CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY
OF THE CONTENT VALUE OF TINTIN COMICS

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This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other University.

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DEDICATION

To my parents S. Kahenya and L. Wanjiku who gave me a childhood. To my husband Wang’ombe, who has been a pillar of strength. And to my daughters Wangechi and Wanjiku who enjoy my noblest dreams.
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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the values contained in the Tintin comics as they relate to the Kenyan children who read these comics. The actual and potential effects of the comics on the values and value systems of the children is discussed.

It is noted that comics are a unique type of literature based primarily, as they are, on the picture. This aspect of comics makes them appealing to the children. Hand in hand with the pictures goes the subject of colour. The Tintin comics are lavishly colourful. These bright colours beckon the children and give the comics extra appeal. Combined with the features of humour and entertainment, the foregoing factors give these comics unique potency as a medium of communicating to children.

As this is a study of values, it has been found necessary to have recourse to the concepts of theme and socialization. These concepts and their applicability to the study are expounded in the introductory chapter. Herge, the author of the Tintin comics is seen as assuming a certain socially conditioned stance towards the values discussed and as making a deliberate effort to affect the children so that they adopt a similar stance.

The Tintin comics as adventure stories is the subject of chapter two of the thesis. In discussing adventure, the role of the hero has been taken as a central factor. The terms adventure and hero are defined generally as they relate to the individual and social values. The hero as an embodiment and vehicle of social values is seen as a role model.
The intended and actual perception of that role by the children in the case of the hero of the Tintin comics is analysed and the reaction of the children to it discussed.

As the author of the comics equates adventure with violence, the subject of violence is dealt with alongside adventure. Other themes such as corruption, drug trafficking and drug abuse are also dealt with in this chapter.

Racism is a running theme in the Tintin comics. It is the subject of chapter three of this thesis. The term is defined and the manifestation of racism and racist ideas in these comics is traced and analysed. The deliberate and concerted effort of Herge to impart racist values in the children and the purposes are discussed. It was also necessary to look at how the children perceive this subject in the texts and the effects which that perception has on the children.

Overall, the study has looked at both sides of the coin as far as the values and the effects and possible effects of the comics on their young readership is concerned. As the study does not encompass all aspects related to the subject of comics and the socialization of children, we view it as an attempt to break ground in this important area of children’s literature.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The study of children's literature is a relatively new development in Kenya as is the existence of that literature in its written form. What has previously filled the shelves is literature from the west. This literature includes a wide variety of western comics. Although criticism of western literature is gradually leading to its replacement with Kenyan literature for children, much of it continues to exist with all the attendant shortcomings. Western comics are not exempted from the shortcomings associated with other literature of western origin.

Comics are a unique type of literature. An understanding of what they are and how they operate is essential to this study. Val Fair describes comics as they exist today as "Illustrated Imperialism for Children." This definition assumes that comics address themselves to children. While this is not entirely true, the Tintin comics do address themselves specifically to children though they may command readership among adults. The children's section of the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) also stocks Tintin comics. This, by implication, means that Tintin is accepted by this national institution as material for children. Many children also have their own copies of the Tintin comics which they circulate freely among themselves.
With regard to the question of definition, one notes that comics have generally proved difficult to define. Some writers like Mauger in *Literary Taste, Culture and Mass Communication* use the terms comic and magazine interchangeably.

The concept of the comical derives from the form of art known as comedy. The form is characterised by humour as a main feature and entertainment as one of its major objectives. In as much as they successfully adhere to these requirements, comics are likely to attract the interest of children because children detest the drab. Comedy that is worth the name, however, seeks to teach even as it entertains. It calls upon us, in the words of Meredith, "... to interrogate ourselves and correct our pretentiousness".¹

The comic element may be found in situations, words and character which when they happen to be incongruous to our expectations are seen as a joke in themselves or as capable of yielding a comic joke. Brandon says of the comic joke that, "... there must also be the butt of that joke".² It is important, therefore, to look at the characters who are presented as comical by the author. It is also important to focus on the situations which the author sees as comical.

Since incongruity means that something is strange or deviates from what is considered normal, it is clear that incongruity can be a question of taste and values. This, then, points to the need to look at the reasons behind an author's presentation of his or her society's values as the norm and those or another society as a deviation and therefore
comical. These reasons will be found not only in the surface meaning of a text but also in the underlying meaning. It is usually such underlying meaning which belies the comic nature of some works. In this connection, Dixion has made the following apt statement in his attempt to define comics.

In spite of the name, many of them are clearly not funny and even those that are meant to be humorous are clearly no laughing matter. ³

Thus while a subject, situation or character may evoke laughter at one level because of the manner of its presentation, that same subject or situation may be said not to be a laughing matter at another level because of its nature. A text can, therefore, be humorous and actually cause laughter while undermining or negating socially accepted values, and Kimenye’s Moses series illustrates this fact. While the texts are humorous, the children in the stories violate school rules and social values with the author's consent. These children smoke the forbidden cigarette whenever they can. They play truant from school and are pictorially shown smoking up a tree in Moses in Trouble. They also show general disrespect for adults be they their teachers or outsiders. While there is nothing wrong with admitting that these things happen in actual reality, Kimenye shows them as admirable, adventurous and worthy of applause. The children repeat their socially disagreeable behaviour throughout the series without remorse and without any indication by the author that she does not approve of it. What is humorous is, therefore, not necessarily edifying.
For purposes of this discussion, comics will be considered as a visual art which also utilizes the word and is presumably humorous and entertaining. While their popularity with the children may be based on their power to entertain, however, the ideas contained in these comics have a deep effect on the children who read the comics. This is because literature is vested with the power to affect and effect values. This effect may be obvious or subtle.

It has already been noted that these comics have their origin in the West. While critics from the West have considered them a subject worthy of serious attention here, the comics have not received much attention here. This is in spite of the fact that they are readily available locally and are read by the children.

A perusal of these comics reveals that they are eurocentric and have the same shortcomings found in the eurocentric prose fiction of the last century. These comics can, therefore, be said to be perpetuating a tradition. *Tintin* has been produced in thirty-one languages and is read probably in more that three times that number of countries. There is also a *Tintin* film based on the *Tintin* characters created by Herge. The character of *Tintin* has also found his way onto T-shirts. Going by these facts, it is clear that there is real need to address the quality of the material in *Tintin* comics.

As comics today form an important part of the literature read by Kenyan children the discrepancy between the availability of comics and their criticism needs to be corrected.
This study aims at breaking the virgin ground of comicdom in Kenya. This will be done by analysing the Tintin comics and critically looking at the values and the ideas contained in these comics. The analysis will focus on the ideas of adventure, violence, drugs and drug-trafficking and corruption. Racism which is a running idea in the comics will also be analysed. The purpose of analysing these ideas is to determine what values the Tintin comics seek to impart in the children who read them. It is the handling of these ideas by Herge and the role which the comics actually and potentially play in socialising the children which will determine the value of these comics.

Socialisation entails the cultivation of those values a particular society considers positive and the discouragement of those it considers negative. In the context of children's literature it means helping the children to grow into socially acceptable and useful members of their society. This includes imparting in them "ways of experiencing and behaving which conform with that society's values". The inability to conform with the values of one's society renders one a social misfit or outcast.

The concept of socialisation is important in this study for the evaluation of the values which Herge, the writer of the Tintin comics propounds, the incipient message and the effect on the readers of the comics. In this evaluation interest will be in whether these values contribute positively or negatively to the development of the child.
A study of the values propagated by the artist necessarily means a pre-occupation with the thematic content of his work. By theme is meant the ideas contained in these comics. It is in this inter-relationship between social values and themes in literature that we find a direct link with the concept of socialisation agreeing with Gorky that:

The problem of themes in books for children is of course a problem of the line of social education to be followed with respect to children. 5

The fact that there is an abundance of Western comics on the Kenyan scene has already been noted. Although these comics have been the subject of serious study in the West where they come from, no such study has been done here. This study is, therefore, justified by the need to rectify this anomaly.

It is true that the majority of the readers of these comics come chiefly from the urban areas, or generally from the middle class but this does not negate the need to study comics. These children do not live in cocoons and what they become is of interest to all. The National School system also waters down somewhat the socio-economic disparities as far as interaction is concerned. Within such interaction exchange of ideas, reading materials and consequent influence can be expected.

Although there are no local critical works on the subject of comics there is a significant number of Western critics who have written about comics. In The Funnies: An American Idiom, White and Abel observe that comics are an area worthy of serious
study. They note rightly that comics are culture bound perpetuating values within a culture while being at the same time a revelation of such values. The two critics, however, are only interested in the American situation about which they state:

The comics doubtless work to reinforce many deeply held beliefs about the meaning of life in America and the relationship of individuals to individuals and to society. 6

It is interesting to note that the Tintin comics have such an American savour to them that critics like those in Val Fajr consider them American though their author is Belgian. In this respect the comics are influenced by the American value system. The question arises of the relevance of these and similar comics to the Kenyan situation.

The answer to the above question, at least in part, is offered by Peter Mauger, a Black American critic. In a terse article entitled "Children's Reading" in Literary Taste Culture and Mass Communication, Mauger states the role of these comics as popularising sadism, violence and cruelty. These comics present anything which is white American or pro-American as human and everything else as an aberration.

Mauger is very succinct in this article but its brevity does not allow him to be more specific and to illustrate the otherwise true statements he makes. While pointing out the negative values advanced and supported by these comics, Mauger does not show exactly how the comics advance such values. However, the fact that the above values are a
feature of the comics does not just make them unsuitable but actually disqualifies them as children's reading.

Fred Inglis in *A Promise of Happiness: Value and Meaning in Children's Fiction* appears somewhat mixed up about the role of fiction in shaping the life of a child, especially during the tween impressionable years. He says of the comic books he read as a child that:

... the main feature of these intermittently awful books in which from eight or nine onwards I saturated my imagination would be what is undoubtedly there: their relentless snobbery, their incipient Fascism, their arrogance and brutality.  

Inglis goes on to draw a false margin between the world of literature and actual reality. To him it does not matter what the hero does or what motivates him because the hero would always be right in "his (hero) sense of fairness" not as necessarily relating to the actual world but "within the terms of the novel." Inglis demonstrates his lack of awareness that the hero has no sense of fairness other than that ascribed to him by his creator who is the author of a text. The fact that the world of the novel—and our workaday world—are closely related and that the creative writer is the one who sets the terms of the novel which Inglis is talking about does not impress itself on him.

Inglis notes but underrates the influence of "The heavy moral fumes given off" by some authors. After reading Inglis, one is left with a lingering suspicion of his stand on
the question of values. Talking of the hero of one of the comics he read as a child, he says that; "he could only run well on fish and chips, that evocative class emblem ..."

It would automatically seem to the questioning mind that this is something to take issue with. It does not to Inglis. The attitude of the author of the comic which Inglis is discussing seems to be that if the hero can manage well on such a diet then it does not matter that he, as a worker, has no access to better food. Indeed the impression created is that he can only run well, which means being heroic, on that diet alone. A different diet would, therefore, be detrimental in that it would compromise his heroism. Inglis does not question this and his criticism seems as warped as the values he condones.

Critics are generally agreed on the potency of the picture graphics in communicating ideas in comics and picture stories. So central is the picture that some critics like Politzer in *The Funnies: An American Idiom* see the dialogue as "... the intellectual excuse for a medium essentially visual." Regardless of whether one adopts a similar position or not, it might be found that the children will remember more easily what they see than what they read. Hollindale also recognizes the power of the pictures. He observes aptly with reference to the subject:

... a first rate illustrator of children's fiction enriches the book he is illustrating ... pictures have an energy and substance of their own.
The pictures help to buttress the written message where they illustrate a text. Arbuthot in *Children’s Reading in the Home* says that "in picture stories the pictures are completely integrated with the text". In the case of comics, pictures do not just illustrate the text, they are primary and the word is secondary. One can actually say that they are the text.

In more general terms, *A Peculiar Gift*, which is a collection of essays, is useful for its attempt to establish the principles of writing for children as children. This means taking stock of their peculiar nature rather than treating them as miniature adults, or worse still, looking down on them. This is an important principle because treating the children as miniature adults would mean trying to communicate with them in a way that is beyond their comprehension. Looking down on them would mean being condescending and oversimplistic. Although these essays recognize this important fact, they have the problem of being prone to generalisations. They are also all occasions of religious moralising, perhaps inevitably so.

Colby is also interested in the principles of *Writing, Illustration and Editing Children Books*. His treatment of these issues according to the various age groups is a useful guideline though it will not always hold. This is because of the various social factors which may affect children and also due to the children’s idiosyncracies. The ability of the children to grasp and perceive issues is, therefore, not uniform, even within the same age group.
With reference to the question of racism, Colby compromises an otherwise enlightening study. He considers racism a minor factor when writing for children. He lists "The presentation of some group. or race through caricature or by the excessive use of dialect", under "other common faults which are relatively unimportant but occur fairly often ...." One feels that the order of Colby’s pitfalls to be avoided in writing for children begs questions. Racism is not an unimportant pitfall because at the centre of it lies the question of one’s identity and humanity. Another equally faulty statement is made by Dickinson who in his criticism of comics in "A Defence of Rubbish", refers to comics as "rubbish" which is "neutral". He does not make it clear what he means by these terms but speaking from a sociological view of literature, the terms rubbish" and "neutral" are meaningless.

