

the text was used as annotation. The following image from a Dutch block book depicts scenes from the Apocalypse:



Figure 17 Blockbook Apocalypse. Netherlands: 1430s-1440s

In the early 16th century, Leonardo da Vinci and other Italian artists created the first caricatures by exaggerating flaws and distinguishing features rather than accentuating marks of beauty. These grotesques, which he called *visi monstruosi* (monstrous faces), were inspired by people da Vinci saw in public, who he used to follow around in order to memorise their features (Vasari, 1568). These grotesques were placed on a single sheet of paper to contrast the range of divergent features:



Figure 18 Leonardo da Vinci, Detail from Five grotesque heads, and three heads of men in profile

Studies of facial features up to this point had been done without apparent humorous intent, but from the 16th century caricatures of specific persons became more widespread both in Italy and northern Europe. A major catalyst for this development was the Reformation, and particularly the influence of Martin Luther. As a monk, Luther would have been familiar with illuminated manuscripts, but following the nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517, he drew the attention of Rome. Caricatures were first used against the reformers, but later by them against the Catholic Church.

Examining these images shows a development from the grotesque hybrids of marginalia to the distortion of features particular to the object of satire. While the commercialisation of manuscript writing and illustration had democratised literature to some extent, the invention of the printing press made books and shorter texts affordable and readily distributable. The distribution of effective propaganda aimed at a literate and illiterate public gained immense political importance as the Catholic Church faced a direct challenge to its power.



Figure 19 Luther's opponents as grotesque hybrids, ca. 1520



Figure 20 Teufels Dudensack, 1521. A combination of a caricature of Luther and a grotesque hybrid as the Devil.



Figure 21 *Der Bapstesel zu Rom* [The Papal donkey of Rome], 1523. grotesque hybrid used as satirical representation of the Catholic Church.



Figure 22 Protestant caricature of indulgences, 1536 or earlier



Figure 23 *Nun muss es ja gewandert sein* [Martin Luther mit Gattin], 1620-1630. A caricature of Luther that exaggerates his weight is used, while the lap-dog and busts satirise the relationship with Luther rather than being traditional hybrids.



Figure 24 Detail from *Die Vorkämpfer der Gegenreformation*, 1691. Caricature is used rather than hybrids, which become less common in the 17th century.

Caricatures and cartoons remained effective tools for political propaganda and social commentary in the UK during the 17th century. This was a time of great religious and social upheaval, where established conventions of morality, gender roles, social structures, fashion and other areas were being challenged. The division between Catholics and Protestants as well as between parliamentarians and monarchists led to the English Civil War in 1642, but this was just one of many conflicts and rebellions relating to social and political change.



Figure 25 John Taylor, *The World turned Upside Down*, 1647



Figure 26 17th century Civil War cartoon satirising the Royalists and Roundheads

Political dissenters like the Levellers and Diggers advocated for legal reforms, including women's rights, religious tolerance and free trade. Other groups like the Ranters rejected traditional moral codes such as the Ten Commandments and embraced antinomianism. Propaganda cartoons supporting or opposing these movements were often produced from woodcuts, and could be reinterpreted for different purposes. While woodcuts themselves were expensive, the printing press allowed affordable wide distribution of pamphlets with images that could be understood by the masses. Many cartoons were republished with altered text, in some cases producing a message that is radically different from the original (Poyntz, 2010):



Figure 27 17th century political pamphlets on the position of women in society



Printed, 1641.

Figure 28 Recycled 17th century woodcut



Figure 29 The title woodcut from *The Ranters declaration* (London, 17 December 1650), later recycled by George Horton in *The Quakers dream: or the Devil's pilgrimage in England* (London, 1655):

Revolutions in France and America during the 18th century weakened the influence of monarchies and increased political awareness in Europe, while relative freedom of the press and the presence of competing political parties in Britain led to the flourishing of visual political satire there. Artists such as William Hogarth (1697-1762) and George Townshend (1724–1807) were instrumental in bringing caricatures from Italy to be used in political satire (Bel & Najmolhoda, 2003). As the effectiveness of caricature became more well known, this was increasingly used by the public and commissioned by opposing political figures as part of their own campaigning. The following cartoon was published in London and satirised the American independence movement:



