

Dony, Christophe. "Postcolonial Theory: Writing and Drawing Back (and Beyond) in *Pappa in Afrika* and *Pappa in Doubt*." In *More Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, edited by Matthew J. Smith, Matthew Brown, and Randy Duncan. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

WRITING AND DRAWING BACK (AND BEYOND) IN *PAPPA IN AFRIKA* AND *PAPPA IN DOUBT*

Christophe Dony

ABSTRACT

The "writing back" paradigm in postcolonial theory postulates that postcolonial literatures establish a set of new and revisionary perspectives on social, cultural, political, and narrative norms underlying much of Western fiction (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002). Postcolonial authors often rewrite canonical English works to "write back" to and decolonize an imperial center and culture, whose perception of the world is shaped and mirrored in literature primarily through the lens of white and masculine hegemony (Thieme 2001). The method devised in this chapter consists of a brief examination of the various formal properties, narrative dimensions, and socio-cultural aspects entailed in an expanded model of "writing back" as it can be applied to comics. The possible counter-discursive and subversive effects underlying this model are then discussed through a sample of cartoons and short comics produced by South African artist Anton Kannemeyer in the anthologies *Pappa in Afrika* (2010) and *Pappa in Doubt* (2015), both of which heavily borrow from Hergé's *The Adventures of Tintin* in terms genre, narrative traditions, and aesthetic, while commenting on the colonial imaginary underlying Hergé's series.

INTRODUCTION

Readers who have never come across Anton Kannemeyer's work may be intrigued, to say the least, just by looking at the cover of his anthology *Pappa in Afrika* (2010). This cover (fig.1) is indeed a parody of the (in)famous comic cover of *Tintin in the Congo* (1932) by Hergé. *Tintin in the Congo* has been described as the colonial comic *par excellence* (Rifas 2012), notably for its stereotypical (mis)representation of Congolese people as inferior, inept, primitive, or marginal. Hergé's colonial gaze and aesthetic also undoubtedly lie in his visual tokenizing of the black body, for which the artist systematically relies on golliwog and coon iconography – that is, grotesque characters with "very dark skin," big clown-like lips, "wild-rimmed eyes," and "wild, frizzy hair" (Pilgrim 2000, n. pag.). As a result, Kannemeyer's reproduction of Hergé's racist iconography in the 21st century may seem offensive and troublesome to many. Yet, paradoxically enough, Kannemeyer's use of Hergé's aesthetic is meant as a critique of colonial discourse and ideology, and their persistence even in so-called postcolonial times.

This becomes especially clear when examining how Kannemeyer employs other subversive elements to denounce fantasies, violence, and anxieties surrounding colonial discourse and its legacy, which *Tintin in the Congo* articulates narratively and visually. For example, the presence of a dead black man as well as several mutilated black characters

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condemns the violence inherent in the process of colonization. Their suffering and grotesque traits seem to be the direct result of an ongoing modern form of (neo)colonization, which Kannemeyer references by tagging boxes amidst the luggage of Tintin's avatar with mentions of oil field service multinational companies, international aid, and genetically modified foods. Implied here is that all of these products and the companies or organizations from which they originate have, in one way or another, participated in the exploitation and misery that have plagued many people and countries in Africa, both during and after the colonial period. Kannemeyer's addition of mainly distressed or dead black characters also produces an uncanny effect, especially for Western eyes, that sharply contrasts with the almost idyllic but mostly fantasized African landscape from Hergé's original cover. This cover, the reader might remember, features nothing but Tintin's car in the middle of an empty, savannah-like landscape, with a giraffe prominently standing in the background. This type of romantic landscape was common and popular in the colonial imaginary because it helped legitimize Europeans' real and cartographic takeover as well as their settlement, all the while minimizing the idea of violent territorial intrusion and appropriation (Huggan 1989; Huggan and Tiffin 2015). In addition to debunking this colonial representation of Africa as an empty space, Kannemeyer suggests that colonization also played an important role in the extinction of wildlife. The 'real' giraffe from Hergé's cover has indeed disappeared in the cover of *Pappa in Afrika*. Kannemeyer's cover still features a giraffe, but a wooden sculpture one that is stacked in the car of Tintin's avatar. This subtle change in form may be said to epitomize colonizers' inclination to literally tame species and lands to advance colonial projects, including the crafting of colonial fantasized memorabilia.

The cover of *Pappa in Afrika* contains several other subversive elements besides those described above, some of which will be examined later on. For now, suffice it to say that the previously discussed revisions illustrate a form of "writing back," which is the critical framework adopted in this chapter. Writing back can be defined as a form of postcolonial appropriation whereby artists adopt *and* adapt colonial traditions and discourses to better expose their "flaws, shortcomings and politics" (Nayar 2015, 13), and then possibly modify their very form(s) or mode(s). Writing back can thus provide an approach for the examination of the type of appropriation and subversion of colonial discourse and aesthetic such as those found in *Pappa in Afrika*'s cover.

In this chapter, an expanded version of the writing back paradigm will be applied to various comics and formal elements from Kannemeyer's anthologies *Pappa in Afrika* (2010) and *Pappa in Doubt* (2015). The readings of the elements presented in this chapter are based on certain assumptions about what the writing back paradigm is and what it can do. It is therefore first necessary to critically engage with these assumptions and their theoretical underpinnings before the framework is applied.