The Kenyan scene reveals that no criticism of the available comics has been done. The comics and magazines produced locally can not compete with those from overseas which are lavishly colourful and attractive. The local magazines have activities like crossword puzzles and wordsearch which are education oriented and are also enjoyed by the children. The children, for instance, are asked to search for the names of rivers, lakes, countries or Kenya’s Members of Parliament. While these are good in themselves, they do not seem to command as keen an interest or as enthusiastic a following as the comics from overseas. Some of the magazines that pass for comics are anything but entertaining.
Minfu and Sweetie passes itself off as a "comic strip (in colour)". 16 Such a definition, however, is more than it can justifiably claim. This "comic strip" is painfully didactic. It is this kind of literature which prompted Gorky to warn: "If you preach to children in a didactic tone you will arouse in them boredom and opposition to the theme of your sermon." 17

If local productions hope to compete with or even be a substitute for comic literature coming from the West, then they must strive to be more entertaining than they are at present.

Kenyan students of children's literature have made critical studies of written literature for children. These studies include the literature produced here and that which comes from outside. The studies show a keen awareness of the social nature and function of literature. Mwanzi analyses eurocentric prose fiction, the nature of that fiction and the use to which it was put. This literature was calculated to entangle the minds of the readers in false myths of racial inferiority and thus render them easy prey to imperialist domination and exploitation by undermining their estimation of their own human worth.

Githiora's dissertation on The Influence of Literature on Young Children's Concept Formation is an attempt to show the role of literature in forging values and attitudes in the child reader. She deals with both the written and visual media and ably demonstrates the said role.
This study is based on a number of hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the Tintin comics affect the children who read them in a way more profound than mere entertainment. It is further postulated that the author of the Tintin comics uses a medium popular with children to deliberately influence the children in a certain way with the ideas he communicates. These ideas are passed on in a manner beyond the comprehension of the child. Finally, it is hypothesised that the ideas which Herge puts across in these comics are at best irrelevant to the needs of Kenyan children and at worst a violation of those needs.

Owing to the fact that the individual and the society are at the heart of this study, the theory of the sociology of literature has been adopted. The sociological view of literature sees literature as a mirror of society. The literary writer is treated as one informed by and drawing his material from society. He is seen as one who makes man in society the subject of his literary endeavours. In this framework, literature is endowed with the ability to tell much about the kind of society existing.

Further to this, this framework holds that a writer writes with a purpose. As a member of the society with which he deals he holds certain views, attitudes and opinions about life. His purpose is to impress these views, attitudes, opinions and desires on his audience and thereby cause that audience to adopt a certain stance towards them. A writer's work will therefore reflect the social and other influences through which he has passed. As Goran Hermeren puts it in *Influence in Art and Literature*:
Works of arts are not produced in a vacuum. Every work of art is surrounded by what might be called its artistic field and this includes buyers, sellers, critics, artistic traditions, literary movements, current philosophical ideas, political and social structures and many other things. All these factors may influence the creation of works of art.18

Thus being a member of a particular society and operating within that particular social framework, the artist does not write as an indifferent or disinterested observer. He actively seeks to affect his audience so that it views reality from his vantage point.

The above framework was applied in studying the Tintin comics. A field study was conducted in a few schools. Visits to the Kenya National Library were made. The children's section of the Library stocks these comics. Observation and questions were used in the collection of data. The questions were listed in a questionnaire. The children were required to fill in answers on the questionnaire paper. The questions sought to establish the readership of the Tintin comics among the interviewees, the popularity of the comics and the general reaction of the children to the comics.

After answering the questions on paper the children were given Tintin comics to read. This enabled the researcher to actually observe the children as they read the comics. Excitement, amusement and laughter could be noted this way.

In issuing the Tintin comics to the children to read, the children were given a choice between these comics and local magazines such as Pichadith, Watoto and Sparkle. This
was intended to establish the comparative popularity of these amongst the children.

The children were issued with comics which they indicated on the questionnaire that they had read before as far as this was possible.

They were, therefore, reading familiar stories. Once they had re-read the stories, they were asked to reconstruct or retell the stories orally. The idea was to establish the ability of the children to grasp the meaning of the stories they had read.

As is already evident from the foregoing, there were questions which the children were required to answer other than those in the questionnaire. These questions could not be included in the original questionnaire because they were about specific texts *Viz* the respective texts which the children read there and then. The questions were, therefore, directed, accordingly, to the relevant persons who had read the particular stories. The children then interchanged the comics and the other children expressed their opinions on the texts.

This second category of question included questions relating to other characters in the stories other than the constant team of Tintin, Captain Haddock and Professor Calculus.

It was in this category of questions that the opinions of the children relating to subjects such as black/brown characters and drugs were sought. Such questions could not be pre-listed because they required the immediate reading of the texts before responses could
be elicited. They also did not have to be listed as interjections could be made and other questions asked in between for clarification.

Reference was also made to relevant material in the library. Six comics were chosen from the ones which were read. All the texts are adventure stories but the six best illustrate and support the argument of the study. Reference was, however, made to other comics where they help the argument.

The thesis comprises three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one is the introductory chapter. The second chapter deals with the comics as adventure stories. It also treats the issue of violence. The chapter is hitched on the role of the hero as an embodiment of social values and as a role model. Other subsidiary issues which the comics raise are also treated in this chapter.

Adventure and violence have been put together because the author presents one as part and parcel of the other. Under adventure will be considered the activities, experiences and journeys of the hero and his colleagues. These provide a good deal of the excitement in these comics. The protagonist is a role model presumably posed for emulation. Interest will be focused on how well he plays this role and how worthy are the values he embodies.
Chapter three focuses on racism and psychological violence. The overt and covert ways in which racism manifests itself in these comics and the effects of racism on the young readers of these comics is addressed. It is hoped that the study will come to a conclusion on the role of these comics in shaping the development of those children who read them.
8. Ibid.
13. M.H. Arbuthnot, Children's Reading In the Home.


CHAPTER TWO

ADVENTURE AND VIOLENCE: - THE HERO AS AN EMBODIMENT OF SOCIAL VALUES

Man has always felt the need to tell adventure stories and create heroes since time immemorial. The oral literature of pre-literate societies affords many examples of adventure tales where heroes accomplish feats in the face of ordinarily insurmountable odds. In African folk tales, for instance, there are examples of the ogre and the giant who with their usually fierce physical attributes and meanness of character, are often pitted against human characters in matches which the human characters seem unlikely to win. When victory comes to the human characters, it affirms the values which these human characters stand for and negates those represented by the ogre. This feature of adventure tales is not peculiar to the African context. As Paul Zweig states in The Adventurer:

In fact the raw material of mythologies throughout the world seems largely to be made up of perilous journeys, encounters with inhuman monsters, ordeals of loneliness and hunger, descents into the underworld.¹

The Mwindo Epic and the Ozidi Saga fit this description exactly. In this way they are close kin to, say, Homer's Odyssev or the Illiad.

This chapter discusses the Tintin comics as they relate to Kenyan children. It will also discuss the role of Tintin as a hero. Since the author describes the Tintin comics as adventure stories, it is not possible to discuss them without discussing the character of
the hero. The two can not be divorced since the adventures are had by the hero and these adventures are the ones which fit him for that description. The appropriateness of Tintin's role as a hero in relation to children will be examined.

In general terms, adventure stories are created by man to serve as an affirmation of human capability to struggle against and overcome forces which oppose man and are hostile to his existence. Paul Zweig defines this role in The Adventurer thus:

Adventure tales bind together the fragile world of human needs and relationships by affirming that mere men can survive the storms of the demonic world.²

Adventure tales thus have an utilitarian value. This is not to deny that adventure tales have intrinsic aesthetic value where the recipient may admit them purely for the enjoyment they provide. In the telling of adventure tales such enjoyment depends on the teller and in their reading, on the literary competence of the writer.

The adventurous character may be described as one who is searching. Thus adventure tales are search stories. They are journeys of self discovery made by one trying to find his place in the order of things; his relationship to nature, to the supernature, the meaning of one's existence and one's humanity. At the end of the adventure story, man's indomitable supremacy is ascertained. The spirit of adventure is the spirit of yearning to know and of defining oneself in the light of this knowledge. By looking at the issue this
way one may then understand Michelle Landsberg's statement with reference to children in their 'tween years; "... there are two quests: the quest for identity and the quest for adventure..." Landsberg further argues rightly that these two quests overlap. The child wants to move out and find out and in this way affirms his humanity.

It is the nature of adventure stories to be dramatic or action packed. The actions in these stories become the focal point in the story but they may not, of course, be divorced from their performer or hero. This dramatic element is a positive element in children's literature. It highlights the heroism of the hero and the starkness of the hero's image and impressions makes these features last longer in the minds of the children. This is positive in so far as the hero is meant to be emulable and if he is indeed worthy of emulation. The deed performed by the hero also afford the children excitement and captivate them thus ensuring that interest in the story is maintained. They are eager to find out what happens next especially with reference to the hero and what other heroic feats he performs. Considering that children are easily distracted and their attention easily diverted this fact makes the adventure story a powerful tool of both entertaining and communicating to children.

Adventure stories are, however, not just tests of physical ability but also call for brainwork. The hero does not act blindly, driving headlong into danger for the mere exposition of his heroic endowment. Often the hero has to stop and think, consider courses of action, the open alternatives and possibly too, the consequences. In
"Adventure: The Unending Game" Maurice Herzog argues rightly that adventure which is worth the name ought to be: "adventure in which a man's total energies, all his physical and mental resources are involved". The stupidity of a 'hero' who stupidly involves himself in a situation will not fail to detract from his heroism whatever the outcome of his involvement.

In children's literature as in adult literature the clearing of hurdles by the hero is an affirmation of human potential. It confirms that it is humanly possible to overcome difficulties in both a practical and emotional way. This is so whether the message is relayed at the level of realism or that of fantasy:

At their best the stories we read in childhood should give us an experience in fantasy of emotional crises we may come across in life and help us to cope with them.

Landsberg's assertion is true except that these stories need not only be in fantasy nor must they address only emotional problems.

The adventure story is well suited to children who at this age have not had their imagination dulled by sceptism and disillusionment born of a feeling of knowing better and, therefore, not about to be taken in. During these "unreluctant years" it is much easier to corroborate what positive conceptions the child may have as well as to initiate new ones. Through the character of the hero adventure can immeasurably enrich the child's
mind by offering him an experience of other places, other people and other ways of looking at things. The hero's behaviour can act as a pointer to the kind of human society his creator feels ought to be cultivated.

The hero is a creation of man to fulfil certain of his needs. Since different societies have different requirements which are also dynamic, the concept of the hero is neither a historical nor a cultural constant. The concept changes in response to the dynamic nature of the society and its requirements. There are, however, human values which endure through time and space and which account for the duplication of heroic characteristics in different societies and at different times. The virtues of courage and perseverance, for instance, remain the same whether one society wishes to affirm that outer space can be conquered and another that wild game can be caught for food.

In this thesis, the term hero is used with a different sense from the more common usage in literature of the leading character in the story. The qualities which are presented as going into the heroic constitution are of prime importance. Equally important is what these qualities reveal about the creators of the hero. Generally speaking, it may be found that these qualities are not unlike those of the heroes in the heroic legend who:

embodied the values, fears, desires and assurances of the people who gradually invented them. They were ... an integral part of the cultural context.⁵
This chapter will address itself to the specifics of the values, fears, desires and assurances revealed in the Tintin comics through the actions of the hero, Tintin.

Conventionally the role of the hero is one of a model. He is what Paul Zweig terms "...and example of right behaviour". In children's literature as in literature in general, the hero is created to serve as an expression of the society's aspirations and at the same time to inspire the achievement of such aspirations. Gorky defines the hero in socio-cultural terms as:

... the embodiment and vehicle of the clan's entire energy now translated into deeds, and a reflection of the clan's spiritual strength.

In children's literature the heroic character is normally one the children can easily identify with. Such ease of identification is attained through the hero's involvement in concerns and situations with which the children are familiar. The issues addressed through the character of the hero are normally those which ordinarily engage the emotional, mental and physical energy of children. The children are then able to see something of themselves in the hero and are the more likely to relate to him. In the words of Wyndhm:

Generally speaking your hero or heroine should be a fairly familiar type with motives, desires and traits common to most young people. (emphasis mine)
The role of a children's hero is not one which can be played by a smart-all-knowing adult or by such a one masquerading as a child. While the children may sympathise with such a character and the predicaments in which he may find himself it would be difficult for him to elicit empathy. The children may not get over the feeling that after all he is a grown-up and therefore ought to do better or if he does then that is just as it should be. When the adult falls short of these expectations, what arises is a situation of incongruity which may provoke unsympathetic laughter. In *Writers, Critics and Children* Geoff Fox has the following to say on the issue:

> The child needs somebody in a book with whom he can identify as a child. This accounts for the presence of many animals or children themselves in children's books, the comparative paucity of adults, especially parents - parents are always got rid of quickly.\(^\text{10}\)

This factor in children's literature is one on which theorists, critics and writer's are generally agreed. In "*Suitable for Children?*" Tucker reiterates the above view commenting inter alia on the predominance of the child as the main character and the relegation of adults to peripheral roles while not denying that it is necessary for the adults to have a role.\(^\text{11}\)

Herge has made a lot of effort to satisfy the above expectations. One of the reasons why the children have come to identify with the hero is that he is perpetually present and always does the same things. It is almost as if Herge is harping at a point. The scene of the action may change but there is really no fundamental change in the action. One
or the other of Tintin’s company may often and for long periods be absent from the activities but not so Tintin. In every picture, page and text, Herge reiterates the heroism of his hero.

