors, and domestic gadgetry.

Modeste et Pompon is not the most original of Franquin's creations, but it has a certain period charm. *Modeste et Pompon* allowed Franquin to try his hand at short gags, and he was soon to exploit the potential of such gags more fully in his next comic, *Gaston Lagaffe*.

7. Gaston Lagaffe, an Original Hero

Gaston Lagaffe, Franquin's most commercially successful comic, was signed "Franquin et Jidehem" until 11 April 1968. Thirty-five million Gaston albums have been sold world-wide, a statue of Gaston was erected on Boulevard Pacheco, Brussels (1996), and a restaurant has even been named after Gaston.[36]



6. Gaston's desk with Gaston and Fantasio, *Gala de gaffes* 96. © Marsu Productions.

According to Franquin, the initial inspiration for *Gaston Lagaffe* came from comics he had seen in America: *Snuffy Smith*, whose hero looked somewhat like Gaston, and an unidentified Mexican strip about a lazy man (qtd. in Sadoul 22). Franquin intended Gaston to be moronic anti-hero: "Unlike heroes, he would have no qualities, he would be stupid, not handsome, not strong. He would be a hero 'without a job,' a hero so hopeless that nobody would want him in a comic strip" (qtd. in Sadoul 157).[37]

Gaston Lagaffe made his entry in *Spirou* magazine on 28 February 1957, wearing a smart jacket and tie.[38] When asked what he was supposed to be doing, Gaston mumbled that he did not know. On 14 March 1957, Gaston swapped his jacket and tie for clothes more indicative of his personality. For the next forty years he wore a slovenly, ill-fitting pullover and threadbare jeans. On 5 December 1957, Gaston was given a job in *Spirou* magazine's office. To begin with, Gaston committed weekly gaffes around the office in single-picture cartoons. As his popularity grew, he was given half a page in *Spirou* magazine from 24 September 1957, and a full page from 14 July 1966.

At first Fantasio accompanied Gaston, but soon Fantasio was replaced by new secondary characters: Jeanne the office secretary at *Spirou* magazine, who loves Gaston madly; de Mesmaeker, a businessman whose attempts to sign contracts with *Spirou* are nearly always involuntarily thwarted by Gaston; Prunelle, Gaston's boss, who exasperatedly cries "Rrogntudjuu!" in response to his subordinate's blunders;

7. The Gaffophone, *Des Gaffes et des dégats* 424. © Marsu Productions. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

Longtarin, the dim-witted policeman, who has occasional run-ins with Gaston on the street.

As *Gaston Lagaffe* developed, Gaston began to change. His face became more expressive and his stiff, upright posture slumped. He remained gaffe-prone but he became less moronic. A philanthropist, Gaston recycled used bottles to raise money for sick children.[39] Gaston was good with his hands, and he became an inventor of some talent. One of his first creations, a rocket, aroused the interest of the Pentagon; but Gaston was also anti-war: he showed his disapproval of the war-toys advertised in *Spirou* magazine by building a model warplane that "bombed" his colleagues at work.[40] Gaston had a flair for music. He made the "gaffophone," an eight-stringed musical instrument, whose sound knocked down walls and disrupted overflying aircraft (see fig. 7).[41] Gaston often causes explosions, gives himself an electric shock or gets a punch on the nose from an irate colleague. However, Gaston's inventiveness suggests he does not lack a spontaneous, natural intelligence.

Gaston had an extraordinary ability to communicate with animals, and he showed an interest in animal-rights and in environmental issues long before they became fashionable. Gaston rescued a lobster from a restaurant, and he trained it to sort his mail; he sabotaged a hunt with a gun that fired carrots, enabling rabbits to avoid hunters by seeing better.[42]

Despite his strongly held convictions, Gaston remained an ambiguous, contradictory hero. As Franquin said: "People have called Gaston an ecologist before the fashion, but he poisons the city with his car."[43] Gaston's dogged insistence on parking his filthy old jalopy wherever he pleases hardly makes him a green.

Gaston Lagaffe has been called the first of many anti-heroes,[44] although the anti-hero, who reverses the traits of the conventional hero, is as old as comic strips themselves. The diabolical Katzenjammer Kids are early anti-heroes. The term "anti-hero" understates Gaston's originality. True, Gaston has some of the traits of the anti-hero: he is eminently fallible and afflicted by grave defects. He is incorrigibly lazy and criminally irresponsible. Gaston never questions his own actions, however destructive. Sometimes he is selfish, sometimes plain daft. However, Gaston genuinely cares about other people and he tries to make them happy. Gaston does not relish violence, and if he provokes catastrophes, he generally does so unintentionally. Sometimes, catastrophes happen precisely because of Gaston's concern for others. Worried about pollution, he attached a large balloon to the exhaust-pipe of his car; the balloon burst, asphyxiating the entire street (*Des Gaffes et des dégats* 423).

With Gaston Lagaffe the clear-cut distinction between heroes and anti-heroes broke down in *bandes dessinées*. Arguably, that breaking

down began in the United States with Donald Duck, another hero with contradictory traits: Donald could be cowardly yet heroic, selfish yet generous, blundering yet intelligent. But Franquin created the first morally ambiguous *bande dessinée* hero, and since Gaston there have been many others. One such latter-day hero is Frank Margerin's Lucien, a lazy, amiable would-be tough-guy; Margerin was among the famous *bande dessinée* artists who dedicated a cartoon to Franquin when he died.[45]

One reason for Gaston's enormous success was Franquin's inspired decision to give him a job at *Spirou*, the magazine in which the strip itself appeared. Gaston was firmly integrated into everyday life because *Spirou*'s office existed in Marcinelle, a suburb of Charleroi, Belgium. Readers could imagine Gaston "working" at *Spirou*'s office between his appearances in the magazine. Gaston bridged the gap between reality and fantasy. That gap was abolished when readers wrote to Gaston at *Spirou*. Once, two genuine readers sent Gaston a new pair of shoes, which he duly wore in the comic the following week (Sadoul 163).[46]

Franquin took the joke further by bringing real people into Gaston's imaginary world. De Mesmaeker was Jidehem's real surname. Franquin himself appeared twice and Monsieur Dupuis, head of Editions Dupuis (*Spirou*'s publisher) made his presence felt in Gaston's office; usually, Monsieur Dupuis stayed just out of sight behind a door or on the phone, although once readers saw his feet.[47]

Franquin encouraged readers to believe Gaston really existed by placing the imaginary hero in his own publisher's office; *Spirou*'s office thus became a point where the real and the imaginary intersect. Franquin's idea worked particularly well because it was complemented by the very nature of comic strips: comics, too, are at a point where the real and the imaginary intersect. The real, because readers witness events directly and they see the "real" hero, not an actor who impersonates him. The imaginary, because readers imagine what happens in between panels; they also imagine the hero's voice. As readers make a degree of effort to bring the drawn hero to life, they must actually want him to exist.[48]

Before *Gaston Lagaffe*, a genuinely existing publisher's office had already been used to authenticate fiction in some of EC Comics' magazines, notably *Weird Fantasy*.[49] Franquin is unlikely to have read those comics as *Weird Fantasy* was not translated into French. The effect produced in *Weird Fantasy* is not exactly the same as in *Gaston Lagaffe*. In *Weird Fantasy*'s office, staff write science-fiction stories which unexpectedly come true; the implication is that the real world mirrors their fantastic stories. But Gaston does not write stories or gags. In *Spirou*'s

office, funny things happen because Gaston's presence blurs the line between reality and fantasy.

