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A Coordinated Europeanization of the Comics Industry through Distribution: The Politics of the Global Journey of Astérix and Tintin through the Strategic Distribution of their Magazines and Contents in the 1960s

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A Coordinated Europeanisation of the Comics Industry through Distribution: The Politics of the Global Journey of Astérix and Tintin through the Strategic Distribution of their Magazines and Contents in the 1960s

_Abstract

Researchers have usually focused on the *Tintin* and *Astérix* series' global book diffusion through translation. However, little has been discussed about the distribution policies of the comics magazine format, a key factor in the development of European comics. This paper will consider the continentalization of western European national comics industries via the intra-EEC networking of distribution channels during the 1960s. By facilitating the exchange of comics features in the Franco-Belgian area, publishers such as Casterman, Le Lombard, and Dargaud ensured the rise of the industry and of the products they wanted to disseminate. Contemplating the motivations of publishers this article will delve deeper into the emergence of cooperative and competitive distribution channels among national publishers and between countries. Through the archives of Casterman and primary sources this article intends to contribute to a greater understanding of how the carefully planned distribution network of comics influenced the development of the European industry as a whole.

The 1960s was a period of great change for the comics industry throughout the world. Before this era, distribution networks had mostly been limited to national scale, and leaned upon American imports. Comics were also primarily distributed through magazines. The 1930s and 1940s saw an influx of American titles onto the European market, especially after the Marshall Plan granted financial aid from the USA to European nations with a clause to allow American cultural products into the European market. American imports were often seen as immoral and violent.[1] This led to Franco-Belgian publishers strategizing a response after 1945. Both the Communist Party and the Catholic Church rallied against American comics' negative influence on children, and contributed to the debates on the Law for the Protection of Youth in 1949. Part of the law limited the number of imported (i.e. American) comics to 25% of the total of drawn pages in any given publication.[2] The resulting effort to only include local creators through the 1940s and 1950s allowed for a greater national monopoly by the 1960s. Once national products became more established, this then led to a wider expansion of European titles and the translation market in the 1960s. I argue that these editorial policies constituted a deliberate Europeanisation of the comics industry.

In this paper, I will use comic magazines from this decade as the primary source to support this hypothesis. For my analysis I will focus upon the comics magazines of

Journal de Tintin and *Pilote,* the publishing vessels where the *Tintin* and *Astérix* titles became popular. The comic magazine format had flourished for several decades previously in France and Belgium. Many of these formed in the wake of efforts to move away from American titles, and titles such as *Vaillant* celebrated this with the proclamation "hebdomadaire 100% français"[3] Several (including *L'Intrépide* and *Cœurs Vaillants)* folded or were amalgamated into other titles in the early 1960s[4]. Others such as *Spirou* and the *Journal de Tintin* (launched in Belgium respectively in 1938 and 1946, and followed by a French edition of *Tintin* in 1948) were still enjoying commercial domestic success in both countries. *Pilote* was launched in 1959, initially sponsored by Radio Luxembourg, before being purchased by French publisher Dargaud.

The impact of the magazine format on an international scale was not truly demonstrated until the 1960s, however. This was when, after over a decade of establishing comic magazines as a national product, a concerted effort to diffuse comics throughout the continent began. Publishers gave a distinct focus to 'de-Americanizing' the market. Eventually this meant that France and Belgium could export their comic content because they held rights over their published works, unlike the strips bought from other countries as was previously the case.

The paper will discuss how carefully constructed networks of distribution channels enabled titles to be more easily disseminated in physical form than ever before. The networks of distribution will be laid out in three types: local, national, and international (primarily European) networks. For the purposes of clarification, this paper takes local to mean networks that were almost organically created through fan clubs and love for the magazine. By the same token, national is taken here to mean the binational sense of France and Belgium as a market of competition, but also as a market joined together in many aspects. The term magazine here refers to a comic magazine, except when specified as other formats, and the word album is used in the 1960s francophone meaning of a collected edition comic book, containing one story or several short stories.

In examining the aforementioned fields, the research intends to shed a new light on how publishers' choices led to a deliberate Europeanization of the comics industry.

1_Format Changes

Format[5] played a key role in the shift towards a Europeanized product. Magazines were the main way comics were published until the late 1960s. They were cheap to produce and could be easily transported. They featured a majority of comic strip content, with educational articles, novel excerpts, games, and contests. The magazine format was particularly important when considering the relevance of distribution channels for the industry; it allowed for a wide variety of contents published on a weekly basis from a range of creators. Sales figures demonstrate their popularity. The *Journal de Tintin* for instance, did not drop below 200,000 copies per issue sold between 1957 and 1968 in (France).[6] *Pilote* meanwhile, maintained a circulation of around the same number within its first few years.[7] Their circulation however relied on many other external factors, which will be discussed here.

Through the 1960s, reader interest began to move toward another form: albums. They were collectable objects, rather than disposable magazines. Many publishers came to see the magazines as a testing ground for material to be subsequently collected for the more profitable album format. This is aptly shown through one of the first magazine titles to be turned into an album, *Blake & Mortimer.* Originally a *Tintin* strip, the album was launched at a signing event in 1950. This title was the catalyst for Lombard's album publishing strategy. Editor-in-Chief Raymond Leblanc reflected that:

> We received more and more requests from readers begging for an album […] We created the first album from Jacobs as a sort of test, to see how readers would react. Because we were asking ourselves the question: 'They've just read the story in *Tintin,* how is it that they're asking for it again?'[8]

As the album grew in popularity after this time, it is clear that the test was successful. The magazine remained prominent, however. As will be discussed in the following sections, there are multiple ways publishers capitalized particularly on the magazine format to drive Europeanization.

2_Local and Bi-National Networks

A key network came from readership. Unlike albums, which could be more of a passive experience, magazines invited considerable reader engagement. Magazine editors recognized that readers wanted to engage with the content, and encouraged this by using a variety of techniques. Surveys were run in the magazines to figure out which

series were most popular with readers. Indeed, readers' polls were published annually in January in *Tintin.* Surveys even affected which series would continue to appear and which would be dropped. They could also influence which titles were published in album format, as stated be LeBlanc: "On a small scale, we would run polls in the magazine, and the most voted for stories would be the first to be published in album format."[9]

Language was a further tool used to include the readers, who were referred to as "friends," creating an exclusive club of those who had the privilege of belonging to the readership, and those who did not. An example of language cultivating community can be seen through issues of *Journal de Tintin* which began (or in some cases, concluded) with a letter to the readers from Tintin himself in section entitled *Entre Nous*, or 'Between us,' further creating a sense of belonging.

The magazines also offered a way for fans to communicate with one another, with *Tintin* dedicating a full page every week to pen-pal advertisements from young people based around the world. A similar operation ran in *Pilote* on a smaller scale, usually in a small classifieds section on the game solutions page, as shown in the Figures below.

Figure 1 & 1B: Pen-pal advertisements in *Journal de Tintin #645,* 2 Mar 1961, Editions Le Lombard/Dargaud (left) and *Pilote #462,* 12 September 1969, Dargaud (right).[10]

The fans were not limited to the 'official' channels of communication provided by the publisher, however. Many amateur fan clubs were set up around the magazines, thereby also aiding in diffusion on a more local scale. Such clubs would organize

events, discuss themes published in the magazines, and write in to talk about their activities. The publishers also had an influence over the clubs. The Figure below shows a list of rules for the *Tintin 2000* club. One of these rules stipulates that every club must keep 'Tintin' informed of all their activities.