Herge has borrowed certain aspects of the archetypal hero and incorporated them in his hero's character. These are at a glance positive attributes and the children identify them as such, though some of them prove to be otherwise at close scrutiny. The attribute of fantastic physical strength is readily apparent. The hero is also subjected to ordeals that condition him to exhibit great ability to endure. In facing these ordeals, both his physical and mental endowment come into play so that he out-fights and outwits his opponents, thus saving himself and others. In *The Red Sea Sharks* Tintin and Captain Haddock have to walk thirty miles throughout the night. In the course of this journey, the captain literally falls asleep on his feet but the indefatigable hero keeps his pace and has to constantly exhort his mate. The hero endures hunger and desert thirst which he overcomes both by dint of wit and, as in many other instances, by a stroke of good fortune. In the end he has had the experience of being a castaway during which experience he and his friends have run out of provisions and run the risk of surviving on "... Dr. Bombard's diet: plankton and sea-water". Later the castaways are shown devouring food after being "rescued". Tintin, in spite of being the one talking of Dr. Bombard's diet, pays little attention to the food. He is shown pondering over the new development for he realises that they have jumped from the frying pan into the fire. This pondering all with a creased brow heightens the hero's heroism in the eyes of the
children. It makes him look big, grow-up and serious and these are attributes which children admire.

The ability to recognise danger fast and find a means of getting out of it is a major feature of the hero's character. In this he is portrayed as the epitome of courage. He never shies away from danger or what he perceives to be his responsibility but always does what has to be done. He, however, does not fight against inhuman monsters of the kind encountered by the mythical hero. Rather, Tintin is the fulfilment of the dreams of Conrad's Jim in Lord Jim who in his boyhood days dreamed that he would realise his dream when" he confronted savages on tropical shores..."13 With Tintin, however, there is none of Jim's disillusionment.

Besides being courageous the hero does not lose his head when he finds himself in dangerous situations. In The Red Sea Sharks Tintin needs only two days to learn how to balance a pitcher of water on his head like an Arab woman. He and the captain need this as part of their disguise so that they can make their get away from Khemed where a price has been placed on their heads. Thus disguised, they encounter an Arab patrol and the captain loses his head. He starts stumbling and can no longer balance his pitcher. He nearly gives the game away but Tintin remains calm. This and the Captain's regaining of his composure saves them in the nick of time.
The virtues of courage, clear headedness and the ability to act fast in times of danger are worth cultivating in children. Tintin provides such an example. He never gives way to despair no matter how desperate his situation may appear. He pushes on to a victorious end.

Herge strengthens his hero’s stand in the eyes of the children by other means also. The hero is rarely the butt of the comic joke. If he were to be made a sort of laughing stock as the Thompsons are, it would detract from his heroism. In the few instances where he is made the object of laughter, that laughter is light hearted and without derision. Such is the case, for instance, in Land of Black Gold when ironic humour is applied to him. He has been taken to the Emir Ben Khalish whom he wants to meet. He has to wait outside while the Emir finishes with another visitor. The other visitor, as it turns out, is none other than Dr. Muller. Tintin just manages to avoid being seen by Dr. Muller by averting his gaze. Once Muller has passed, Tintin rises to go to the Emir’s office but turns to follow Muller with his eyes thinking: "What’s that gangster doing here? ... I must keep my eyes open!" The irony of it is that while he is telling himself that he must keep his eyes open, he walks straight into a stone pillar and gets... himself stunned for not looking where he is going.

Though the children find it funny that Tintin walks into the pillar this does not adversely affect their identification with him. Such incidents in the hero’s life have the effect of making him more human in the eyes of the children. It is comforting to know that little
accidents happen to the hero also. The incidents, therefore, do not detract from the hero's heroism in the eyes of the children. On the contrary, they may even underscore it. The laughter which these incidents cause is mirthful unlike the other characters whom the children scoff and deride.

The hero also had none of the stupidity attributed to those characters whom the author intends the children to view with disaffection. He many on occasions get outwitted and thus be put at a disadvantage but at the end of the day he emerges triumphant and therefore more heroic. In *Land of Black Gold*, for example, Muller discovers that Tintin is not his servant Ahmed by using a mirror to check Tintin’s actions behind his back. On discovering this he steals behind Tintin and clobbers him on the head with the butt of his gun. He stops short of killing the unconscious Tintin because while he is debating whether to shoot him the sound of the Thompsons jeep engine stops him. He fears that the shot will be heard.

As in the heroic legend where when it appears that the hero is done for an upsurge of the heroic quality or a stroke of good fortune intervenes, Tintin gets out of these difficult situations. The intervention of good fortune in favour of the hero suggests that another greater force other than the hero's own strength is at work sanctioning the hero's deeds and what he stands for.
Although the children do not realise or demonstrate any awareness of the author's hand at work in the above, they are led to identify more and more with the hero. While the author's championing of the hero's position in the above is done mainly by suggestion, he also makes express statements for the same purpose. The hero is presented as a likeable fellow, trustworthy even when he has not done anything to prove that he is worthy of such trust. In *Land of Black Gold* the Emir Ben Khalish says:

> It is strange, I do not know why am I telling you all this ... you are a stranger ... I have no reason but I trust you.¹⁵

It is good to teach children that being trustworthy and having the goodwill of people is something worth aspiring to. On the other hand, such trust and goodwill have to be merited. It may prove dangerous telling children that there are some strangers who can be trusted because the reality of the present world dictates otherwise. Whereas it is true that there are strangers who may mean well, there is no way anyone, especially a child, can tell the difference.

There are other positive issues which Herge addresses through the character of Tintin which children can generally relate to. In *Tintin and the Picaros* Tintin is shown doing morning exercises. He discusses business with the captain while he, Tintin, does headstands. This comes through as a minor detail but it could be taken to mean that the heroism of Tintin is to a certain extent cultivated through physical fitness. If one accepts the hero's identity as a child, the scene is a truthful reflection of he nature of children.
The children are not likely to view the headstands as a calculated programme of maintaining physical fitness. Rather, they see it as play, and play is central to children's lives. The scene also reveals children's inherent inability to concentrate on "serious" things for any length of time. They cannot keep the mind trained on one thing for long. By relating the hero's behaviour to the nature of children, Herge makes empathy that much easier.

The hero is also the vehicle through which Herge conveys his view of certain burning issues of the day. The hero is used positively to speak out against an unhealthy lust for money. He does not rate money above his principles and will not trade off one for the other. When he does something he is more interested in the principle behind it than in private gain unlike people like the Thompsons who go looking for Bab El Ehr’s hideout dazed by the prize offered to anyone who would find the hideout.

Thompson: Five thousand pounds. You needn't say that again!... By this time next week we'll bring you Bab El Ehr trussed like a turkey.

Thompson: Five thousand pounds reward!16

In the same text, Land of Black Gold, the fiendish Dr. Muller Alias Professor Smith offers to make Tintin rich for life if he agrees to destroy the ‘aspirin’ found by the Thompsons. The "aspirin" turns out to be "formula fourteen" which is the chemical used by the saboteurs to increase the explosive quality in petrol. Tintin declines Muller's
offer:

Muller: I will make you rich for life if you destroy those aspirins instead of analysing them...

Tintin: So the tube belongs to you ... What's in the tablets?

Muller: Why worry?... Destroy them and your fortunes made!

Tintin: No thank you, Doctor Muller, I'm not interested.¹⁷

Considering Dr. Muller's lifestyle and his connection with Skoil Oil magnates and Imperialists, there is no doubt that he could indeed make Tintin "rich for life" to save his secret. However, it turns out that the hero does not have a price; he has principles to safeguard.

The intention of the saboteurs is to use "formula fourteen" to ground the transport machines of the enemy countries in the event of war. There is, thus, a lot at stake in this. The inventors of formula fourteen would have the balance tipped in their favour in the event of war and be in a position to impose their will on 'enemy' nations. Besides, by using the aspirin label on "formula fourteen" the saboteurs have put the lives of people at risk. The Thompsons who inadvertently swallow some formula fourteen believing it to be aspirin have to get specialised treatment to restore them to normality.
Whether it be in the form of money or favours, corruption is a social ill which eats at the moral fibre of society and runs counter to justice. In the above instance Tintin confirms that it is possible to stand firm and not be bought with money and favours to overlook the right thing. The problem with such positive instances of character projection is that they are minor details which end up being submerged by the more recurrent themes such as violence and racism.

In the seven comics studied, Herge is categorical in his stand on cigarette smoking as far as the hero is concerned. On several occasions, Tintin is offered a cigarette but declines with the appropriate social etiquette. In *Tintin and the Picaros*, for instance, Alcazar's offer is politely turned down with a "No, thanks"\(^{18}\). A similar offer by Ben Khalish in *Land of Black Gold* is met with a "No thank you, I don't smoke"\(^{19}\). The hero therefore, advocates abstention from smoking and although he has nothing to say when it is done by others, he does in such instances act as a positive role model with reference to a habit which is hazardous to both the individual and the society.

The issue of drugs and drug taking is a subject of paramount concern to contemporary society. This subject is further dealt with by Herge in his views on alcoholism. Alcoholism is one of the most widespread forms of drug abuse. It is a serious problem because unlike narcotics, it is socially and legally accepted. Perhaps this is the explanation as to why Herge treats it with a certain ambiguity which shows a bias in favour of it.
To illustrate the ambiguity we have Captain Haddock on the one hand. He literally loves whisky and is by all appearances an alcoholic. He will take any alcoholic drink when in dire need although whisky is his speciality. He is a likeable character and the children who were interviewed do indeed like him. Next to the hero he is the one who commands the admiration of most of the readers of *Tintin* who were interviewed. Some of them rate him above Tintin as their favourite character. They find him funny. He is even funnier when drunk, because of his incongruous behaviour. Then there is Tintin on the other hand. While he is not a teetotaler himself, he on occasion shows disapproval of the Captain’s drinking habit. As a role model he does not have a clear cut stand on alcoholism. In *The Red Sea Sharks* he orders “two glasses of ginger beer” for himself and the Captain. He also takes wine with Oliviera da Figuera in *Land of Black Gold.*

In view of the fact that Tintin does take alcohol himself and that the behaviour of an alcoholic is shown as a humorous thing through the character of the Captain and the dog, Snowy, Tintin’s disapproval of the habit loses seriousness.

It is perhaps in the way that Tintin panders to the Captain’s weakness that Herge most strongly negates his own apparent stand against alcoholism. As a result of this negation, alcoholism ceases to be an abhorrent social ill which is unhealthy to the individual as alcohol becomes an agent of revitalisation. In *The Red Sea Sharks* when the Captain can no longer keep up in the trek from the enemy, Tintin gives him whisky to dispel sleep and restore his energy. He drains the bottle of whisky in a gulp and according to the pictures the whisky serves the intended purpose most effectively. In the end Herge’s
message boils down to this; a little alcohol does no harm even to a "youngster" or "lad", alcoholic behaviour is amusing and alcohol can boost lesser mortals who have not the strength of a Tintin to go on struggling when they must. This is a faulty message to communicate to children considering the debilitating effects of alcohol and drugs in general.

On the issue of drugs and drug abuse the author focuses on drug trafficking. In *Cigars of the Pharoah* the hero busts an "international drug smuggling chain". This issue of drug trafficking is treated realistically by Herge. The drug dealers who comprise African Arabs, Asians of Japanese and Indian origin and Europeans of no stated nationality but apparently English, have devised a subtle way of dealing in opium. The ploy of rolling the opium into cigars has fooled police across the world. A greater power is needed to contend with them and so the hero comes in.

The kind of drug dealing treated in *Cigars of the Pharoah* is characterised by the same violence that characterises the same trade in actual reality. There is also the usual disregard for human life.

The drug dealers are driven by one motive which is to make money and woe to anyone who stands between them and their objective. Though the violence directed towards those opposed to the drug dealers in *Cigars of the Pharoah* does not result in death but in madness, the implication is the same: the anti-drug trafficking person becomes
incapacitated in the fight against the trade.

Madness is inflicted on those fighting the drug smugglers by shooting them with a poisoned arrow. This is a deduction which has been made and proven by the hero Tintin. The ability to make this deduction puts him a cut above the other opponents of drug trafficking. The fact that he decides to oppose and expose the drug smugglers is commendable and emulable. However, the Maharaja and his relatives have always made a similar stand so something more is needed to make the hero’s involvement more impressive. The fact that he throws in his lot with the Maharaja and others adds weight to the issue and justifies the opposition in the eyes of the children who identify with him. What adds to Tintin’s heroic stature in this instance, however, is his ability to break the racket which everyone else had failed to do.

Herge raises the question of drug trafficking again in *Land of Black Gold*. In this text there is mention of heroin but this is left as a loose thread in the story which does not advance the main story significantly. On both counts, though, Herge makes it sufficiently clear that this trade is to be abhorred. The drug-dealers are portrayed as "terrorists" and their organisation is "devilish".

Though the interviewed children demonstrate some awareness of what drugs are, many of them are familiar with bhang, Herge’s treatment of the subject does not make it clear to them why drug-trafficking is to be abhorred. The main problem with drug dealing as
we know it today is not so much the staggering profits derived from it as the effects of the drugs on drug users. This does not appear anywhere in the comics. By making it seem as if his greatest objection is to the profits made by the drug lords, Herge risks reducing the whole drug war to an escapade. This is because he focuses on the wrong reasons for the drug war while side-stepping the issue which he needs to focus on. It may seem that the hero goes into the war for the sake of breaking up the drug dealing gang. The children therefore, identify with the hero because he is the hero and not because of the ideals he stands for which Herge does not make clear to the children. It is objectionable if the children identify with a position simply because that is the side the hero happens to take without them understanding what it is all about.

The foregoing serves to illustrate that there are certain things that recommend the hero for a role model. In these instances, the hero actually and potentially acts as an example of individually and socially commendable behaviour which the children can copy from. In some of these instances, however, the author does not provide a clear picture of what the hero stands for so that in terms of representing values, the hero's role seems sometimes to be double-edged so to speak. In some instances, he espouses emulable values but negates positive values in other instances. He, therefore, has the potential to socialise positively and negatively. When dealing with children, however, one needs to be definite.
Although he acts as a pointer to enduring values such as courage and perseverance and on contemporary issues such as corruption and smoking, the hero has certain defects which mar his function as a role model. In terms of what he is and what he stands for in the instances where he acts as a negative role model which feature more prominently in the texts, he greatly reduces the content value of these comics. It is on these instances now that attention will be focused.