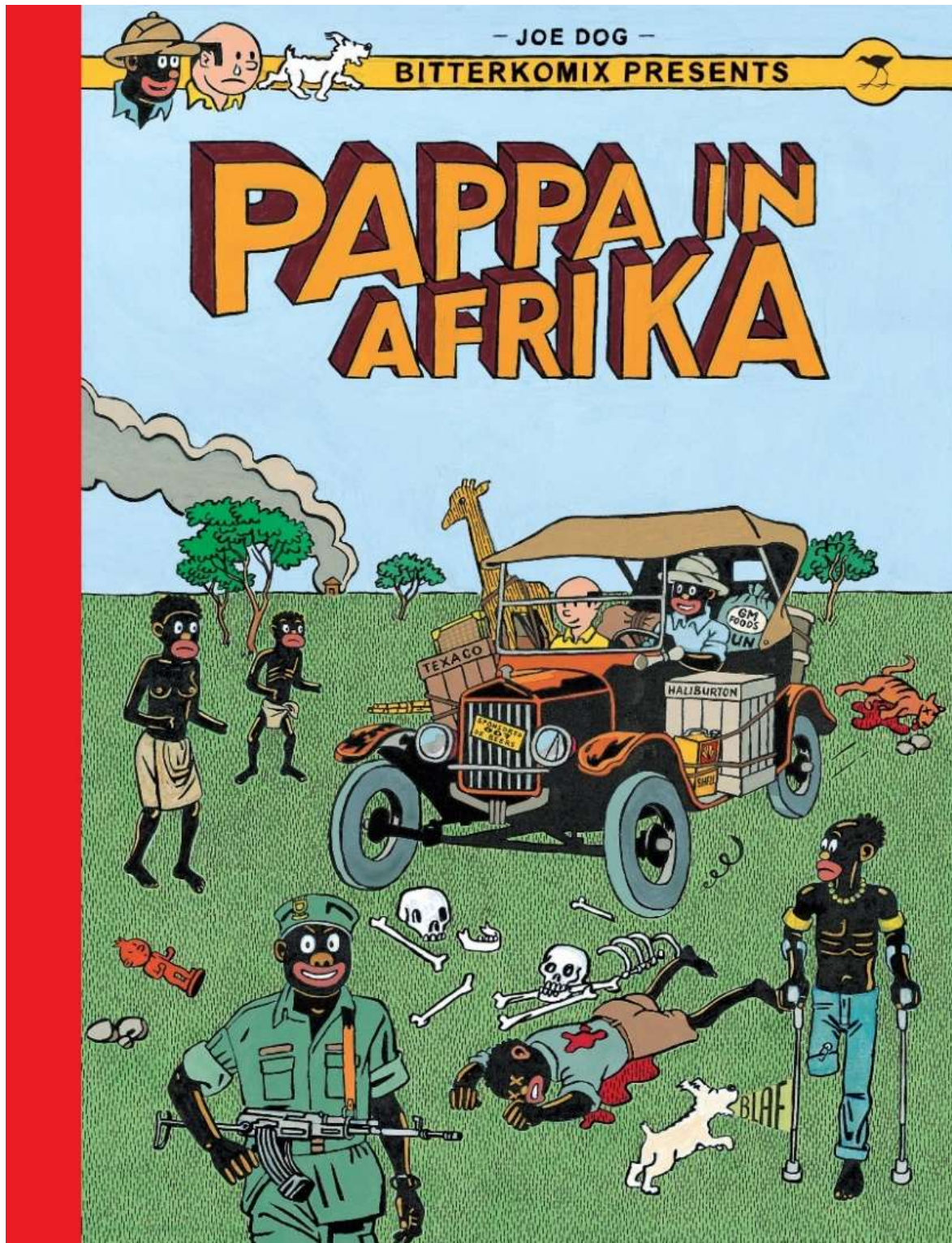


Fig.1: The cover of *Pappa in Afrika* (2010). Copyright Anton Kannemeyer

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UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

The first underlying assumption is that a text which writes back does so in engaging with another individual text or a body of texts *and* with the underlying socio-cultural, ideological, and political realities that these texts reflect and shape. This engagement with what lies beyond textuality and narrative is what distinguishes the writing back paradigm from other critical concepts based on relationality, such as intertextuality, intermediality, or genre theory. These critical concepts from literary and media studies are concerned with how texts and narratives engage with other texts and narratives; they provide a rationale for describing and analyzing how writers and artists adapt, expand, or provide commentaries on fictional worlds and/or literary traditions. However, while they are helpful in establishing typologies of textual and narrative relations and in highlighting writers and artists' possible influences and (af)iliations, these approaches generally show little concern for extratextual issues such as ideology and politics.

A second underlying assumption is that the political and ideological tenets underlying the writing back paradigm are the result of the model's roots in postcolonial theory. In *The Empire Writes Back*, one of the foundational critical texts of postcolonial studies which conceptualized the writing back paradigm, the editors argue that postcolonial literatures engage with and reflect on the effects of the imperial process and colonization even after the dismantling of former colonial powers (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002, 2). This seminal work also posits that many a postcolonial text contests and exposes the discriminatory systems of all kinds imposed by colonizers on colonized people, which include government procedures and regulations, economic and socio-cultural models, but also linguistic and literary traditions. In writing back against these models, postcolonial authors have sought to reclaim colonized people's voices, heritage, and agency. In fact, postcolonial authors have often aimed to revise colonial historiography and Western literature's Orientalist aesthetic (Said 1985). Orientalist representations of places, cultures, and "others" abound in Western literature and testify to its long-held "denial of the value of the 'peripheral,' the 'marginal' and the 'uncanonized'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002, 3).