8. Verbal and Visual Humor in Gaston Lagaffe

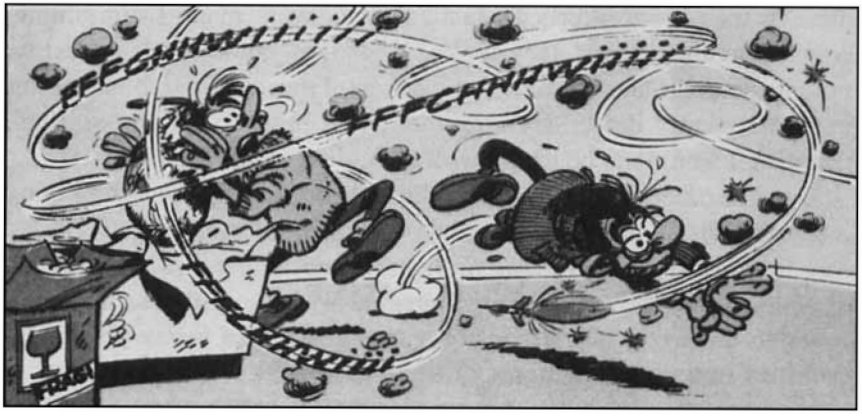
Gaston Lagaffe's workaday office setting was very different from Spirou's globe-trotting adventures. The structure of *Gaston Lagaffe* was also very different. From now on, Franquin only used short gags which, rather than bringing comic relief to an adventure story, were an end in themselves, and gave the strip meaning.

As we have seen, Franquin recalled that short gags were rare in 1950s *bandes dessinées*. Contemporary American humorists, following Charles Schulz's hugely successful *Peanuts*, were mostly using short gags to generate humor based on character study. The new conventions of American gags which Schulz pioneered are neatly summarized by Richard Marschall:

> the sarcastic punch line; the upturned-eyes response; eye-contact with the reader in the final panels; the primal scream as reaction to a situation; an entire gag relaying one character's reflections rather than an interchange between two; the gag payoff in the penultimate panel; and a comment in the last balloon.[50]

Franquin reinvented the gag in Europe just as Schulz did in America, although Franquin did not take gags in the same direction as *Peanuts*.

The first gags in *Gaston Lagaffe* were visual slapstick, with Gaston causing disasters around *Spirou*'s office. Soon, Franquin introduced verbal humor. Gags using verbal humor often began with humdrum



8. Business as usual at Spirou, *Lagaffe nous gâte* 599. © Marsu Productions. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

office conversation and ended with a visual payoff: a picture of Gaston taking a figurative expression used in that conversation literally. For example Fantasio, tired of seeing Gaston loafing around *Spirou*'s office, said "put a spring in your step" ("ayez du ressort"); Gaston slouched out of the room but he soon bounced back in again, scattering Fantasio's paperwork everywhere, with two enormous springs attached to his shoes (*Gala de gaffes* 79).

In later gags, verbal humor became more varied. As befits an ambiguous, equivocal hero like Gaston, verbal humor frequently arose from punning word-play. Sometimes, dialogue consisted entirely of double meanings.

When Gaston goes to an interview for a part-time job as night-watchman in a porcelain store, the word-play is particularly funny: an abundance of (unfortunately untranslatable) puns about fragile objects and breakages are incorporated into a coherent conversation between Gaston and his prospective employer.[51] This is an extract:

Store owner:	Je suis brisé depuis que mon veilleur de nuit m'a laissé tomber.
Gaston:	Pourquoi, il n'était pas dans son assiette?... Faut pas en faire un plat....
Owner:	Ça vous fait rire?
Gaston:	Aux éclats!

In the final panel, Gaston produces a racket and ball, and readers are left to wonder whether words will be translated into actions.

As Gaston became more of an inventor, visual humor arose from his ingenious creations. Gaston's inventions were amusing because, although they were utterly fantastical, they were made from simple, everyday materials, and they looked as if they could work in reality. Franquin said: "If Gaston invents a machine, I must study it to make sure the reader cannot detect anything that could prevent it from working, otherwise, I would not be happy with it" (qtd. in Tvonvina 42).[52]

Our illustrated example (fig. 9) shows how Franquin was combining verbal with visual humor to craft subtle, tightly constructed gags twelve years into Gaston Lagaffe (*Un Gaffeur sachant gaffer* 515). Unlike the examples cited above, the humor begins with the pictures and then moves to the words. First, Gaston's car-hoist looks funny because it combines outrageous fantasy with the technically feasible. Second, humor arises from the unexpected reversal of roles: when Gaston is arrested by Longtarin, we expect Gaston is going to be punished, but instead, Longtarin ends up in trouble, thanks to Gaston's word-play.

The first thing Gaston says to Longtarin is a pun that plays with the similarity of sounds between "souffle" ("breath") and "sifflet" ("whistle"). "Ça vous coupe le souffle" means "it takes your breath away"; "Ça vous coupe le sifflet," Gaston's invented expression, means, by analogy, "it takes your whistle away"; that is a reference to the policeman's whistle, one of his tools for maintaining public order. Gaston's pun both looks ahead to Longtarin's failure and blocks meaningful communication by making words interchangeable. In the same panel, just before Gaston's word-play makes the legal position of his car uncertain, the car itself changes color from yellow to white.

9. *Un Gaffeur sachant gaffer* 515. © Marsu Productions.

In panel seven, when Gaston suggests that his car is not parked illegally as it is off the ground, his logic breaks the rules governing the context in which the word "parking" is generally understood. At that moment, words become totally unstable: they break free from the confines of speech balloons, anarchically invading the picture.

The ending of this gag is especially powerful because readers do not know the punch line. We must imagine for ourselves the extremes of absurdity to which Gaston's flawed logic leads Longtarin, because we cannot see what question Longtarin asks his superior at the police station between the last two panels. Judging by his superior's reaction, one can guess that Longtarin asked something like "how far off the ground can a car be parked before it becomes illegal?"

Our example shows how far Gaston had come from the blundering imbecile of his early gags. By diverting language away from meaningful communication Gaston subverts Longtarin's thought, and so, he can park where he wants to.