Herge’s pictorial presentation of his hero makes it apparent that he is struggling to satisfy the demand that the hero be one that the children can easily identify with. Tintin is by all pictorial appearances a boy. Herge belabours this identity by having him variously referred to by appropriate terms. In *Tintin and the Red Sea Sharks* he has him referred to as a "lad" and "youngster". On other occasions he is referred to as a "boy" or a "young man". On every other page in the texts the word young is used with an appendage to refer to the hero. The impression created is one of insistence on the hero’s youth. Herge may find such insistence necessary because the hero’s youth is imposed.

The children find the hero good looking or attractive. Quoting the language of some of them, one would say "he is cute". He is also distinguishable not only by his small boyish appearance but also by other aspects of his physical appearance, which are decidedly unique. He sports the same hairstyle throughout the comics and this has become a mark of distinction. Some of the children like Bob Muniu of Nairobi Primary School try to sport the same kind of hair style.
The attempt by the child here to copy the physical appearance of the hero results in incongruity. This problem arises from having a hero intended for a white audience as a model for black children. For these children, there is little or nothing, other than the hero's apparent size, for them to relate to. His concerns and the general circumstances of his life have no bearing on the social reality of the children.

It appears that Herge has drawn a miniature adult and tried to pass him off as a child. Tintin is a newspaper reporter by profession. This is something which is communicated by referring to him as "the boy reporter" rather than a fact which comes through from the stories. In action he comes through as a sort of sleuth or crime buster of the thriller tradition who is reported about in the newspapers rather than doing any reporting himself. It is probably this overblown, sensationalised presentation of his character which appeals to the children by the escapist thrills it provides. Thus, while young Kenyan readers of Tintin may find it difficult to conceptualise a boy reporter since there is no provision in the local situation for such a role, the situation is made worse by the fact that Tintin does not play that role in the stories.

It has been pointed out that Tintin is a miniature adult but this is really not the core of the problem in his function as a role model. The fact that he does adult things is not what disqualifies him as a hero for local children and children in general. Rather, the nature of the things he does is what presents a problem. Children can conceptualise adult roles so long as such roles are within the range of their experiences. This is what
accounts for role acting like playing mother, father or teacher in children's games. Moreover, children are impatient of being children and cannot wait to grow up, behave as and be treated like adults. The ability and willingness to conceptualise relevant adult roles enables the children to project themselves into the future. Irrelevant adult roles can confuse this projection.

In this case, Tintin represents neither a child model nor an adult model. This is because as a child model he is a sham and as an adult model the things he does are completely removed from the experience or likely experience of Kenyan children.

Tintin's supposed profession involves him in situations and things which are far from what children can be involved in. He is acquainted with all sorts of personages from heads of state and ex-heads of state to multi-millionaire thieves. He finds himself in situations where he has to solve all sorts of mysteries so that he can ostensibly report on them. It is not a wonder that some of the children are not persuaded that he is a boy. Victor Ochieng from Mbagathi Primary School likes Tintin "because he is a short man with jokes". David Njoroge from Ruthimitu, on the other hand, likes him because "he is a little man who knows how to fight". Even supposing that the ability to fight all and sundry and impose one's will on them were something worthy of emulation, Tintin would probably not convince Njoroge that he too can do it because he knows himself to be a boy and Tintin a "little man".
The imposition of a youthful identity on the hero by the author is also manifest in the fact that the supposed lad owns a flat. The flat is well furnished and has a library of voluminous texts. He can also afford to take holidays and cruise round the world: "Port said, Instanbul, Pinaeus, Naples, Marseilles, then home through the Strait of Gibraltar". It is hard to imagine a "lad" in the Kenyan context owning a flat and taking a holiday both planned and financed by himself. Such a thing is beyond even the best economically advantaged children in Kenya. This, however, is not the case with televisions and telephones which things the hero has in his flat. This middle class identity kit makes middle class standards the acceptable standards and the values that are worthy of emulation. The majority of the children in Kenya fall outside this class, making this a distortion of the true picture and creating false expectations in those children who fall outside this class. Fortunately, not all the children readers of Tintin believe that one needs a middle class background to have an adventure or that only adventures tailored for this class are worth having. Robert Kamau and Victor Ochieng feel that hunting rabbits in the field or fishing respectively can also be adventurous. These are things which they are familiar with and which are relevant in their environment.

Ordinarily the escapades of the hero take him to distant corners of the globe. He has traversed the world from Russia to Congo. These journeys are made by all means afforded by modern technology: aeroplanes, ships, cars, rockets and spaceships. These concerns of the hero and the manner in which he carries out his activities give the comic
a definitely American slant. The values and attitudes propagated by Tintin are American and the Kenyan child reader is expected to emulate these. This has led its critics in Val Fajr to discuss it as an American product. This explains why in Tintin and the Red Sea Sharks it is "U.S Navy sea planes, ... certainly machines from the Los Angeles" which come to give Tintin’s adversaries a "pasting" and get him out of a tight spot. Hergé’s approach of the combat situation is typically American where the outcome of such an encounter is seen as a foregone conclusion. This "American will unquestionably be the winner" view of life is seen in the words of the Captain:

"Oh! Great grandfathers!
What a pasting! ...
They’ll be as flat as Dover
Sole after that!" \(^23\)

This attitude arises from the American belief that their stand is the right stand and others should be made to adopt it by all means. This over confidence is presented by Hergé as justified. The child is meant to accept it as right. This placing of America on a pedestal once done, serves to undermine the self-confidence of the non-American and non-caucasian child reader. America is given all the glory and the child is not in a position to challenge this. Tintin as a hero is meant to advance values and attitudes such as these among others so that his suitability as role model for Kenyan children begs questions.
Tintin is a specialist in whatever he does. He does not speak the language of a child. Rather, he speaks the language of a specialist in whatever mystery he is trying to solve. His specialised and wide vocabulary belies his youthful identity. He can operate the various travel machines and speak or at least understand the language of the sailor, the aviator, the astronaut or whatever instruments he may be using. In *Land of Black Gold* he ponders over the newly "acquired" explosive quality in petrol and again the language is that of a specialist:

Analysis of the petrol showed nothing ... but what if someone used an additive that leaves no trace?... Tonight, Snowy my friend, we'll take a little trip to see some storage tanks.24

They indeed do take a little trip in pitch darkness and out of Tintin's volition. This makes him a strange kind of child if one were to concede that he is one. Children are customarily afraid of darkness even when that happens to be inside a house. If they should find themselves alone out in the dark which may turn out to be quite adventurous, it would be by accident rather than design. As far as children are concerned, what lies in darkness is best left alone. They associate darkness with danger and violence.

Violence is the hallmark of these comics. Although adventure tales permit this, the violence in these comics seem to have a negative influences on the children as will be demonstrated. This might be because of the fact that children crave for adventure and the Tintin comics equate adventure with violence. This violence is shown as a panacea
for all ills, a remedy for all grievances both real and imagined.

In text after text, picture frame after picture frame, the reader is treated to all manner of physical violence: fist fights, bomb blasts, kidnappings, forced confinement in places, and fighting with hose pipes to mention but a few. The hero is at the centre of all this violence giving much more than he receives. As he stands at the centre of this violence, the children are intended to look up to him as a role model. The effect of this tells on some of the children who were interviewed. Some of them have been led to associate adventure and heroism with violence and gadgets beyond their reach. This is revealed in their answers when asked what they would do as heroes and whether they would like to take part in an adventure and why:

"I would beat, fight, arrest", says Wakarima Wamba. "I can't be a hero. I would kill people in the area, or fight with them," says Victoria Mwangura after saying that a hero is someone who does great things. This seems to be a contradiction arising from her reading because there is nothing so great about killing or fighting people. On the other hand, it could mean that the socialisation of some Kenyan children for their respective sex roles has prevailed in this instance against the message of Tintin. Violence is not expected from a woman in Kenya society who is taught to be submissive and docile. This, however, does not negate the potential of the text to exert negative influence.
Presenting the hero as always right regardless of what he does is a problem. It means imbuing the children with the wrong values. As Fred Inglis says in *A Promise of Happiness: Value and Meaning in Children’s Fiction* it is not enough, that heroes be thought heroic "by virtue of their actions not their motives". Children, however, will not delve into motives. They decide to identify with the hero for less complicated reasons as Grugeon and Walden point out:

... a child’s choices are based not so much on right versus wrong as on who arouses his sympathy and who his antipathy. The more simple a character, the easier it is for a child to identify with it and to reject the bad. The child identifies with the good hero not because of his goodness, but because the hero’s condition makes a deep appeal on him. The question for the child is not "Do I want to be good?" but "What do I want to be like?" The child decides on the basis of projecting himself wholeheartedly into the character.

While I concur with the above, the converse happens to be true in the case of Tintin. His violence and other negative values make him a bad hero or a poor role model. Nevertheless, the children would like to be like him because of Herge’s manipulation of the character.

Apart from showing adventure as necessarily violent, the comics also present it as something beyond the reach of most Kenyan children. Michale Kirima says "I would not like to take part in an adventure because I would need a gun, a boat, a swimming suit, a floater and other things. I can’t get those." Other children feel that adventure cannot be had unless one goes outside one’s country. This is part of the inferiorisation process
where only American-kind of adventures are regarded as adventures worth the having. Taking part in such adventures means showing unrealistic machismo and unrivalled violence.

Herge does not appear to be concerned about the effects of such a plethora of scenes of violence. His work indeed thrives on it to serve the twin objectives of selling his comics and selling the west as a model of social behaviour. He is in this way socially irresponsible for failing to recognise or ignoring the adverse effects of such a preponderance of violence as expressed by Richard Wright:

"I should hate to have my children getting used to sights of violence, death, brutality. When for years a child has seen men hitting others killing or getting killed he gets used to it. In time it does not impress him any more, and death, betrayal, deception become unimpressive facts of life, just "one of those things"." 27

Wright was writing about the effects of perpetuating the negative values of the American society on the individual and the society. These values which are parochial and inhumane are unworthy of a just society. They are the same adopted values which Herge propagates as desirable and emulable.

While it is true that Wright was talking of a different medium, his argument still holds. The effects and possible effects of violence viewed on the screen and that seen on script may be different only in degree. The character on the screen appears to be more of life
and blood and the action more real and immediate so that the impact may be that much
greater. In either case, however, the danger is real when violence is presented as funny
and comical.

The comics show that violent acts are successfully executed by those who are physically
strong. The children are impressed by the apparent strength of the hero. The people
Tintin bashes are several times bigger than him. The bashings thus become fantastic feats.
Now persuaded that violence is an entertaining pastime and can correct all ills, many
children will be led to wish that they could fight as well as Tintin does. Timothy Mbuthia
likes Tintin because "he fights and wins" and says that if he were a hero "I would be
fighting nicely". Martin Oduor also likes Tintin" because of how he fights" and would
like to be a hero" so I would fight the people who fight my friends".

There seems to be a contradiction in the way many of the children react to this issue of
violence. On the one hand, they admire Tintin's violence and his winning streak while,
on the other hand, they reject the violence of his adversaries. This could be because they
are already persuaded by other means, such as the presentation of him as handsome and
superior, to be arbitrarily against his enemies. On the other hand, it could be that the idea
of winning is being used here as a means of legitimising violence as Gerson argues in
"violence as an American value theme":

...the strong man is king. In America the hero is viewed as the good
guy... The deification of the winner as the right guy often means that
'anything goes' so long as the right guy does it. The winner thus has the mandate to perform practically any kind of violence since he is the good guy... The means of winning are much less emphasized.28

In the violence that goes on in these texts, Herge would have the reader believe that nobody gets seriously hurt. When people do get hurt Herge makes it look amusing. He presents violence and injuries resulting from violence in such a way that they evoke laughter rather than pity or sympathy. In *Land of Black Gold*, for instance, one of Tintin's enemies is punched by another and sent tumbling down a set of stairs. He knocks his head on the floor and loses his wits. The situation is presented as funny as he starts rumbling on in rhyme and tongue-twisters mixed with nonsensical things:

Why not? ... Rub it with camphorated oil!... And that's not all ... Sister Susie's sewing socks for soldiers.29

When Captain Haddock gets a similar knock on the back of his head with a whisky bottle thrown by a drunken monkey in *Tintin and the Picaros*, he takes the bottle and uses it as a telescope rumbling on in his sailor jargon:

Hard a, starboard ... Who's Captain here, you or me? ... To crown it all I've lost my ship... Perhaps it's flown away.30
These rumblings have all the suggestion of mental imbalance and this is supposed to be comical.

The portrayal of violence as a joke or a show and therefore as entertaining and harmless is a distortion and falsification of reality. It is shown as if people can bash each other, play around with guns and knives and come to no great harm. This violence fascinates and attracts the children. They call it 'action'. Some, like the comics themselves, equate it to entertainment. There is also the danger of those children who come from violent environments seeing such a presentation of violence as a vindication of violence.

"I like Tintin because it is full of actions, I like the way they fight and how Tintin escapes", says Charles Owuor who is echoed by Onesmus Mutiso. "I like the action when they hit each other and you see stars going like this", says Bob Muniu demonstrating the stars seen by the stunned victims of blows in the comics (in comparison with locally produced magazines which he has read). It has many funs (sic) shooting and beating others. Also bombing others by (sic) bombs", says Stephen Pastore.