A third assumption is that the writing back mode can take many different forms. For example, many postcolonial writers have revised a particular Western classic, thus articulating a writing back mode around a clear one-to-one textual correspondence. This is notably the case of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which builds on of the "mad woman in the attic" trope present in Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre* (1847). J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) is another example that is woven around Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (1969) focuses on revising Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (ca. 1611). These postcolonial narratives reflect the weight of Western cultural and literary traditions in former colonies, and how various strands of discrimination against

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and misrepresentations of former colonized people were deeply ingrained in Western narratives. Of course, all of these authors may engage with different aspects of the Western canon. As John Thieme reminds us in his exploration of a postcolonial canon: "a heterogeneous range of societies ha[ve] experienced colonialism" differently, and there are accordingly "major disparities between the ways in which" particular authors "'wrote back'" and "engaged with the canon" (Thieme 2001, 2). On the whole, however, this type of writing back generally aims to "*redesign, relocate, reevaluate* the classic protoworld" (Doležel 1998, 206), that is the "original" fictional world as it was first imagined in the source and often "classic" text, whose narrative elements and themes often serve as springboards for revision or expansion of said fictional world.

These narrative transformations generally affect and comment on characters, space, and time. For example, characters whose voices and roles were downplayed in the source text, notably because of their status, position, or race, may be given more prominence. The psyche and personality of major characters from the source text can also be revised so as to expose how its characters both reflect and shape discriminatory and paternalistic discourses and attitudes. Moreover, spatial and temporal settings from the source text may be redesigned so as to draw attention to often previously overlooked locales or histories, or simply to offer alternative perceptions of history than those conceived by Western historiography. Finally, even if this has been the focus of less critical attention (Goebel and Schabio 2013; Munos and Ledent 2018), these narrative transformations can be intertwined with a reevaluation of specific poetics and politics of storytelling which can comment on formal and stylistic elements, genre traditions, or tropes, especially those that present whiteness, traditional masculinity, heterosexuality, "truth" and temporal linearity as normative. These revisions do not necessarily target a Western literary text, but a broader "worldview" as constructed and perceived by Western discourses. Writing back can thus be understood in a much broader way than bilateral textual relations.

A fourth underlying assumption is that most narratives to which a writing back mode can be assigned sustain the spatial metaphor of a culturally and politically dominated periphery that is subordinated to an authoritative center. This is because the very concept of writing back was built on spatial reflections and vocabulary. This concern for this spatial dialectic is implied in the previously referenced *The Empire Writes Back*, whose title alludes to a 1982 article "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance" by Salman Rushdie. In this article (Rushdie 1982), the writer contends that language and literature constitute means to resist and fight colonialism. Drawing on Rushdie's line of reasoning, Aschroft et al. later theorized the writing back mode to explain how authors from former colonies (i.e. the periphery) revised Western literary and cultural traditions to expose the disastrous consequences and traumas caused by colonial centers.

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The prominence of this spatial dialectic underlying the writing back model is precisely what has led critics to attack the critical framework. In their postmodern conceptualization of imperialism, for example, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that the writing back paradigm is obsessed with colonial history and, as such, reinforces the prevalence of binary oppositions such as colonizer/colonized and center/periphery (Hardt and Negri 2001). There is no doubt that colonization has had a significant impact on formerly colonized people and their literary histories. However, assessing all literature coming from formerly colonized regions as primarily concerned with contesting colonial historiography and Western aesthetic is questionable. This is a view shared by literary critic Evan Maina Mwangin, who argues that many African writers foreground textual and literary conversations with each other, thus articulating relations that go beyond the "writing back to the colonial center" paradigm (Mwangi 2010, 4).

Postcolonial writers' increasing "preoccupation with the Self, with one's history - literary and non-literary" (Ghazoul 2013, 127) allegedly points to the outmoded character of the "writing back to the Empire" paradigm. Writing back to the West and to the English canon was particularly popular among what could be labelled the first generation of postcolonial authors, that is, authors who engaged with the colonial history of a former colony and that of its metropolis during, or shortly after, the process of decolonization because they experienced it firsthand. Postcolonial writers and artists of later generations seem to have moved away from this pattern. Many of the reasons behind this shift lie in the rise of globalization. Globalization, understood as the increasingly faster flow of capital, cultural goods, and people around the world, has undermined the importance of national sovereignty, and possibly the need for postcolonial artists to revise a national past and history as deeply intertwined with colonization. Moreover, transcultural and transnational issues arising from various forms of global migration may have pushed artists to scrutinize forms of identification beyond the scale of the national. Another possible reason for the decline of the writing back paradigm may be that writers and artists who have not actually experienced colonialism or the processes of decolonization can only understand this traumatic past indirectly. Contemporary postcolonial artists may therefore struggle to deal with a colonial past and history which they may not directly relate to, or whose details they do not entirely possess.

Despite its decline and ideological shortcomings, the writing back paradigm should not be entirely dismissed, as some have argued (Fasselt 2016, 155; Mongia 2016, 67). Rather, writing back as a mode of contesting and revising ideological, political, and narrative authorities could be expanded so as to go beyond what it has meant so far. The very act of writing back is, indeed, a moving target, whose mode and forms can vary according to medium-specific issues and particular historical and cultural junctures. After all, postcolonial theory itself has moved beyond the narratives and processes underlying decolonization to accommodate new critical practices that are anchored in our global era

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and its "neocolonial imbalances" (Wilson, Sandru, and Welsh 2010, 2); it has indeed "further modulated and refined its engagement with neo-imperial practices" by increasingly considering issues of environment, gender, race, and migrancy (Wilson, Sandru, and Welsh 2010, 1). There is thus no reason that these new soundings in postcolonial theory would not apply to the writing back mode, or its expanded version.

