Eichberger, Vanja

Franco-Belgian comic books/bandes dessinées in the 20th century and how they depict the ideal of a happy home

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Francouzsko-belgické komiksy/bandes dessinées ve 20. století a jak zobrazují ideál šťastného domova

Vanja Eichberger / vanja.eichberger@chello.at

Institute for Contemporary History, Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna

Abstract

Comics feature many topics – Homes or their absence are among those. No famous comic focuses on home only, many bring stories or subplots revealing the artists' view. In this contribution, those views are being analysed and compared, focussing on master narratives within and interpretations of the works. A selection of comics from Belgium and France has been made limiting the research field to two of the most active/innovative markets for comics. Three of the most important comic series are being analysed, covering a time between 1929 and the 1990es: *Chlorophylle, Tintin and Sibylline*.

Keywords

Media history, literature history, art history, comic books, bande dessinée, Belgium

1 Introduction

European comic books feature many topics - Homes, happy ones or their absence are among those. Due to the depictive *and* textual character of this medium, the possibilities for placement of ideological, political and other references are almost unlimited. The pictorial level of home presence in comics can be roughly divided in two aspects: Home as in Homeland (something that can be defined or alluded to by many means) and Housing in its function as home-providing space for the characters. The first aspect is highly ideological and draws on literary role models like Homer's Odysseus. The latter aspect, that of housing is only seemingly trivial, since the exteriors and the interiors of houses, but also fixings, furniture etc. can be (and are) used by artists to give time and style frames to their respective stories.

While no prominent Bande Dessinée (French term for comic albums) focuses on home only, many of them feature stories or subplots that reveal the artists' view. Some of those narratives feature complete story arcs set in or around homes or flats – an early and very successful example would indeed be *The Smurfs* by Belgian artist Peyo. The little people in the stories live in an idyllic, archaic village hidden in a forest; they are often shown living a frugal, merry village life using machinery (and representing some ideology) that correspond to late Middle Ages or Early Modern Age. Here there are many domestic scenes that relay to us day-to-day-life in an idyllic natural environment. The author defines their village as the most holy place for the Smurfs and they defend their home fiercely from any predators.
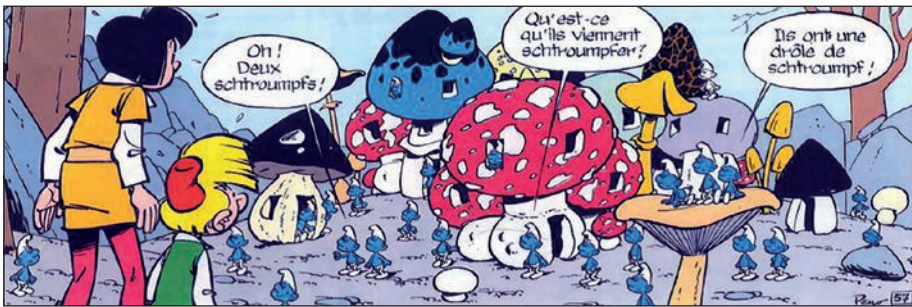
This imagery carries in itself a few master narratives or their elements. Idyllic depictions of country and village life are known since Virgil's *Bucolics* and have been time and again a favourite genre of literature, be it during the Renaissance period (Petrarca) or in the 19th century masterpieces of literature like Elizabeth Gaskell's *North And South* or Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. This kind of imagery (but of course not only this kind) found its way into the New Media of the last two centuries – Film, Photography and Comics. The idea behind this contribution is to show some of those depictions, an-

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1   First depiction of the Smurf village appeared in the Johann et Pirlouin series by Peyo in 1958, this rendition comes from: Peyo: *La Flûte à Six Schtroumpfs*. Dupuis, Marcinelle 1970, p. 39.

alyse them and compare the narratives and possible interpretations of texts and pictures in this context.

Since France and Belgium are among the most active and innovative markets for comics, it seemed logical to select most important figures or groups of figures, covering the time between 1920es and late 1990es. The choice was not an easy one, since the comic books production in those countries was and is very high in numbers and multifaceted.

The choice of BD fit for analysis was complicated, since almost all comics show constructions or "homes". My research leans to the comedy subgenre of comics; still, there are many authors and stories in that field. One decisive factor was the style in which the BD is drawn. The most successful works of the period are drawn in the "ligne claire" style, a distinctive way of drawing and coloring that offers clear boundaries between objects and persons drawn in the BD. This style also favours clear boundaries of single pictures and accentuated contrasts over blurred or intersecting drawings in aquarelle or pastels. Works in ligne claire style were attributed to practically all important Franco-Belgian artists in the comedy BD world in the aftermath of the Second World War. Most of those works appeared in three competing weekly magazines, *Le Journal de Tintin, Spirou* and *Pilote.*[2] The first and style-defining series of this kind was "Les Aventures de Tintin" by George Remi (Hergé), that started in 1929. Since this is the most famous Belgian comic figure (indeed one of the most famous and popular in the whole Franco-Belgian output, along with *Astérix* and *Lucky Luke*), it is only prudent to select *Tintin* as one of the featured works for analysis.

While the comedy genre offers many possibilities of parody, comment, and interpretation, of the three above-mentioned series, only *Tintin* happens in "real time" and offers depictions of contemporary issues, ideas, and surroundings. Another very successful and popular author who placed his heroes in the 20th century was Raymond Macherot. His main works are *Chlorophylle* and *Sibylline*, depictions of anthropomorphized animals living in earth holes and tree trunks in an idyllic country setting. Some episodes of *Chlorophylle* feature an island with an indigenous animal population that evolved into a (very Mediterranean looking) modern society. Macherots success and popularity, as well as the abundant depictions of home and "Homeland" make his works the perfect choice for an analysis.