The above points to the need to provide children with interesting and relevant material for their reading. As it is, many children indicated that they would choose foreign comics such as Tintin rather than locally produced magazines. Though one can see the attempts to make the content of these magazines relevant to Kenyan children, the
children still find them dull in terms of colour and presentation.

The *Adventures of Tintin* suggests to children that adventure can only be had with paraphernalia which are not available to them both because they are children and Kenyans. These stories also make it appear like adventure cannot be had unless one goes to "exotic" places outside of one's own country. These faults are consequent upon the fact that these comics were for a white audience. They meant to instil into this audience a yearning for and attainment of competence in the use of modern and ultra-modern technological equipment. The idea was to use that audience in the conquest of the world and outer space once the desire and courage to do so had been kindled in them.

In conclusion it can be said that the hero of these adventures is used to advance the stated message. At best the basic concerns of these comics are of little or no interest to the Kenyan child at present and at worst undermine such interests. The hero is an unworthy model for the children because his youthful identity is a hoax. He also supports inhuman and anti-social behaviour such as unvidictictable violence. When he addresses himself to other day-to-day problems like alcoholism, smoking, drug trafficking and drug abuse Herge is not decisive and inadvertently or otherwise connives these social ills. Although some of these problems arise in our context due to the fact that Herge is addressing himself to a white audience, there can still be no justification for teaching white children to revere violence and take pride in colour prejudice. These are vices which work against the entire human society by undermining and negating
humane social values.
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30. Herge, Tintin and the Picaros. (Tournai, Belgium; Castermann S.A), p.36
CHAPTER THREE

RACISM: MANIFESTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF RACIST IDEAS

Addressing the question of racism requires that one adopt a historical perspective because racism is a historical phenomenon. The manifestation of this phenomenon in the Tintin comics will be traced. It will be shown that it is through the same old eyes that Herge looks at the world as he deals with ultra-modern concerns in his comics.

The notion of white superiority, among people of that colour, existed long before the commencement of the African slave trade but did not become a systematic way of thinking until the need to justify slavery and colonialism demand it. Both these phenomena, however, had a material basis. Walter Rodney in How Europe Underdeveloped Africa clearly shows the link between Capitalism, Slavery and Imperialism. The slaves were needed as labour to exploit the resources of the "New World" and colonies were necessary as sources of raw materials and markets for industrial Europe.

Although the enslavement of Africans was basically rationalised on the ground that they were heathen and hardy, some racist theories and ideologies were formulated so that a people who purported to be Christians may treat those they enslaved, and later those they colonised, in a way which was clearly discordant with the principles of the
Christian faith they professed. Theories were, therefore, spun to deny the humanity of the non-white races so that racism came to define the economic, political and social relations established between the white and non-white races. The mild racism of the medieval ages thus transited to blunt racism of the slavery and colonial times when blackness came to be equated with savagery, bestiality, treachery, deceit, thievishness, laziness, mental simplicity, and similar negative attributes. In the words of Hartman and Husband, it was then that the question of colour ceased to be merely;

...aesthetic or allegorical and formed the basis of a quite literal ascription of different qualities of different races of men.²

The theories woven by the Europeans were meant to undermine the blackman’s belief in his own humanity and thus render him easy prey to capitalist imperialist manipulations. A racial echelon with Europeans at the top was divised and passed as divinely ordained. The literature given to the enslaved and colonised people’s of Africa and the orient was geared towards the promotion of racist beliefs. The representation of the black race in occidental literature was purely negative for the express purpose of supporting the existing socio-economic and political order. Fanon defines that representation thus:

In Europe, the black man in the symbol of evil... The torturer is the black man, Satan is black... when one is dirty one is black-whether one is thinking of physical or of moral dirtiness... In Europe... the black man stands for the bad side of the character ... There is no comparison with a magnificent black child: literally such a thing is unwonted... In Europe, that is to say in every civilised and civilising country, the Negro is the symbol of sin.³
Racism is thus a philosophy of oppression and exploitation based on the assumed inferiority and subhumanity of the oppressed. The argument here is that this philosophy is not a thing of the past though it may often be quite subtle even as imperialism has become more intricate. The imperialists still seek to make non-white races despise themselves while placing what is white on a pedestal as an emulable though unattainable ideal. Racism and racist ideas continue to manifest themselves in various ways in the contemporary western world and to find expression in the literature issuing from there.

Hartman notes that racism is not a thing of the past saying that:

The important point for present purposes is that racist beliefs ... are not just interesting relics of a dead past, but live on in the cultural repertoire of present day Britain, and form part of the perspective through which we view contemporary events.

Hartman’s observation applies not only to Britain but also to the Western world in general. The media through which such beliefs are preached have also multiplied and comics constitute a significant part of that media.

The previous chapter demonstrated that Tintin is unfit as a hero for children in general and Kenyan children in particular because of various faults pointed out. This chapter deals with the racism of the author Herge as revealed in his hero and the overt and covert ways in which racism manifests itself in these comics. It is further evidence both of the undesirability of the hero as a role model and the unsuitability of the text for children.
In Land of Black Gold amidst a puzzling and worrying situation where petrol has 'acquired' explosive qualities and war is threatening to break out, Tintin gets himself appointed as a radio officer on a ship called Speedol Star. His sniffing around has revealed to him that there will be people aboard who may be involved in the petrol mystery. The ship is destined for Khemed, a country with a distinctly Arab sounding name. In Khemed, "there's a row going on... between the (incumbent) Emir, Ben Khalish Ezab and Sheikh Bab El Ehr who is trying to depose him".6

Starting from the most basic level one finds that there is a hierarchy among the ship’s crew. On this ship which comes from the West, the cook is black. Other blacks are engaged in similar menial jobs in a way that suggests that this is their natural calling. The said cook is drawn pitch black with two little dots for eyes and thick red lips. Pictorial replicas of him are to be found in another servant in the Emir’s house and in the person of Murad whose station is that of a servant in Muller’s "palace". Not only do these servants not have any distinguishing features or characteristics but the hierarchy in which they fall at the bottom is presented as the natural order of things.

The servants in doctor Muller’s house are presented as regular idiots. They all listen to Oliviera as he spins yarns designed to keep them off Tintin’s tracks as he prowls in their master’s house. All the while they show wide-eyed, wide mouthed incredulity at his tall tales and not one of them wonders why the busy tradesman should waster his time telling them these stories.
This presentation of the character of the servants leads to their rejection by children. This is especially so with reference to their colour and general physical appearance. Mary Nditi from Mbagathi Primary School said she did not like the colour of the black servant because "his colour is funny. He is ugly". Her sentiments were echoed by Anne Makone of City Primary School who does not like the black characters "because of their colour. The others are bright". The feeling that the white complexion is brighter, better and more beautiful is general among the children who were interviewed.

The comics may not have initiated this negative value in the children but they have certainly contributed to reinforcing these ideas. The picture graphics have been especially powerful in making the children assimilate the anti-blacks, pro-white attitude. Through this literature intended to teach the white audience "the violence of hatred and prejudice" the black child learns the violence of self-hatred and self-rejection. Such a child is threatened with losing touch with himself. The picture created of himself and the people who are his own colour becomes a millstone on his mind. His mind may then become manacled by an attitude towards his colour which may limit his expectations of himself, cripple his humanity and inhibit full realisation of his human worth.

What comes through on reading Land of Black Gold is that the situation in Khemed is one of imperialist intrigue which the children do not have the ability to grasp. This, however, does not mean that they may not get affected by it as is borne out by Colby:
Practically speaking the only taboos for this age (nine-twelve) are emotional intellectual or political situations to which he may respond but which he cannot understand.\textsuperscript{8}

This study would seem to suggest the same. Asked to reconstruct the story from the comics the children were unable to and used just a few words to tell what had impressed itself on them. For instance, many of them would say that the Arabs wanted to kill Tintin but he went looking for them and defeated them. The children do not ponder over the meaning of these stories.

It does not matter whether the children understand the motives behind the waging of war on a "Third World" country like Khemed. It was not intended that they should understand that Sheikh El Ehr who wants to depose Ben Khalish is backed by international capitalists in the form of Skoil, a Western oil company. If the company manages to instal El Ehr in Khemed he will lease oil concessions to the company. Skoil has tried to persuade and threaten Ben Khalish but he favours Arabs and for this they would depose him. Khalish is not expected to dance to his own tune. Rather he is expected to concede to the wishes of the West. Herge puts this across without raising any questions and the children react to it without fully understanding the issues at stake.

Although Tintin is posed as a defender of justice fighting on the side of Ben Khalish, what the comic reveals is quite different. Tintin’s help to Ben Khalish to hold on to power is given not so much out of respect for what Khalish stands for as Khemed being
used as a battle ground between imperial powers. Muller who is on the side of Skoil is certainly German and Tintin represents another side of the imperial spectrum viz. Belgium. It will be demonstrated that there is no sufficient reason for Tintin to support Khalish because when it comes to the question of who is the better leader for Khemed, he has as little to recommend him as El Ehr. The same accusations levelled at El Ehr by Tintin can also be levelled at Ben Khalish. In the "political racketeering" going on here (courtesy of Robert H. Abel), the intended political lesson is that in international affairs as in other affairs, might equals right. The children may not appreciate Herge's manipulation of their minds but it is a short step from internalising feelings of racial inferiority to accepting the international order as right. In line with the above, Herge makes a deliberate attempt to discredit the Arabs be they those on El Ehr's side or those on Ben Khalish's side. When Tintin helps Ben Khalish hold on to power, imperialist interventionism is justified by the hero as necessary to keep the savages of each others throat. Non-whites, it is insinuated, are still "the white man's burden". The question of who appointed Tintin and the power he represents to be the world policeman is not raised. It is assumed that he has the moral and legal right to do it. This is born of that feeling of racial superiority being discussed.

Khalish is portrayed is such a way that he is unfit to be a ruler and Tintin supporting him defeats his explicit protest of good-will to Khemed. When Khalish discovers that his son has been kidnapped by his would-be deposers, he is reduced to a whimpering idiot. He becomes childish and sentimental and incapable of thinking constructively. His
black servant looks on helplessly with pouting lips as if he is going to break down and join his master in crying. If not in deed, in reaction he is the image of the loyal retainer. Only the white sleuth can help the helpless Khalish.

A child who is presented with the picture of a full grown man, and the leader of a country, at that, bawling and crying becomes baffled. The reactions of the children show that this is contrary to their expectations. Joseph Manguru from Nembu Primary School found it "strange". Other children found it "stupid", "silly" and "childish". There is also the possibility of such a presentation undermining the faith of the readership in the leaders thus presented. The image of a crying man who is also a leader can be shocking for young Kenyan boys who are taught that men should not cry because it is unmanly to do so. One is left wondering why anyone would want to prop up the government of such idiots. The reason is that Khalish’s supporters do not have the interest of Khemed at heart. Rather they are out to advance their own interests at the expense of Khemed. The complexity of the real issues involved and the way Herge handles them is beyond the mental capability of the children.

Tintin’s support for Ben Khalish is further invalidated by other presentations of him which show him is equally negative light. On the one hand he is shown to us on the verge of losing sanity on account of his kidnapped son while on the other he will not let Tintin use his car to pursue the kidnappers. Whichever way one looks at it, this portrayal is negative. Herge presents Khalish as extremely simple minded or as too
stupid and material minded to realise his own inconsistency.

Ben Khalish is also portrayed as an authoritarian ruler who threatens to unleash terror on anyone who differs with him even on the pettiest of issues. This Arab aristocrat who spares the rod and spoils the child, for he is foolishly fond of his son, has made his son grow up into an ill-mannered child who is always up to mischief. Khalish is also subtly presented as a barbaric person in relation to others. As a father and a ruler he has nothing to recommend him.

The children are not able to appreciate the said subtlety. The fine details which go into the making of the Emir's character are lost to them. It is of no consequence to them that the Emir laments that his son had suffered greatly while sitting for a portrait and casually remarking that "actually, the artist went insane". To the Emir, the suffering of the boy is of primary concern while the consequences on the painter are incidental. The aspect of the Emir's character is revealed again in The Red Sea Sharks. The Emir's pet cheetah attacks Ben Yussef who is a servant in the house. When the Emir learns about it and that "it will take at least three weeks before he is well", all he can afford is an ambiguous "oh poor creature". It is not clear whether this is in sympathy with the man or the cheetah. The ambiguity suggests sub-humanity on the part of the servant in view of the possibility that the cheetah may be thought more worthy of sympathy than the man.
Whereas the above may be regarded as a castigation of aristocratic callousness ambiguity and irony are undesirable features in children's literature. This is because children can not wade through shades of possible meaning. Irony is completely lost on children who; on reading something ironic, will take it as its face value. This result is that the children perceive the wrong message and imbibe negative values. In the text this becomes an issue if the children read the printed words. The children's assessment of Ben Khalish's character is, however, based on his pictorial representation. His depravity does not impress itself on them. They can, therefore, not question why he should receive help from Tintin and even were they able to question it, they could not be able to make any deductions which would provide the answer. To them he is just a silly weak man who must get the help of the almighty whites in his helplessness.

Ben Khalish's enemies are also depicted as savages but they are worse savages. They are worse not because they would cause greater harm to Khemed if they were to rule but because their savagery is directed against their country's white mentors.