* * *

Over the course of *Gaston Lagaffe*, Franquin evolved a graphic style which differed from "style atome," yet which was also distinct from Hergé and from contemporary American comics. While Gaston was becoming popular, Hergé was perfecting his detailed, "clear-line" realism from *Tintin au Tibet* (1960) to *Tintin et les Picaros* (1976). Hergé's lettering remained sober and neutral. American funnies, influenced by Schulz's *Peanuts*, were mostly adopting an economy of line, stripping images down to the essentials and reducing background to the minimum. The uncluttered decor in *Peanuts* and others focused attention on the witty dialogue.

Franquin's graphic style contrasted with the clarity and sobriety of Hergé and Schulz, becoming increasingly complex and chaotic-looking during *Gaston Lagaffe*. The first *Gaston Lagaffe* gags were simply drawn, generally depicting Gaston and colleagues against a yellow or blue background. From *Gare aux gaffes* (1966), drawings became more animated: letters bursting out of speech balloons; exaggerated, inventive onomatopoeia (like Prunelle's "Rrogntudjuu!"); long, elaborate motion lines as objects whiz around *Spirou*'s office, thanks to Gaston. Franquin's early interest in Disney and in film animation resurfaced: events are accelerated, often with only a split second between panels, as wildly gesticulating characters race in and out of *Spirou*'s office. Very tight graphic organization underlies the apparent chaos, for images flow smoothly from one to the next. Often, for example, a character exits right from one panel through a door; in the next panel he enters left, with the same door now behind him.

From the mid-1960s, color was increasingly varied. Franquin set more gags outside *Spirou*'s office, using street-scenes, night-scenes, country-scenes and changing seasons. He depicted objects half glimpsed through mist with the help of a vaccinostyle—a medical instrument normally used for preparing the skin prior to injections, that looks like a pen with a diamond-shaped tip (Sadoul 30). Franquin used his vaccinostyle to blur objects by scratching at the ink; the more distant the object, he more he scratched it away. A good example of this effect appears in *Gare aux gaffes* (303).

Like Hergé, Franquin was using ever more detailed backgrounds. Unlike Hergé, Franquin delighted in exaggerated caricature. Gaston's recognizable but unreasonable world has absurdly cluttered desks, streetlamps bent at odd angles, shops with punning names (like "sec shop" the dry cleaner), a passing biker with "fragile" on his crash helmet.[53] By the early 1970s, some of Franquin's outdoor scenes have such an abundance of background detail that subtleties are not immediately noticeable. When Gaston drives a depressed friend out to the country to cheer him up, the scenery looks attractive at first glance; but on closer inspection, we notice that the landscape is full of half-hidden garbage (*Gaffes bévues et boulettes* 849). Sadoul comments that readers see this scene twice: first through the eyes of cheerful Gaston, and second through the eyes of his depressed friend (26).

In Gaston's last albums, growing numbers of incidental, background characters add discreet touches of verbal and visual humor. When Gaston causes a traffic jam, a driver behind shouts and sounds his horn in a speech balloon which reads: "Quel est le fils de TUUUT!" (fig. 10).[54] Here, Franquin is both circumlocuting the obscene insult "fils de pute" ("son of a whore"), and he is using the speech balloon in an original way: as the driver's voice and the sound of the horn are both encapsulated by the same balloon, their meaning is equivocal. Is the car speaking, or is the driver making the noise of the horn?

Like all good cartoonists, Schulz, Hergé and Franquin each adopted a graphic style that fitted their protagonists' behavior. Schulz's mock-reasonable style suits gags about children and a dog naïvely imposing adult rationality on their surroundings. Hergé's "clear-line" matches Tintin's clarity of thought. Gaston's mere presence undermines adult rationality. As Gaston plays with everyday language, sometimes making rational thought impossible, his behavior is matched by Franquin's pictures: deceptively disorganized-looking panels reflect Gaston's chaotic, unbridled intelligence; extreme caricature counteracts the effect of reality created by the profusion of everyday objects, placing Gaston's world at the interface between banality and utter fantasy.

10. Gaston's traffic jam, *La Saga des gaffes* 1055. © Marsu Productions. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

With *Gaston Lagaffe*, Franquin exploited the visual and verbal potential of gags to the full, using elaborate slapstick, intelligent word-play and jokes where readers imagine the punch line. Franquin established his own, distinctive brand of humor and style of drawing, as well as creating an original character. Gaston's appeal was near-universal. His comic had enough knockabout fun to sustain a child's interest, yet enough sophistication and subtlety to please the adults. By the early 1960s, Franquin was a very big name in *bandes dessinées*, and still more artists began to be inspired by him. Those influenced by Franquin are far too numerous to be listed in full. A few examples follow.

Inventive, likeable, blundering Gaston spawned countless imitators. One is Marc Lebut, who drives a Model T Ford, and who makes life impossible for his neighbor with his imaginative but hare-brained schemes; another is Désiré, a scatterbrained, musically-minded hero, who also drives a quaint, unusual car.[55] Gags about gaffe-prone heroes with cars like Gaston's almost became a cliché in 1960s *bandes dessinées*. *Les Petits Hommes*, an amusing yarn about a meteorite that falls on a village causing the inhabitants to shrink, is drawn in an energetic, caricatural style, whose playful mix of detailed, everyday reality with pure fantasy recalls Franquin.[56] Renaud, the ingenious main protagonist, resembles Gaston physically; but serious, courageous Renaud is a more conventional hero than Gaston.

Following Gaston's success in *Spirou*'s office, other artists drew gags about heroes working for *bande dessinée* magazines. The best-known is Achille Talon, published in the magazine *Pilote*; in the comic,

Achille works for the imaginary magazine *Polite*.[57] The graphic style of Achille Talon resembles Franquin; unlike Gaston, Achille is a fat, pompous suburbanite, who talks much but says little. Finally, *Le Gang Mazda* has a "clear-line" similar to Hergé, and depicts three artists who, like Gaston, work for *Spirou* magazine—while the strip itself appears in *Spirou*.[58]

9. Gaston Lagaffe, a Figure of Myth

As a culture evolves, old myths become eclipsed, but new myths replace them. Cultures constantly produce myths because myths satisfy a deep-rooted human need: the need to make sense of life. Myths define a popular reality and they are accepted uncritically. Myths are appealing because they reduce the complexity of experience by making things seem simple and absolute.

Popular comics spontaneously produce myths. Like myths, comics use attractive imagery that is easily understood; both myths and comics tend to express the moral and the abstract through physical actions. Comic strip readers bring the hero to life by reading, and they want him to exist. Gags and adventure stories ease the hero's entry into the collective consciousness by reiterating similar structures over the years. The hero is truly mythological once he is more universally recognized than his creator.