1.1 Methods, materials, sources

The method of choice is – as it befits research on literature – the comparatist method of close reading, followed by a comparison of the "happy home"-depictions in the selected works.

It is important to compare the ideas of "home" as presented in the selected works. In comic book research, this means comparing both textual and visual appearances of the topic. Since the medium is a very narrative one, it appears reasonable to consult the recent theories gathered around the notion of a "narrative turn" in historical studies (M. L. Ryan), as well as those around the "pictorial turn" (J. T. Mitchell, G. Boehm),

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2   Havas, Harald: *Die ganze Welt ist funny*. In: ComicWelten. Ed. G. Habarta. Edition Comic Forum. Wien 1992, pp. 165–168.

especially considering the iconic attributes of the comic as a medium. One of the meta-questions would surely be "Narratives and Master Narratives, how do they encompass 'Happy Home'"? Among the answers we are bound to find motives and elements of the Rural Idyllics (Macherot), as well as Aristocratic Homes (Hergé). On the representative, visual level, the material is abundant, since most of the depicted scenes show buildings, houses or apartments. As for context, the already mentioned idea of a patriotically charged Home can rather be found in Macherots works, than in "Les Aventures de Tintin" with its ever-changing backgrounds and general action premise.

The materials used are mostly reprints of original comic books as they appeared in magazines and dailies or in separate albums. In some rare cases it was possible to acquire original issues; however, it is hard to say which version of some works is/was the most widely distributed one. In some cases, the original drawings have been changed, colorized and panels that had been considered disturbing or inadequate were replaced by new ones. Most of the comics used come from coloured album editions, while originals that appeared in instalments in monthly or weekly magazines have often been published in black and white style. Some pre-war episodes of Hergés *Tintin* had to be altered for different reasons: their usage of anti-Semitic imagery, their reference to Allied vessels as "enemy troops" or their allusions to technical specifications of Nazi weaponry.[3] The post-war albums achieved high popularity across the world and are certainly better known than the original stories. New technologies and further development of the printing press technology made it also possible to reprint the old black-and-white originals in abundant colours.

As for sources, primary ones are comic books in recent critical editions (complete works of Macherot for instance, accompanied by literary and historical or even methodical comments). Comic Book encyclopediæ and library lists, as well as bibliographies serve the purpose of creating a complete picture of the editing work in this area. Specialized biographies, autobiographies and collections of interviews are available for most of the authors. In case of Hergé, there are even scientific discussions and publications that debate many different aspects of those works. As already stated, a coherent comic book science is still not present in Europe, although there are many researchers in the historical, media and literature studies who are delivering an increased amount of material about this rather neglected medium. The special form of comic book distribution, the comic periodicals that were immensely popular in the 50es, 60es and 70es always brought commentaries on new or featured episodes and authors, penned by enthusiasts among the editors, but also by prominent artists, historians or fans. Such editions (magazines *Pilote*, *Spirou* and *Tintin* for Franco-Belgian editions, *Strip Art* in Yugoslavia, *Sgt. Kirk* in Italy etc.) are invaluable for research on comic books and hard to find, since those comments often appeared only once in the respective editions. This is also a feature that would be very characteristic for comic book sciences – the fact that much of the comment and research is done by fans, enthusiasts and authors themselves, similar to the phenomenon of the Social Novel in Britain and France in the second half of 19th Century.[4]

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3   *Rechtsextremismus, Rassismus und Antisemitismus in Comics*. Ed. R. Palandt. Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag KG, Berlin 2011, p. 109.

4   An excellent and abundant study on this kind of literature in England and France of the 19th Century

2 A historical overview

Since the middle of the 19th Century, comic figures and stories have evolved into an art form with their own esthetical and editorial characteristics. Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer was arguably the first one to draw stories in a sequential flow and publish them periodically.[5]

Comic books and the Bande Dessinée are a medium and an art form that emerged to full success and popularity during the 20th Century. Starting with the newspaper wars between early populist publishers W. R. Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer in New York from 1895 on, early comic stories – also called "the daily funnies" – became an asset in the struggle for market shares between daily papers in the USA.[6] Early forms of today's Yellow Press started to spread over Europe in the following decades. In fact, the term "Yellow Press" for boulevard media is coined in allusion to one of the first daily comic figures in Pulitzer's New York World called "The Yellow Kid".[7] This illustrates the importance of comic strips for the newspaper business. While USA stayed the main source for daily comics in horizontal strips of three to four pictures, independent styles and directions soon developed in many European countries, as well as in South America.

In Europe, Belgium, France and later Italy and Yugoslavia were the countries with the greatest output of numerous genres of comic books. Starting in 1929, Belgian artist Hergé created many episodes of "Les Aventures de Tintin", causing an uproar at the Gare du Nord in Brussels by announcing the arrival of his hero, young reporter Tintin, after his first adventure. Belgian artists shall go on to dominate the European comic book market for decades. In France, the comic art is early recognised as an art form and is being treated as equal to other arts almost since the very beginnings. Today we speak of Franco-Belgian comic art, often using the word Bande Dessinée, deriving its meaning from the editorial and physical dimensions of comics. The term "Graphic Novel" has been proposed in the Eighties and stays limited to longer, artistically relevant works, sometimes drawn in a film-noir-style and frequently placing the content in a classical "film noir" context.

Since the rise of high-budgeted comic book adaptations in Hollywood of the Eighties, starting with Tim Burton's *Batman*, the comic book has achieved a new prominence, especially in view of large profits that highly polished ensemble films bring in – Marvel's *Avengers* film series and DC's *Wonder Woman* are American products and they often address daily cares of average Americans.

