

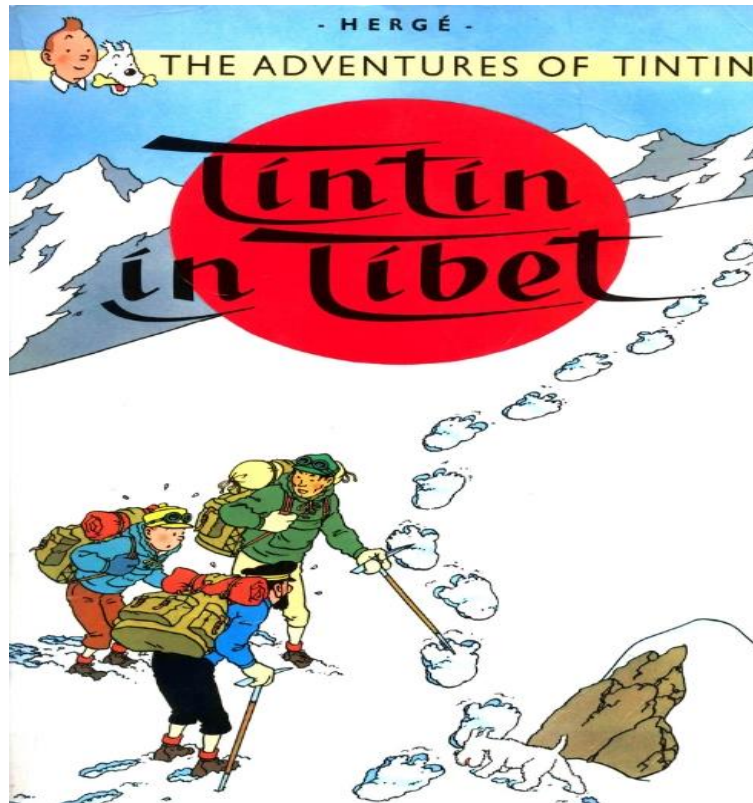
The Department of English

RAJA N.L. KHAN WOMEN'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)
Midnapore, West Bengal

Course material- 4 on

Tintin in Tibet

(Insights on critical issues)



For

English Hons.

Semester- IV

Paper- HCC10 (*Popular Literature*)

Prepared by

SUPROMIT MAITI

**Faculty, Department of English,
Raja N.L. Khan Women's College (Autonomous)**

Role of coincidences in *Tintin in Tibet*

Coincidences and chanced occurrences did play a very significant role in *Tintin in Tibet*. The incidents in the story are conjoined together by these coincidences that happened to take place in plenty. To begin with, Tintin and his friends were at a holiday resort when the story begins. Therefore, not being Tintin's regular residence, the arrival of Chang's letter at the right time, in the right place had to be coincidental. Had this letter not reached Tintin, the entire premise of actions that ensued after the letter was received would be nullified and the story would not exist. On similar rails, had the letter reached Tintin a bit late, it would become equally difficult to save Chang, with the amount of time exhausted already. Therefore, the movement of the letter does play a very crucial role in regulating the subsequent actions in the story. The vision of Chang lying in the debris of the wreckage and the news articles published in the newspaper being noticed by Tintin simultaneously was coincidental too. It had helped Tintin to connect the dots and form a firm conviction about the plane crash and instinctively assume that Chang is alive.



Tintin's sudden spotting of the scarf hanging from a cliff can also be considered a chanced incident providing the much needed impetus to the plot. Tharkey, the trained Sherpa was the one who knew the space and was practical enough to suggest that they should leave as soon as possible to magnify their chances of survival. The Captain was of the same opinion as well. However, Tintin's firm belief that Chang was alive and his inherent obstinacy made him decide to stay back and continue the search. This was when Tintin suddenly discovered the scarf hanging from the cliff. Had he not coincidentally discovered the scarf, a vital clue would have missed and the progress of the plot towards resolution would be hindered.

Similarly, finding the monastery and passing out close to it increased their chances of survival in leaps. Having the aid of the Blessed Lightening about Chang's location was of tremendous help to Tintin, which can also be considered a result of these coincidences. Yeti's discovery of Chang could also be considered coincidental. Had it not been the case, Chang would not have been able to sustain himself in those trying circumstances.