When Franquin died, the reaction of the European press across the social and political spectrum proved he was a myth-maker. In France, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Télérama*, and *Le Canard enchaîné* all identified Franquin as Gaston's father; *Le Canard enchaîné* ran a cartoon that showed French President Jacques Chirac asking Alain Juppé, the gaffe-prone then Prime Minister, whether he wanted Gaston's job.[59] The journalists and cartoonist knew Gaston was imaginary but, endowing him with an unusual degree of reality, they wrote as though Gaston genuinely existed in flesh and blood. Gaston had crossed national boundaries, and he had given people from all walks of life a common cultural reference. Gaston had taken his place alongside Superman, Mickey, and Tintin in the gallery of contemporary mythological heroes.

An important difference between mythological heroes in comic strips and those in antiquity has been pointed out by Umberto Eco. Heroes in antiquity became mythological through a story that "has taken place and can no longer be denied"; in antiquity, myths told of "something which had already happened and of which the public was aware."[60] In comics, events happen while the strip is being read. How, then, can one reconcile the mythological hero, who "must be in part *predictable* and cannot hold surprises for us...he must necessarily become immobi-

lized in an emblematic and fixed nature," with the hero whose future is unknown and who is passing through time before our eyes? (Eco 109-10).

The answer lies in the nature of comic strips' adventure stories and gags: "To begin a story [or gag] without showing that another had preceded it would manage, momentarily, to remove Superman [or Gaston] from the law that leads from life to death through time" (Eco 114). If a new story or gag began where the previous one ended, Gaston and Superman could age. In Gaston's case, the shortness of the gag breaks up time, rules out narrative development and immobilizes the hero in an eternal present.

Gags suit Gaston perfectly. In his ever-fixed present, Gaston neither plans ahead nor faces the consequences of past actions. He renews himself after every gag. No matter whether he gets a black eye, blows up *Spirou*'s office, bounces up into the stratosphere or antagonizes the police, Gaston will never be fired or jailed, let alone killed.

In comic strips, as in antiquity, myths often tell of god-like figures with powers beyond the lot of mortals. Gaston, eternally youthful, indestructible, unbound by the laws of physics and of men, is a typical figure of myth. If, like a Greek god, Gaston embodies popular ideas in a human form, what ideas does he embody? Superman, Mickey, and Tintin each personify an ideal of goodness, but Gaston is more morally ambivalent than those heroes, and what he personifies is less clear.

Although he does what is forbidden and what cannot be done in everyday life, Gaston is not another emblematic "little man" resisting authority. If thousands of office workers doomed to dull jobs sympathize with Gaston's flouting the rules, thousands of managers can sympathize just as easily with his harassed bosses. Gaston could use his powerful Gaffophone to destroy authority by making the country ungovernable, but he does not do so. If he did, *Spirou* magazine might be destroyed, and there would be no more gags. Because of their repetitive structure, gags rule out the possibility or desirability of radical change, suggesting that authority will never really be defeated.

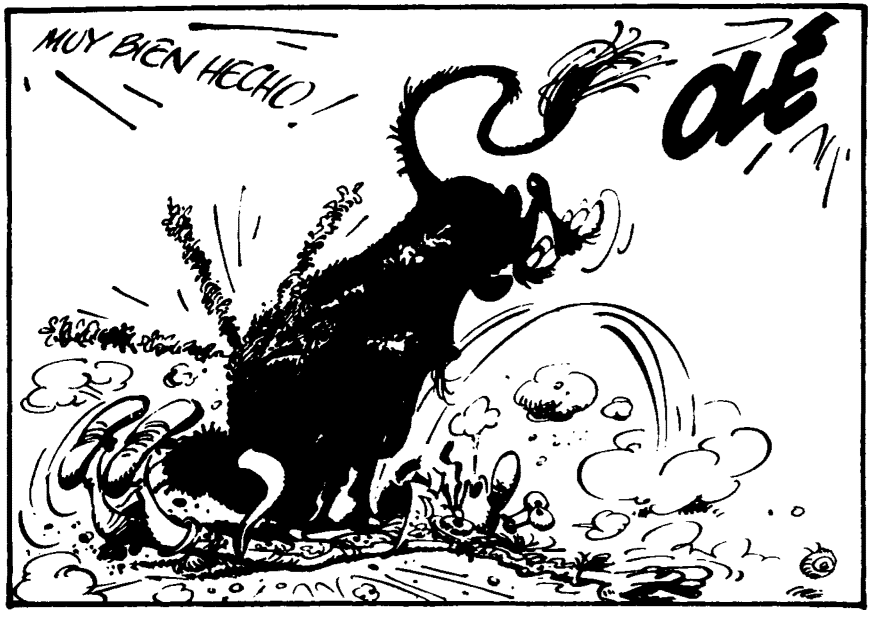
Gaston blurs distinctions between mundane reality and pure fantasy with his original behavior, his word-play and his inventions. In so doing, he dreams up new and interesting ways of negotiating everyday problems. Sometimes he succeeds, sometimes he does not—just like everybody else. Gaston represents clever but eternally flawed humanity. Yet people love Gaston because he rises above gaffes and blunders by making the course of events give pleasure. He never gives up and, like Shakespeare's Falstaff, he enjoys laughter for its own sake.

10. Idées noires *and After*

By the early 1970s, Franquin had more than proven his talent, and he was awarded the Grand Prix at the first *bande dessinée* festival in Angoulême, France (1974). *Bandes dessinées* were now taken more seriously than they had been in the 1950s, and they began attracting scholarly interest. In Paris, two organizations, CELEG and SOCERLID, were established for research into *bandes dessinées*.[61]

Despite growing international acclaim and huge sales, Franquin was increasingly depressed. He later spoke frankly about how he had needed medical treatment in the early 1980s for depression (Sadoul 46). *Idées noires*, Franquin's next comic, gave an insight into his darker side.

Idées noires consisted of short gags but it was very different from *Modeste et Pompon* and *Gaston Lagaffe*. Whereas Modeste and Gaston were surrounded by friends, characters in *Idées noires* are marooned in a universe that does them harm. Characters in *Idées noires* are not mythological heroes who renew themselves after every gag. Quite the opposite: in *Idées noires*, black humor frequently arises from the pointless, unheroic deaths of the protagonists: electrocution, decapitation and shooting, to name but a few. This unrelenting gallows-humor is particularly grating because, ironically, characters often die at precisely the moment they believe they are saved: a man lost in the snow sees lights



11. The bull's revenge, *Idées noires* II 131. © Marsu Productions. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

ahead and thinks he has reached civilization; but the lights turn out to be the eyes of a wolf-pack.[62]

Some gags in *Idées noires* use ideas previously found in Franquin (such as anti-militarism and green issues), but Gaston's cheerful, imaginative subversiveness is replaced by cynicism of cosmic proportions: goodness does not exist, and faith in goodness is laughable. One example: a super-tanker is shipwrecked and the survivors are covered by an oil-slick. They pray that God, in his infinite goodness, will save them; immediately after their prayer, feathers come down from heaven, sticking to everybody. Why? Because an airplane carrying feathers for making eiderdowns spontaneously explodes overhead.[63]