While comics found their way into social acceptance by the end of the century, they lost large parts of their alleged main audience, adolescents, to a new emerging form of entertainment, the video (or computer) game. Since their first appearances in the carrier media outlets like daily news and weekly magazines, comic books have been subject

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was given by Bachleitner, Norbert: *Der englische und französische Sozialroman des 19. Jahrhunderts und seine Rezeption in Deutschland*. Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam 1993.

5 Platthaus, Andreas: *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen Comics und Manga*. C. H. Beck Verlag, München 2008, pp. 17–19.

6 *Vom Geist der Superhelden Comic Strips*. Hg. von H. D. Zimmermann. DTV, München 1970, p. 13.

7 McCloud, Scott: *Understanding Comics*. Harper Perennial, New York 1994, pp. 17–18.

to rejection, denunciation and outright prosecution. Like the campaigns against the film industry in the 1920es and 1930es, the conservative and often backwards organizations holding power in different countries throughout the 20th century have tried to suppress, forbid or even destroy comic books. State censorship bureaus were also very active in this field, as well as cultural puritans. In the aftermath of the Second World War, being backed by the staunch conservative political establishment in the post-war-USA, German-American psychiatrist Fredric Wertham launched a campaign against comic books that was very similar to that of the Hays Code against Hollywood films twenty years earlier.[8] This campaign found its echo in Western Europe: in Austria and Germany, conservative and right-wing-Christian youth organizations even started collecting comic books with the explicit purpose to burn them publicly.[9] The French approach was a different one, there was a state law that decided what can be printed and what not; its main purpose was not stopping comic books but enforcing domestic products instead of US-imports. This can be interpreted as a part of the efforts to protect French language and culture that even led to obligatory quotas of domestic music, movies or animation films in TV, radio and cinemas. While diverse laws have been decreed to this end, the latest version dates to 1994 and is called "Loi Toubon" after the then-Minister of Culture who introduced it.[10] One of the most important stipulations in this law determines that all French music broadcasts must feature at least 40% of "domestic" French products, thus limiting foreign cultural influence.

Further examples of censorship against comics as a medium or against single artists or against single episodes of popular outlets are numerous; in 1937, an early episode of Disney's *Mickey Mouse* comic set in a troubled kingdom was forbidden in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, since the state censors felt the plot to be too similar to the political situation in contemporary Belgrade.[11] This episode was not printed in Yugoslavia its original form until the 1980es. In 1977, proponents of the Argentine military dictatorship murdered a prolific and popular comic book artist and all four of his children: Héctor Germán Oesterheld originated the classical masterpiece comic book *Eternauta*, an allegory about space invasion, dictatorship and terror addressing contemporary South American topics in a realistic setting.[12]

Finally, the iconoclastic attacks against caricatures and comics in the 21st century show us the importance of the freedoms of expression and speech. Similar historical events have already marked the cultural history of the humanity and they seem to come back in different cultures and times: Byzantium in the 8th and 9th century[13], modern-day Belgium

8   Tiley, Carol L.: Seducing the Innocent: Fredric Wertham and the falsifications that helped condemn comics. In: Information and Culture, A Journal of History. Vol. 47.4; University of Texas, Austin 2012, p. 387.

9   Havas, Harald: *Feindbilder*. In: ComicWelten. Ed. G. Habarta. Edition Comic Forum. Wien 1992, pp. 184–191.

10   https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000005616341/2020-09-18/, cited 18.9.2020.

11   Disney, Walt: *Miki Maus i njegov dvojnik*. Politikin Zabavnik, Beograd 1992 p. 116.

12   Kemper, Anna: *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Familie*. In: Oesterheld, Héctor Germán – López, Francisco Solano: Eternauta. Avant-Verlag, Berlin 2016, pp. 7–19.

13   Belting, Hans: *Das echte Bild: Bildfragen als Glaubensfragen*. Verlag C.H. Beck, München 2005.

and Netherlands in the 16th century[14] or contemporary violent Islamic debate that also includes bans on depicting God or Prophets (Boko Haram or the Islamic State).

3 Selected Series and Authors

3.1 Hergé: *Tintin* – Class differences: Castle Moulinsart as opposed to Tintin's nondescript Brussels flat

This style and storytelling defining series has started in 1929 – the first of 24 original instalments sees a young reporter from Brussels going to the Soviet Union in order to "inform the readers" of the Catholic youth magazine *Le Petit Vingtième* about the situation in the first communist country. There are many aspects of this story that are worth noting, since the author himself says that it started out as a piece of staunch anti-communist propaganda[15] his magazine was spreading in the Twenties and the Thirties.

Anyone who is acquainted with Tintin's adventures will be sure to wonder how much place there can be for homes in a fast-paced adventure comic book. There are several phases to Tintin however; the comic book series appeared until the 1980es, and the authors' view of many things has gradually changed, the Second World War being one of the catalysators for those changes. In the early episodes, Tintin's flat in Brussels is sometimes shown – it is a nondescript entity which does not get much attention, even if there is a typical Brussels concierge in the house:
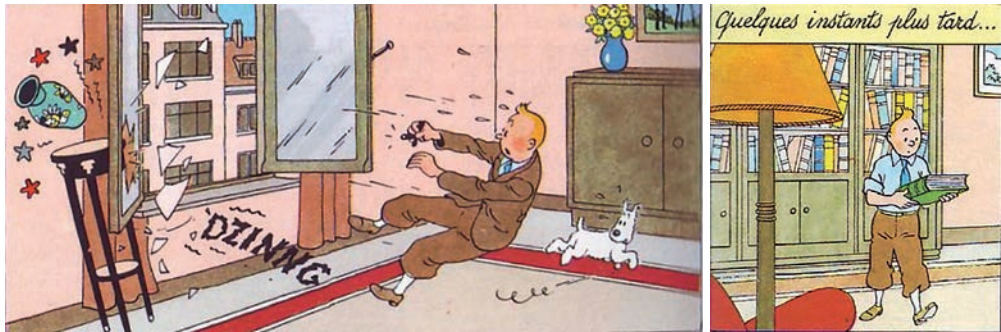
Most of the early episodes are set entirely at sea, in other countries, on trains, in hydroplanes or in the desert. In the post-war era, Tintin's best friend Captain Haddock inherits a grand old castle in Belgium called Moulinsart, this is a kind of a happy home our heroes did not have before. While sporadically depicted in several episodes, one of them is even set entirely at Moulinsart, the 1963 episode *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore/The Castafiore Emerald*.