Figure 30 "The female combatants, or, Who shall" (1776)

In the 1790s, the systematisation of physiognomy strengthened the idea that a person's character could be seen in their facial features or body language, and therefore undesirable features could indicate a moral failing. This was used in the late 18th and early 19th century by James Gillray in caricatures of political figures such as William Pitt the Younger, Napoleon and King George III. Gillray also established the character John Bull as a personification of unpretentious and honourable Englishness, in contrast to the excesses of the French Jacobins or English nobility. As an engraver, Gillray etched his drawings onto copper aquatint before adding colour later. This technique and the character John Bull were later continued by Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank, who expanded the objects of satire and caricature to include stereotypes of other nationalities such as the Chinese and Irish as well as social commentary about different elements of society. During this time, speech bubbles and annotations became more common as literacy grew.

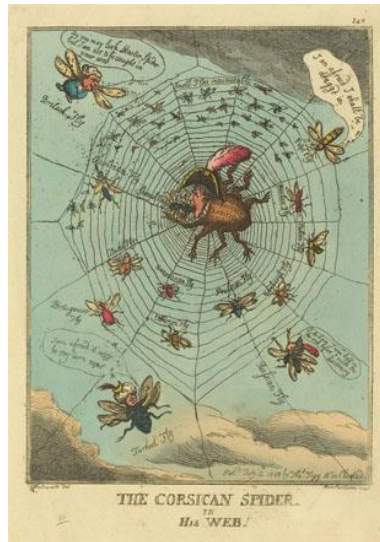


Figure 31 *The Corsican spider in his web: Thomas Rowlandson (1808)*

1925 saw the first edition of the Glasgow Looking Glass, a four page volume recognised as the world's first comic. In the 1830s, lithography and wood engraving took over etching, while illustrated newspapers and magazines started to feature comics and caricatures.

In contrast to the relative freedom in the UK, political satire in France was limited after prominent cartoonist Honoré Daumier was imprisoned for six months due to a caricature of the king as Gargantua. He faced further censorship of his lithograph *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834*, which depicted a massacre at riots in Paris, and was produced to promote the freedom of the press and to fund the legal expenses of the illustrated political journal *Le Charivari*. In 1835, King Louis-Philippe banned political cartoons, leading political cartoonists like Daumier or J. J. Grandville to move toward social commentary.



Figure 32 *Jean-Ignace-Isidore Grandville and Eugène-Hippolyte Forest: Artillerie du Diable (1834)*

J. J. Grandville (Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard) revived the tradition of human/animal hybrids as seen in medieval manuscripts, but combined them with caricature and more sophisticated social commentary. Where previous examples parodied and symbolically upended the social order, Grandville often used the form and status of an animal to caricature human features or to show the animalistic nature of many human relations and hierarcies.



Figure 33 Misère, hypocrisie, convoitise (1854). Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard: Les Métamorphoses du Jour. No. 14.

The illustration above shows a mouse on its deathbed symbolising misery, while a hypocritical cat weeps by the bedside. Three covetous crows representing the church, the nobility and the army stand ready to seize the mouse and/or its possessions on its death. The standing characters' apparent respect and sorrow at the misery of the mouse belie their responsibility for and exploitation of it. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, a story set during the French Revolution, Charles Dickens writes:

“Expressive signs of what made them poor, were not wanting; the tax for the state, the tax for the church, the tax for the lord, tax local and tax general, were to be paid here and to be paid there,…”

(Dickens, 1859)

The genre was further developed by the Francophone Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer, who emphasised the sequential nature of this art form (as highlighted in the opening quote). The German Wilhelm Busch expanded on this with a greater focus on dynamic images:

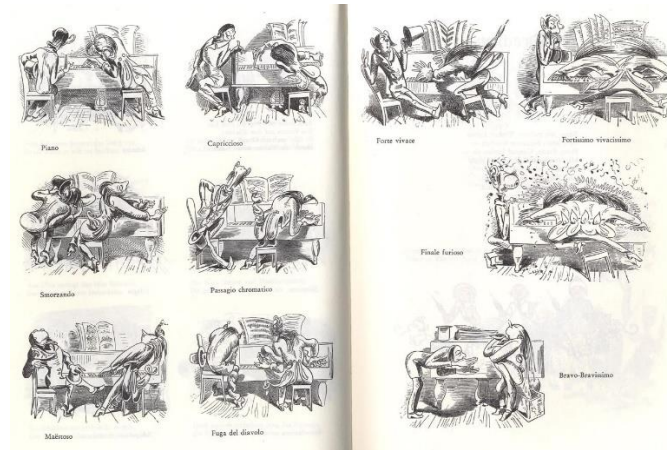


Figure 34 Wilhelm Busch, *The Virtuoso* (1865)

From the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, comics entered the mainstream in the UK and elsewhere in Europe due to serialised comics of different kinds. These included more satirical magazines such as *Punch*, which emphasised caricature, and more narrative-based cartoons that became popular among children and the working class, such as Ally Sloper's Half Holiday, which debuted in the British humour magazine *Judy* in 1867. Publications such as *Comic Cuts* and *Illustrated Chips* (both established in 1890) established the genre of the British comic, which was further popularised by *The Dandy* and *The Beano*, first published in 1937 and 1938.

In the 1890s, the US artist Richard F. Outcault combined many of the elements of comic art at a level of popularity that brought these conventions into mainstream consciousness. Outcault's newspaper strip *The Yellow Kid* is considered to be the first popular American comic, and its emergence is named as the birth date of comics by Zanettin. While *The Yellow Kid* was a New York street urchin with an anti-establishment voice and that shows a working class and mixed race community (Hogan's Alley), it strongly supported established capitalist institutions. The comic improved sales for *The World* and *The New York Journal* and inspired merchandise of many kinds. It also inspired the term "Yellow (Kid) journalism", which was a criticism of the tendency to sensationalise journalism and replace news with comics and social commentary, thus appealing to the masses rather than those seeking accurate reporting. There were also criticisms that 'yellow journalism' was used to influence the public to support the Spanish-American war.

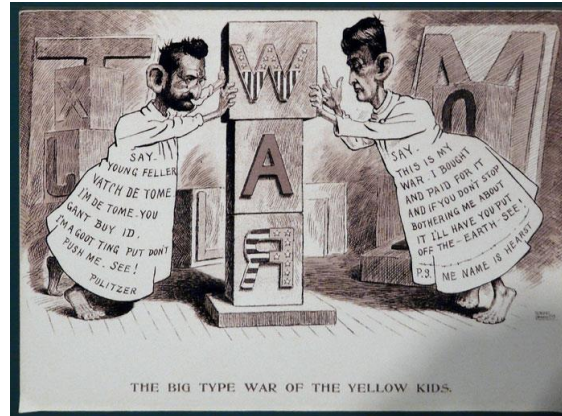


Figure 35 The big type war of the yellow kids. Leon Barrit, 1898

Hergé and Tintin

In 1929, the Belgian cartoonist Georges Prosper Remi (known by the pen name Hergé) created *The Adventures of Tintin*. Initially published in serial form by the staunchly conservative and Catholic newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*, the adventures were later published as books. Hergé was strongly influenced by the techniques of American newspaper comics that were sent to him from Mexico and by the American newspapers that were sent to *Le Vingtième Siècle* from America, but he enjoyed less exposure outside of French and Dutch-speaking countries during the next two decades. For this reason, the genre of Franco-Belgian comic stories was well established by the time it became well-known abroad. Due to the fascist viewpoint of the newspaper, early adventures in Congo and Soviet Russia were commissioned and used as conservative and colonialist propaganda. The newspaper was closed during the German occupation of Belgium and Hergé moved to Belgium's leading newspaper, *Le Soir* (then under German management), as the editor of the children's supplement.