Franquin's graphic style changed radically with *Idées noires*. Drawings are in black and white, and all traces of Disneyesque wholesomeness have gone. Franquin's new style in *Idées noires* recalls two painters of fine art, Hieronymous Bosch (1450-1516) and Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), rather than any previous comic strip artists. *Idées noires* contains no vast, allegorical tableaux, and the comic lacks the Christian morality underpinning Bosch's *Last Judgement* and *Temptation of Saint Anthony*.[64] Yet *Idées noires*, like Bosch's paintings, depicts a swarming, dangerous world where people are deformed by their own folly; Franquin's gag in which a hunter negligently shoots part of his own head off is one particularly grotesque example (fig. 12). Like Goya's *Madhouse* and *Third of May 1808*, *Idées noires* depicts mentally confused characters with exaggeratedly distorted facial expressions and glaring, frightened eyes; Franquin's squad of soldiers, like Goya's madmen or the victim in *Third of May 1808*, are both terrified and terrifying (*Idees noires* II 70).[65]

Unlike Bosch and Goya, Franquin refused to extract anything moral, noble, or aesthetic from catastrophes. He extracted black humor and he took ugliness to extremes. Some pictures in *Idées noires* are an incoherent mass of hideous, skeletal shapes.

Despairing humor combined with hallucinatory, deliberately ugly drawing had no precedent in *bandes dessinées*, but *Idées noires* bears some resemblance to American Underground artists, especially Robert Crumb. In France, *Actuel* magazine began publishing Crumb in 1970, although Franquin said the Underground never caught on in Belgium.[66]

Crumb and Franquin both set their characters in a morally bankrupt world. Like Crumb, Franquin was unconvinced by religion, was anti-war and was worried about the environment. But Crumb was also very different from Franquin: Crumb subversively drew with rounded, mock-Disneyesque sweetness, giving numerous depictions of humanized animals. Moreover, Crumb's characters can rebel, and they salvage some

pleasure through sex and drugs. Franquin's characters in *Idées noires* are denied rebellion and pleasure; Crumb's psychedelic influences and sexually explicit drawing are entirely absent from Franquin. Crumb is laughing at America, Franquin is laughing at hope.

Franquin's pessimism in *Idées noires* exceeded that of the Underground. When *Idées noires* came out in the mid-1970s, the idealism of the 1960s had already been overtaken by disillusionment. The aggressive cynicism of *Idées noires* parallels the "no future" bleakness of its contemporary: punk. Franquin did not listen to punk music, but he called the punk slogan "no future" an expression which was "harsh but

12. The hunter, *Idées noires* I 45. © Marsu Productions. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de france.

wonderful...it speaks of people locked into a society which is completely breaking down" (qtd. in Cambier 29).[67] Punk rock and *Idées noires* both articulated that depressing vision.

Franquin took pessimism to extremes. The punks proposed anarchy as a solution and rebelled, like their Underground forebears, with sex, drugs and loud music. In *Idées noires* there is neither revolt nor any solution. There is only lonely and futile death, without hope of resurrection.

* * *

In his later years, Franquin became less prolific. He lived modestly in Brussels with his wife, Liliane, whom he had known since the 1940s, occasionally working on collaborations with friends. His reputation grew, and he won the Adamson prize in Stockholm, Sweden (1980). Franquin was becoming ever more concerned about international problems. He drew advertisements for UNICEF and Amnesty International (1979), and for Greenpeace (1982).

In 1979, *Cauchmarrant*, Franquin's collection of pictures of grotesquely humorous monsters, was published by Bédérama (Paris). In 1990, Franquin drew *Tifous* for Belgian television with Yvan Delporte, marking a return to the gentler humor of the past. On the eve of his death, Franquin was working on little abstract pictures that he called "doodles." They will be published soon and, according to his friend Numa Sadoul, "with André Franquin, [doodles] were taking on quite apocalyptic proportions. They were works of art. He has done hundreds of them."[68]

Franquin died in the south of France on 5 January 1997, just after his seventy-third birthday.

11. Conclusion

On continental Europe, unlike in Britain, comics have long been treated with the reverence normally reserved for "art." Nowadays, the *bande dessinée* is routinely referred to as "the ninth art" ("le neuvième art"), a term coined by CELEG. When Franquin's career began, *bandes dessinées* were overshadowed by America, and they were often viewed with suspicion. When Franquin died, *bande dessinée* museums existed in Brussels and Angoulême, partly funded by the Belgian and French governments respectively.

Franquin himself did not crave the respectability enshrined in the word "art." With his customary modesty, he said "I'm only a mischievous, old child who draws" (qtd. in Labé 29).[69] Nevertheless, if *bandes dessinées* are now recognized as an art-form, Franquin deserves some of the credit. Second only to Hergé, Franquin gave *bandes dessinées* their

own distinctive identity. Despite occasional parallels with prominent American artists (Kurtzman and EC Comics from the 1950s, Crumb from the 1960/70s), Franquin has a voice of his own. An influential figure, he produced works of enormous diversity, becoming more original as his career unfolded.

In *Spirou et Fantasio*, after drawing stories obviously influenced by Disney and by Hergé, Franquin produced new effects: anti-militarism, irony that undermines the hero, parody and sometimes outright subversion of the genre. Franquin arranged a cast of original secondary characters around Spirou (the Count, Seccotine, the Marsupilami, Zorglub); he also became a leading proponent of quintessentially post-war Belgian "style atome."

With *Gaston Lagaffe*, Franquin created the first morally ambiguous *bande dessinée* hero, he reinvented the gag to great comic effect, and he produced a myth. Franquin also developed an immediately recognizable graphic style that combined highly detailed, exaggeratedly caricatural chaos with tight graphic control. In *Idées noires*, Franquin adopted a harsher, uglier style, while taking black humor to extremes not seen in *bandes dessinées* before.

Franquin is not only worth studying because of his artistic originality. He is also interesting because his work is a revealing page of popular history. Franquin faithfully depicts, and he sometimes even anticipates, the succeeding prejudices, dreams and fears of the post-war years.

In Franquin's work, the colonialist paternalism of *Spirou chez les pygmées* gave way to triumphant consumerism and to technological optimism with "style atome" during the mid-1950s (*Les Pirates du silence*, *Modeste et Pompon*). In the early 1960s, *Z comme Zorglub* and *L'Ombre du Z* displayed a disenchantment with the cult of consumerism not commonly expressed until the late 1960s and the Underground. Gaston Lagaffe, who first appeared in 1957, anticipated the questioning of previously hallowed attitudes (like militarism and the work-ethic), which became widespread during the late 1960s; Gaston also prefigured the rise of environmentalism during the 1980s and 1990s. With *Idées noires*, Franquin took anguish about loss of innocence to extremes. His unremittingly bleak humor even surpassed the defiant despair of late 1970s/early 1980s punk.