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14   Driessen, Christoph: *Geschichte Belgiens*. Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg 2018, pp. 62–64.

15   Sadoul, Numa: *Entretiens avec Hergé*. Casterman, Luçon 1989, p. 54.

16   Hergé: *Le Sceptre d'Ottokar*. Casterman, Luçon 2007, pp. 7–8.

Another example would be the episode set in the Balkans, *Le Sceptre d'Ottokar/King Ottokar's Sceptre* from 1938, a politically charged story depicting a small, rural and proud eastern European kingdom being threatened by its large brutish neighbouring dictator. Here, the buildings and the architecture – and this means homes and houses – are used to tell us where we are:

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The mosques and the garments, as well as the Cyrillic letters on the gendarmerie building are pointing towards Kingdom of Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, the traitorous "Iron Guard" in the complex story refers to Romania and the villain's name "Müsstler" is a clear combination of the names Mussolini and Hitler.[18] It is also worth noting that the author shows the streets of the Eastern European countries as muddy and made of earth and loam, while the streets of Brussels are mostly impeccable. This kind of comparison implies that there are differences between parts of Europe, the Western parts being more developed and modern, while the Eastern parts are shown in a pre-industrial state. Also, the American and Western European episodes of the series show contemporary vehicles, most of the cars drawn by Hergé are contemporary types or even prototypes[19]. Hay carts and old, outdated vehicles appear only in less developed countries or in Africa. Along with the poor state of housing in the non-Western cities of Tintin's universe, this practice transports the idea of Western supremacy over Eastern Europe or other continents (North America is seen as a part of the West).

17 Hergé: *Le Sceptre d'Ottokar*. Casterman, Luçon 2007, p. 25.

18 Sadoul, Numa: *Entretiens avec Hergé*. Casterman, Luçon 1989, p. 110.

19 An extensive fan webpage dedicated to the cars used in *Tintin*: http://dardel.info/tintin/indexE.html

But it suffices to concentrate on the episode in which the home of the gang is treated almost as a person.

The plot of the domestic episode refers to a known operetta singer Bianca Castafiore – a recurring figure in the Tintin universe – who comes to Moulinsart to visit. The whole 62 pages of the episode show drawings of the castle and its surroundings, a large park, vast grounds of forest around it, as well as a Gipsy cartload village nearby that provides a subplot. Most of the drawings depict interiors, since many conversations happen inside of the castle. Some examples of the rooms and galleries show an immensely rich household. The presence of a butler, a large piano, furniture in style of Louis XIII, as well as other conveniences are clearly pointing toward an upper-class household:
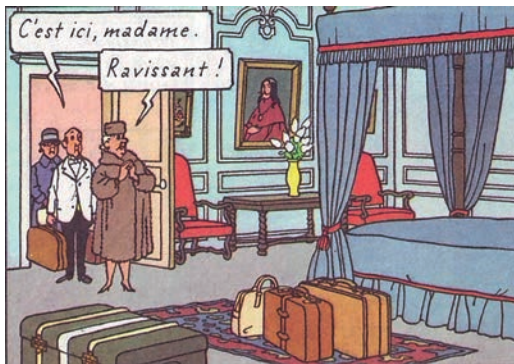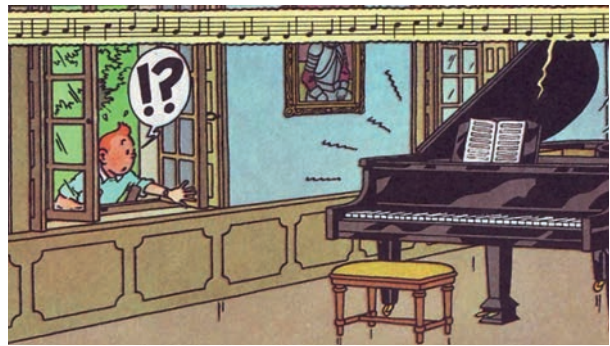

The (few) exteriors that are shown here only enhance this impression, especially when shown together with the carts inhabited by the Gypsies. The whole action part of the story depends on contrasts between rich and poor, while the comedy part is provided by using gender relation stereotypes, among other methods (the singer stages an affair between herself and the Captain as a publicity ruse for the media).