The greater restrictions on political speech under occupied Belgium influenced Hergé to make Tintin more of an explorer rather than a reporter in subsequent books. Other external events influenced changes in the format: earlier books were coloured and restructured into a shorter 62 page format due to the greater appeal of coloured comic books and a shortage of paper in the country. *The Shooting Star*, which was serialised between 1941 and 1942, reflected the anti-Semitic and anti-American attitudes of the Axis powers. Following the war, Hergé's links to the German occupiers at *Le Soir* led to his arrest as a collaborator. He was imprisoned for only one night, but blacklisted from his profession. During this time he continued

to re-draw and colourise older books, and in 1946 started working with a new magazine named *Tintin*. In 1954, *The Shooting Star* was edited to remove the references to Jews and America, which was changed to the fictitious South American country.

In 1958, work began on translating the series into English. While the translators Leslie Lonsdale-Cooper and Michael Turner were given the freedom to adapt the language, they worked closely with Hergé to produce translations that appealed to British readers as works in their own right. Special consideration was given to wordplay, and names were changed both to Anglicise them and to link the name to the occupation or personality.

Some artistic changes to *The Black Island* were suggested by the British publishers, as it was considered insufficiently accurate for British readers. In America, some panels were modified or blanked by the publishers Golden Press to remove themes such as drunkenness and free mixing of races:



Figure 36 L-R An image from the first Methuen edition in the UK; the first Golden Press edition with the image removed; a later Methuen version redrawn by Hergé



Figure 37 Three versions of the same panel in *Tintin in America* from 1932, 1946 and 1973.

The question of Hergé's racism reveals differences and inconsistencies in the sensitivities of various cultures and times. In response to a reader, Hergé wrote: "What the American editor wanted was the following: No blacks. Neither good blacks nor bad blacks. Because blacks are neither good nor bad: they don't exist (as everyone knows, in the USA)." The Crab with the Golden Claws changed black thugs to "white people of an indeterminate race", and with an unclear place of origin. Other changes in response to objections from foreign (in this case Scandinavian) publishers included changing a scene in Tintin in the Congo where Tintin drills a hole in a live rhinoceros, fills it with dynamite and blows the rhinoceros up.

Goscinny, Uderzo and Asterix

Perhaps fittingly for the genre, the writers of the Asterix series, René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, were both sons of immigrant parents who brought a wide range of influences to their art. Goscinny was born to a family of Jewish immigrants from Poland, who then travelled to Argentina when he was two. At 19, he moved to New York with his mother, where he found work in an art studio and met several prominent American and European cartoonists. On returning to Europe in 1951, Goscinny worked at the Belgian news agency 'World Press', where he met Albert Uderzo for the first time. Uderzo was the son of Italian immigrants who had created several cartoon series before meeting Goscinny. Together they created characters such as Oumpah-pah, which was later adapted for serial production in the *Tintin* magazine. In 1959 Goscinny and Uderzo started the magazine *Pilote*, which introduced the character Astérix. Following its commercial success, the cartoonists decided to dedicate their time fully to the series.

While Hergé borrowed a number of techniques from American newspaper strips, Goscinny and Uderzo incorporated many themes from superhero cartoons. Astérix and the indomitable Gauls have superhuman strength and demonstrate over-the-top, gratuitous violence that nevertheless fails to kill or permanently harm their opponents. Tintin shows some departure from reality, particularly in the use of mythical creatures and strange phenomena, but the storylines are still loosely based on the real world. Asterix takes the idea of the underdog to an extreme level and embraces absurdity for comedic effect:

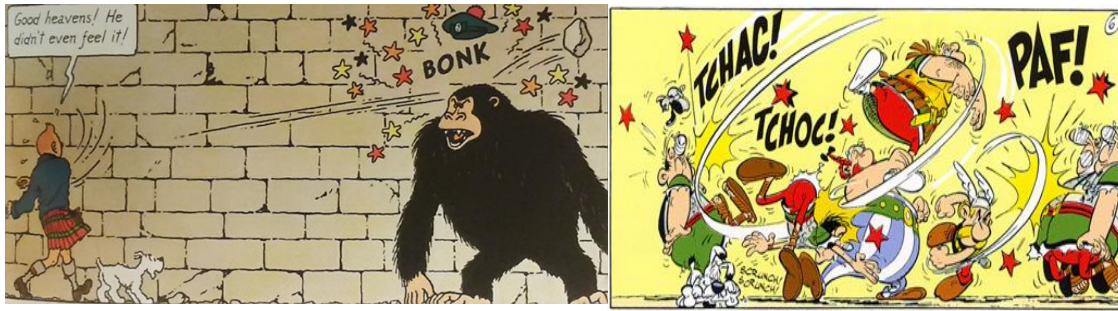


Figure 38 Violence in Tintin and the Black Island (1938) and Asterix and the Mascot (1968)