ICI, LE CLUB !

Cartes, insignes et porte-clefs quittent maintenant chaque matin, par régiments, nos bureaux pour les quatre coins de la Belgique.

Partout, nos membres ont reçu ou reçoivent le matériel qui fait d'eux des participants à part entière de ce qui est en train de devenir la plus dynamique association de jeunes du pays.

Déjà nous avons enregistré de nombreux parrainages : le temps d'établir les fiches nécessaires, et nos premiers RECRUTEURS D'ELITE qui nous ont envoyé les adhésions d'au moins CINQ de leurs amis, seront portés sur nos listes de SUPER MEMBRES « UNE ETOILE ». (Nous disons : UNE étoile parce qu'il y aura dans l'avenir, possibilité de gagner 2, 3 étoiles et davantage...

Avec, bien entendu des récompenses à la clé. Les recruteurs « 1 étoile » recevront, chacun, pour commencer un album-cadeau des EDITIONS DU LOMBARD.

COMMENT « MONTER » UNE SECTION LOCALE « TINTIN-2000 » ?

Vous n'êtes sans doute pas seul, dans votre quartier ou votre localité à vous être inscrit au club. Vous connaissez évidemment d'autres copains qui eux aussi en font partie.

REUNISSEZ-VOUS !

Voici ce qu'il faut pour constituer une équipe « 2000 » valable :

A) être au moins trois. C'est un minimum. Une section de trois membres sera une section TRIANGLE. Une section de QUATRE membres sera une section CARRE. Ensuite, on saute à SIX membres (hexagone). Bien entendu, plus une section est numériquement importante, plus, le moment venu, elle aura accès à des activités plus grandes.

Mais il faut que les membres fassent réellement partie de la section : n'inscrivez pas votre petit frère de six mois ou l'oncle Adhémar qui a 107 ans pour « faire nombre ».

Vous devrez nous écrire pour nous expliquer comment est constituée votre équipe.

B) Deux moyens de procéder : ou bien vous montez vous-mêmes la section. C'est-à-dire que vous vous connaissez déjà entre membres, et que vous nous expliquez, du premier coup, comment est constituée la section, qui en est le président, les numéros des membres qui la constituent. Ou alors, vous ne connaissez pas d'autre membre du club : VOUS NOUS ENVOYEZ UNE ANNONCE, que nous publierons dans cette page : vous nous dites quelles sont vos spécialités (sport, bricolage, art pratiqué etc.). Vous indiquez aussi où et quand on peut vous atteindre : heures, numéro de téléphone, adresse etc.

Des contacts pourront donc s'établir, les membres de « 2000 » se rencontreront.

MAIS ATTENTION : passer une annonce ne veut pas nécessairement dire que vous serez le président de la section.

Une fois réunis, il faudra voter. Pour cela, entre vous, vous expliquerez comment vous concevez la vie de la section, ce qu'il y a moyen de faire effectivement et qui va organiser ça. L'âge, le sérieux, la confiance des autres: voilà ce qui doit amener à choisir un chef de section.

Ce sera peut-être vous... Peut-être un autre ami. L'essentiel est que la section tout entière en bloc, devienne un succès. Le chef n'est jamais, ne peut pas être, un petit dictateur : c'est au contraire celui qui le mieux, peut comprendre les goûts, les désirs et les qualités des membres, et mettre au point les activités qui créeront un climat de joie générale. Pas question pour lui d'IMPOSER ses propres goûts, ça ne marcherait pas.

C) Une fois la section plus ou moins formée, il faut mettre au point un programme de réunions. Une bonne idée est d'ouvrir un « journal » de la section : on y indique tout ce qui s'y passe, ce que chaque membre découvre et propose comme activités, ce que chacun sait faire etc. On y indique aussi un bref rapport de chaque réunion, on rappelle les promenades faites ensemble, les buts (par exemple monter ensemble tel modèle réduit, entrer en contact avec une section voisine pour une rencontre de sport ou autre, décider que les membres qui connaissent quelque chose — la natation tiens, par exemple — vont l'apprendre aux autres, etc.). IL FAUT TENIR « TINTIN » AU COURANT DE CES ACTIVITES.

Très vite, ici, au centre de « 2000 », nous nous ferons une idée du dynamisme des sections. Nous verrons dans quelles zones du pays existent, ci et là plusieurs sections vivantes que nous pourront mettre en contact : toujours le principe de la « boule de neige » qui grossit. Plus tard, en plus des concours individuels qui vont commencer, il y aura des concours intersections. Mais nous devons, pour viser juste, bien vous connaître. Pour cela, vous devez d'abord vous connaître entre vous.

J'attends de vos nouvelles. Chaque semaine, ici même, je continuerai à vous donner des miennes. Je rédige en outre actuellement les premières « lettres personnelles » qui vous parviendront sous peu. ÇA BOUGE !

ET BIENTOT : DEBUT DES INFORMATIONS « TOP-SECRET » SPECIALES POUR MEMBRES DU CLUB SEULEMENT !

A mardi !

Tintin

C) Une fois la section plus ou moins formée, il faut mettre au point un programme de réunions. Une bonne idée est d'ouvrir un « journal » de la section : on y indique tout ce qui s'y passe, ce que chaque membre découvre et propose comme activités, ce que chacun sait faire etc. On y indique aussi un bref rapport de chaque réunion, on rappelle les promenades faites ensemble, les buts (par exemple monter ensemble tel modèle réduit, entrer en contact avec une section voisine pour une rencontre de sport ou autre, décider que les membres qui connaissent quelque chose — la natation tiens, par exemple — vont l'apprendre aux autres, etc.). IL FAUT TENIR « TINTIN » AU COURANT DE CES ACTIVITES.

Figure 2: A list of rules that readers wishing to form Tintin 2000 clubs should adhere to. Highlighted here and in capitals in the text: "You must keep 'Tintin' informed of its activities." The rules end with "Soon: 'Top Secret' special information for club members only!" *Journal de Tintin #10, 1968* (Belgian edition), 05 March 1968, Le Lombard.[11]

Lombard's intervention in this case shows the clubs were a valuable resource in terms of diffusion. By making different clubs keep in touch about their activities, it could give them an idea about which aspects of the magazines were promoting high levels of club engagement.

Local networks therefore became a more organic way for the material to travel from person to person. This was not a statistically quantifiable number of sales, but was a vital resource in getting the magazines widely embedded into public consciousness. *Pilote* in particular leaned heavily on these networks, as they showed in the following cartoon (Figure 3) in the tenth anniversary special issue. The strip insists the magazine is being passed around friends, siblings and even parents as well as workers

who come across it in their daily lives and those who read it for free on newspaper stands. They imply then that readership is therefore much higher than assumed at first glance from official sales figures.