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20 Hergé: *Les Bijous de la Castafiore*. Casterman, Tournai 1963, p. 11.
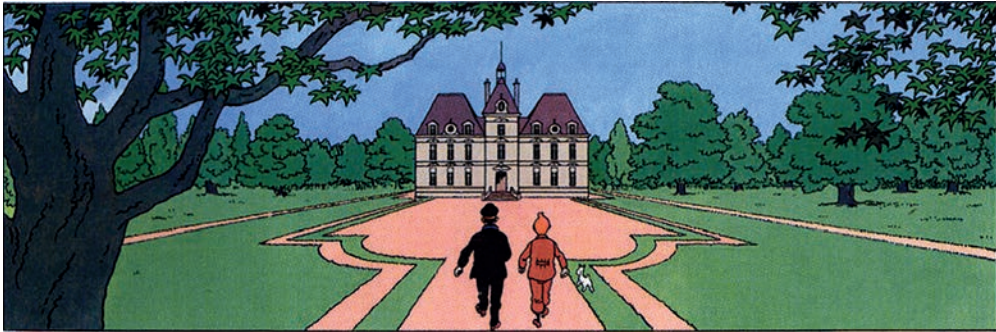
21 Ibid, p. 34.
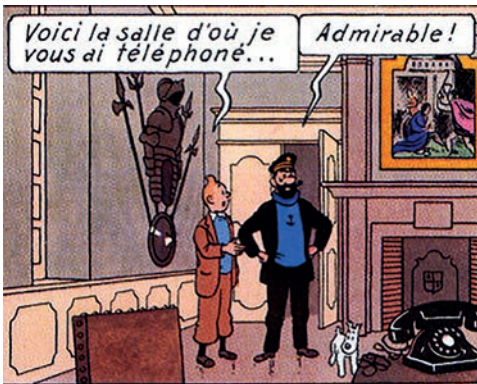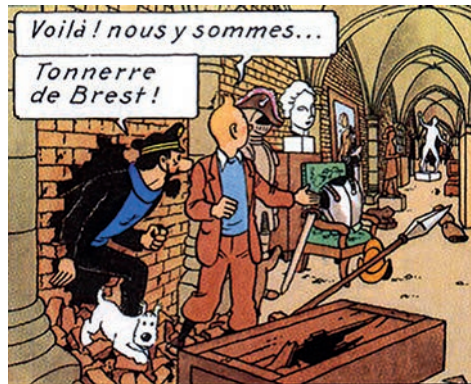
22 Ibid, p. 44.

23 Ibid, p. 51.

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First depiction of the castle appeared in *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge*, an escapist episode set partly in the 17th century that was published during the Second World War. Here also the interiors are shown, clearly indicating that the castle comes with works of art, stylish furniture and all the modern conveniences:

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24 Ibid, p. 12.

25 Hergé: *Le Trésor de Rackham le Rouge*. Casterman, Tournai 1954, p. 59

26 Ibid, p. 59.

27 Ibid, p. 60.

The castle and the riches within not only provide a retreat after the adventures of the heroes, but they also symbolize a secure place in times of turmoil.

3.2 Raymond Macherot: *Chlorophylle, Sibylline* – Rural and urban nostalgia

Raymond Macherot (1924–2008) was one of the leading graphic artists in post-war-Belgium. Like many other comic book artists, Macherot also designed caricatures; his work in the bande dessinnée field can be classified as comedy, since all his most important series (the two treated here and the third large series *Colonel Clifton*) rely on slapstick and other classical comedy techniques.

The two series of interest, *Sibylline* (1965–2007) and *Chlorophylle* (1956–1989) are similar to each other. Both feature humanized animals and depict their homes in trees and underground. In both series, a peaceful, simple rural idyllic scenery where small birds and rodents live in a bucolic harmony is being threatened by invasions of rats.

In *Sibylline* and *Chlorophylle* the author draws on his personal experience with war, invasion, occupation and resistance. Raymond Macherot was 16 years old in May 1940, as German troops attacked and occupied Belgium, despite a non-aggression treaty from 1937 and proclaimed Belgian neutrality. Belgian politicians feared a repetition of atrocities and demolition the country suffered in the First World War, only 22 years before. Still, a strong resistance movement almost immediately commenced, especially in Brussels and Wallonia.[28] After finishing school in 1942 and enrolling at the Law University of Liège, Macherot witnessed the Battle of the Ardennes and decided to join the British Royal Navy at the beginning of 1945.[29] The war experience left direct traces in many items of his artistic output, *Sibylline* and *Chlorophylle* both feature armies of black or field rats often organized and sometimes also clad like the German SS-officers that taunted the Belgian populace during the war. It is also this setting that points to the David and Goliath story – small field rodents would normally have no chance in a fight against large rats.

The homes in Macherot's works are sometimes holes in trees, sometimes typical branching subterranean rodent habitats, or large bushes or even pumpkins. The technique of using humanized animals to tell stories is ancient; one of the most effective attributes of this technique is how the artist depicts homes. In *Sibylline*, they can be simple holes or majestic labyrinths under the fields, the humanizing aspect is in the furniture and decorative elements, as well in the scenery itself, like an idyllic winter evening in a room with a fireplace (!) inside a tree hole.

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28 Driessen, Christoph: *Geschichte Belgiens*. Verlag Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg 2018, pp. 180–182.

29 Caluwaerts, Stephan: *Le peintre des roix*. In: Macherot, Raymond: Intégrale Sibylline Vol. 1 (1961–1965). Casterman, Palaiseau 2013, pp. 4–5.

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These two examples are typical for home depictions in *Sibylline*. Both show private scenes in well-organized homes. The first one implies an intrusion on the holy premise, where a stranger enters the sleeping room of a lady, rendering her indignant and angry. This implies a violation of privacy and defines the function of a home for the author – secluded, private, and cosy (as opposed to the grand representative castle in *Tintin*). The second picture shows the role of a home by contrasting cold wintery scenery outside and warm, secure, well decorated and furnished parlour room inside. The text in the bubble adds repetitive quality to this scenery ("just like every year at the same time!") and thus introduces tradition that emphasizes the qualities of a well-built home. The logical inconsistence in this picture is a typical source of comedy: how to build a fireplace in a tree?

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30   Macherot, Raymond: *Sibyl-Anne vs. Ratticus*. Fantagraphics books, Seattle 2011, p. 3.