Herge's psychological issues that made *Tintin in Tibet* different from the other Tintin novels

Having spent a successful career as a cartoonist, Herge had already published plenty of Tintin stories but the demand never ceased. This pressure for producing newer stories involving Tintin's adventure took a severe toll on his mental health. His personal life was not rosy too. Love was gone from his conjugal life, he acknowledged and the emotional gap with Germaine was an ever growing one. It was during this time that Fanny Vlamincq joined Herge's 'Studios' and their newly discovered mutual attraction culminated into a love affair. However, due to his catholic upbringing and the divorce laws, he was unable to obtain a divorce. Completely at unease in all fronts of line, Herge began having nightmares, which had peculiar features, dominated by white. To Numa Sadoul, Herge relates, "At the time I was going through a real crisis and my dreams were

nearly always white dreams. And they were extremely distressing. I took note of them and remember one where I was in a kind of tower made up of series of ramps. At a particular moment, in an immaculately white alcove, a white skeleton appeared that tried to catch me. And then instantly everything around me went white.”

To get relief, Herge went to a Swiss psychoanalyst, Prof. Ricklin, who was a student of Carl J. Jung. He suggested, the only way to obtain relief would be to stop producing Tintin. Herge decided to take him up for a challenge and devised a counter attacking plan. He felt, the only way to negotiate this crisis is to confront it and defeat it. Therefore, *Tintin in Tibet* is set in the back drop of snow covered Himalayas that answered his white nightmares and dismiss it forever. Extra dozes of white proved to be a fine trick in nullifying the effect the white nightmares were having on him. Similarly, the very act of not stopping the production of Tintin and getting accustomed to the pressure was his answer to the other problems in his professional life. Therefore, this story was a journey for Herge that helped him grow as a man and overcome his personal fears and obstacles. No wonder, Herge always considered *Tintin in Tibet* his favourite Tintin novel.

Links for further readings

1. Farr, Michael. *Tintin: The Complete Companion*. Belgium: John Murray, 2001.
2. <http://www.en.tintin.com>
3. <http://www.tintinologist.org/guides/herge/>
4. <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,986416,00.html/>

Link for watching an adaptation of *Tintin in Tibet*

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=h4kxIufj9w>

Links for watching other Tintin adventures

The Secret of the Unicorn:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qboqep_n6pA
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=l2tS_TTt04Q

Land of Black Gold:

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZI_THZ0BUMc
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=cAtxXRrWi6g>

The Black Island:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sw3BmjgrFo&list=PLnflkYIFZrHw8bT76gfKLDN7HQ2iI4eFx&index=7&t=0s>

The Adventures of Tintin, (2011 movie)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=eFVOH-dKRWY>

The Calculus Affair

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=z1UocgNJ1Ns>

The Crab with Golden Claws

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=z1UocgNJ1Ns>
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=xckGfOt2Blg>

Cigars of the Pharaoh

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0idA4p0Cp3A>
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0idA4p0Cp3A>

Note:

With this material prepared by me, I am also attaching a very short essay, “Herge and the Myth of the Superchild” by Jean-Marie Apostolides, which you might find useful.

Hergé and the Myth of the Superchild

Author(s): Jean-Marie Apostolidès

Source: *Yale French Studies*, No. 111, Myth and Modernity (2007), pp. 45-57

Published by: Yale University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20479370>

Accessed: 28-04-2020 14:00 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Yale University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Yale French Studies*

JEAN-MARIE APOSTOLIDÈS

Hergé and the Myth of the Superchild

I believe that, regarding Tintin, there is a way of going far beyond what has been done before. . . . When something like this is successful for such a long time, there is a good reason. What reason is this?