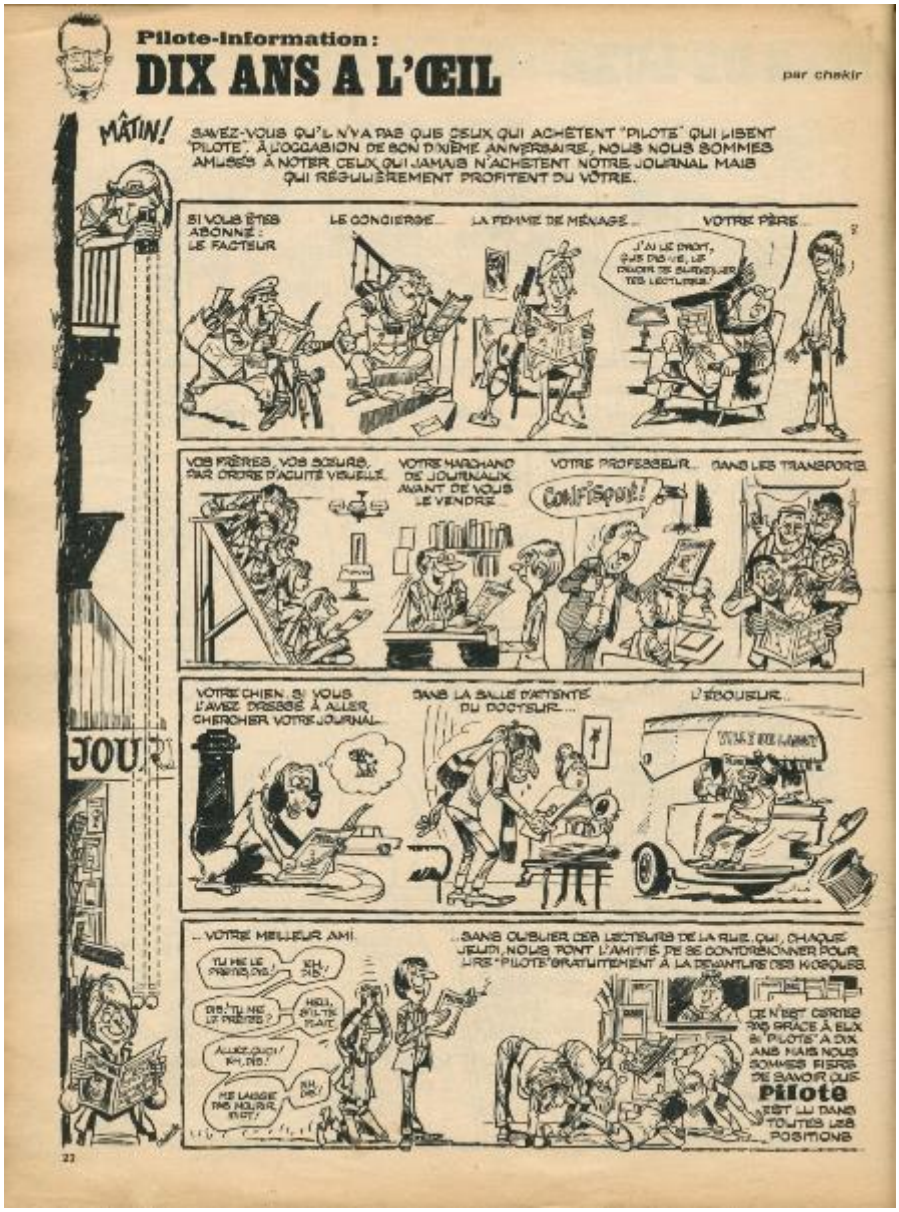


Figure 3 Strip: "10 years in plain sight" by Chakir, from *Pilote #520 (10th anniversary special)* Describes how the readers of Pilote aren't necessarily always those who buy it. Your postman, the janitor, the maid, your father, your siblings, your news dealer, your teacher, commuters on public transport, the garbage man, etc., all profit from *your* copy!"[12]

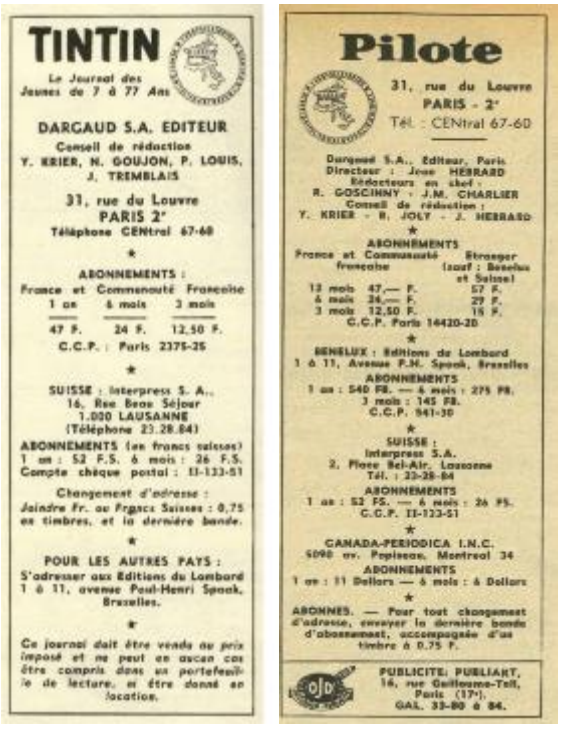
This Figure demonstrates the pass-along culture of comics readership, which had been an important aspect of 'unofficial' comics diffusion between friends. It was in

the publishers' interests to gain widespread national recognition, even if that didn't make sales.

Publishers therefore facilitated contact between readers to create a wider network of organic distribution. The clubs were one way of doing this in a select location, and this eventually extended to invite readers from around the world to communicate with one another. These networks were thus used to ensure a wider public read the magazine.

One of the main ways of distributing to children nationally was through subscriptions, which were an integral part of circulation, and a key financial resource for the magazines. Subscriptions also extended distribution to other countries. As such, it was important that this information be visible within the magazine: every issue contains the necessary addresses for subscriptions in France, Benelux, Switzerland and Canada. This is shown in the mastheads in Figure 4 below. As the countries were French and Dutch speaking, it meant that they could be directly shipped without the need for translation, and its associated costs. The editors therefore ran these services themselves rather than relying on distribution companies, which dealt with delivering magazines in bulk to newspaper stands. One again, this widened the scope for distribution, both nationally and internationally while economizing on the costs of doing so.

From the example in Figure 4 from *Tintin*, we can also see the close relationship between publishers Dargaud and Lombard, with information stating that subscriptions for *Tintin* for other countries should be addressed to Lombard. This relationship will shortly be discussed further.



TINTIN

Le Journal des Jeunes de 7 à 77 Ans

DARGAUD S.A. EDITEUR
Conseil de rédaction
Y. KRIER, N. GOUJON, P. LOUIS, J. TREMBLAIS

31, rue du Louvre
PARIS 2e
Téléphone CENtral 67-60

★

ABONNEMENTS :

France et Communauté Française		
1 an	6 mois	3 mois
47 F.	24 F.	12,50 F.

C.C.P. : Paris 2375-25

★

SUISSE : Interpress S. A.,
16, Rue Beau Séjour
1.000 LAUSANNE
(Téléphone 23.28.84)

ABONNEMENTS (en francs suisses)
1 an : 52 F.S. 6 mois : 26 F.S.
Compte chèque postal : II-133-51

Changement d'adresse :
Joindre Fr. ou Francs Suisses : 0,75 en timbres, et la dernière bande.