31   Macherot, Raymond: *Sibylline et le serment des lucioles*. Les Editions Flouzemaker, Herve 2006, p. 3.

In Macherot's first successful series, *Chlorophylle*, there is a remarkable development inside the story, when the heroes, who hitherto only knew life as field animals, discover a distant island group on which animal life evolved peacefully into a kind of 1930es-Mediterranean lifestyle, with railways, cars (fuelled by mint oil), aeroplanes and a functioning state with a king (a small white mouse). The explanation is simple –no humans and no animal predators have ever set foot (or paw) on this island, so the field animals were able to evolve into a society. The artistic vision of a civilized animal kingdom is rich in detail and goes beyond simple pictures, since the story told is a very complex one, including wars, a coup d'état by a black rat and an espionage thriller inside two or three long episodes set on the island. Here, the animals live in typical Mediterranean houses made of stones, they wear (Western European styled) clothes and live in a diversified society with an army and a police force. The Capital city of Fourbi is shown as a typical friendly and busy port town one could expect to find anywhere on the South coast of France:

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Further in the story, the author shows many different houses and homes, from stately Royal Palace to simple buildings of utility like railroad shacks etc.

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32 Macherot, Raymond: *Chlorophylle et les Croquillards*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 2. Ed. J. Pessis. Éditions du Lombard, Brussels 2012, p. 43.

The interior decoration and style are accordingly different in the old village and on the island:

While the former rural setting points to a frugal existence under the earth, the "liberated" and thus sophisticated animals live in human dwellings. Yet, even at Fourbi, the Royal Palace is an exception, most of the other buildings are still designed as one or two story houses designed as living quarters. The function of the houses stays similar to that of the earth holes in the early episodes or in Sibylline – private retreats.

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33   Macherot, Raymond: *Chlorophylle et les Croquillards*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 2. Ed. J. Pessis. Éditions du Lombard, Brussels 2012, p. 53.

34   Ibid, p. 71.

35   Macherot, Raymond: *Pas de salami pour Célimène*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 1. Ed. J. Pessis. Éditions du Lombard, Brussels 2012, p. 158.

36   Macherot, Raymond: *Chlorophylle et les Croquillards*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 2. Ed. J. Pessis. Éditions du Lombard, Brussels 2012, p. 44.

4 A Comparative analysis

During research on comic books (but also on written literature and in some respects on film), multiple possibilities come to the surface, when it comes to functions and possibilities of home depictions. From literature history we know that home and housing both have been and are topics from the very beginnings of the human output in this field until today. Besides Homer and Vergil (*Aeneid*), one can find those topics practically everywhere, very often as a reflection of politics or ideologies in respective times of origin. There is even a period in German literature called Heimatroman (Homeland novel) that has been reflected in other national literatures; its characteristics are ideological charge, depictions of sufferings by nations, groups and families inferred on them by villains and adversaries that often belong to defamed "Others" who threaten the very fabric of the "Self". The main aesthetic means of this kind of literature is contrast, defining rural, agricultural, village world as an Arcadian place and the Nature as a fond home for Man, whilst modernization and industrialization – along with the urbanization – are presented as evil and deadly. It is not surprising that this kind of literature came up from the 1830es on, with the advent of trains, telegraphs, industrial fishery or modern development in general[37]. This genre has later been taken up by (mostly German and Austrian) cinematography, creating the Heimatfim genre (Homeland movie).

While such works of literature and film display the typical black-and-white imagery of ideologies transported therein, the use of homeland and housing imagery in comic books is less pre-determined, as we see in the irony which "our" authors show in their artistic output. Macherots cosy holes under the earth with all modern facilities like light, beds, fireplaces and windows do not look pompous or luxurious from the outside. Hergé on the other hand uses housing and homes as a direct comment on the larger situation in the respective environments, since his heroes live in a castle full of riches, as befits rich Whites from Western Europe. The Africans in the second instalment on the other hand live in huts that are similar to each other; the Gypsies in the later episode also live in typical fair waggons and tents, so that the author seems to establish an order of things, when it comes to housing. In the early episodes, the homes and their depictions seem to support that chosen order: Western European and American houses and towns are shown to be impeccable, betraying a rather colonialist view upon worlds that do not belong. In this way, the author uses homes and housing to convey the merits of Western progress over "backward" societies. This is mostly done in a paternalistic way like in the Congo episode. Comparing all the instalments within the series, one can safely say that the progress is mostly defined as technical advancement. In ethical or philosophical terms, the West is not always shown as superior. In *Tintin au Tibet*, an episode that appeared in 1960, the people of Nepal and Tibet, as well as friendly monks, are shown as equals, when it comes to customs and social life. As "Adventures of Tintin" progressed through years, there is a clear shift in the author's treatment of non-European cultures and societies.

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37   von Wilpert, Gero: *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*. Alfred Kröner Verlag, Stuttgart 2001, pp. 330–332.

Historical framing and recognizability – the clues that point to the right period in history

Tintin is set in a time frame of the Mid-20. century, so that the author can use new technologies and thematize new media like cinema.


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Since the time frame in *Tintin* is very close or identical to that of its authors and indeed readers, it is much easier to convey the sense of time in pictures. Inventions like colour TV or money-forging machines are shown not in order to set the time frame, as this was done already in the first instalment, when Tintin travels to the Soviet Union, a contemporary topic. They serve much more as means for the artist to depict his interests and events or movements that caught his eye and fantasy.

In the animal fables by Macherot, the author does not give a time frame, yet we know that we are in the present time, because there are telephones, cars, lorries etc. *Sybilline* and *Chlorophylle* do not depend on time framing, in order to work with the audiences. One could even propose this fact as a method of sorting the subgenres of this kind of comedy art – depending on the role of historical facts in the narration. Macherot's heroes, but also figures like Garfield do not need a time frame in order to recount their stories, while comic series like *Astérix* (antique setting), *Blackbeard* (piracy setting), *Iznogoud* (oriental setting) or *Lucky Luke* (western setting) all depend on their particular historical contexts in order to work. This is not a question of quality, but one of style.