—Hergé

The world of Hergé is populated by children, but to understand his work, we must also recognize the presence in this complex universe of a new figure, the superchild.¹ The superchild, which stands in contradistinction to the Nietzschean superman, constitutes a key myth of the twentieth century. Hergé did not invent it: it first appears in France after the defeat at Sedan, in 1870. In the wake of this traumatic event, French youth began to view its vanquished elders suspiciously. In literature, the myth of the superchild appears in almost all the avant-garde writers following (and including) Rimbaud: it was central to Lautréamont, Jarry, and Cravan; Roger Vitrac's 1927 play, *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir*, places the myth at the center of its narrative; and it found a lasting incarnation in Gaston Leroux's character, Rouletabille. After World War I, the myth was also developed in films and novels, although it was especially after World War II that it triumphed in France (and elsewhere), leaving its most enduring mark on the generation of '68. The considerable arrogance of this generation derived not only from its rejection of patriarchal values, but also from its symbolic victory over parents—two key motifs of the superchild myth.² With *Tintin*, Hergé not only offered a model illustration of this prevailing

1. I am borrowing the term from Olivier Todd, in Hergé, *Correspondance* (Louvain-la-neuve: Duculot, 1989), 5.

2. François Ricard has analyzed the most striking aspects of this phenomenon in *La génération lyrique: essai sur la vie et l'œuvre des premiers-nés du baby-boom* (Montreal: Boréal, 1994), even if he uncritically accepts this generation's principal values.

myth of his age, but also, I will be arguing, he interpreted the myth in such a way that the superchild could be reconciled with the preceding generation. By secretly adapting the myth to conservative Catholic values, Hergé showed how the superchild did not have to pursue a perpetual war against all adults.

TINTIN VERSUS JO AND ZETTE

Hergé's oeuvre forms a whole. Its power and richness cannot be fully appreciated without first comparing the cycle of *Tintin* to that of *Jo and Zette*, an earlier comic book series that also featured two children (and their pet monkey, Jocko). Such a comparison is of exceptional interest since it reveals certain repressed aspects of the Tintin saga. This initial step will lead us to highlight several key characteristics of the superchild myth and to explore those reasons—other than the author's talent—that Tintin's character has found such success in the second half of the twentieth century.

The two series stand in a relation of complementarity, rather than opposition. The idea of the family, which emerges as a major theme in both series, serves as an interesting point of comparison. The presence of a family in the case of *Jo and Zette* is countered in *Tintin* by its total absence. As soon as they leave the family home, the Legrand twins meet their parents' evil doubles, archaic figures who personify all childhood fears. For them to become adults, *Jo and Zette* must defeat a series of frightful enemies who appear as figures of monstrous parents, such as the mad scientist in *Le rayon du mystère*. However, contrary to *Tintin*, the twins do not easily succeed in defeating these parental figures. In order to win, they need help from their real parents. This is why they can never attain the mythical status of superchildren. To achieve this goal, they would have to act outside of the family circle.

The myth of *Tintin* builds in particular on the refusal of the traditional notion of family. This characteristic gives the hero his freedom of movement; it is this freedom that allows him to escape conformity and to invent, from one adventure to another, an original rapport with the world. In this sense, *Tintin* is an anti-family myth; or rather, the character evolves as a myth inasmuch as he refuses assimilation into a typical family structure. The traditional family is a stable and permanent structure; it fixes the human being in a temporal continuity. By turning toward his parents, the child knows where he comes from: by imitating them he knows where he will go. The familial universe is thus associated with the notion of time.

Unlike Tintin, Jo and Zette are prepubescent, which means they are at a moment in their development that can be characterized by the idea of anticipation; they are waiting for something to take place. They both hope to escape childhood by imagining the life they will lead later on. "If I were bigger," declares Jo in *Le testament de M. Pump*, "I would be flying the stratospheric plane that papa will invent. . . . And I would be winning the ten million dollars!"³ Although it is the adults who provoke the children's adventures, the twins themselves get into trouble for the pleasure of the game. In *Le rayon du mystère*, for instance, Jo decides on his own to borrow father Mathieu's boat to play pirates with his sister.⁴ By behaving in this manner, he knows that he is disobeying parental rules.