Bab El Ehr has his followers capture Tintin and take him to his desert hideout. Journeying across the desert, Tintin is made to walk with a rope tied around him. He naturally gets worn out. El Ehr is not averse to abandoning him in the desert to perish. He could easily take the "young" man with him but he does not, presumably because of his inherent inhumanity.
An interesting variation of the above takes place within the next three pages. The abandoned Tintin comes around and discovers that there are people nearby. These people are out in the desert to sabotage Arab oil installations. After blowing up the pipeline one of them lags behind fixing the stirrup on his horse. Suddenly Tintin acquires a gun, Arabic attire and a horse. Herge artfully avoids showing how Tintin came by these things. It is however, abundantly clear, though not to many of the children interviewed, that he got these things from Ahmed. Some thought he had carried the Arabic attire and those who thought that he took it from Ahmed did not see anything wrong with that. Herge artfully avoids showing how Tintin gained possession of these clothes. This is because Herge wants to manipulate the minds of the children to favour Tintin for the wrong reasons. When he is through with camouflaging as an Arab and removes Ahmed’s clothes, we discover that Tintin still had his own clothes on him. The conclusion is that not only did Tintin take Ahmed’s clothes but he also abandoned him naked in the desert at night. This is not treated as a savage thing like El Ehr’s abandonment of Tintin because Herge does not think it is. Herge shows the abandoned Tintin lying prostrate but skims over the fate of Ahmed. This is a deliberate attempt to manipulate the feelings of the children to favour the white sleuth, whatever he does, and reject his coloured adversary. It is not surprising, therefore, that little Mohammed from Nairobi Primary School hates the Arabs "because they were trying to kill Tintin". Of course the killing of one human being by another is to be abhorred but it is dangerous to suggest that human life is of unequal value depending on colour and those on whose lives little value is placed can be freely dispensed with.
The treatment Ahmed receives at the hands of Tintin belies the presentation of the hero as a humane person who will not spare any effort to see that other people, friends or foes, come to no mortal harm. This is how Herve presents him in Tintin and the Picaros where Tintin insists on a bloodless coup d'état. An analysis of the text reveals that the culture which informs the hero’s value system is riddled with biases, prejudices and errors for which there is no mitigation. Violence against individuals and non-white nations is justified by the author suggesting that the violence is in the interest of these nations and individuals for they have certain defects which invite such ‘remedial’ violence.

Tintin and the Red Sea Sharks follows the same run as Land of Black Gold but it is even more complex for the children to follow both in its political significance and its form.

There still is political strife in Khemed and a similar situation exists in San Theodores, a South American republic. From finding out where the ‘rebels’ are getting the armaments especially the military planes, the plot shifts to one of breaking a slave trading racket.

Significant facts continue to surface but they are above the heads of the children, at least in their presentation. Capitalism, it is revealed, has no human scruples. This would be a good lesson to learn if it was put in a way the children can understand. Those
supplying the war planes to the warring factions in both countries are not bothered about who rules who or who gets ousted by who as it is demonstrated in these words:

"It’s in the bag! Twelve mosquitoes there, too. To help chuck out his rival Tapioca... Suits us. Let them fight. So long as we can unload our junk on them why worry."\(^9\)

Those who help either side of the warring factions do so in their own self interest.

Tintin still favours his ‘friend’ Khalish. At the first sign of imminent trouble the Emir sends his son, Prince Abdulla, to Europe for safe custody. Now that the Emir has been overthrown, Tintin feels ‘duty-bound’ to"...try to rescue the Emir".\(^10\)

The Arabs in this text are depicted as thoroughly stupid. El Ehr’s men bombing of their own numbers when instructed to kill Tintin shows them as stupid and incapable of following instructions.

The Arabs are depicted as not only foolish but also cowardly. A patrol sent after Tintin needed "only one shot into the air and they bolted like rabbits".

Moreover, it is not only those who are against Tintin who are cowardly. When the cowardly patrol reports back and two military aircraft are sent after Tintin and it looks like Tintin inc. will perish this time, the cowardice of the Arabs is underlined in the
incident:

Tintin: If only I had a gun!
Captain: They are coming back.
Tintin: A gun! give me a gun
Arab: (with a frightened look on his face) It . . . h . . . here .
. . Take it".12

The Arab behaves as if he is incapable of using a gun and one wonders why he is carrying it in the first place. If he can use it, then he is not as a great marksman as Tintin. He is scared out of his wits and stammers because of it. Such fright could also have incapacitated him so that he had not the presence of mind to use the gun. If he had made any attempt he would certainly have been wide off the target. It is, therefore, Tintin who hits the plane and as usual saves the day.

The above is worth comparing with a scene from Land of Black Gold for its distortion of reality. In this text a group of "rebel" Arabs are trying to hit an enemy plane. Five picture frames later they are still banging away but they do not hit their target.

The exchange of fire between Tintin and the enemy plane sets Tintin's ship on fire. The Arab crew supposed to be helping Tintin "take the boat and make off" 13 leaving him on the lurch again like the cowardly and treacherous people they are. Herge seems to be contemptuous of the Arabs even when they happen to be on the ‘right’ side.
When the plot develops into one of exposing a slave trading racket, Tintin’s ‘friend’, Ben Khalish reveals to him that one Rastapapolous is the key figure in the trade. While the name sounds Greek the first part of it, Rasta, calls to mind the Rastafari movement. The association of the movement with slave trading is a cruel jibe considering the history of the movement. It is an attempt to demean the movement and its involvement in the struggle against racism.

The slaves dealt with are "native Sudanese and Senegalese" who are ferried in ships owned by Rastapapulous. They are convinced that they are on pilgrimages to Mecca but they are sold as slaves in the Arab world.

It is significant to note that the only reason why Khalish exposes the racket is that he has disagreed with Arab Air, an airline owned by the same Rastapapoulous. The cause of the disagreement is a reflection of Khalish’s stupidity. Ben Khalish’s spoilt son had demanded that Arab Air planes do some aerobatics for his pleasure:

Well instead of seizing this opportunity of pleasing my little sugar-plum, they refused, on some trumped up excuse ... Naturally, I was very angry and threatened to terminate our agreement. I also used another threat that I would reveal to the world that Arab Air are involved in slave trading. 14

The Emir is, therefore not just a decadent aristocrat but also a self-centred being who nevertheless gets Tintin’s help. He in fact condones slavery and that is why when Tintin comments that the sale of slaves is dreadful, the Emir can only afford a vague and
uncertain "Er... Yes ..." The concern of the Emir as well as that of Tintin for the welfare of the would-be slaves is implausible.

The graphic portrayal of the would-be-slaves is repulsive to the children and they do not sympathise with these people. The slaves are drawn with goggle eyes, thick lips and big snub noses. This is an exaggeration of the stereotype physical characteristics attributed to the black people. The children hate the appearance and colour of the slaves. Biko Okumu said "I don't like them. They are too black. They are drawn funnily and their lips are red. If they are too black they are ugly". Nyaguthii Hungu of Nairobi school felt the same. "They are not cute. They are not nice because of their blackness. They are too black". Sarah Wanyoike opined, "I don't like them because of their looks. They look funny to me with their lips. They are different from others. They look funny and ugly". The colour graphics are just the most striking negative features suggested as being inherent in the character of the "Negroes" which the children are not consciously aware of.

Some of these they interpret as positive traits. This is the reason why they admire what should not be admirable in the black character. The blacks are shown as simple characters who are also naive to the point of being dumb. They almost drive Captain Haddock to the end of his tether by insisting on going on to Mecca in spite of his warning them of the fate which awaits them there. It takes them incredibly long to see reason. Captain Haddock shouts at them in frustration trying to make them see sense but
all they can do is answer stupidly: "You not shout, effendi. Poor black men only want
to go to Mecca". These people are portrayed as being so dumb that they will not
recognise an insult. When Haddock calls the black slaves "boneheads" and
"dunderheaded coconuts" one of them answers stupidly with a grin:

We not coconuts effendi. We good black men. We good Muslims. We
want to go to Mecca.

The "negroes" are depicted as children who need the strong hand of a big-brother to
show them the way. They can still be hoodwinked in their simple mindedness by
promises of rewards to get them to "obey all orders". After bribing them thus, they trip
themselves in their rush and anxiety to please the Captain. His first order that some of
the "negroes" work as stokers receives ardent response with hand lifting in anxiety to
be chosen.

The fact that the "negroes" respond to the Captain's insults with smiles shows that
Herge is exploiting the stereotype image of the stupid and naive negro. The language
he makes them speak also does nothing but mar the character of the "negroes" in the
eyes of the children. Because the children have been generally conditioned to view with
awe the fluent speaker of the English language, a person who speaks this language as
the "negroes" do in the story evokes derisive laughter. The children are invited to laugh
at and disassociate themselves from such a person.
The children do not and can not appreciate Herge’s manipulation of their views for what it really is. They like the fact that the "negroes" jump up at Captain’s orders: "Nearly everyone wanted to be chosen to help Captain" said Anthony Kilonzo. Michael Macharia said" I like them because when they are told to do something they obey. They obeyed Captain Haddock". He said this although he did not like their colour.

Obedience and helpfulness are positive values which children should be taught to imbibe. This, however, is only so when such obedience and helpfulness are not demonstrated by doing something which is anti-social or self-demeaning. There is something sinister in the suggestion that full-grown me can be tricked or coerced through promises into doing something and at the same time showing them as considering themselves privileged.

Tintin manages to break the slave trading racket with the help of U.S. navy planes. The newspaper reports of this show Herge as a blatant racist. One paper reports the United Nations reaction to the revelation as follows:

Profound shock has been caused in all Western delegations by the news of the Red Sea slave trading.17

- The report suggests that non-Western delegates to the United Nations were not shocked by the disclosure and did not register any objections. Though the slaves are from Africa, it is implied that Africans condone this inhuman practice and take part in it even in this
Another newspaper is headlined "New Revelations Shock the World". Going by the paper's reports of the story and what the above cited paper says, it would seem that the West is "The World".

Revelation in the Rastapopoulos affair have shocked the civilised world. With the discovery aboard the freighter Ramona of Africans destined to be sold as slaves in Mecca, the facts are plain: in this twentieth century, slave traders are still at... 18

The West and "the civilised world" are synonymous here and this to Herge is "the World". Non-whites have a peripheral role in this world because they are not seen as equal human beings. Though the children interviewed did not make such arguments, and they can not be expected to, Herge has in text after text emphasised this point, in cruder and simpler ways which the children readily absorb.

The text ends with the triumph of the "hero" in exposing the racket and reinstating Ben Khalish whom the "rebels" had managed to overthrow. The children's celebration of his victory is a kind of gut reaction. They are not able to conceptualise the implication of the term slave. This inability to conceptualise the meaning of slavery shows that it is not sufficient censure of slavery and slave trade to tell the children that these people were going to be sold as slaves but Tintin rescued them. The children are more likely to be moved in a conscious way by the presentation of the plight of a slave. George Lamming
has an understanding of the limits of a child’s mind to comprehend such a concept as one of his boy characters reveals:

He didn’t understand how anyone could be bought by another. He knew horses and dogs could be bought and worked. But he couldn’t understand how one man could buy another man. 19

One finds a replay of *Land of black Gold* in *Tintin and the Picaros* only this time the scenario changes from the Arab world to South America. Again the country, San Theodoros is bedeviled by political strife. The leader, General Tapioca, came to power by toppling Alcazar and the latter is trying to regain power. Tapioca does not have the support of Tintin and one can well guess the outcome of this struggle for power. Tintin has declared him "... a real tyrant ... he’s cruel and he is vain". 20 Alcazar and his guerrillas, the Picaros are supported by imperialists:

They are said to be backed by another great power ... commercial and financial this time. The International Banana Company ... 21

Tintin wants to help Alcazar regain power and he in his turn plans to change the name of the capital city from Tapiocapolis to Alcazarpolis. One of the reasons why Tintin thinks that Tapioca is vain is because he has named the capital after himself but for some reason he does not seem to mind Alcazar doing the same thing. It is therefore difficult to imagine that Herge was seriously criticising or satirizing such behaviour by third world leaders. Even if that was the case, children would not be able to condemn it because satire is beyond the mental capability of children.
Alcazar whom Tintin supports is a poor alternative to Tapioca as a leader of San Theodoros. He is an "impotent" semi-literate man who is pathetically hen-pecked. He can also not keep a hold on the Picaros who are presented as senseless alcoholics who would pass themselves off as revolutionaries. They are shown having a drunken orgy on whisky dropped for them from the air by Tapioca's men. As they drink they shoot their guns this way and that. Besides showing guns as toys, this scene portrays the Picaros as fools who do not know what it is they are fighting for.

Since Alcazar can not control his Picaros he needs and must get help from the Whites. This again is rationalisation of imperialist interventionism. This time help comes in the form of scientific genius through the person of professor Calculus. He has managed to make a drug which when taken makes alcohol repulsive to the consumer.

In the forest hideout where Tintin and his accomplices join Alcazar lives a native people called the Arumbaya. These people are thick-lipped, snub nosed, stereotype per excellence. They are completely out of touch with "civilisation". Although they are brown rather than black the children do not like them anymore than they do black people. They use the term black to refer to the pitch black and the brown pictures. Robert Kipkorior said he does not like the Arumbaya because "they are black", a feeling with which Juliet Mukomu concurred. Other children were repelled by other physical features of the Arumbaya.
It is, however, to be noted that not all the children were repulsed by the colour black. Juliet Gitahi said she liked the black people "because they are black like us". Anthony Munene did not have anything against them because "They are our fellow Africans". One, however, feels that these answers are stock phrases. It should be possible for the children to reject evil from whatever quarter irrespective of the colour of the perpetrator of such evil.