PROCEDURES

Readers can start a critical analysis through the writing back lens by identifying the differences and similarities between the relevant narratives, traditions, or discourses that the writers and artists engage with: In what ways are characters, space, and time re-evaluated at the level of the fictional world or story space? How are genre, traditional discourses, or narrative traditions revised, and to what effect? How much of the protoworld(s) or prototext(s) is appropriated or adapted?

Readers may also look beyond traditional textual and discursive transformations to examine how stylistic and medium-specific elements such as gridding and layout strategies, color palette, line style, or even publication format and seriality may contribute to an expanded writing back agenda. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to outline analytical procedures for each of these aspects, especially as each of them can be tackled from different critical angles. And it is, of course, very unlikely that a writing back mode can be applied or achieved in regard to all of the previously mentioned aspects. Next to providing commentaries on narrative and genre revisions, my own analysis will mainly focus on two of these formal and comics-specific elements, namely line style and seriality, which I now briefly turn to.

According to comics critic Jared Gardner, line style is "the one feature of comics that marks them as profoundly different . . . from both the novel and film" (Gardner 2012, 56 quoted in; Tarbox 2016, 144); it articulates a particular voice, "not the metaphorical 'voice' of narrative theory, but the human voice of oral storytelling, of song, or performance" (Gardner 2012, 66 quoted in; Tarbox 2016, 144). Gardner actually coins the term "voiceprint" to highlight how comics artists visually and aesthetically expand on storytelling traditions in unique ways by visually and aesthetically "join[ing] together," as Tarbox puts it (Tarbox 2016, 144), "voice and writing, orality and print, performance and text" (Gardner 2012, 66 quoted in; Tarbox 2016, 144). As Tarbox suggests (Tarbox 2016, 144–56), the concept of "voiceprint" can be used to examine how artists may adopt and/or adapt a dominant or popular line style and color palette for various reasons, including lineage and symbolic capital or, more interestingly for our concern, writing or drawing back purposes.

Gardner also pinpoints seriality as another important narratological aspect of comics in his exploration of the medium's history of storytelling. He defines comics

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seriality as "an economy" that "simultaneously epitomizes and travesties the logic of consumer capitalism" (Gardner 2012, 26). In other words, Gardner suggests that seriality is intrinsically and paradoxically connected to repetition and change since what underlies serial storytelling is the ongoing development of a particular fictional world (see Saint-Gelais 2011), whose boundaries and features may be reconfigured by artists desiring to distance themselves from the weight of continuity, fidelity, or tradition. Obviously, the nature of serial narratives, which can "exist as entities that keep developing in adaptive feedback with their own effects" (Kelleter 2017, 1), may be used by artists wishing to push this adaptive feedback to its limits.

APPROPRIATE ARTIFACTS

An expanded writing back approach can be applied to any comic that consistently questions a dominant system of representation, narrative tradition, or worldview. Comics actually produced in an actual postcolonial context may offer more relevant samples. But the very idea of postcolonial comics goes beyond particular national and historical boundaries, especially as transnational and global aspects have animated worldwide comics production for decades (see Denson, Meyer, and Stein 2013; Dony 2014). This is a view also shared by the editors of *Postcolonial Comics*, who tend to bypass the very phrase and argue that "ninth art [comics] in global contexts records historical critique, political action, or emergent transnational narratives of trauma, gender, protest, and global exchange" (Mehta and Mukherji 2015, 5). As a result, it may be possible to stretch the writing back mode to particular comics produced in the US, Europe, and Japan, especially those that challenge issues of dominant continuity and/or the normative realities that a particular publisher may present as central in their uni- or multiverse.

ARTIFACT SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

Anton Kannemeyer can be described as a central figure in the world of postcolonial comics as he has been very influential in the development of a South African comics culture. In the early 1990s, he co-founded the *Bitterkomix* magazine with Conrad Botes. As its title indicates, the magazine features comics whose tone and content can be described as bitter, virulent, and disquieting. This is because both Botes and Kannemeyer have used *Bitterkomix* to notably display and comment on their anger, anxieties, and fears regarding South Africa's particular racial politics and multiracial environment. Publishing more and more diverse artists over the years, *Bitterkomix* became one of the central forces for the development of an indigenous comics culture in South Africa. This development was also influenced by Kannemeyer's increasing fame through exhibitions in galleries worldwide. Many of the cartoons and short graphic narratives featured in Kannemeyer's *Pappa in Afrika* and his sequel *Pappa in Doubt* were either previously published in *Bitterkomix* or featured in previous exhibitions. As such, his anthologies are quite representative of his eclectic and long-spanning oeuvre. Moreover, they are also worth examining as they

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articulate a type of serial storytelling that further participates in and comments on Kannemeyer's many references to Hergé's *The Adventures of Tintin*.

SAMPLE ANALYSIS

Kannemeyer, Anton. 2010. *Pappa in Afrika*. Auckland Park: Jacana.
———. *Pappa in Doubt*. 2015. Auckland Park: Jacana.