Psychologically, the twins are in the "latent period" of development, a period during which sexuality is at rest. While sex differences do not concern them, they want to grow up, have a career, make money, and integrate themselves into linear time. Tintin, on the other hand, has just gone through puberty, but he manages to escape time since he remains apparently unchanged: he constantly resembles himself, both physically and morally, from the beginning of his adventures to the end.⁵ To the extent that he evolves, it is only within an unspecified period of time in life, approximately between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. The myth of the superchild thus builds on a suspension in time, on a "frozen temporality." By contrast, the Nietzschean superman strove to achieve a goal, to attain an end, in order to prove himself. In Jarry's work, the supermale is equally inscribed in time since his activity has death as an ultimate horizon.⁶ Unlike both of these models, the superchild attains his status by freezing time; he remains forever young, in a suspended state. His main activities consist in a spatial displacement; he keeps repeating the same scenario each time—the eternal battle between Good and Evil—with the only variations consisting of unexpected events and a new setting. Even if the masks change, the theme of combat is similar. Tintin's life rolls along a circle that perpetually begins anew.

3. *Les aventures de Jo, Zette, et Jocko*, vol. 1: *Le testament de Monsieur Pump* (Paris: Casterman, 1993), 6, 12.

4. *Les aventures de Jo, Zette, et Jocko*, vol. 3: *Le Manitoba ne répond plus* (Paris: Casterman, 1993), 7, 3.

5. We know that it is only superficially true and that the reporter does not stop evolving, maturing, aging. Yet the apparent refusal of time gives Tintin his mythical dimension.

6. Alfred Jarry, *Le surmâle* (1898; Paris: Ramsay/Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1990).

This refusal of temporality is a corollary of the rejection of the familial universe. Having in a sense sprung forth from himself, Tintin *naturally* escapes the temporal dimension, or in other words, History. Never does he stop and ask himself about his genealogy, nor does he worry much about his long-term future. Throughout his adventures, the spatial dimension prevails over the temporal one; the experience of the world is given to him through the diversity of places rather than through confrontation with time.⁷ Unlike his readers, Tintin escapes a confrontation with history—a confrontation that often proved traumatic for his readers, who had to face the twentieth century's recurrent wars and genocides.⁸ Here lies the foundation of the myth of Tintin: in partaking of his adventures, we forget the vagaries of our own history. Through his capacity to absorb us in his adventures, the hero carries us with him to a world where time stands still.⁹

THE ORDEAL

In Hergé's work, in order for the boy to attain the full status of a super-child, he (or his double) must defeat an archaic paternalistic power, such as Rastapopoulos in *Les cigares du pharaon*. The defeat of this archaic figure not only allows the hero to free himself from childhood fears, but it also creates the very dynamic of the entire adventure. Moreover, the defeat of the malevolent character does not entail his death, but only his metamorphosis. Tintin never comes into direct contact with the forces of Evil, but remains fundamentally *innocent*.

Through his numerous encounters with the powers of Evil, Tintin manages to throw a couple of scoundrels in jail, yet he never kills anyone. Alonzo Perez and Ramon Bada, for instance, are responsible for their own deaths.¹⁰ Among the "good guys," only the seventeenth-century ancestor of Tintin's companion captain Haddock, the chevalier François de Hadoque, captain of *La Licorne*, actually commits murder (in *Le secret de la Licorne*, published, significantly, in 1944), killing the pirate Red Rackham, who had stolen his ship and killed the crew of his

7. I refer here to a study by Pierre Masson, *On a marché sur la terre* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989).

8. It is not by chance that we proclaimed the '90s "the end of history," at the height of postmodernism.

9. Jan Baetens writes: "It is not only the woman that is feared in the castle of Moulinsart, but also the child, which is to say time and, ultimately, death," in *Hergé écrivain* (Brussels: Labor, 1989), 117. My translation.

10. *L'oreille cassée* (Paris: Casterman, 1993), 60–61.

ship *La Licorne*. This particular murder, however, has the symbolic value of a religious sacrifice. Hadoque's act of bravery prompts the island natives to deify the chevalier and secures him a prominent place within the Tintin saga. Not only does the chevalier de Hadoque become the famous captain's prestigious ancestor, but Tintin's as well, inasmuch as his sacrifice leads to the emergence of two opposed, yet complimentary figures who, as we shall see, constitute key figures in Tintin's "reinvented" family—the savant and the buffoon.¹¹

In addition, Red Rackham's death allows the hero to achieve the status of a superchild. While Tintin partakes of the heroism of the superman or of the supermale, he does not partake of the blood crimes of the first, nor of the sexuality of the second. To maintain his essential *purity* someone other than Tintin must accomplish the necessary defeat of the archaic figure, in response to the hero's unconscious desires. François de Hadoque is the one who accomplishes it: he thus becomes a sacred figure, separate from the others. His deification, associated with primordial time, is renewed in the presence of Tintin, during the reenactment that Archibald carries out in *La Licorne*. It is during this ceremony that the hero metamorphosizes into a superchild. After having relived the pirate's murder with his companion, Tintin no longer fears the archaic figure. This archaic figure is decisively *broken*, without Tintin having to soil his hands with blood. By remaining pure at heart, he may well consider himself the eternal incarnation of the Good.