A humorous situation, which paradoxically is no laughing matter, arises when the Arumbaya "savages" amuse themselves by taking calculus' trappings of civilisation: his hat, jacket, collar and spectacles. Calculus, who still believes in the myth of the thievish savage cries out, "... save me! ... stop thief! ... Fire ... Police! ... Help, I am undone". Herge exploits the myth in a way which could adversely influence the opinions of the children. Already biased against the Arumbaya because of how they are pictorially presented the children are further persuaded to regard them as thieves: "They are evil. They are stealing professor Calculus clothes", said Juliet Gitahi. It was this same child who had previously said that she liked the Arumbaya because they were her kin in colour. Her second opinion serves to underline the statement made earlier that the expression that "they are black like us" is more a stock phrase than anything else. Michael Macharia also expressed the same impression as Juliet saying, "I don't like them. They were ripping off professor Calculus' clothes."
A mind which has developed a critical awareness may well see some irony in the above but the children do not. It is quite clear to the adult eye that stealing Calculus’ clothes is the last thing on the Arumbaya’s minds. There is, nonetheless, a degree of defamation suggested by the presentation of grown-up men and women undressing another man so that they can play with his apparel.

Among the Arumbaya lives one white Dr. Ridgewell. He is on a "civilising" mission which includes teaching the local people how to play golf in the tropical forests of South America. This may well be an ironic projection but as observed earlier irony is inappropriate in children’s literature. The Arumbaya are shown as having failed to pick up this fine aspect of civilisation "Nice to be back Dr. Ridgewell!... How are the Arumbayas? ... learnt to play golf yet?" "Don’t talk about it! ... But on the other hand they’ve made great strides ... in drunkeness, I’m afraid..."23

The surface meaning of this is that the Arumbaya have not the knack of learning such a thing as golf. Although they have failed to learn this apparent virtue, they have more than they need when it comes to drunkeness which, in their case, appears to be a vice. There are different yardsticks used in this as in other incidents. Captain Haddock’s over-indulgence in alcohol does not bother Herge at all. The captain has endeared himself to the children and though they find him ordinarily funny they find him even funnier when drunk. Through him alcoholism is made to look like something admirable.
At the Arumbaya village where they are treated to Arumbaya hospitality, Tintin and his friends express dislike for the food given to them by their hosts. It appears from the picture that they are on the verge of vomiting. The scene does not suggest to the children that such dislike can be a matter of cultural disposition. Whether it is a matter of such disposition or not, it is expressed with extraordinary lack of civility. To the children the rejection of the food by the protagonists simply means it is bad and thus a reflection of Arumbaya inferiority.

Herge does not leave it at that. Although Arumbaya food is not "fit for human consumption", they would kill anyone who does not appreciate their "delicacies". Herge says as much authoritatively through the character of Ridgewell who has lived among the Arumbaya and has the "I know my natives well" attitude. Rebuking Tintin for doing a foolhardy thing like spitting the drink offered to him, Ridgewell reveals this attitude: "Young idiot! Do you want to get yourself murdered?".

The doctor’s attitude towards the Arumbaya reeks of the erroneous racist assumptions of the last century’s "philanthropists". His words and attitude reflect a deeply ingrained belief in the backwardness of the Arumbaya whom he presents as senseless enough to kill a man for finding their diet unsavoury.

The difference in the humanity of the white and the non-white races is insisted upon by Herge without relenting. Such differences are even apparent in their reaction to the drink
laced with professor calculus' anti-alcohol drug. The whites react to the drug in a "gentlemanly" way. After one sip of the treated alcohol they content themselves with a "pfgouh" and a grimace. Avakuki, the Arumbaya chief drains the whole bottle before any reaction can be registered much to the shock of professor Calculus who alone knows of his experiment. The chief then does a grotesque dance crying wildly with mouth wide open "waoaoaow" waaaaah!". It could be that this difference in the reaction is due to the fact that Avakuki had taken more of the drug having drained the whole bottle but the fact that he has to take so much before the effects begin to show makes him a strange being.

The children cannot be expected to argue a case like the one above. Here as in most of the other scenes, it is more on the pictures than on the words that they base their judgement. The picture of the dancing and yelling Avakuki struck them as very funny. It is doing the society a disservice to show non-white leaders as dull-witted, childish, clownish buffoons and then showing these faults as a spectacle for laughter. This is the same way Herge presents Tapioca and Khalish. The persistence of such portrayal would seem to suggest that these faults do not only have to do with their colour but also that colour is one of their short-comings. There is really no empirical basis for such a projection as Wyndam asserts and I concur:

Villains are villains because of their poor characters not because of the job or profession they may have or because of their race or religion. They are individuals and their villainy (should) never cast(s) aspersion on the group from which they spring.25
Yet the colour black in The Tintin series seems to imply inherent villainy or at least to compound the malevolence of the non-white races.

The introduction of comical white characters by the author does not change the argument. The comic element in these characters is found in their idiosyncrasies rather than in the fact of their race. Their being comical is explained. There is the captain for instance, whose funny language and behaviour is related to his history as a sailor and his drinking habit. When he jumps up from sleep and talks as if he is commanding a ship, and directing the crew to combat stations, we know that he is reliving a previous experience with pirates.

Much of the humour in these comics is provided by the characters of Thompson and Thomson. The two are supposed to be private detectives who are sometimes hired by intelligence agencies like the Scotland Yard. They are, however, unrealistic and one doubts that their services could be hired by any agency. They are extremely funny and stupid which two things seem part and parcel of each other. In the Red Sea Sharks the two are after General Alcazar who Tintin is also interested in. They go to question Tintin on what he knows about the general and when he asks them what they suspect him of, they respond stupidly:

Why are we suspect? I mean, what do we suspect? My dear fellow, if you imagine we'll tell you he's smuggling aircraft you are much mistaken. "Mums the word" that's our motto.
The other Thompson echoes:

Well said! ... To be precise: "Dumb's the word". That's our motto. The general may have come to Europe to buy up old air craft, but you won't learn that from us!...26

This is exactly what the general is doing in Europe and the words of the Thompsons are all the lead Tintin needs. Their language and behaviour here is not an isolated incident. Rather, this is the characteristic behaviour and speech of the Thompsons. Their incongruous behaviour, however, is deliberately not linked to their colour. It seems that it is directly related to the fact that they are siamese twins.

In the case of the black/brown races, the incogruity of the characters is on account of their colour. Their physical features as well as their behaviour shows them, en masse, as the butt of the comic joke. They are all, without exception, presented the same way with the same defects which leads one to read racist intentions in their presentation.

The above is true even when one is dealing with those of the non-white numbers who are meant to be Tintin's friends. Ben Khalish is supposed to be one such friend and a good man. Considering the support he is given by the protagonist and the words of Oliviera da Figuera, he represents the best among the Arabs: "What a man! ... One of the best!" The language attributed to Khalish as expresses his ire with El Ehr is, however, downright distasteful. This is the same language the Emir has passed on to his
son, Prince Abdullah:

mangy dog!... Grandson of a scurvy jackal! ... Great grandson of a moulting vulture!... I will roast you over a slow fire!... I will pull out your beard, one hair at a time... And I will stuff it down your throat.27

To pose such a character as representing the best among a race is to show that race in very poor Light. The language of the Emir Khalish does not befit a leader let alone a parent. It is bad enough that such language is attributed to the Emir yet Herge heaps other negative attributes on him and presents him as the best representative of the Arab race nonetheless.

Alcalzar whom Tintin would impose on the people of San Theodoros is a blood-thirsty scoundrel. Although he is supposedly Tintin's friend the relationship is a unequal one. It is a relationship true to the description in Val Fair:

The most generous portrayal of them (Arabs) shows them as creatures who are relatively harmless, light-headed simpletons. The same applies to Red Indians, Blacks, and the Chinese race. Tintin is a lesson in racism and prejudice, a lesson is submission to the creed as a basic principle. In the Tintin books the killing and death of non-whites is something ordinary and unimportant! Tintin might occasionally have a friend among them, but that too is the kind of a master to a servant.28

True to the above observation, Herge shows Tintin trying to civilise and humanise his "friend" Alcazar by checking his lust for human blood. He insists that he will help Alcazar execute a "revolution" only if it is bloodless. Alcazar on his part insists that heads must roll. He pleads with Tintin to allow him this indulgence:
But at least you’ll let me shoot Tapioca and his ministers?... And his staff officers? ... You wouldn’t refuse me that?  

And when Tintin refuses categorically, Alcazar is reduced to entreating hands clasped before him in supplication: "At least let me shoot Tapioca... just Tapioca, I implore you!".  

Alcazar is unlike the simple-minded, whimpering Khalish. This is a scoundrel who must be taught some respect for human life. This presentation of Tintin as civiliser is a sham as has already been shown. The children cannot make the necessary association of facts. They do not like Alcazar "because he likes killing people" but it seems like killing done by whites is permissible. Though they do not like Alcazar they are not able to question why Tintin should help him. This dealing in double standards by Herge is calculated to influence the children against the non-whites without full understanding of the facts.  

In this issue as in others, Herge mystifies reality in an attempt to force and falsify points. Once Alcazar ousts Tapioca, he tells him that he will not kill him. The following exchange occurs between them and a colonel who has hitherto played Tapioca’s right had man.  

Alcazar: Executions are out!... His life will be spared.  
Colonel: But General, it’s contrary to every custom. The people will be terribly disappointed...
Tapioca: The Colonel is right, General ... for pity's sake don't pardon me!
Do you want me completely dishonoured?

Alcazar: Permit me to insist, General! My decision is irrevocable (it never was his decision); Your life will be spared. An aircraft will be placed at your disposal, to convey you to wherever you may wish to go.

Tapioca: Are you mad?

Alcazar: No, I'm not ... But he is! ... This muchacho made me give my word that the coup will be bloodless ... I'm desperately sorry.

Tapioca: Ah, an idealist, is he? ... Young people have absolutely no respect for anything... Not even the oldest traditions!

Alcazar: We live in sad times! (All emphases mine)³¹

Several deductions may be made from the above citation. It is apparent that as far as Herge is concerned the desire for a bloodbath is not a character trait peculiar to Alcazar. In the event of a coup d'état, the people expect such a treat failing which they become "terribly disappointed." One can then surmise that the people in general are as bestial as Alcazar. To them the absence of such a bloodbath is a cause for lament. In reality this is not the case for such political upheaval is a cause of distress to the populace for whom daily living becomes a hazard.
The apparent moral dereliction is, again according to Hergé, not peculiar to the present situation. It is an age old custom, one of "the oldest" to kill for the sake of it. The two generals cut a ridiculous picture, with their behaviour bordering on insanity, one crying out for the other's blood and the other begging him to have it and only Tintin's deprecation saves the day. The civilising mission must therefore continue at all costs and it is this presumptuous pretext which provides Tintin with an excuse for violating these countries national integrity. This is done with the blessing of the United Nations for Hergé has made it abundantly clear that the body exists at the time of the writing.

Hergé making Tapioca insist on being killed is a deliberate distortion of reality. There are situations in life as in literature when men have preferred death to humiliation as a mark of honour. Ordinarily compromising ones' honour in such cases involves the violation of certain principles which one holds dear. Such death may add to the character's stature. A case like this cannot be argued for Tapioca because he is a character without any integrity. A critic trying to impute noble motives on Tapioca's insistence that he should be killed would only succeed in making him look more ludicrous.

Hergé's positive and negative characterisation of the white and non-white races respectively is also done through the kind of cursing and swearing language they use. Tintin rarely swears though he may once in a while call on "holy snakes". Hergé manages also to make out like there is "civilised" and "uncivilised" cursing.
There is no imagining Haddock without his "thundering typhoons" or "billions of billious blue blistering barnacles". His swearing makes him all the more likable to the children who find the word/sound play and the piling of words quite amusing. His cursing even when his anger is in earnest is cause of entertainment to the children because of its peculiarity. Words like "ectoplasm", "coeleswanth" and "ostrogoth", are uncommon. The children think that some of the words are made up. Such insults and others like "pickled herring" and "bougainvillea" sound nonsensical and therefore humorous. The effect is that of taking the sting out of insults. None of these words are capable of calling forth any negative associations from the children as ordinary insults do.

When ordinary insults, or ordinary words are used as insults by the Captain, they do not reflect poorly on him but on those to whom they are addressed.

The language used by the "villains" is, however, decidedly bad and the author poses this as a reflection of their "villainy". Indeed it is so foul that when one of the Arabs is cursing in Land of Black Gold, Tintin's faithful dog, snowy, wisely advises him: "such language! ... Don't listen to him, Tintin... even in Arabic."

When the Arabic insults were translated by Professor Mohammend El. Kashef they turned out to be "I hope our God curses you. Dog! Oh, the son of a dog. Your father is a Bedouin".
Only those children who can understand Arabic can read these portions of the texts which are in that language. When the language was translated, it turned out also to be a dialect either Syrian or Lebanese (El.Kashef). Sometimes it was only gibberish. Non Arabic readers, therefore, have to rely on Herge's estimation of the foulness of these words as expressed in the words of Snowy. While one is not saying that such insults should be encouraged in children's reading, one notes here a subtle manipulation of the children's feelings and attitudes. Those children who cannot read the Arabic portions are made to feel that this swearing is more detestable than words like "son-of-a mangy-dog" which the "villains" also use. It is intended to make the villains appear even more villainous. When a curse like the latter is used, the child automatically makes a negative association based on his conditioning. In this case the swearing detracts from the character of the non-white swearers who are not favoured by Herge. Herge suggests that there is "civilised cursing and "uncivilised" cursing.

In religion as in dress, diet and habits, the non-whites are shown as abnormal human beings. Herge pokes fun at these religions by having them, or scenes dealing with them, reduced to a merely humorous spectacle. In one scene he juxtaposes a Muslim kneeling and bowed in prayer against the same Muslim who is immediately transformed into a diabolical monster when one of the Thompsons kicks him on the bottom. This monster goes after Thomson brandishing a sword and shouting curses in Arabic. He is so unreasonable that he will not listen to any explanations by Thomson or accept his apologies. This juxtaposition is a wry statement by Herge of his own estimation of the
Arab character and the Islamic religion. This is deliberate manipulation of the reader’s minds to make them reject the Arab character. The children respond to the picture of the Arab going after Thomson’s life by condemning the Arab who wants to kill Thomson for ‘only’ kicking him. They say the Arab is ‘bad’.