The "Val Tranquille" (the Peaceful Valley) in *Chlorophylle* serves as a paradigm for home and homeliness offering everything the animals of the field could need – a place of an almost Arcadian quality, which must be saved from the intruders. It is very interesting how Macherot designed the evil rats; their attire and appearance and bearing remind strongly of a stern, merciless army that covered almost whole Europe with death and blood and destruction from 1938 on. Here we must remember that the author was a very young man who joined the RAF to fight the Nazis who attacked and sacked his peaceful and neutral homeland of Belgium.

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38   Hergé: *Tintin au Congo*. Casterman, Lucon 2006, p. 26.
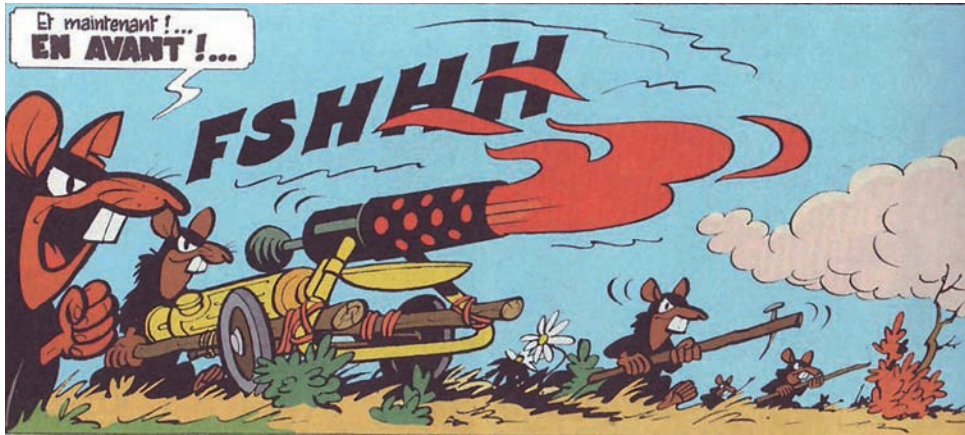
39

Motives depicting Homes and Homeland and their roles in the respective stories

Macherot uses the Biblical David and Goliath story in their respective series; his field animals resort to cooperation and united forces - one of Macherots earliest cartoon stories is *Mission Chèvrefeuille* – a four-pages-comic that tells a story of field animals defending their part of the woods against aerial attacks by vile buzzards. The field animals alert their "aviation" – a group of jackdaws that fly in the war formation of the RAF. Other aspects of home and homeland are found everywhere, the field animals visit the local pub for instance, which is also homelike. This way the patriotic element of the home narrative is presented, respectively the domestic idyll variation.

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39   Macherot, Raymond: *Chlorophylle contre les rats noirs*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 1. Ed. J. Pessis. Le Lombard, Bruxelles 2012, p. 58.

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Chlorophylle is very adventure-bent, the episodes in the woods and the fields feature a few backgrounds of holes the talking animals live in. When it comes to depiction of the city or the village, we catch some glimpses of contemporary furniture, cars, streets and some typical landscapes. The episodes set on the island of civilized animals offer a better view of Macherot's picture of Home as in Homeland: a harmonious community of

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40 Macherot, Raymond: *Mission «Chêvrefeuille»*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 1. Ed. J. Pessis. Le Lombard, Bruxelles 2012, p. 40.

41 Macherot, Raymond: *Le furet gastronome*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 3. Ed. J. Pessis. Le Lombard, Bruxelles 2013, p. 108.

animals prospering on an island where there are no predators. They have railways, cars fuelled with mint oil, a good king and a society reminiscing of cities on the French coast before World War 2. This kind of idyll is very persistent in Macherots animal comics, as Sibylline also lives in a small village that points to the 1930es as an Arcadian time. The buildings on the island of Coquefredrouille are drawn in a certain style, imitating cities on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea:
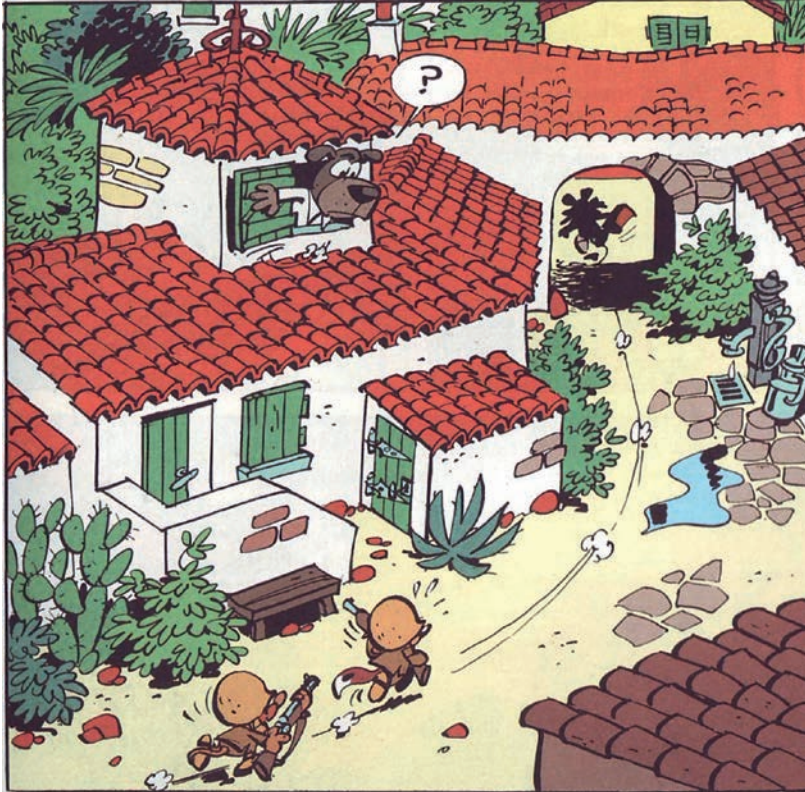
42

Tintin's characteristic quick pace and non-stop changing sites of the action prevented any exterior or interior from becoming an iconic feature of the series, until the castle of Moulinsart was introduced. Still, this motive mostly provides the backstage for some episodes and only comes to prominence in the analysed episode.