With Red Rackham's defeat (which occurs in Hergé's own time at the pivotal moment of World War II), the *Tintin* saga adopts a new direction. The myth of the superchild is now fully realized. As a superchild, Tintin invents a family for himself; he can now enter time, and he accepts the reduction of his power, showing himself capable of facing old age and death. This reentry into temporality clearly marks a departure from the superchild's initial rejection of time. But the character's acceptance of time comes on his own terms: thanks to the founding sacrifice realized by captain Haddock's ancestor, Tintin's entrance into time inverts, as we will see, the linear temporality of the traditional family.

The "secret" of *La Licorne* is therefore the definitive defeat of the archaic power, a secret that Hergé discovers—and recovers—during

11. See *Le secret de la Licorne* and *Le trésor de Rackham le Rouge*, both created during World War II.

World War II. The pirate's murder allows for the arrival of two new figures in Tintin's universe: on the one hand, we have the confirmation of the captain's eminent position, and, on the other, we have the invention of Professor Calculus. For the last time during the hero's adventures, Haddock reappears trapped in his original violence, a prisoner of self-destructive impulses, which he bears throughout *Le crabe aux pinces d'or*. Yet, in the adventure of *La Licorne*, the captain is henceforth on the side of the Good, his ancestor having taken responsibility for destroying the incarnation of evil, Red Rackham. Even though he keeps his frightful beard, he no longer appears threatening to his friends. In *La Licorne*, Haddock steps out of the archaic universe embedded in blind violence, in order to perform a new role, that of the buffoon. He is now likable, well spirited, and joyful when he can overcome his doubts and his depression; his insults are no longer spells he casts on those around him; they must be understood instead as the expression of his lack of power to change the world. Unlike his prestigious ancestor, he has lost the sacred dimension, which alone may explain why François de Hadoque could be deified by the island natives.

As for Professor Calculus (whose first appearance in the *Tintin* cycle occurs precisely with *Red Rackham's Treasure*), he inherits from the other half of the archaic power its amazing mastery of technique, and henceforth becomes the savant. Master of fire and water, his power is nonetheless limited since it belongs to the realm of science, rather than of magic. If needed, he controls this power as soon as it changes into a destructive force. He is far more brilliant than Legrand, the father of Jo and Zette, despite the fact that he is apparently unresponsive to his surroundings due to his deafness. This handicap never prevents him from fulfilling the role, vis-à-vis Tintin, equivalent to that of Legrand in the saga of Jo and Zette. The professor guides the "lad," lets him borrow his machines (the rocket and the submarine), and accepts Tintin's help in moments of difficulty or during his amnesia.

We are now better placed to define the rules that constitute Tintin's universe. While the real world reproduces itself via sexuality, the imaginary world of Tintin is based upon the mythical principle of self-reproduction. It is the son who engenders the father, or at least who *invents* him; the son allows the father to appear or disappear, according to the circumstances. At the origin of the genealogy lies an indistinct archaic figure resembling Uranus, a power both masculine and feminine, hateful and loving, white and red, a sacred figure whose surname of *ra* (like Rastapopoulos) or *rak* (like Rackham) is the inverse of *kar*

(like Muskar or Ottokar), which refers to the legitimate monarch.¹² This archaic figure seeks to capture everything in its infernal circle. Directly or indirectly, the hero must not only endure the persecutions and the violence of this archaic force, but he must above all defeat it. When he succeeds, he does not annihilate it, he fractures the circle in two halves, giving birth to two generations of cells, that of the heroic son and that of the fathers. This division engenders an even more complex universe that constructs itself, step by step, not around the central figure of the hero—Tintin—but around the two autonomous figures of the buffoon and the savant. Each of them inherits part of the attributes of the archaic figure from whom they stem.