★

POUR LES AUTRES PAYS :
S'adresser aux Editions du Lombard
1 à 11, avenue Paul-Henri Spaak,
Bruxelles.

★

Ce journal doit être vendu au prix imposé et ne peut en aucun cas être compris dans un portefeuille de lecture, et être donné en location.

Pilote

31, rue du Louvre
PARIS - 2e
Tél. : CENtral 67-60

Dargaud S.A., Editeur, Paris
Directeur : Jean HERRARD
Rédacteurs en chef :
R. GOSCINNY - J.M. CHARLIER
Conseil de rédaction :
Y. KRIER - R. JOLY - J. HERRARD

★

ABONNEMENTS

France et Communauté française		Etranger (sauf : Benelux et Suisse)
12 mois	47,— F.	57 F.
6 mois	24,— F.	29 F.
3 mois	12,50 F.	15 F.

C.C.P. Paris 14420-20

★

BENELUX : Editions du Lombard
1 à 11, Avenue P.H. Spaak, Bruxelles

ABONNEMENTS
1 an : 540 FB. — 6 mois : 275 FB.
3 mois : 145 FB.
C.C.P. 941-30

★

SUISSE :
Interpress S.A.
2, Place Bel-Air, Lausanne
Tél. : 23-28-84

ABONNEMENTS
1 an : 52 FS. — 6 mois : 26 FS.
C.C.P. II-133-51

★

CANADA-PERIODICA I.N.C.
5090 av. Papineau, Montréal 34

ABONNEMENTS
1 an : 11 Dollars — 6 mois : 6 Dollars

★

ABONNES. — Pour tout changement d'adresse, envoyer la dernière bande d'abonnement, accompagnée d'un timbre à 0,75 F.

PUBLICITE: PUBLIART,
16, rue Guillaume-Tell,
Paris (17e).
GAL. 33-80 à 84.

Figure 4 & 4B: Mastheads from *Journal de Tintin #874* and *Pilote #208*, including subscription information. This information was published in every issue.[13]

Lombard had found another local advantage for distribution: in 1950 the ground floor of their Brussels publishing house offices became a store where readers could buy the magazine, the *recueils* (collection of 5 magazines bound together), albums of their favorite characters, and even Casterman's *Tintin* albums.[14] This meant that a process of market evaluation and monitoring of buying trends could be carried out on site, on a small scale. Readers were no longer a distant numerical figure, but real people with whom the editors could interact. This new brand of book store focusing solely on comic books (and tie-in merchandise, which was becoming increasingly prevalent at this time) was also a turning point in how the distribution of comics worked in the Franco-Belgian market, with editors Dargaud and Dupuis also opening their own stores in Paris in the early 1960s, along with a *Tintin* store.[15] Having brick and mortar locations changed their distribution because the publishers would have more copies delivered to their own offices to sell them on through their own channels (subscriptions and comic book stores). This meant that publishers had increasing control over how their magazines were distributed, and they could capitalize upon this to diffuse them through a larger network.

Organic local distribution had been the case for many of the magazines established through the 1950s, as they could use the networks of their founders i.e. the Communist Party or the Catholic Church. This meant primarily selling magazines such as *Rallye Jeunesse* and *Record* at youth groups, outside church, and door to door.[16] Distribution companies did play a role, however. This was negligible for the aforementioned titles, but grew in the 1960s, as publishers wished to increase the scope of their audience. When *Pilote* was founded, it was established outside of these traditional Party or Church support networks, and so relied more on distribution companies. The one it used, *Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne* (NMPP) was ill-suited to its purpose, as discussed here by Michallat:

> The distribution agency, […] assured both the delivery of the publication to sales outlets and the return of the 'invendus' [unsold copies] to the publisher and took […] 42% of the sales revenue. It was imperative for *Pilote* to receive rapid feedback from the agency to enable it to respond to fluctuations in sales figures by increasing or decreasing its print-run. The response time, however, was slow and *Pilote* incurred huge losses when it finally became apparent, upon the return of thousands of unsold magazines, that it had grossly overestimated demand. Bitter accusations circulated that the NMPP had deliberately sabotaged the *Pilote* project by knowingly withholding the 'invendus.'[17]

This was also discussed in the press at the time, when Elvire de Brissac from *Le Monde:*

> […] claimed that journals either belonged to the category of 'la presse commerciale' [the commercial press]or 'la presse engagée [the engaged press] […and] that the commercial press was […]disadvantaged by the anonymity of the NMPP method of distribution because there was no direct contact between publisher and reader, and consequently, no means for the publisher to register the desires of the reader at the point of distribution.[18]

Pilote belonged to the commercial press, and was therefore 'disadvantaged' in terms of distribution. These analyses show the importance of a direct relationship with the readers versus the anonymous aspect of standard distribution, and how it could affect those publications without a direct link to their readership. *Tintin* on the other hand, stayed somewhere in the middle ground. It was Catholic-endorsed but not necessarily distributed by the church.[19] It also had the advantage that it was produced by two publishers who could maximize the magazine's reach: Le Lombard in Belgium and Dargaud in France.

It must also be noted that the rise in popularity of the album format began to change how this distribution worked. The album meant that the revenue from both

formats could feed into each other and reduce the reliance upon one form of distribution. Indeed, once *Pilote* obtained ground-breaking sales of the Asterix albums,[20] they needed to rely less on the NMPP to distribute for profit. Albums were also distributed differently, shipping directly to bookstores rather than to kiosks or through subscription or pass-along readership. The parallel development of the *format poche* (pocket book) novels in France was also utilized in order to benefit from the broader outreach of Dargaud's distribution channels. Michallat argues that:

> It was no coincidence that the FP and the *bande dessinée* album enjoyed a simultaneous surge in popularity between 1962 and 1965. Firstly, *bande dessinée* publishers made use of the distribution networks and retail outlets of the FP. *Astérix,* for example, was distributed by Séquana[21] which was also the distributor for the FP series […] With access to the same broad range of retail outlets the *bande dessinée* album was able to take commercial advantage of the changes in book retailing culture brought about by the FP.[22]

The quote above implies that the *format poche* was a product of the masses that allowed literature to became more readily accessible to a wider public. Comics had almost always been considered mass-media and using this distribution made them even more available. While the focus in this essay is on magazines, it is worth noting that albums did contribute to how magazines were distributed and the general diffusion of comics. Dargaud particularly knew how to use the combined revenue from both forms to its advantage. Using the same distribution channel was a very deliberate choice to maximize their albums' impact on the book market. This was of course combined with a huge advertising campaign for the albums through the magazines.

A key aspect which contributed to a resulting opportunism was the use of publisher connections used to distribute both magazine and album titles on the largest possible scale. These began in France and Belgium, between the publishers of both countries. Though the news media often pitted the two primary series (*Tintin* and *Astérix*) against each other, the publishers were not exactly competing enemies. There were certainly frictions, however. In the case of *Tintin,* Casterman held the copyright and published the albums, so was the main contact for all rights information, but the magazine was published by Lombard (both publishers being based in Belgium). Lombard would then pay rights for any *Tintin* content to Casterman, but retain the rights to the various comics series created for the *Journal de Tintin*. When Lombard began to publish albums, whose formats were modelled on Casterman's Tintin series, Hergé and Casterman felt their existence might threaten sales of the *Tintin* series.[23] One of the

agreements reached between the two publishers as a form of compromise was for Casterman from then on to print the collected and bound versions of the *Journal de Tintin* magazine.