As for the positions of homes and intended effects in the works, the Tintin episodes are very detailed in depictions of Moulinsart, thus underlining the fact that the stately home is to be the operational basis for the reporter and his friends. Macherots evocations of homeliness and rural/urban idyllic evoke and describe ideas of patriotism in both places, Val Tranquille and in Fourbi on the animal island.

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42 Macherot, Raymond: *Chloro à la rescousse*. In: Chlorophylle intégrale 3. Ed. J. Pessis. Le Lombard, Bruxelles 2013, p. 163.

5 Conclusion

Every comic book (indeed every work of fiction) reveals ideas, demands, (political) opinions and ideologies of its authors; most social sciences have been neglecting whole media like video games, comic books and animated graphics during the past century, or classifying them only as interesting for children. This condition is being overcome by scientists from many disciplines in the last twenty years. Historical disciplines can use the bande dessinée in many fields. In my research, comic books are often transporting ideologies or Weltanschauung, thus presenting ideas, narratives and elements of master narratives to their readers and multiplying them.

In this sense, comic series like *Astérix* and (to a certain extent) *Tintin* can be read as historical documents – not so much for credibly depicting the time and events in their contents, but for giving us a look at the ideas and interpretations of history by their authors. In this way, the *Astérix* stories convey possible interpretations of the late antique period by the authors and their contemporaries, while *Tintin* delivers a very clear ideological picture of the Mid-twentieth century of his author, publisher and intended readers.

Macherot's animal stories offer somewhat less in this field, since the two series rely on their own in-story points of reference. Still, the character of Sibylline is often shown in an emancipatory way, since she mostly takes over the planning or the action in the fights against the rats. This way, a female figure in the male-dominated field of comic books offers a projection field for emancipation. In comparison to another iconic female figure of Franco-Belgian origin, Smurfette (who very often must be rescued by her male friends and thus corresponds to the "damsel-in-distress" motive), Sibylline acts like a modern emancipated woman.

As shown in this paper, the topics of Home and Housing are omnipresent on the pages of selected comic books. While some series (*Tintin*) present accurate depictions of the backdrop scenery – and make this scenery even main topic in some instances, others like *Sibylline* use less determined imagery of mostly interiors to confer Homeliness and Private Space as holy and at the same time threatened by adversaries or simply by modern developments. In some of the comics the author shows clear preference for rural and simple, almost pre-modern societies, in others technical and philosophical modernization are shown to be the driving force of the human development, and this is shown by the differences in housing (Chicago and Brussels for instance represent also a kind of normality in "Les Aventures de Tintin", while Congo, the Andes and especially Japan are shown in a very stereotypical way, thus denying the drawings other functions but the framing one).

Vanja Eichberger

Franco-Belgian comic books/bandes dessinées in the 20th Century and how they depict ...

Francouzsko-belgické komiksy/bandes dessinées ve 20. století a jak zobrazují ideál šťastného domova

V klasických evropských komiksech nalezneme mnoho podob domova – šťastný domov, zničený domov, ztracený nebo opuštěný domov představují pouze několik příkladů. Žádná z tradičních komiksových sérií se nesoustředí pouze na téma domova; nabízejí široké spektrum významů a interpretací, avšak domov se objevuje prakticky ve všech komiksech bez ohledu na časové a regionální rozdíly. Francie a Belgie představují nejplodnější a nejstabilnější producenty komiksových dobrodružství a příběhů, článek se proto soustředí na dva známé autory z této oblasti a jejich slavná díla: *Chlorophylle* and *Sibylline* (Raymond Macherot) a *Les Aventures de Tintin* (Hergé). Obě tyto dlouho existující (a často multi-mediální) série přinášejí zobrazení domova, ať už ve fyzickém, nebo abstraktním smyslu (domov jako vlast apod.). Obrázky a příběhy v *Chlorophylle* and *Sibylline* z tohoto hlediska poskytují nejvíce materiálu ke studiu. Hergésův *Tintin* přináší mnohá vyobrazení toho, co bylo považováno za charakteristické pro země, které mladý reportér navštívil. Komparativní analýza těchto zobrazení a jejich funkcí umožňuje sledovat mnohá témata, která jsou zajímavá a důležitá pro historický výzkum této, akademickou sférou spíše opomíjené, oblasti lidské kreativity. Ukazuje se, že využití motivu domu/domova nepředstavuje pouhou kulisu, která podbarvuje zamýšlené sdělení. Vedle poskytnutí časového rámce, stylu nebo geografického umístění příběhu může pojetí domova rovněž vyjadřovat zápas mezi pokrokovostí a zpátečnictvím. Dalším možností je poukázat na rozdíly (především třídní) uvnitř společnosti skrze zobrazení luxusních domovů, které jsou dány do kontrastu s prostými příbytky chudých. Domov může být rovněž ohrožován, ale i chráněn svými obyvateli; v těchto typech příběhů se odráží ideologie a pohled na svět jejich tvůrců.