Anton Kannemeyer has grown up and lived for most of his life in South Africa, where he was raised in a middle-class environment where white Afrikaner culture prevailed. White Afrikaner culture is mainly associated with rather conservative and Christian values; its dominant political force throughout the 20th century is the system that enforced racial segregation and the apartheid regime. Of course, many contemporary white Afrikaners now struggle and feel uneasy with the traumatic past and regime that their ancestors directly implemented or (in)directly supported, a system which contemporary generations of white Afrikaners may or may not have witnessed firsthand, and in which they may not have directly participated. Anton Kannemeyer is clearly critical of this white Afrikaner culture and its underlying colonial legacy in postcolonial times. His oeuvre, which contains many autobiographical narratives, consistently shows signs of distress, resentment, and guilt towards this "old" white Afrikaner culture, what it has come to represent, and – more generally – the ghosts of colonialism beyond South Africa.

One of these signs is undeniably the tears dropping from the face of Tintin's avatar in the covers of both albums (see fig.1 and fig.2), more specifically in the top banner that mimicks the types of logo that used to appear in the weekly Franco-Belgian comics magazine *Le Journal de Tintin* and some editions of *The Adventures of Tintin*, including newspaper ones. This type of logo usually depicted a close-up shot of Tintin and Snowy smiling, or a body shot of Tintin and Captain Haddock in adventurous poses. The presence of this type of logo thus functioned as a brand with particular genre and publication markers, indicating to readers that they might expect cheerful and action-packed serial adventures with rather merry and daring characters in the publication(s), whose traditional serial installments in weekly or daily publications ensured reassuring repetition. The figure of Tintin's avatar crying in Kannemeyer's albums sharply contrasts with these generic and publication markers. So does the title of the second anthology, *Pappa in Doubt*. The latter indeed suggests that Tintin's avatar and who he can stand for – at times a white everyman in postcolonial Africa, an alternative reporting figure to Tintin, or sometimes possibly the artist himself – is overwhelmed by the weight of colonial history and its postcolonial legacies. Both the covers of *Pappa in Afrika* and *Pappa in Doubt* thus foreshadow painful and difficult narrative episodes that are at odds with the general tone and the rather linear and non-evolving model of seriality characterizing *The Adventures of Tintin*, that is a series with characters whose established age, psychology,

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and background are not much developed over time so as to create a deep sense of reader familiarity and a quasi-canonical heritage that is hard to shake off.

This challenging of serial and generic markers becomes especially obvious upon closer examination of what Kannemeyer's albums actually contain. Most album editions of *The Adventures of Tintin* usually offer extended narratives of approximately 48 colored A4 pages – the historical album standard in Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*. Though similar to this format in size and shape, Kannemeyer's albums are in fact collections of single-page cartoons and short graphic narratives. Tintin's avatar remains a central figure in many of Kannemeyer's comics, but many of them focus on different characters, historical moments, and settings, including traumatic episodes of colonial history and reflections on contemporary South African politics and multiracial society. Thus, Kannemeyer's albums do not follow a clear chronological organization, neither do they reflect on or shape one specific socio-cultural reality. Rather, taken together, his comics offer a multitude of perspectives on a variety of topics, all of this in various drawing styles that range from clear line aesthetic – the dominant style – to more realist- or expressionist-like drawing modes.¹

This eclecticism in terms of form, subject matter, and aesthetic clearly subverts the coherence and cohesion underlying the storyworld and flat serial model of *The Adventures of Tintin*; they present everything *but* reassuring repetition or compulsive pleasure. Even if a sense of redundancy is present when Kannemeyer reuses the figure of Tintin's avatar and/or Hergé's clear line aesthetic, uncanny feelings transpire from these episodes rather than a nostalgic or comforting familiarity.

Various elements further destabilize the serial and generic markers underlying *The Adventures of Tintin*. First, attentive viewers will have noticed from the covers of *Pappa in Afrika* and *Pappa in Doubt* that Tintin's avatar has balded, which suggests aging. This calls into question how Hergé's character, just like countless superheroes, was never affected by the ravages of time. Moreover, the aging of Tintin's avatar suggests that the politics of storytelling of *The Adventures of Tintin* and their underlying ideologies may have literally "gotten old." The outmoded character of Hergé's politics of storytelling, including its generic aspects, is reinforced by how Kannemeyer's comics suggest a "questioning mode" rather than an "answering one," with introvert characters rather than assertive persona. This is notably the case in the cartoons "Nsala, of the District of Wala" (fig.3) and "Extinction" (fig.4), both of which challenge the merry-go-happy adventure tone of *The Adventures of Tintin* and even Tintin's detective skills and ability to solve mysteries.