This practice of using other companies for printing continued with Dargaud also having the collected editions of *Pilote* as well as several albums printed at Casterman in Tournai. It would perhaps be logical to think of Casterman the publisher, and Casterman the printer as two separate entities, but through correspondence between publishers, we can see that the two were in fact linked closely. In other words, publishing decisions were also printing decisions and vice versa. They worked together for decisions on print runs, formats, choice of paper quality, and production values. Print order documents in the Casterman archive show several instances where both Lombard and Dargaud are listed as the joint customer for the print order of several albums and collections.[24] Beyond the level of publisher collaboration for a united Franco-Belgian network, this can also be seen through a lens of pure practicality; a single print order was cheaper than several, and the shipment would then be split and delivered accordingly after printing. Printing would also become crucial for international distribution, to be discussed in later paragraphs.

There were many instances of the publishers working together in order to gain maximum exposure across the border. The link established in the previous paragraph between publishers Le Lombard and Dargaud was instrumental in shaping the industry through the 1950s and into the 1960s. Their relationship was a strategic alliance of the Belgians (Le Lombard) and the French (Dargaud). In regard to the distribution of *Journal de Tintin* in France, Dargaud was listed as the editor and distributor, and kept the content almost exactly the same except for the cover and editorial notes. Lesage argues that the two publishers:

> [W]ere situated on either side of the border, but formed a duo whose destinies were linked so closely that there is no sense in separating them. As Editions du Lombard existed in France only through their commercial partner Dargaud, the couple must be considered as an inseparable ensemble, a sort of embodiment of Franco-Belgian publishing. On the other hand, as Dargaud's success stemmed from their role as the bridgehead of Lombard in France, it is more relevant to regard the two publishers as a mutually complementary ensemble. Far from being a static relationship, their complementarity evolved over the years. Dargaud was a simple commercial partner in French territory for a decade, but it started to gain its independence in the early1960s, profiting less from sales of *Pilote* than from an elaborate multimedia strategy.[25]

Lesage's arguments are convincing, given the level of cross-publisher cooperation mentioned here. As he points out, Dargaud started by printing Lombard titles under their own name.[26] They then also shared the publication of *Journal de Tintin* across the two countries. But, what set Dargaud apart with the launch of *Pilote,* and changed how distribution affected it, was this multimedia, and multi-format strategy. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

There was also cross-promotion between the magazines themselves, using the advertising pages to promote their counterpart. This shows once more that they weren't always in competition. The printing aspect comes into play in this situation, as both Pilote and Journal de Tintin (after 1962) were printed by Periodica Brussels — promotional material could thus be inserted in both titles with relative ease, i.e. without having to ship them elsewhere for the pages to be added. This can be seen in the example below. It often also meant that they could be distributed using the same channels, from the same shipment.

Figure 4 and 4B: Advertising inset for the cover of the latest Pilote from "our friends at Pilote" placed next to a Tintin contest, p.21 and the pull-out cover itself for the Christmas special issue of Pilote, placed after p.27, in the middle of a Blake & Mortimer story. Both from *Journal de Tintin #895, 1965.*[27]

The 1960s was also a time of multimedia and product tie-ins. Comics were made into several new formats besides the traditional magazine and then album format. The new formats were a further key aspect in their distribution. The aforementioned Dargaud capitalized upon this, but this was also the case for *Tintin* comics. The diversity of the output of format that arose in the 1960s meant that the publishers could capitalize upon mass distribution of the same product in multiple formats. The magazine as the main focus of this paper of course played a significant role, but there were also albums, special editions, *Super Pocket* and *Tintin Selection* (a kind of 'Best of' the magazines' comics strips in paperback novel) formats, and even pop-up and coloring books. This meant that there was a comic product in almost all means of consumer life.

Multiple formats were also an excellent strategy for cross-advertising. One thing that the magazines could do that the albums could not was advertisement. While external product advertisement in the magazines (ranging from pens to Levi's jeans) provided welcome financial support, the magazines also offered free advertisement space for the other comic formats, shown here in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Full page advertisement for *Super Pocket Pilote #5* in Pilote #518, 09 October 1969, Dargaud.[28]

Other formats were used to advertise the magazine in return, as shown in Figure 6 below. This advert from *Super Pocket Pilote #3,* a more traditional pocket-sized paperback in form, also makes the bold claim that the *Pilote* team were the "European champions of comics in color."

Figure 6: Double-page advertisement for *Pilote* magazine and subscription offer in *Super Pocket Pilote #3,* Dargaud, March 1969.[29]

This is a further hint at the desire to create a certain form of Europeanization, with Franco-Belgian titles at the forefront of creation. Another key aspect about the *Super Pocket Pilote* series (9 books, 1968-69) is that they were printed by Mondadori (another partner publisher of Casterman's) in Italy. *Tintin Selection* was also printed in Italy by Fratelli Spada. Using another country's expertise for a different format also extends the concept of Europeanization, forging ties to create a more united industry, with certain countries responsible for different aspects. Both publishers capitalizing on the international printing network shows the close industry collaboration between countries, to be considered in the next section.

These formats were in addition to the numerous multimedia products such as animated movies and audio dramas. Multimedia was a strategy of several different art forms at this time, particularly in terms of 'youth culture'.[30] Many of these, including radio, crossed over with comics, with *l'émission Pilote* appearing on France Inter radio station in 1961. This directly adapted comic strips into audio. The *Feu de camp du Dimanche matin,* [Sunday morning campfire] a show presented by the *Pilote* editorial team on Europe 1 in 1969, included sketches directly adapted from the magazine.[31] We must also remember that *Pilote* itself was launched by Radio Luxembourg, making it a multimedia product from the very start.

As will be discussed in later paragraphs, this multimedia practice was also expanded internationally, facilitating global distribution of multiple facets of the comics industry.

3_A European International Network

However, perhaps the most interesting form of network can be viewed through the multinational, and multilingual, lens. Language is of course a key aspect in the relationship of transfers. The Franco-Belgian transfer was facilitated by the lack of need to translate the titles. This also extended to other francophone territories, as discussed earlier. Belgium's bilingual French and Dutch market, also contained *Kuifje*, the Flemish version of *Journal de Tintin*, launched around the same time as the original French edition. This was then exported to the Netherlands.

Language was a key strategy in gaining readers and increased audience scope even without translation. This was therefore the first step in international diffusion. The next was to expand into different languages to reach a greater level of distribution.

The expansion of languages and thus of markets can be tracked through the rich Casterman publisher archives in Tournai, Belgium, which contain extensive correspondence and contracts with international publishers. This resource additionally shows that the international network was firmly established in the 1950s and 1960s. It played a valuable role in the diffusion of the titles throughout Europe, and indeed, the worldwide success of the *bande dessinée* phenomenon as we know it today. Many letters in the archive discuss the importance of sales tactics and strategies for their own countries, and seek advice (in both directions) to maximize audience reach.