Franquin's characteristic sense of humor evolved during his career. He generated humor by making the distinction between good and evil fall away (*Spirou et Fantasio*), disappear (*Gaston Lagaffe*) and become meaningless (*Idées noires*).

Spirou began as a model of heroic virtue like Mickey and Tintin; by humorously undermining Spirou, Franquin subtly questioned the tri-

umphant goodness that conventional heroes exemplified. Gaston Lagaffe is so ambivalent and so equivocal a hero that he exemplifies neither good nor evil. *Idées noires* has no exemplary or mythological heroes at all; it makes us laugh at pointless catastrophes in a godless universe.

A pessimistic vision lurks beneath Franquin's amusing and often colorful comic images. Taken as a whole, his body of work evokes a world whose post-war optimism was groundless; from the mid-1970s, his humor grew distinctly darker. Yet for all Franquin's implied pessimism, he will always be remembered as a great humorist. His expertly drawn comics are very funny. André Franquin succeeded in making people laugh for over fifty years. He deserves to be recognized in the English-speaking world.

Note: All accompanying illustrations are by Franquin.

Notes

[1]*Spirou et Fantasio*, *Spirou* magazine [Charleroi, Belgium] 1946-1968; published as 19 hardback albums (Charleroi: Editions Dupuis). *Gaston Lagaffe*, *Spirou* magazine 1957-1990; published as 18 hardback albums (Editions Dupuis). *Modeste et Pompon*, *Journal de Tintin* [Tournai, Belgium] 1955-1959; published as 4 hardback albums (Brussels: Editions Lombard). *Idées noires*, *Le Trombone illustré* [Charleroi] 1977 and *Fluide glaciale* [Paris] 1977-1983; published as 2 hardback albums (Paris: Editions Audie). Following references to Franquin give titles and dates of his hardback albums, with page numbers from the definitive edition of his complete works, *L'Intégrale Franquin* (Paris: Rombaldi, 1985). For more on Franquin's publishing history see Philippe Queveau, *Presque tout Franquin* (Paris: Comset, 1991).

[2]Dutch, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Finnish, Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, Italian, and Indonesian. My thanks to Christian Jasmes, archivist and librarian at Charleroi, for that information, and for making available to me various articles about Franquin in the Belgian press to which I refer during this study.

[3]All translations from French are my own. Hergé called Franquin "un grand artiste à côté duquel je ne suis qu'un piètre dessinateur," qtd. in Numa Sadoul, *Entretiens avec Hergé* (Tournai: Casterman, 1989), 136. Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, "L'Hommage à Franquin," *Figaro* [Paris] 7 Jan. 1997: 20.

[4]Jerry Robinson, *The Comics, an Illustrated History* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1974), 241. Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics* (London and New

York: Routledge, 1993), 186 and 193. Maurice Horn, *The World Encyclopedia of Comics* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 262.

[5]For an in-depth study of the early *bandes dessinées* discussed below, see Pierre Couperie *et al.*, *A History of the Comic Strip*, trans. Eileen Hennessy (New York: Crown Publishers, 1968).

[6]*The Katzenjammer Kids* were published in France under the title *Pim, Pam, Poum* (Paris: Hachette, 1934). *Pim, Pam, Poum* also appeared regularly in Walt Disney's *Journal de Mickey* [Paris] from 1934. Speech balloons had previously been used by European caricaturists, notably Englishman James Gillray (1757-1815).

[7]*Tintin au pays des Soviets* (1929), *Tintin au Congo* (1930), and *Tintin en Amérique* (1931) first appeared in the magazine *Petit Vingtième* [Brussels]. Following references to Hergé give dates of his color album republications (Tournai: Casterman). For more on Hergé's publishing history, see Harry Thompson, *Tintin, Hergé and His Creation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991).

[8]"Je lisais beaucoup de bandes américaines dans Mickey, Robinson...et aussi le Tintin d'Hergé," qtd. in Numa Sadoul, *Et Franquin crea Lagaffe* (Brussels: Distri B. D/Schlirf Book, 1986), 13. Following references to Sadoul are from this book unless otherwise stated.

[9]David Manning White and Robert Abel, *The Funnies* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 95.

[10]The law forbade any "apologie du banditisme, du mensonge, du vol, de la paresse, de la lâcheté, de la haine, de la débauche, ou de tout acte qualifié de crime ou de délit," qtd. in Henri Filippini, *Dictionnaire de la bande dessinée* (Paris: Bordas, 1989), XVI.

[11]Franquin recalled his problems with censorship in André Franquin and Joseph Gillain, *Comment on devient créateur de bandes dessinées* (Verviers, Belgium: Marabout, 1969), 45. The offending pictures were in Spirou's adventure *La Corne de rhinocéros* (1955).

[12]"Actualités enfantines," *Nation Belge* [Brussels] 4 Aug. 1935: 8. "Actualités enfantines," *Nation Belge* 25 Aug. 1935: 8.

[13]*Spirou et la maison préfabriquée* was first published as a hardback album in 1977. Franquin's other early strips discussed below, *Le Tank*, *Radar le Robot* and *L'Héritage de Spirou* were published in the hardback album *Spirou et Fantasio* (1948).

[14] "Il n'y avait que deux grands noms: Disney et Hergé."

[15]Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scot, second edition (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1968), 92 and 50. The hero's "absentation" testing and triumphant return summarized in my next two paragraphs are described by Propp 25-60. For a critical appraisal of Propp, see

Martin Barker, *Comics, Ideology, Power and the Critics* (Manchester, England, and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 117-33.

[16]Disney, *The Phantom Blot*, in *Mickey Mouse in Color, 1930s Disney Comic Strip Classics* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 160-84. For an in-depth discussion of foreign countries in Disney, see Barker 279-99.

[17]*Spirou chez les pygmées* was published in the hardback album *Quatre aventures de Spirou et Fantasio* (1950).

[18]"Je ne suis pas raciste moi-même.... Je dessine des Noirs ridicules autant que je dessine des Blancs ridicules."

[19]"Agriculture, commerce et tourisme sont les deux mamelles qui sèment le pain dont il abreuve ses enfants," *Le Voyageur du Mésozoïque* (1960), 1014.

[20]"Ce sabre est le plus beau jour de ma vie," Henri Monnier, *Grandeur et décadence de M. Joseph Prudhomme* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1852), 15.

[21]Jules Verne, *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (Paris: Hetzel, 1864). *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers* (Paris: Hetzel, 1870). Hergé's Tournesol first appeared in *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge* (1944).