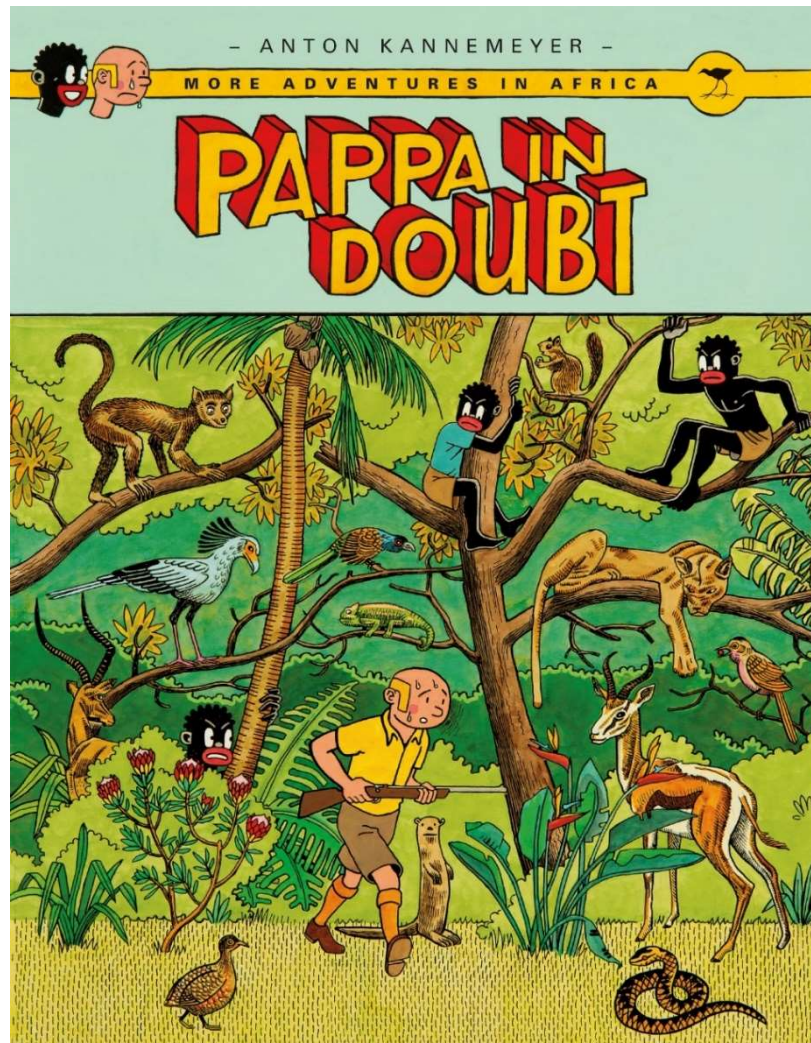


Fig.2: The cover of *Pappa in Doubt* (2015). Copyright Anton Kannemeyer.

"Nsala, of the District of Wala" (fig.3) is a double-spread page cartoon which replicates a historical photograph of a Congolese man, Nsala, looking at the severed members of his daughter, a victim of the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company militia in the early 20th century. According to the biographer of Alice Seeley Harris, the English missionary who took the original photograph, Nsala "hadn't made his rubber quota for the day so the Belgian-appointed overseers had cut off his daughter's hand and foot," whose "leftovers" they then "presented" to Nsala (J. P. Smith 2014, 54). Just like Nsala, who lingers on this shocking atrocity in the frozen clear-line cartoon, the reader cannot but pause on this image without being able to fully comprehend the trauma that it registers, which by definition "brings us to the limits of our understanding" (Caruth 1995, 4).

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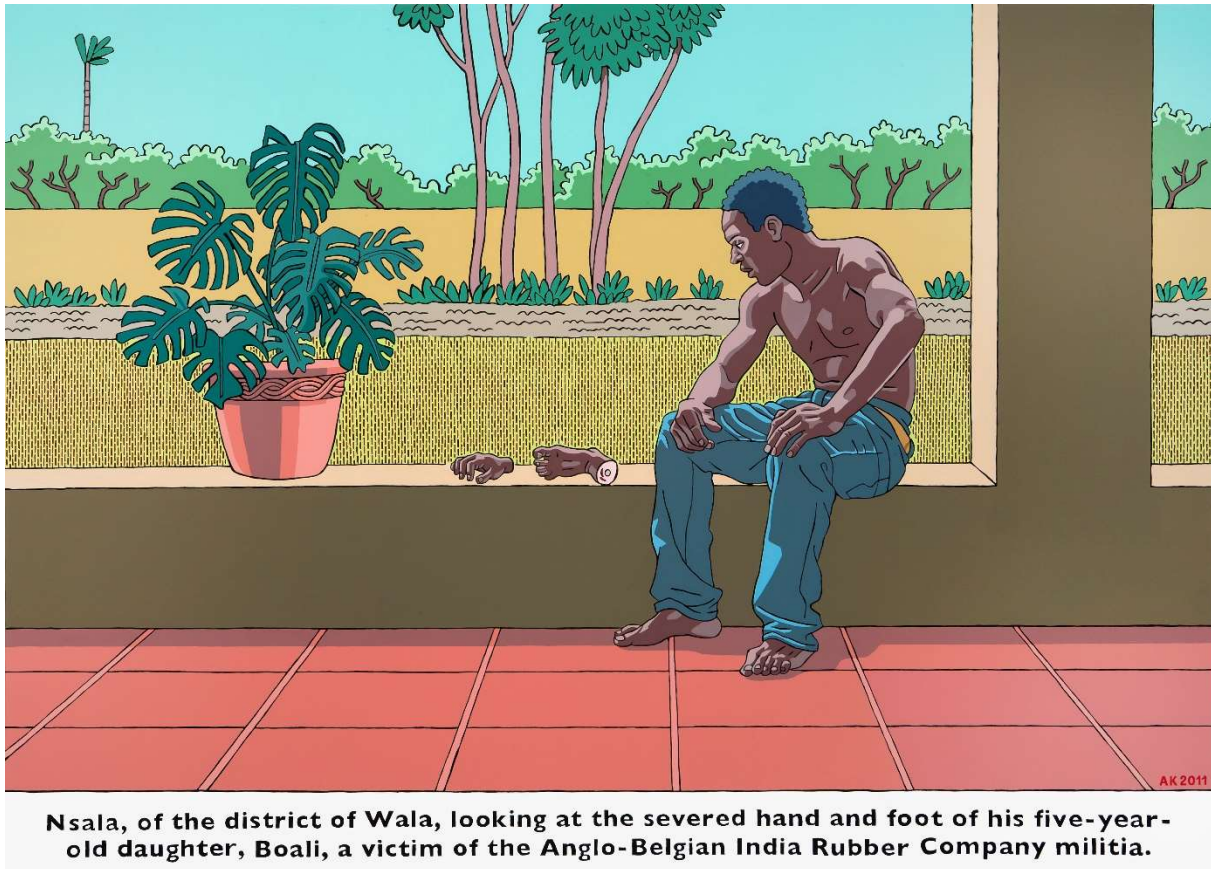