Spain was a particularly valuable contributor to this network. The available correspondence shows that publisher Editorial Juventud enjoyed a cordial relationship with Casterman. This was also an interesting case of the *Tintin* strips first being distributed to a wider general audience, rather than directly aimed at children, through the art magazine *Blanco y Negro.* Editorial Juventud began by publishing albums in Spanish and eventually Catalan languages, and then*, Tintin Semanario*, Spain's version of the *Journal de Tintin.*

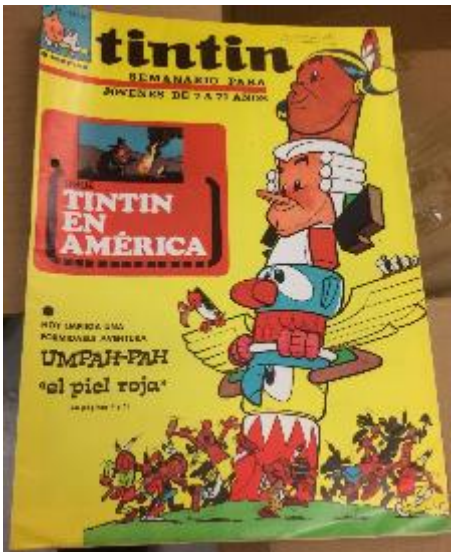


Figure 7: Front cover of *Tintin Semanario #12,* Editorial Juventud, 31 January 1968 taken from sample sent to Casterman.[32]

Although this magazine did not achieve commercial success in Spain, both Editorial Juventud and Casterman agreed that it could serve as a form of advertisement for

the album format.–Though this direct translation of the Belgian magazine failed, homegrown magazines which published the francophone strips did enjoy some success. *Cavall Fort*, a Catalan monthly which published *Achille Talon* and *Spirou* for instance, ran from 1961 to 1979.

The letters available in the archive reveal the emergence of networks within each country, with Casterman consulting their international counterparts on marketing strategies, competitors and even decisions on whether to grant requests to rights sales to newspapers. On a logistics front, this was of course also preferable, as the publishers in that specific country could provide the translated and lettered strips, as they had already produced them for the albums, and whoever bought the short format stories could obtain them for a fee. This also worked when the album publisher would become a sort of middle man for other media companies interested in making multimedia products from the series. Products such as records, radio series and television shows were all discussed in the correspondence. For example, in 1966, Editorial Juventud asked Casterman permission on behalf of a record producer to put together a collection of *Tintin* songs in Spanish and Catalan, and offered to act as Casterman's spokes-company with the producer.[33] Yet again here we see the use of multimedia distribution as a way to increase audience. The case of Spain is also significant, as we are able to gain a rare insight from the correspondence into some of the production and logistics related problems that arose for distribution.[34]

Through Spain, it is also possible to note a religious element. The Journal de Tintin itself in Belgium was conceived as a form of showing Catholic morals, hence making it an ideal export to Catholic Spain. Specifically, in Catalan states, where a revival of the language was also taking place, people wanted to resist the secularization taking place under the Franco regime through a revival of their language. It was therefore felt that Tintin could be used to counter so-called immoral children's contents and promote language learning.[35]

Religion also played a role in the United Kingdom, where *Tintin* was translated into English in 1951. It then appeared in the weekly comic magazine *The Eagle,* which had been founded by the Reverend Marcus Morris to impart to children stories with a decidedly religious moral tone in order to counter the American imports that he felt were too violent.[36] It is unsurprising therefore that the two comics cultures would work together. When the Tintin series was picked up by publisher Methuen in the

1950s for album publication, the books were also printed at Casterman. English language adaptations were of course an important element that Casterman wished to seize upon, as it would provide the key to the North American market. Unfortunately for them, the series never did as well across the Atlantic Ocean. Scholars have debated whether this was due to too great a cultural difference between Europe and the USA.[37]

One markedly relevant case of international distribution is exemplified by the correspondence between Casterman and Carlsen Verlag, a German/Danish publisher. The publisher was responsible for acquiring the rights to the titles for Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. Per Carlsen, the Editor-in-Chief of Carlsen Verlag, also headed the Danish distribution company, Illustrationsforlaget (also known as Presse-Illustrationsbureau)[38] in the 1960s. Their position as an editor/distributor was a clear advantage within the market, and meant that they had a monopoly of almost all of the Nordic territory. This is also a key proof of just how closely linked distribution and publishing were. Incidentally, Carlsen also employed Casterman to print the translated albums, further consolidating the close working relationship of the two publishers for a coordinated effort at a united market strategy to reach more countries and readers.

This particular Danish/Swedish/German/Norwegian network was also made use of in the distribution of European Disney titles, where individual stories produced by European studios would appear in each of the above country's Disney magazine at almost exactly the same time.[39] An interesting reclaiming of an American product created by European studios to contribute to a Europeanisation of the industry was thus established. A similar publication schedule (all within the same week) also applied with the Franco-Belgian content magazines of *Fart og Tempo* for Denmark, *Tempo* for Norway and *Serieltidning Bang* for Sweden. They were all the same magazine every week, they had just been translated. This is shown in Figure 8.

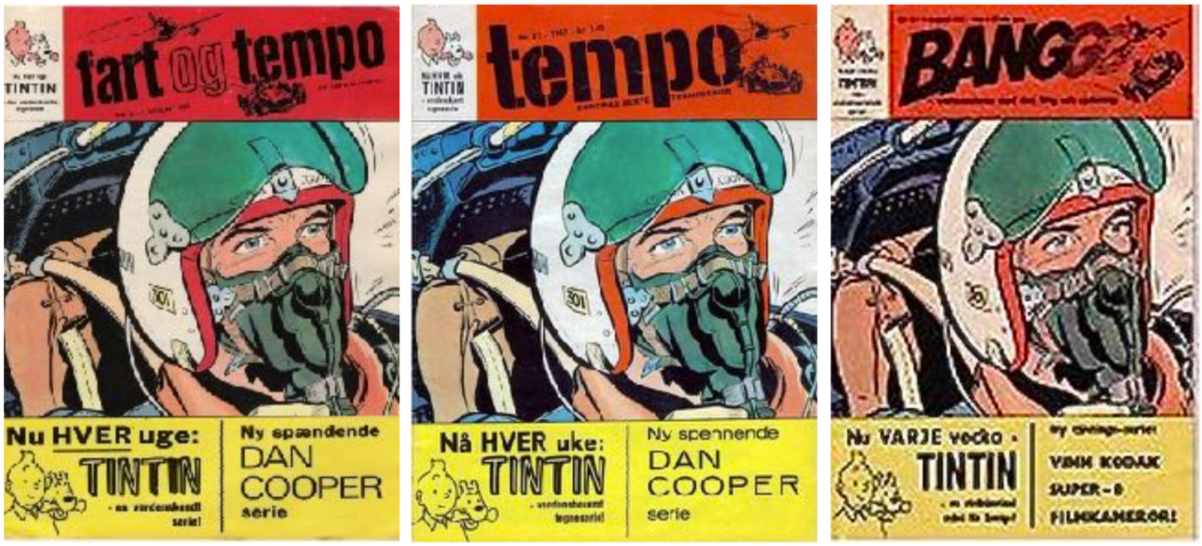


Figure 8: Covers of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish (from left to right) versions of comic magazines. All #31, August 1967.[40]

The international versions of the magazines did not necessarily include stories from just one of the francophone magazines. Danish *Fart og Tempo* and the Swedish and Norwegian versions for instance, contained stories from both *Pilote* and *Journal de Tintin.* The Portuguese *Foguetao* similarly contained strips from all of their francophone counterparts' magazines, including examples such as *Asterix, Tintin,* and *Michel Tanguy.* This magazine even featured *Dan Dare* from the British *Eagle* as its front cover. *Foguetao* was incidentally also the first translation of Astérix created, and adopted the exact same slogan as *Pilote: Semanario Juvenil para o Ano 2000 (*weekly youth magazine for the year 2000). It appeared in 1961.