[22]The Giff Wiff, *Journal de Mickey* 3 Nov. 1935: 5. Jeep (known as Pilou Pilou), *Robinson* 30 Jan. 1938: 15. Propp mentions the recurrence in folktales of magical creatures like the Marsupilami, with "extraordinary attributes," who "offer their services and are accepted as helpers," 45-46.

[23]Les Daniels, *Comix, a History of Comic Books in America* (London: Wildwood House, 1973), 66-67. *Frontline Combat* is not known to have been published in French.

[24]For more on "style atome" see Anton Makassar, *Le Style atome* (Brussels: Magic Strip, 1983).

[25]Led Tvonvina, "Les Augures ont prononcé Franquin," *Falatoff* [Paris] Nov./Dec. 1972: 29-60 (46).

[26]For example, Robert Crumb, *Modern America*, in *Robert Crumb's America* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1995), 8. Originally published in *Arcade* number 2 (1975), n.p.

[27]Gaston appeared in *Vacances sans histoire* (1959) 1046, and *La Foire aux gangsters* (1960), 1142.

[28]*Mad* was first published in French by Francélia (Paris: 1965).

[29]Qtd. in Pierre Sibille, "André Franquin, l'invité du mois," *Libre Belgique* [Brussels] 9 April 1981: 14-15 (14).

[30]Ramon Monzon, *Cha'apa et Group Group*, *Vaillant* magazine [Paris] 1956-1965.

[31]Annie Cordy, "Houba Houba Hop! La Chanson du Marsupilami," Columbia, ESRF 1284M, 1960.

[32]Yves-Marie Labé, "André Franquin, le père de Gaston s'est arrêté à 950 gags," *Monde* [Paris] 7 Jan. 1997: 29.

[33]Qtd. in Carine van Zuylen, "Gaston Lagaffe, anti-héros de la bande dessinée," diss., U Libre de Bruxelles, 1982, 8.

[34]George McManus, *La Famille Illico* (Grenoble, France: Glénat, 1980), 5. Translator unknown. Originally published by King Features Syndicate (New York: 1945). Franquin, *60 aventures de Modeste et Pompon* (1958), 42.

[35]*Bonjour Modeste* (1959) 93. The zapper was first marketed in Europe by Grundig (1969).

[36]Franquin's sales figures are given in "Des Chiffres et des dates," *Soir* [Brussels] 7 Jan. 1997: 7. The restaurant "Chez Gaston Lagaffe," 4-6 rue de l'Epée, Brussels, opened in 1981 but has since closed.

[37]"Contrairement aux héros, il n'aurait aucune qualité, il serait con, pas beau, pas fort. Ce serait un 'héros sans emploi,' un héros dont on ne voudrait dans aucune bande dessinée tellement il était minable."

[38]Gaston's first appearances are collected in Rombaldi 11-32.

[39]*Gala de gaffes* (1963), 167.

[40]*Les Premiers Gags* (1960), 40. *Lagaffe mérite des baffes* (1979), 986.

[41]*Des Gaffes et des dégats* (1968), 424. *Un Gaffeur sachant gaffer* (1969), 519.

[42]*Gare aux gaffes* (1966), 276. *Le Cas Lagaffe* (1971), 732.

[43]"On a dit que Gaston était écologiste avant la mode mais il empeste la ville avec sa voiture," qtd. in Jean-Luc Cambier, "Franquin, l'interview," *Télémoustique* [Charleroi] 20 Nov. 1996: 24-30 (29).

[44]Patrick Gaumer and Claude Moliterni, *Dictionnaire mondial de la bande dessinée* (Paris: Larousse, 1994), 273.

[45]Frank Margerin, *Bananes métalliques* (Paris: Humanoïdes associés, 1982). Frank Margerin, "Franquin," cartoon, *Télérama* [Paris] Jan. 1997: 10.

[46]See *Le Bureau des gaffes* (1964), 185.

[47]Franquin appeared in *Gare aux gaffes* 282 and *Gaffes bévues et boulettes* (1973), 841. M. Dupuis appeared in *Le Bureau des gaffes* 199.

[48]For more on the way comic strips are read and experienced see Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994).

[49]For example, Albert Feldstein, *Cosmic Ray Bomb Explosion, Weird Fantasy* [New York], July/Aug. 1950: n.p. Joe Orlando, *The Ad, Weird Fantasy*, July/August 1952: n.p. My thanks to Dave Huxley for introducing me to *Weird Fantasy*.

[50]Richard Marschall, *America's Great Comic Strip Artists* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), 276. Later comics influenced by Schulz include Johnny Hart's *B.C.* (1958) and Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury* (1968).

[51]*Lagaffe nous gâte* (1970), 645.

[52]"Si Gaston invente une machine, je dois l'étudier pour que le lecteur n'y puisse rien détecter qui devrait l'empêcher de marcher, sinon je ne serais pas content."

[53]"Sec" is French for "dry." The "sec shop" appears in *Gaffes bévues et boulettes* 865. The biker is in *Un Gaffeur sachant gaffer* 512.

[54]"Who is that son of a TUUUT!" *La Saga des gaffes* (1982), 1055.

[55]Maurice Tillieux and Francis Bertrand, *Allegro en Ford T* (Paris: Dargaud, 1968). Christian Godard and Mittei, *Un Cabriolet pour Désiré* (Brussels: Lombard, 1969).

[56]Albert Desprechins, Pierre Seron, and Mittei, *Les Petits Hommes*, *Spirou* 1967. To date, 34 hardback albums of this story have been published (Charleroi: Dupuis).

[57]Greg (Michel Regnier), *Achille Talon*, *Pilote* [Paris] 1963 (Filippini 1). To date, 42 hardback albums in this series have been published (Paris: Dargaud).

[58]Christian Darasse, *Le Gang Mazda*, *Spirou* 1987. To date, seven hardback albums in this series have been published (Dupuis).

[59]All of these newspapers are published in Paris: Labé 29. N.S. "Le Père de Gaston à Druout," *Figaro* 7 Jan. 1997: 20. Michel Daubert, "Franquin," *Télérama* 18-25 Jan. 1997: 6-9 (9). "Best of Gaffes," *Canard enchaîné* 8 Jan. 1997: 5.

[60]Umberto Eco, "The Myth of Superman," in *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 108-09.

[61]CELEG (Centre d'études des littératures d'expression graphique) was founded in 1964. SOCERLID (Société civile d'études et de recherches sur les littératures dessinées) was founded in 1966. Both organizations have ceased to exist.

[62]*Idées noires* I (1981), 51.

[63]*Idées noires* II (1984), 127.

[64]Bosch, *Last Judgement*, Academy of Fine Art, Vienna, Austria, in *Jerome Bosch*, by Jacques Combe (Paris: Rombaldi, 1947), 31. Bosch, *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, National Museum of Fine Art, Lisbon, Portugal, in Combe 47.