Fig.3: "Nsala, of the District of Wala", *Pappa in Doubt* (2015), pp. 70-71. Copyright Anton Kannemeyer

Another example of a pausing, self-absorbed, and doubting character is found in "Extinction" (fig.4). In this image, Tintin's avatar - who strikingly resembles the artist as can be seen in various autobiographical narratives in both albums - is trying to make sense of his childhood. This is indicated in the intertextual relation with the reference to Thomas Bernhard's novel *Extinction* (1986), which the character is absorbed in. Quite similarly to the character in this picture, the protagonist of Bernhard's *Extinction* is forced to deal and reconnect with the undesired legacy and troubling values that his family has championed but that he abhors: fascism and conservative Christian traditions. Like Bernhard's protagonist, Tintin's avatar struggles to deal with his own troubling past, which is also tied to trauma and discrimination as is indicated in the figures and toys on the floor, among which gollywog dolls with severed members. The legacies of colonialism in this cartoon also indirectly transpire in the background out of the window, a beautifully manicured garden, whose tending to is still often mainly done by black people in South Africa or other "others" elsewhere.² The troubling questioning mode that the cartoon presents, then, lies in its ironic and paradoxical juxtaposition of conflicting ideas. On the

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one hand, the cartoon points to the possible and needed extinction of "old" white Afrikaner culture and values with its reference to Bernhard's novel. On the other, the persistence of the legacies of colonialism, and its residual elements such as gollywog dolls or manicured gardens, conveys the need and importance to acknowledge and remember this traumatic past. After all, as a note hanging in the artist's studio represented in the *Black* storyline stipulates: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (Kannemeyer 2015, 57).

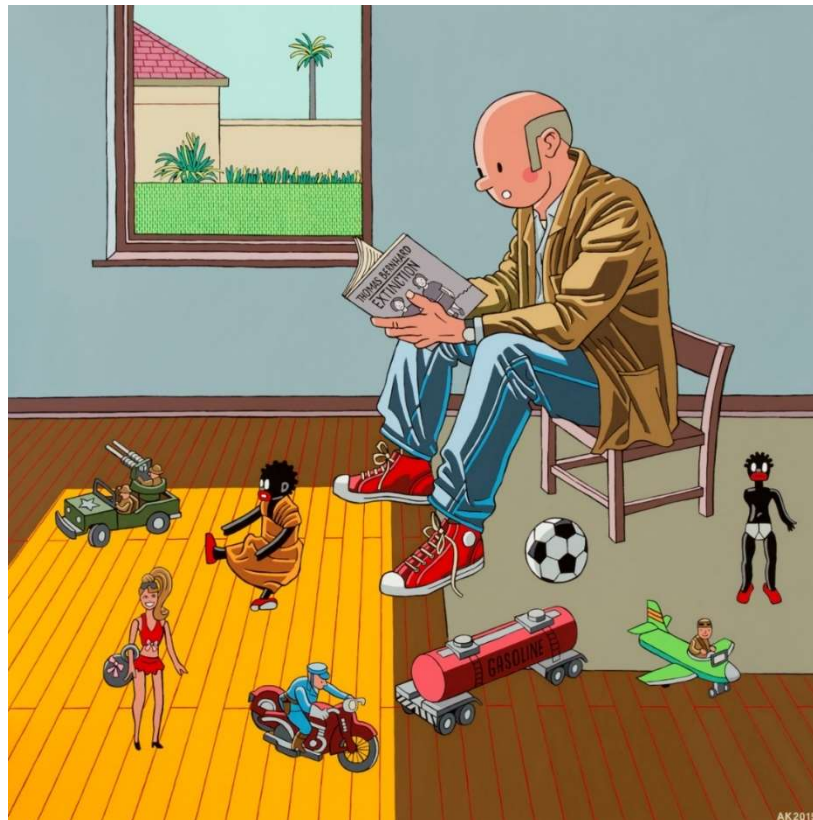


Fig.4: "Extinction", in *Pappa in Doubt* (2015), p. 29. Copyright Anton Kannemeyer.

If Kannemeyer's albums subvert many of the generic codes of *The Adventures of Tintin*, there is nonetheless another staple genre practice from Hergé's series that Kannemeyer does not entirely discard, namely the figure of the reporter. In *The Adventures of Tintin*, the protagonist is a reporter. But just like Superman or Spider-Man, his reporting skills are but a pretext for his adventures. Tintin is rarely shown actually writing or reading. Nor does he really cover stories; rather the places and people he visits form the background for stories which are never reported, but happen before the readers' eyes as the events of the narration unfold. In contrast, the eclecticism of Kannemeyer's albums suggests more "authentic" reporting. His narratives do describe events, and the

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ways in which these events are presented express views and opinions, admittedly sometimes very controversial ones.