Hergé's universe refuses sexuality, not so much due to misogyny, as it has often been argued, nor to satisfy the publication laws governing young adult literature, but because of a less evident reason pertinent to the specificity of Tintin's myth. The introduction of sexuality in this saga would oblige Tintin to accept childhood, maturity, and aging as episodes of life. Hergé would then be constrained to place death at the heart of the hero's adventures, while in fact, as we have seen, a key element of the superchild myth is the very refusal of temporality. Hergé's characters do not reproduce sexually, yet they dispose of elaborate secret laws of self-engendering and reproduction. As we have seen, they take an inverse biological direction, as the son invents the father or, rather, the fathers. In a different sense, they reproduce via the division of the primitive cell. The fight against the archaic figure allows for the fulfillment of the superchild. Helped by Tchang and the Sons of the Dragon, Tintin overturns the rule of Rastapopulos, but he does not kill anyone. It is François de Hadoque who brings justice to the misdeeds of Red Rackham.¹³

Tintin never hesitates to defy the forces of Evil and to oppose their negative values. He never doubts the legitimacy of his position, as he knows that he is acting in the name of an order that transcends all paternal figures met along the way. The secret of Tintin's youth lies in his capacity to eternalize a *decisive instant*: the very moment of realization that the father is not invincible, that the young man should not be frightened and that he should confront his enemy. This is the original

12. Serge Tisseron calls attention to the sonority of *Kar* in Hergé's work, in *Tintin et le secret d'Hergé* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1993), 36–38.

13. Red Rackham is, for the seventeenth century, the equivalent of Rastapopoulos for the twentieth, i.e., a malefic figure who threatens the legitimate order.

ordeal that defines the hero as a superchild. It is the primary condition on which all further elaborations in the cycle are built.

However, we cannot fully understand the cornerstone of Tintin's world without first observing the relationship between the hero and the different paternal figures he encounters. All of Tintin's adventures represent an eternal repetition of the moment when the father's power is discovered to be limited, a discovery that typically takes place during adolescence. This decisive instant is the spark for the explosion that precipitated, in the 1960s, the collapse of the patriarchal structure of many Western societies. By freezing time, Hergé opened up the spatial dimension to his hero. Once defeated, the archaic figure renounces its place. This defeat allows the hero to freely explore the world and to invent new relationships in his immediate surroundings. The suspension of time represents the key condition not only for Tintin's freedom, but also for attaining maturity. Without gaining a single wrinkle, he quits his juvenile rigidity to become more tolerant, more generous, and more human. In other words, he ages only within. If Tintin is a myth, it is because Hergé has transformed a natural psychological acquisition that gives access to maturity, into an endeavor of epic dimensions that opens the hero's eyes to the ways of the universe.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

An adult reading of the Tintin saga must immediately confront the question of authority. In Hergé's work, as in the world, the father figure—who is the keystone of authority—is not monolithic. The father figure presents itself differently depending on the circumstances. By comparing two such figures, Rastapopoulos and Professor Calculus, we can observe two types of authority that have been imposed on the majority of twentieth-century Europeans in the political sphere. In the first place, we encounter an absolute authority: the leader must be obeyed without discussion; his power entails something mysterious; the marks of respect for him must be numerous and constant. An overt piece of evidence in Hergé's work: this first type of man is called "Master" by his subordinates. The Master exerts an uncensored authority over his disciples. He engulfs them in his power and demands their total submission, under the threat of rejecting them into darkness, outside the circle of the chosen ones. The disciples do not exhibit any personal worth independently of their Master; they exist only as subordinates to the Master's supremacy, under his glow. Without him, they

are nothing. The tyrant wants to be loved; he shines back on the slaves who are submissive to him. If they disobey or if they revolt, their first punishment is the loss of love in the Master's eyes, which is equivalent to a kind of rejection into nothingness, ultimately signifying death itself.

