

Tintin goes to the neurologist

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The Canadian Medical Association Journal traditionally runs an offbeat research paper in their Christmas edition, for which there is apparently huge competition. This year, Tintin goes to the neurologist. The feedback is fun to read too. (External news coverage here and here.)

My first exposure to Tintin was—of course—in Sweden. (Why “of course”? Because it seems that everything I do ties back to Sweden somehow...)

While browsing through a music store’s clearance bin, I found an audio dramatization of Den svarta ön. I recognized “Tintin” as the name of a popular children’s character, though I myself had never read any of the stories.

I started listening to the CD and found the story amazingly dull. However, I chalked this up to my bad Swedish listening comprehension, figuring that if only I understood more of it, the story would be more enjoyable.

Some months later, I tested this theory: I went to the library, found a copy of *The Black Island* in English translation, and read it.

It was an amazingly dull story.

During my most recent trip to Taiwan, the person I was telling this story to couldn’t figure out what children’s character I was talking about. We happened to be in a bookstore and I stumbled across a copy of the same story in Chinese translation. (The Chinese translation of Tintin’s name is 丁丁 – dīng-dīng, in case anybody else finds themselves in the same jam.) Of course, having found the book, I had to buy it; it’s sort of become a collection now. Someday I’ll try to read it, but not quite yet. My Chinese is barely at phrase-book level right now.

It has been pointed out that even though Tintin is ostensibly a journalist, over his 45-year career he filed but one story. You’d think his editor would be kind of upset by now.

I also have copies of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in all (but one) of the various languages I know or am trying to learn. And I'm counting the American and British English versions as different. Because they are.

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