In fact, despite Kannemeyer's use of gollywog iconography, many of his narratives still appeal to a certain sense of postcolonial justice - albeit a difficult and complex one that exposes human rights abuses and racial injustice while simultaneously digging up and reusing colonial history and iconography. In so doing, Kannemeyer engages in a type of memory work that criticizes Tintin's inability to use and mirror "true" and contemporary reporting techniques. Moreover, it could be said that Kannemeyer uses an avatar of Tintin to challenge, as Vanessa Russell would put it in her discussion of the "mild-mannered" reporter in American comics, the "superhero's vision of omniscience" (Russell 2009, 229). In this sense, Kannemeyer's use of an aged avatar of Tintin in a "replacement capacity for the superhero" and the original Tintin brings him closer to the likes of comics artists using "alternative" reporting figures such as the ones that Russell discusses, namely Joes Sacco and Art Spiegelman (Russell 2009, 229). Interestingly enough, however, Kannemeyer employs a very different voiceprint from that of these artists.

According to Gwen Tarbox, Sacco, Spiegelman, and Jacques Tardi have championed a dominant voiceprint for the representation of geopolitical conflicts, human suffering, and traumatic experiences in comics (Tarbox 2016, 145). The characteristics of these artists' voiceprint include "the use of tightly drawn, often jagged lines, crowded panels, and extensive shading within a black, white, and gray palette to present hyper-realized examples of human suffering under oppressive political regimes" (Tarbox 2016, 145). In contrast, Hergé's clear-line aesthetic is anything but scratchy, dirty, or frenetic. Rather, its core principle is that of neatly black contoured shapes, whose visual "smoothness" is reinforced by the use of flat and pastel-like colors. According to Hergé's critics, this particular visual style emphasizes readability insofar as it allows readers to focus on text and therefore immerse themselves in the fictional world (see Peeters 2011). By extension, clear line aesthetic has been associated with a lack of narrative/visual complexity (see Tarbox 2016, 146).

Obviously, Kannemeyer reuses this clear line style and its underlying ideas of readability and simplicity to represent highly controversial and traumatic experiences, which are rather "hard" to read. In so doing, he can be said to draw back to, or rather beyond, the dominant Western voiceprint practiced by Sacco, Tardi, and Spiegelman. Kannemeyer's use of clear line aesthetic forces readers to contemplate and pause on his comics precisely because of the uncanny effect that they produce in juxtaposing "easy and readable" visuals with "difficult" and politically-charged subject matters, which range from colonial history and its devastating legacy to interracial rape, political corruption, and (un)political correctness.

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In the cover of *Pappa in Doubt* (fig.2), Kannemeyer even goes one step further in ironically twisting this poetics of clear line aesthetic. Black characters are amalgamated with apes as they appear in trees only and are still racially stereotyped with clear line aesthetic and golliwog iconography. In contrast, the animals in the same jungle as the black characters are drawn in a slightly more realistic aesthetic, as is indicated in the use of some crosshatching and more graphic details. By highlighting this difference in visual treatment, Kannemeyer writes and draws back to how colonial explorers and zoologists accounted for new animal species in very detailed ways in their logbooks or sketchbooks, whereas they failed to do so with indigenous populations.

CONCLUSION

The expanded writing back agenda that transpires from Kannemeyer's *Pappa in Afrika* and *Pappa in Doubt* takes different forms. This chapter has examined how some of these forms - including genre revision, a recontextualization of voiceprint, and a challenging of linear seriality - participate in the challenging of narrative, cultural, and ideological issues yoked to colonial historiography, its legacy, as well as comics-specific traditions. This multilayered contesting goes well beyond bilateral textual revisions dealing with the narratives and processes of decolonization or the English literary canon, which used to be central in what could be called the first phase of the writing back paradigm. Kannemeyer's expanded writing back agenda could further be examined in other comics and cartoons whose poetics and politics of storytelling further complicate and subvert yet other narrative, visual, and cultural traditions than the ones explored in this chapter.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig.1: The cover of *Pappa in Afrika* (2010). Copyright Anton Kannemeyer

Fig.2: The cover of *Pappa in Doubt* (2015). Copyright Anton Kannemeyer

Fig.3: "Nsala, of the District of Wala", *Pappa in Doubt* (2015), pp. 70-71. Copyright Anton Kannemeyer

Fig.4: "Extinction", in *Pappa in Doubt* (2015), p. 29. Copyright Anton Kannemeyer.

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¹ In *Pappa in Doubt*, these last two drawing styles are, for instance, respectively represented in his portraits of filmmaker David Lynch (2015, 35) and writer Chimanda Ngozi Adichie (2015, 61), and in a parody of Edward Munch's painting *The Scream*, which shows a stereotypical gollywog character in distress on the Nelson Mandela bridge.

² A very similar cartoon to Kannemeyer's "Extinction" was first published as the cover of a special issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 2010). In this cover, quasi identical to the painting "Extinction", Kannemeyer had placed a gollywog figure in the garden. In a personal communication with the artist (Kannemeyer 2018), Kannemeyer claims that he was dissatisfied with the quality of the printing of this painting and that he therefore created a new one, from which he removed the gollywog figure because of censorship and controversy with art galleries. More generally speaking, manual and housekeeping labor done by black people in South Africa is also the topic of Kannemeyer's series of cartoons "Splendid Dwelling" (Kannemeyer 2015, 10; 76–77).