In the second form of authority, which characterizes the kings of Syldavie, Ottokar IV and Muskar XII for instance, or the relationship between Tintin and the different figures of professors he encounters (Calys, Halembique, Calculus): the leader demands obedience, yet the power he exerts is no longer total. He does not govern according to his own rules, but rather in accordance with a legitimacy recognized and accepted by the population. The leader behaves like a demanding patriarch, yet one who respects the laws of justice. This type of authority corresponds quite neatly with French models of absolute monarchy, and in particular with Louis XIV. This form of government was also promoted by the right in France and Belgium, between the two World Wars. At the moment when he began his career, Hergé personally shared this rightist point of view, which he conserved for a long time.

During the twentieth century, most of the totalitarian regimes founded their power on archaic, uncensored authority. Such was the case of Stalin and Hitler during the period between the two World Wars. While the rest of Western Europe was ignorant, or pretended to be ignorant, about certain details of the communist regime, the fascist question was of main concern for France as well as Belgium. It is well documented that Hergé was sensitive to such questions, all the more because he was raised with conservative values, and stayed close to political figures on the Right such as Léon Degrelle.¹⁴ At that time, Hitler's regime enrolled and engulfed the German youth in Nazi ideology, which relied heavily on patriarchal mythologies. Under his unchecked authority, the servants acted for the regeneration of the German race: the healthy youth emerged mythically from the persona of the *Führer*, their new pseudo-biological father.

Tintin refuses this type of patriarchal authority, preferring the more limited, reason-based authority that Professor Calculus exerts. When he encounters Rastapopulos for the first time, the reporter is attracted by this billionaire endowed with affable manners. He does not initially understand that the elegant owner of *Cosmos Picture* is also the chief

14. Pierre Assouline, *Hergé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

of the secret society that strives to master the world and to reduce it into submissiveness. When he finds out the truth, Tintin escapes the illusion surrounding him, and distances himself from Rastapopulos. Henceforth, he will never cease fighting against this malevolent character, who is later transformed into a mundane scoundrel, associated with the figure of the buffoon, yet still belonging to the sphere of Evil.

Hergé thus appears to be, in his life as well as in his values, closer to rightist anarchism than to fascism. In this respect, Tintin is an emblematic twentieth-century myth because of his opposition to uncontrolled authority, to the power of the Rastas and of the Rackhams, who are for the social universe what sharks are for the animal world. The fundamental opposition between the two types of authorities is less perceptible in the Tintin saga than in that of Jo and Zette; nonetheless, it lies at the root of the hero's spirit of adventure. The evidence is that, in the beginning of his career, Tintin defends rightist values; however, he does not attain the mythical dimension of a superchild until he flees the archaic universe entirely. This transformation is the only way to escape the devouring power that forces the son to submit completely to the whims and desires of a father.

THE FUNCTION OF THE MYTH

With the development of technology and capitalism, the Western world lost its direct link with tradition along the course of the twentieth century. It underwent a metamorphosis, which is to say, it entered time. In the twentieth century, the relationship between the two main sources of our civilization—Judeo-Christian pacifism and the military—tipped heavily out of balance, engendering the totalitarian monstrosities that we have seen. The men born along with Tintin around 1930 have become adults and grown old in a world completely different from that of their childhood. Certainly, World War I signaled a break with the past. However, it is the ruptures following World War II, including those of '68, that mark the definitive abandon of the traditional patriarchy, and the establishment of a society turned toward hedonism and consumption, in which the media occupies a significant place. While our ancestors tried to follow the example of their predecessors, wanting to show themselves worthy of succeeding them, in contrast we have deliberately severed our links with the past.

However, can any of us—Jews, Christians, or Muslims, faithful or agnostics—turn our backs on our heritage without damaging it, even

though we judge it outmoded and erroneous? The problem of breaking with tradition is too recent to be understood in its multiple dimensions, be they social, ethical, or psychological. This, I believe, is where the mythical thinking in *Tintin* can be said to intervene. Tintin becomes a myth partly because he lives in the twentieth century; as a journalist and adventurer, he embraces both the media and technology, while at the same time remaining loyal to the two traditional pillars of the Western world, Christianity and heroism, and he does so by never relinquishing adolescence. Tintin is the eternal youth of the West, its Galahad; he demonstrates that he is capable of confronting and defeating evil without losing his original identity and purity. The myth of Tintin thus represents in some ways the keystone of Western identity. Based on this core, any edifice may be built.