Figures 9, 9B & 9C from top to bottom: Title page bearing the same slogan as *Pilote. Astérix the Gaul* strip translated for the first time, in Portuguese and black and white. Then *Tintin in Tibet,* in original French text with translation into Portuguese underneath the strip. All *Foguetao #1, Emprensa* Nacional de Publicidade, Lisbon 4 May 1961.[41]

Comics as they appeared in international magazines could have been experienced as a 'Franco-Belgian' export. There was no distinction between what appeared in *Tintin,* or *Pilote,* they were simply grouped together in one translated magazine. Though there were strips from other countries that made it into the magazines in France and Belgium, the majority were transferred the other way around. This links once again to the rights sales, and the control that the French and Belgian publishers had built for themselves, allowing a monopoly of distribution not only in their own nations, but throughout the continent too. But this was different in other countries. From *Tintin Semanario,* we can see that magazines seemed have more commercial success when they mixed content from France and Belgium with their own countries' products. We

could then argue that this is a Europeanization in international reader tastes, with many preferring to read comics from multiple countries, including their own.

There was a threat to this, however. This era also saw a tug-of-war situation with laws in several nations to counter the perceived negative influence of comics on children.[42]

One apparent way of combatting this was to form an international group of publications, *Europress Junior,* in 1961. The logo, shown in the Figures below, shows an apparent union between the six initial members of the European Union (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands) demonstrated by showing each of the countries in map form, and the number 30,000,000 with the words "members" and "readers" written in all the languages. The two magazines discussed in this paper carried a Europress Junior logo within their mastheads. In 1962, the *Journal de Tintin* ran a Europress Junior contest to create a logo to symbolize the European youth in issue #713. When the winners were revealed a year later in issue #768, the competition results were prefaced with a description of the organization as "the European association of publishers of material for the youth (Europress Junior) which gathers 250 published titles whose combined monthly circulation amounts to 30 million."[43]

There is some debate as to whether this union was entirely effective, however. Mention of the organization is missing from the majority of literature, so there are many questions left to be explored. Did the organization make it easier to distribute throughout the continent, for instance? Or were they a group only in name? If nothing else, this network could very well have provided a method for communicating with one another, and to keep informed of censorship practices in other countries where they imported and exported comic content. It is perhaps more likely the case that it was more of a front presented to give the appearance of unity, but who never in actual fact implemented any tangible policies or applications. The desire for this group does however show a huge level of Europeanization. Even the logo groups readers together as one united European readership, and therefore a European comics industry.

http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=nbn:de:0009-2-103653

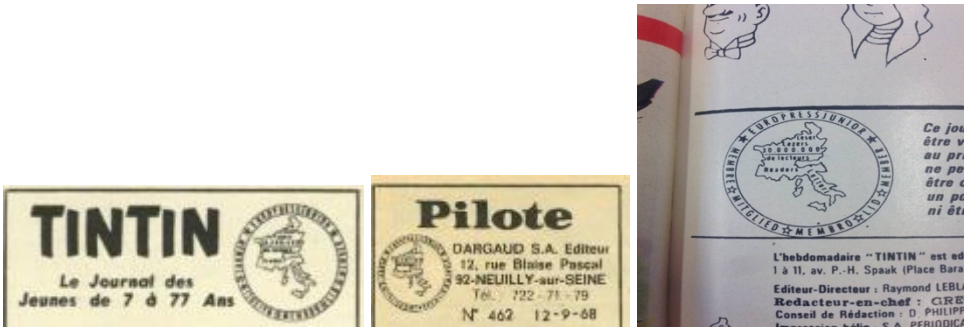


Figure 10, 10B & 10C: Europress Junior logo, which appeared in every issue of *Pilote,* and every issue of *Tintin* after 1961.

In conclusion, there were many aspects which led to a greater Europeanization of the comics in the 1960s through distribution. Publishers both carefully built their own strategies for widespread distribution and utilized more organic local networks, which passed around comic magazines by hand. Editors worked together to reach more audiences, and though there were some issues, this was overall a great success, which led to the boom that the form enjoyed in this decade. Types of networks often intertwined, profoundly linking the local, national, and international exchanges of the comics form. As part of a wider strategy for international distribution, relationships were built with other publishers in various European countries, which eventually led to agreements to share production of different products between them. There were some efforts to form international societies, in terms of production, distribution, and even criticism. However, it is difficult to see their true impact.

The comic magazine was a key factor in this strategy on all levels, and were often the primary way of exporting the comic strips. The 1960s was a key decade with magazines at the peak of popularity, but it can also be argued that this time was also the decline of this particular mainstream format. By the 1970s, more independent and underground magazines had emerged, and the biggest publishers were focusing more on album as well as multimedia production. However, the magazines had opened a door to wider world of possible distribution. The weekly *Journal de Tintin* folded in 1980 for the Belgian edition, and 1973 for the French edition. Both did however continue on a monthly schedule for a few years later. *Pilote* weekly ended in 1974.

_Endnotes

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1 Project supported by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR) (11595363).

2 See Pascal Ory, "Mickey Go Home: La désaméricanisation de la bande dessinée (1945–1950)," in *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire* 4 (1984), 77–88 (hereafter abbreviated as Ory, 1984).

3 Journal official, Documents parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, 1948, 1962–1964 cited in Ory, 1984, 77–88.

4 Ory, 1984, 80.

5 See Laurence Grove, *Comics in French: The European Bande Dessinée in Context* (London: Berghahn Books, 2010), 117–142.

6 For more study on importance of format see: Pascal Lefèvre, "The Importance of Being 'Published': A Comparative Study of Different Comics Formats," in *Comics & Culture*, Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen, eds. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum at the University of Copenhagen, 2000), 91–105.

7 Sylvain Lesage, *Publier La bande dessinée: Les éditeurs franco-belges et l'album, 1950–1990* (Paris: Enssib, 2018), 412 (hereafter abbreviated as Lesage, 2018).

8 See Eliza Bourque Dandridge, *Producing Popularity: The Success in France of the Comics Series* Astérix le Gaulois (Master thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2008).

9 Original text: "Nous avons reçu des demandes de plus en plus nombreuses de lecteurs nous réclamant l'album… Nous avons fait ce premier album de Jacobs à titre de test, pour voir comment les lecteurs allaient réagir. Parce que nous nous posions la question : Ils viennent de lire cette histoire dans le journal Tintin, comment se fait-il qu'ils en redemandent ?" Raymond Leblanc, interview with Hugues Dayez, in Hugues Dayez, *Le duel Tintin-Spirou: Entretiens avec les auteurs de l'âge d'or de la BD belge* (Brussels: Luc Pire, 1997), 15 (hereafter abbreviated as Dayez, 1997).