Much has been written about the politics of the Asterix series¹, but one of the chief differences between the two characters is the constant presence of the Romans in Asterix. While the 'indomitable' Gauls always win in the end, they achieve this only through the magic potion and constant vigilance. The existential threat from isolation, inability to produce the magic potion, the revelation of the secret recipe to the Romans, spies or lack of unity within the village is always present.

The culture within the village is mainly nationalist/regionalist and conservative, but this is within the context of imperialist forces and many risks. In Asterix and the Normans, Justforkix's modern attitude may be attractive to many villagers, but his fear puts him in immediate danger. In Asterix and the Secret Weapon, Bravura's appeal for women's rights is cautiously supported by the druid Getafix, but the male villagers are unable to negotiate the new gender roles due to their understanding of gallantry and leave the village. Bravura's confidence that the Romans will accept peaceful negotiation and treat her with respect as a woman is misplaced:

¹ See <https://hillele.org/2013/09/10/politics-in-the-world-of-tintin-and-asterix-2/> for a comparison of politics in the world of Tintin and Asterix



Figure 39 Asterix and the Secret Weapon, p. 30

Similar risks are associated with capitalism in Obelix and Co. and gentrification in The Mansions of the Gods. Episodes in the Asterix series generally lead to a resolution where the crisis is averted and life returns to normal, and social harmony is valued more than the promises of economic and social development. While the characters often travel, they happily return to the same situation they came from. The sense of gender and regional identity is strong, but other nationalities are generally treated with respect, especially in their resistance against Rome. The diversity and identity of the surrounding cultures is respected, but there is less support for multiculturalism. All races, including the main characters, are portrayed as flawed and are caricatured in appearance and stereotyped in behaviour.

Black people are an exception to the above statement, and are also depicted in ways that reveal social prejudice against them. This can be seen in many caricatures of black people in Franco-Belgian comic art, which unselfconsciously exaggerate the stereotyped form and mannerisms in the same way that they do with people from different regions and countries in Europe:



Figure 40 Caricature of black and white characters in Asterix

While caricaturing black and white people alike may not be problematic in itself, the social status of black men as a servile class valued for their physical strength but not intelligence is projected onto ancient history. Nubians are portrayed as gladiators, galley slaves, carriers of thrones, sedan chairs and stretchers or as food servers throughout the series, despite the much less racial nature of slavery in ancient Rome²:



Figure 41 Black sedan chair carriers, Asterix the Gladiator

Unlike in a sacred text or many novels based in a particular culture, the exact events and cultural references are not expected to reflect reality in ancient Gaul. The ancient setting of the series is often used for social commentary on modern culture and identity in France and its regions, Europe and beyond as well as on contemporary themes such as social change, the EU, urbanisation, gender roles, rock and roll culture, package holidays, multiculturalism and others. Later books often have caricatures of contemporary figures, or make references to modern

² It should be noted that there are slaves of many different races in the Asterix series, and three appearances of Cleopatra with a huge mobile sphynx throne (twice in Asterix and Cleopatra and once Asterix and Son) depict the bearers as Egyptian, Nubian and European.

songs, events and attitudes. Goscinny and Uderzo often break the fourth wall by referring to the episodic nature of the series:



Figure 42 Asterix and the Roman Agent, p. 10 and Asterix in Belgium, p. 10

For this reason, it could be said that the source culture is not necessarily the cultures of ancient Gaul and Rome, or even modern France. Rather, the fantastical world of Asterix has its own culture that draws from many sources: The French looking at themselves, their history and the world around them. Various strands of western European and American cartooning history. The experience of living in the post-WWII European Union, and the closer interaction with a diversity of ideas and cultures. The perspective of children of immigrants with experience of living in several countries.