While the myth of Tintin highlights certain elements of our daily reality, it also blinds us to others, in particular to those associated with History. In Hergé's work, as we have underlined earlier, the spatial dimension prevails over the temporal one, and represents the structural factor of the plot in any adventure. Although the myth prevents us from thinking of time, by analyzing its components, we can nonetheless highlight the successive layers and the inherent contradictions that construct it. We are all, in one way or another, the product of historical ruptures, the result of infidelities, the playthings of History. Sooner or later, we betray our ideals to adapt to present circumstances, which is to say, to time itself. Tintin represents both our memory and our mirror of illusion. We easily identify with him. By representing permanence, he comforts our loyalty despite our constant betrayals. As he crosses over frontiers, political regimes, and epochs, apparently never changing, he represents the link that binds us to the past, as well as to the future. In short, he becomes the instrument of our false consciousness as he gives the impression that time stops and that we can escape the confrontation with the ruptures within our own History: while the world transforms all around him, Tintin himself remains the same, eternally loyal to what he was in the beginning of his career.

Seventy-five years after its creation, the myth of Tintin is far from ending its run. Meanwhile, the influence it may have on the twenty-first century differs from the profound significance it had during Hergé's time, when, under the influence of Norbert Wallez, Hergé placed Tintin in charge of soothing the concerns of a rightist Europe caught in the conflict between communism on one border and capitalism on the other. Today, the superchild is innocent of the dramas of the

world. He partakes of the suffering of the weak, he is compassionate toward the unhappy, and he sides with the victims and the oppressed. In addition, he will never become an adult. Eternally young, nothing can ever come in the way of his conquests, which exclude violence at least in appearance. His adventures are evermore irresistible as they rely on a constantly updated technology thanks to the savant's sponsorship. Although he establishes his bearings in Moulinsart, this mythical village can be found anywhere. Without any familial attachments, without a country of his own or a king, Tintin is at home everywhere. No frontiers enclose the superchild. He represents the shape that universalism takes today, that of a civilization founded on a liberal democracy and on technology.

Respectful of different cultures, at once skeptical and generous, Tintin is the token image of the West in the tide of the globalization of economic exchange. No language is foreign to him; he adapts well to the diversity of customs and beliefs; he confronts any given situation with calm. What makes him still our contemporary is the perfect emotional control that accompanies each of his actions. Despite himself, without changing his state or mind, and apparently without an inner life, Tintin is always attuned to the world's diversity. This is why we may predict without much risk that his public success will continue for years to come. Contemporary society's profound attachments to Tintin are too numerous for him to stop representing a touchstone of Western identity.

Hergé could have chosen to create the endeavors of a superman, yet instead he chose to invent a superchild. The risk was great, and Tintin could quickly have fallen under the ridicule of his virtuous pretensions, but this was not the case. On the contrary, little by little, the author was able to forge a new myth, as characteristic of the twentieth century as Don Juan or Faust were of their time. A myth is a fabulous story that generally relates events of a long time ago—the original time—and that serves as guarantee for values accepted by any given society. It explains the origin of various institutions, the priority given to values such as loyalty and heroism, and the reason why things exist. Hergé's strength is placing this superchild not in a distant past, but in the heart of the present, in a suspended time of youth. Another essential element of Tintin's mythical status is his fascination with speed and his aptitude for mastering contemporary techniques. He is more than a simple adventurer; this taste for action is due to his age. Tintin is an adolescent who, without ever entering adult age, makes the entire world youthful

by confronting himself with it. Instead of Tintin integrating himself within history, instead of him aging and eventually dying, it is in fact the exterior universe that stops in time during the contact with the hero. Thanks to Tintin, all his companions—Calculus, Haddock, Rastapopulos, Castafiore, Thompson and Thomson—escape the injuries of time because they coexist in the same space as he does. They belong to the circle of the chosen ones. They share along with the hero an eternal present that can be prolonged indefinitely since the paternal figure (the main administrator of patriarchy and of linear time) is kept away. Far from treating Tintin like an irresponsible young man, those close to him listen to him as if he were a demigod able to provide solutions to all their problems. Ultimately, they know he will save them because of his very ability to stay forever young and to conserve perpetually the characteristics of a superchild.