10 Original text: "Très modestement, on faisait des référendums dans le journal, et les histoires les plus plébiscitées furent éditées les premières en album." Leblanc, interview with Dayez, 1997, 15.

11 Georges Dargaud, ed., "Mon Courrier" in *Journal de Tintin* #645, March 2 1961 (left), 39 and René Goscinny, ed., "Petites Annonces" in *Pilote* #462, September 12 1967, 57 (right).

12 Raymond Leblanc, ed., "2000 Le Magazine de l'Avenir Supplement,"in *Journal de Tintin* #10/68, March 5 1968 (Belgian edition) 8.

13 Chakir, "Dix ans à L'œil" in *Pilote* #520, October 23 1969, 22. Translation of text (from left to right, top to bottom in standard comic reading direction): Did you know that it's not only those who buy 'Pilote' that read 'Pilote'. On the occasion of our 10th birthday, we were amused to find that those who never buy our magazine regularly enjoy yours! If you have a subscription: The postman… the building manager… the cleaner… your father. "I have the right to check up on what you're reading!" Your brothers and sisters, in order of age… your magazine seller before he sells it to you… your teacher "Confiscated!"…on public transport…Your dog if you've trained him to fetch your magazine… in the waiting room at the Doctor's office… the garbage man…… your best friend "You'll lend it to me, right? Right? Hey, will you lend it to me? Come on, please. Come on, promise! Don't leave me hanging here… Come on!"...and not to forget all the readers in the street who every Thursday, do us the honor of reading 'Pilote' for free on newspaper stands. It's certainly not thanks to them that 'Pilote' has reached its tenth birthday, but we're proud to know that Pilote is read in every position.

14 Georges Dargaud, ed., *Journal de Tintin* #874, July 22 1965, 49 (left) and Jean Hebrard, ed., *Pilote* #208, October 17 1963 43 (right).

15 Lesage, 2018, 166.

16 Jessie Bi, "La librairie spécialisée en bandes dessinées: librairies d'éditeurs," (2011), accessed 13 June 13, 2019, <https://www.du9.org/dossier/librairies-dediteurs/>.

17 Elvire de Brissac, "Presse des jeunes, problèmes d'adultes," in *Le Monde*, December 19, 1962, 12, cited in Wendy Michallat, *French Cartoon Art in the 1960s and 1970s: Pilote hebdomadaire and the Teenager bande dessinée* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2018), 104 (hereafter referred to as Michallat, 2018).

18 Michallat, 2018, 82–83.

19 De Brissac, 1962 cited in Michallat, 2018, 84.

20 For complicated relations of Catholic publications with Tintin, and a Papal blessing see *Jacques Pessis, Hergé - Raymond Leblanc: l'histoire du journal des jeunes de 7 à 77 ans* (Weyrich: Neufchâteau, 2016), 56.

21 Lesage, 2018, 174.

22 Sequana remains one of France's largest companies for distribution of paper products today. In the 1960s, they were also in an enormous period of expansion, equipping themselves with larger trucks and ships for a greater scope of possible delivery. (Sequana company website <https://www.sequana.com//wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Historique-Sequana-d%C3%A9taill%C3%A9-2018-ENG.pdf>, accessed June 05, 2019.) This could also explain the decision to also distribute bande dessinée in addition to pocket formats, as part of a larger expansion strategy.

23 Michallat, 2018, 162.

24 Pessis, 2016, 56.

25 Tournai, Belgian State Archives, Casterman Archives, Printing files. Box 49.190, Order #3186, 19 September 1969, for example (hereafter referred to as Casterman Archives).

26 Lesage, 2018, 154. Original text: "Les deux derniers acteurs majeurs de la phase d'élaboration du standard de l'album de bande dessinée se situent de part et d'autre de la frontière, mais constituent un duo dont les destinées sont si étroitement liées qu'il n'y aurait guère de sens à les séparer. Dans la mesure où les éditions de Lombard ne sont présentes sur le sol français qu'à travers leur partenaire commercial Dargaud, force est de considérer le couple comme un ensemble indissociable, sorte d'incarnation de cette édition belgo-française. Par ailleurs, Dargaud construit sa prospérité sur ce rôle de tête de pont du Lombard en France, aussi évoquerons-nous ces deux éditeurs comme un ensemble complémentaire. Loin de constituer une relation statique, cette complémentarité des deux éditeurs se déplace au fil des années. Simple relais commercial en terrain hexagonal pendant une décennie, Dargaud s'émancipe au début des années 1960, profitant moins des ventes de Pilote que d'une stratégie multimédiatique accomplie."

27 Lesage, 2018, 170.

28 Georges Dargaud, ed., *Journal de Tintin* #895, 16 December 1965, 27. Copyright Lombard/Dargaud 2019.

29 René Goscinny, ed., *Pilote* #518 09 October 1969, 24.

30 René Goscinny, ed., *Super Pocket Pilote* #3, 136–137.

31 See Christina Von Hodenberg, "Mass Media and the Generation of Conflict: West Germany's Long Sixties and the Formation of a Critical Public Sphere," *in Contemporary European History* 15.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

32 "Le Feu de camp du dimanche matin," 02/11/1969, Europe 1, 00:46:39, Paris, Europe 1 archives.

33 Casterman Archives, Correspondence – Editorial Juventud, Tintin Semanario #12 sample.

34 Casterman Archives, Correspondence – Editorial Juventud, 05 November 1966.

35 Casterman Archives, Correspondence – Editorial Juventud, 05–11 December 1966.

36 See Rhiannon McGlade, *Catalan Cartoons: A Cultural and Political History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016).

37 See James Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

38 See Jean-Paul Gabilliet, "A Disappointing Crossing: The North American Reception of Astérix and Tintin," in *Transnational Perspectives on Graphic Narratives: Comics at the Crossroads*, Daniel Stein, Shane Denson, and Christina Meyer, eds. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

39 Casterman Archives, Correspondence – Illustrationsforlaget. All letters are signed by Per Carlsen for both companies, and both companies are archived together.

40 Data collected from freely available I.N.D.U.C.Ks database, <http://inducks.org> accessed October 18, 2019.

41 *Fart og Tempo, Guternberghus udgav, Denmark Tempo, Hjemmets-Trykk, Norway, Serieltidning Banggg, Hemmets Journal*, Sweden, all #31, August 1967.

42 *Foguetao* #1, (Lisbon: Emprensa Nacional de Publicidade, 4 May 1961).

43 See Thierry Groensteen, "C'était le temps où la bande dessinée corrompait l'âme enfantine…," in *9e Art: Les Cahiers de Mussée de la Bande Dessinée* (1999), 14–19.

44 Original text: "l'association européenne des éditeurs de publications pour la jeunesse (Europress-junior) qui groupe 250 titres de publications dont le tirage global atteint 30 millions d'exemplaires par mois." Georges Dargaud, ed., in *Journal de Tintin* #768 July 11 1963, 42.