At times, Herge makes a laughing stock of these religions with no apparent motive other than to deride. In Cigars of the Pharaoh Buddhism is made the butt of jokes by having Snowy antagonise the holy cow as part of a plan to get Tintin out of a difficult situation.

In The Red Sea Sharks Tintin and Haddock masquerading as Arab Muslim women find an Arab woman at a well. She is apparently in need of help and begins to talk to the two in Arabic. They do not understand. The woman, in exasperation and suspicion, pulls off Haddock’s veil and is shocked to see that the wearer is a man. Haddock responds by cursing: "why can’t you speak English like everyone else you fancy-dress Fatima. What do you want anyway?" As if the above does not suffice, he calls the woman an old witch.

The complacency with which Haddock assumes the prerogative of dictating to the woman the language she should speak in her own country is shocking. It is as if it is the woman’s business to learn English and not Haddock’s to learn Arabic. One also questions who "everyone else" is that speaks English. To crown it all the traditional attire of this Muslim woman is used as a mark against her by turning it into an insult.
This is part and parcel of the culture warfare waged by the imperialists to effect the total colonisation of their victims. Val Fair rightly puts it:

... another part of Tintin's mission is to fight against the culture, religion and beliefs of the people of the third world and to ridicule and belittle them. From Buddhism to the culture of the Red Indians of South America the Tintin books mock them all. The writer's and designer's animosity towards Islam is quite obvious. They show scenes of prayer with insults, and Islamic modest dress is used as a comic tool.34

The Tintin comics therefore contain racist ideas which make them poor materials for Kenyan readers and non-white readers in general. These ideas manifest themselves in the pictorial presentations of non-white races which are stereotype. The language and behaviour attributed to the black/brown race detracts from their character in the eyes of the children. The demeaning way in which the white characters treat the non-white characters and the non-white character's acceptance of the same also makes for poor representation of the non-white characters. In many cases the situations in which this negative projection of the non-white character is done are beyond the comprehension of the children. The children thus react to the situations without full knowledge of what they mean. The political complexity of Tintin comics is beyond the ability of the children to comprehend. The comics also pose issues of social significance without resolving them adequately in a way beneficial to the children and the society. The main reaction of the children is based on the pictures which the author uses crudely to advance racist ideas. The children find these texts entertaining because they are colourful and melodramatic. There is no doubt that these comics contribute to
influencing their young readership in a way detrimental to both their mental growth and social conditioning. They are, therefore, unfit to be given the children as part of their literature.


22. *Op. cit* p.34
24. Herge, *Tintin and the Picaros.* (Tournai, Belgium: Castermann S.A) p.48
30. Ibid.


32. Herge, Tintin: Land of Black Gold. (Tournai, Belgium: Castermann, S.A)


CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed some of the values and ideas contained in the Tintin comics. The analysis has shown some of the observable and potential effects which these ideas have on the children who read the comics. The values and ideas borne by these comics have been looked at as a reflection of Herge's attitude to life. They also reflect the culture from which those attitudes derive and are a part of.

The Tintin comics have an undoubtable appeal on their readers. This study established that the colour of these comics exerts a magnetic pull on these children and their power as a medium of entertainment keeps the children spellbound.

Herge chooses the all time popular adventure form of story to communicate his ideas to the children. The problem is that Herge equates adventure with a no-holds-barred kind of violence. The danger inherent in this is that of popularising violence as a form of entertainment and a solution to personal and social wrongs whether such wrongs are real or imagined.

Herge also shows adventure as an experience which cannot be had unless a person goes from his environment to other ostensibly quaint or exotic places. The equipment needed to carry out such adventure is by and large unavailable to children simply by virtue of
their being children and more importantly by virtue of its availability only in the domain of the materially privileged.

The above and other ideas are embodied in the character of the hero, Tintin. He travels to different parts of the world violently subduing those who may stand in his way and those he finds in these 'strange' places. He is in this sense a conqueror. To make it easier for his hero to carry this message across, Herge makes him handsome and therefore physically appealing to the children unlike those who are supposed to be his adversaries.

Some of the children who read these comics have been led to view adventure as a privilege beyond their reach. It was clear from the fieldwork that these children have been made to believe that 'real' adventure cannot be had within their environment. Some of the children think that only adventures with an American flavour such as those had by the hero are worth having and yet these children cannot have such adventures. This is all part of an inferiorisation process which runs through Herge's works.

By placing a high premium on violence as a means of advancing and effecting one's views and by suggesting that violence is the essence of heroism, Herge influences his readers negatively. A good number of the children feel that they cannot do anything heroic because they are incapable of the kind of violence they have been led to associate with heroism. It is not that the children are averse to this kind of violence. Rather, they
feel that they cannot execute such violence with success. They are fascinated by Tintin's success which is achieved through violence. This means that if such children felt that the odds were not stuck heavily against them in a situation, they would get their way by use of such violence. Thus Herge popularises and nurtures violence in these children.

This study discovered other ideas of social significance communicated by Herge through the character of the hero. Although these ideas are important, Herge treats them either without committing himself one way or the other or with contradiction as opposed to those ideas he wants to drill into the children which he harps at. Such contradiction and the failure to commit himself are an indication that Herge intends to manipulate and negatively influence his audience. He robs what would have been positive ideas the necessary punch.

In cases where positive ideas and values appear in these stories, it is as peripheral details, comprising as they do, minor threads that get lost along the way in the main idea and story.

The above is exemplified in Herge's dealing with issues such as drug trafficking. The issue of drugs is relevant to Kenyan children today. Although Herge's hero is opposed to drug trafficking, however, it is for the wrong reasons. He opposes the trade mainly because of the underhand manner in which exorbitant profits are made. Herge shows the characteristic violence of the trade which can only be countered by the greater violence
of the hero. In reality, however, the question of the money made from drugs is of subsidiary importance in comparison with the problem of drug abuse and its effects on the individual and the society which is ignored.

From his misdirected attention on the question of narcotics, Herge goes on to glorify alcohol and alcoholism. In spite of the fact that alcoholism may be a more widespread form of drug abuse than narcotics, Herge presents the behaviour of an alcoholic as funny, admirable, amusing and emulable. Herge's hero who is purportedly a lad has nothing against alcohol and indulges in it occasionally. He recommends it to the alcoholic Captain Haddock as a tonic for fatigue. With Tintin's approval of alcohol, the lovable Captains' indulgence in it and the antics of faithful Snowy after consuming it, it may seem to the children that Herge approves the drinking of and overdulgence in alcohol.

Other issues which Herge seems to treat positively are so peripheral that they escape the notice of children. The fact that the hero does not smoke, is not materially corrupt or exercises to keep fit receive just but a mention. They are minor details which are unlikely to be noticed by the children. When asked to talk about the hero and their admiration of him the children take no note of these details. As a vehicle of conveying values, Herge's hero is more potent in transmitting negative values than positive ones because Herge highlights the former while underplaying the latter.
The fact of the hero’s identity also makes him an unconvincing role model for the children. He is not a young boy as the author would have the children believe. The children are not deceived and they refer to him as a "little" or "small man". His colour makes him an unworthy model for the children when coupled with the values he represents. Due to the fact that Herge creates the impression that the colour white is superior while maligning other races, there is the danger that children may feel that Tintin executes his heroic feats because he is white and therefore, superior. The children may admire him but they cannot successfully aspire to be like him.

The hero is also used by Herge as a vehicle of communicating racist ideas. His subjugation of the non-white peoples is a deliberate attempt by Herge to impart self-hatred in non-white children. The hero is shown as gallant and valiant because of this subjugation of non-white races. He is admirable whereas those he fights are treated with contempt.

In advancing racist ideas, the Tintin comics are a continuation of the eurocentric tradition. They buttress the same old myths about the inferiority of the non-white races. The author advances racism through crude pictorial stereotypes in which Arabs are portrayed as hawkish and blacks as goggle eyed, snub nosed and of pitch black colour. To discredit these races further in the eyes of the children, Herge depicts them as imbecile and infantile. Generally, the non-white characters are physically ugly and mentally deficient. Such pictorial stereotypes easily impress themselves on the minds of
the children to undermine the humanity of non-white races and instil a feeling of inferiority. It is clear that Herge is deliberately manipulating the minds of children who read these comics to turn them against non-white races. This is because the defects he attributes to these characters are shown as general and inherent. Because these defects are to be found in all the non-white characters in the texts, Herge is passing on the false message that such is the nature of these non-white races. The fact that the flaws Herge shows in his white characters when they are flawed - are individually peculiar and explainable confirms that Herge has racist intentions in his characterisation.

By presenting white children with such a negative and distorted image of the non-white peoples, Herge supports and perpetuates colour prejudice. When presented to black children, on the other hand, such an image can initiate or reinforce a negative self image. The study found that most of the children interviewed hate these characters on account of their colour and because they cannot speak the English language fluently. The children disassociate themselves from these characters which is a step towards self-rejection. By undermining the non-white people in the eyes of these children, and suggesting that they should be subjugated because they are inferior, Herge acts as an imperialist agent.

Herge's imperialism is not only political but also cultural. By showing the inability to speak the English language fluently as something to be ashamed of, Herge is actually fighting the battle in favour of that language. Further, in their religion, food, dress ad
general habits the non-white races are presented as inferior to the white. Some of the children have been led to accept this as a fact which it is not.

This study shows that Herge presents America as the world policeman and saviour of those in distress even when they happen to be savages at each other’s throats. In this role America is presented as a predetermined winner. This is part of the inferiorisation process. It is aimed at imparting an attitude of reverence towards this self-appointed saviour. The readers are also meant to look up to that saviour for solutions to their problems. This serves to undermine the self-worth of the non-white readers. Many of the children are impressed and admire America’s "helping hand". They do not have the ability to read this as an excuse for imperialist interventions and acts which it actually is.

Herge deals with the above political ideas with a complexity beyond the comprehension of the children. The children respond to the ideas without understanding their meaning and implication.

In view of the foregoing, we conclude that the Tintin comics are imperialist war fare masquerading as children’s literature. Herge uses a medium which is appealing to the children to undermine the self-image of his non-white readers. These children have no need to be led to accept imperialist conquest or to aspire to make such conquest. The values which Herge upholds are unworthy and unemulable by a humane and just society.
The *Tintin* comics, it was evident from this study, contribute to moulding the characters of their young readers negatively. While the foregoing was evident from the field work, the analytical part of the study also revealed that these comics have great potential to convey negative values by insinuation and suggestion. What is good in terms of values in the comics largely goes unnoticed by those interviewed children who read the comics. The positive elements are drowned by the negative one which Herge gives prominence and emphasis. This makes the *Tintin* comics of minimal value as a means of socialising Kenyan children. After noting the attraction of the comic medium to the children and weaknesses of the *Tintin* comics which are to be found in the eurocentric comics in general, we make the following recommendations.

There is need to make existing and future local productions more appealing to the children. Colour is a primary element in creating such appeal. It is admittedly expensive for local producers to have that much colour in their productions. However, we note that at the beginning of this study the *Tintin* comics were selling at seventy shillings a copy locally. At present the same comic is going for one hundred and twenty shillings and still selling. With moderate colour and moderate prices, good local productions can also sell.

However, it takes more than colour to create the kind of following enjoyed by the *Tintin* comics. Local productions would have to avoid the kind of drabness found in the *Mingu and Sweetie* "comic". It is not enough to have human figures and balloons. One of the
features which the children found attractive in *Tintin* was the action. While this meant violence to some of the children, to others it meant the ability to see the *dramatis personae* acting out the story in realistic actions. In fact the often melodramatic actions of the characters in *Tintin* appealed to the children.

The drabness found in some local productions is not only pictorial but also in the words. Didacticism has little place in children’s literature. Children also appreciate wit and humour and these can be injected into local productions aimed at children.

While the above have little to do with values, they are fundamental in sparking off that interest that can enable one to go on and communicate values. Each of the positive subjects which Herge treats brushingly is sufficient material for a comic story. One can look at the possibility of creating a suitable hero to convey these and other relevant messages in a sort of single strand story easily understood by the children. This is because of the fact that too involved a plot makes the children get lost in their reading and many important details escape them.

Another possibility is that of using the popular comic medium to convey the messages of oral narratives to the children. Such oral narratives can be presented in pictorial comic form. The characters can even be personified and a popular human children’s hero involved to convey the said messages and other relevant contemporary ideas. Whatever course the up-coming and future Kenyan children’s comics may take, it is
clear from the study that as an agent of socialisation, this popular medium cannot be ignored.


Tintin: Cigars of the Pharoah. Tournai Belgium: Castermann S.A.

Tintin: Land of Black Gold. Tournai Belgium: Castermann S.A.

Tintin and the Picaros. Tournai Belgium: Castermann S.A.

Tintin in Tibet. Tournai, Belgium, Castermann S.A.


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34. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* Nairobi Heinemann Educational Books Limited 1985


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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your name?
2. Do you read Tintin?
3. Which Tintins have you read?
4. Where do you get Tintin comics from?
5. Do you have any of your own?
6. Do you borrow Tintin from your friends?
7. Do you lend your Tintins to your friends?
8. Why do you like reading Tintin comics?
9. Who is a hero?
10. Who is the hero in Tintin comics?
11. Which person do you like best in the Tintin comics?
12. Why do you like that person?
13. Are there any other people you like in Tintin?
14. Who are they?
15. What is an adventure?
16. Would you like to take part in an adventure?
17. What would you like to do in an adventure?
18. Do you read other comics apart from Tintin?
19. Which are these comics?