[65]Francisco de Goya, *Madhouse*, Algur H Collection, Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, in *Goya in the Twilight of the Enlightenment*, by Janis Tomlinson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 179. Goya, *Third of May 1808*, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain, in Tomlinson, Illustrated Plate 25.

[66]Qtd. in Michel Pierre, "Franquin le Virtuose," *Magazine littéraire* [Paris] Jan. 1980: 62-63 (62).

[67]The slogan "no future" is "dure mais c'est formidable...elle exprime les gens enfermés dans une société qui commence à ne plus aller du tout." "No future" was popularized by the Sex Pistols' hit "God Save the Queen," Virgin, VSA181, 1977.

[68]"Chez André Franquin, ça prenait des proportions purement apocalyptiques. C'étaient des oeuvres d'art. Il en a fait des centaines," qtd. in Oliver Vaerenbergh, "Attention les yeux, les doodles arrivent," *Soir* [Brussels], 11/12 Jan. 1997: 10.

[69]"Je ne suis rien d'autre qu'un vieux gamin qui dessine."

Works Cited

"Actualités enfantines." *Nation Belge* [Brussels] 4 Aug. 1935: 8.

"Actualités enfantines." *Nation Belge* 25 Aug. 1935: 8.

Barker, Martin. *Comics, Ideology, Power and the Critics*. Manchester, England, and New York: Manchester UP, 1989.

"Best of Gaffes." *Canard enchaîné* [Paris] 8 Jan. 1997: 5.

Cambier, Jean-Luc. "Franquin, l'interview." *Télémoustique* [Charleroi, Belg.] 20 Nov. 1996: 24-30.

Combe, Jacques. *Jerome Bosch*. Paris: Rombaldi, 1947.

Couperie, Pierre, *et al. A History of the Comic Strip*. Trans. Eileen Hennessy. New York: Crown Publishers, 1968.

Crumb, Robert. *Robert Crumb's America*. San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1995.

Daniels, Les. *Comix. A History of Comic Books in Americ*a. London: Wildwood House, 1973.

Darasse, Christian. *Le Gang Mazda fait de la BD*. Charleroi, Belg.: Dupuis, 1988.

Daubert, Michel. "Franquin." *Télérama* [Paris] 18-25 Jan. 1997: 6-9.

"Des Chiffres et des dates." *Soir* [Brussels] 7 Jan. 1997: 7.

Desprechins, Albert, and Pierre Seron. *Les Petits Hommes: L'Exode*. Charleroi, Belg.: Dupuis, 1974.

Dirks, Rudolph. "Pim, Pam, Poum." *Journal de Mickey* [Paris] 3 Nov. 1935: 5 [trans. unknown].

Disney, Walt. *Mickey Mouse in Color, 1930s Disney Comic Strip Classics*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Douste-Blazy, Philippe. "Hommage à Franquin." *Figaro* [Paris] 7 Jan. 1997: 20.

Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979.

Feldstein, Albert. "Cosmic Ray Bomb Explosion." *Weird Fantasy* July/Aug. 1950: n.p.

Filippini, Henri. *Dictionnaire de la bande dessinée*. Paris: Bordas, 1989.

Franquin, André. *L'Intégrale Franquin*. Paris: Rombaldi, 1985.

Franquin, André, and Joseph Gillain. *Comment on devient créateur de bandes dessinées*. Verviers, Belg.: Marabout, 1969.

Gaumer, Patrick, and Claude Moliterni. *Dictionnaire mondial de la bande dessinée*. Paris: Larousse, 1994.

Godard, Christian, and Mitte Godard. *Un Cabriolet pour Désiré*. Brussels: Lombard, 1969.

Hergé (Georges Rémi). *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1963.

——. *Coke en Stock*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1958.

——. *Le Crabe aux pinces d'or*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1943.

——. *Tintin au Tibet*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1960.
——. *Tintin et les Picaros*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1976.
——. *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1944.
Horn, Maurice. *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*. New York: Chelsea House, 1976.
Labé, Yves-Marie. "André Franquin, le père de Gaston s'est arrêté à 950 gags." *Monde* [Paris] 7 Jan. 1997: 29.
Makassar, Anton. *Le Style Atome*. Brussels: Magic Strip, 1983.
Margerin, Frank. *Bananes métalliques*. Paris: Humanoïdes associés, 1982.
——. "Franquin" [cartoon]. *Télérama* [Paris] Jan. 1997: 10.
Marschall, Richard. *America's Great Comic Strip Artists*. New York: Abbeville P, 1989.
McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
McManus, George. *La Famille Illico*. Grenoble, Fr.: Glénat, 1980 [trans. unknown].
Monnier, Henri. *Grandeur et décadence de M. Joseph Prudhomme*. Paris: Michel Lévy, 1852.
N. S. "Le Père de Gaston à Druout." *Figaro* [Paris] 7 Jan. 1997: 20.
Orlando, Joe. "The Ad." *Weird Fantasy* July/Aug. 1952: n.p.
Pierre, Michel. "Franquin, le Virtuose." *Magazine littéraire* [Paris] Jan. 1980: 62-63.
Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Trans. Laurence Scott. 2nd ed. Austin and London: U of Texas P, 1968.
Queveau, Philippe. *Presque tout Franquin*. Paris: Comset, 1991.
Robinson, Jerry. *The Comics, an Illustrated History*. New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1974.
Sabin, Roger. *Adult Comics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
Sadoul, Numa. *Entretiens avec Hergé*. Tournai, Belg.: Casterman, 1989.
——. *Et Franquin crea Lagaffe*. Brussels: Distri B.D./Schlirf Book, 1986.
Segar, Elze. "Popeye." *Robinson* [Paris] 30 Jan. 1938: 15 [trans. unknown].
Sibille, Pierre. "André Franquin, l'invité du mois." *Libre Belgique* [Brussels] 9 April 1981: 14-15.
Thompson, Harry. *Tintin, Hergé and his Creation*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991.
Tillieux, Maurice, and Francis Bertrand. *Allegro en Ford T*. Paris: Dargaud, 1968.
Tomlinson, Janis. *Goya in the Twilight of the Enlightenment*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.
Tvonvina, Led. "Les Augures ont prononcé Franquin." *Falatoff* [Paris] Nov./Dec. 1972: 29-60.
Vaerenbergh, Oliver. "Attention les yeux, les doodles arrivent." *Soir* [Brussels] 11/12 Jan. 1997: 10.

Van Zuylen, Carine. "Gaston Lagaffe, anti-héros de la bande dessinée." Diss. U Libre de Bruxelles, 1982.
Verne, Jules. *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*. Paris: Hetzel, 1870.
——. *Voyage au centre de la terre*. Paris: Hetzel, 1864.
White, David Manning, and Robert Abel. *The Funnies*. London: Macmillan, 1963.

Matthew Screech lectures in French at the Manchester Metropolitan University, England. He publishes work on 19th century Symbolist poetry and on *bandes dessinées*.