



Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in Black and White

By Michael Tisserand

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In the tradition of *Schulz and Peanuts*, an epic and revelatory biography of Krazy Kat creator George Herriman that explores the turbulent time and place from which he emerged—and the deep secret he explored through his art.

The creator of the greatest comic strip in history finally gets his due—in an eye-opening biography that lays bare the truth about his art, his heritage, and his life on America's color line. A native of nineteenth-century New Orleans, George Herriman came of age as an illustrator, journalist, and cartoonist in the boomtown of Los Angeles and the wild metropolis of New York. Appearing in the biggest newspapers of the early twentieth century—including those owned by William Randolph Hearst—Herriman's Krazy Kat cartoons quickly propelled him to fame. Although fitfully popular with readers of the period, his work has been widely credited with elevating cartoons from daily amusements to anarchic art.

Herriman used his work to explore the human condition, creating a modernist fantasia that was inspired by the landscapes he discovered in his travels—from chaotic urban life to the Beckett-like desert vistas of the Southwest. Yet underlying his own life—and often emerging from the contours of his very public art—was a very private secret: known as "the Greek" for his swarthy complexion and curly hair, Herriman was actually African American, born to a prominent Creole family that hid its racial identity in the dangerous days of Reconstruction.

Drawing on exhaustive original research into Herriman's family history, interviews with surviving friends and family, and deep analysis of the artist's work and surviving written records, Michael Tisserand brings this little-

understood figure to vivid life, paying homage to a visionary artist who helped shape modern culture.

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Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in Black and White By Michael Tisserand Bibliography

- Rank: #182511 in Books
- Brand: Tisserand Michael
- Published on: 2016-12-06
- Released on: 2016-12-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.68" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover

- 560 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of December 2016: *Krazy: A Life in Black and White* is the exhaustively researched and fascinating story of a trailblazer with a secret. Nicknamed “The Greek” by a fellow cartoonist, owing to his swarthy complexion and curly hair (which he typically kept hidden under a fedora), it wasn’t until George Herriman, creator of the perpetually lovestruck Krazy Kat, had been dead for twenty-seven years that a would-be biographer discovered the secret Herriman had guarded all his life. He was the product of a mixed-race marriage, and had, like two generations of Herrimans before him, been able to “pass for white.” The creator of a comic strip that has been infinitely more influential among cartoonists and intellectuals than it was popular with the American public (the strips only appeared in newspapers for twenty years because newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst was such a fan he gave Herriman a lifetime contract; a visitor to Herriman’s editor found an office junior sopping up a water leak with original Krazy Kat art), this new biography finally gives Herriman his due and frames him as a visionary whose influence helped shape popular culture for decades after his death. It takes a fresh and knowing look at the cheerfully subversive cartoons involving the put-upon but loving black cat and his white, brick-throwing love/nemesis. In addition, Tisserand provides eye-opening dimension with regard to the scale of Herriman’s influence: Michael Chabon, Will Eisner, Charles Schulz, ee cummings and many others credit him with inspiring their work (you may never look at the zigzag on Charlie Brown’s t-shirt again without remembering that it was Charles Schulz’s tribute to the Navaho designs that recurred in Herriman’s work). Ultimately, the reader comes away with a sobering idea of what an exhausting job it must have been for a gentle genius, living on the color line in the first half of twentieth century America, pursuing a career and a point of view that never would have been open to him had his true racial identity been known. —*Vannessa Cronin, The Amazon Book Review*

Review

“The comic strip “Krazy Kat” ran in newspapers from 1913 to 1944. But who was the man behind the cat? This fascinating biography and guide to the work of the cartoonist, who passed for white, tells the full story.” (*New York Times*)

“Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in Black and White by Michael Tisserand, skillfully returns context to “Krazy Kat,” revealing that it could have come from no other time or place than during the accelerated rise of the American media empire.... Tisserand’s work is impressive. His seating of Herriman’s achievements among other battling art forms of the time is essential for understanding comics history.” (*Washington Post*)

“Tisserand ... has written the rarest kind of book: scholarship that is accessible and captivating, genuinely fun to read. His prose sparkles, smooth and flowing, rich with metaphor and invention.” (*Chicago Tribune*)

“... one of the year’s best biographies.” (*Boston Globe*)

“A fine new biography.” (*Wall Street Journal*)

“Krazy, so rich in anecdote and so warm in affection, succeeds in adding a good deal to the wonder of George Herriman’s legacy – mainly by putting the artist in last place on Earth he liked to be: in the spotlight, center stage.” (*Christian Science Monitor*)

“Essential reading for comics fans and history buffs, Krazy is a roaring success, providing an indispensable

new perspective on turn-of-the-century America.” (*Kirkus (starred)*)

“It’s one of the best true stories told in 2016.” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

“... engaging, revealing.... Herriman’s adventures in newspapering in the early years of the 20th century are alone worth the price of the book.... Whether you’re a longtime *Krazy Kat* fan, as I am, or a new acquaintance, this biography will enrich your knowledge of the Kat and its creator.” (*Tampa Bay Times*)

“Perhaps no one in his field is as deserving of a top-notch, in-depth biography as Herriman. And with Michael Tisserand’s *Krazy* we now have a most valuable, studiously researched, and, indeed, definitive profile of the man that does him full justice.” (*Print*)

“Herriman’s delight in anarchic transformation and gentle subversion had personal roots, as Michael Tisserand reveals in this scrupulously researched, luminously written and eye-opening biography.” (*The Times Literary Supplement*)

“Tisserand tells a big story and a compelling one. Equally spellbinding is the deeply personal portrait of a man with a secret — and a man who had many friends, loved his family, endured his share of tragedy but kept, as Tisserand puts it, ‘his sense of wonder and delight.’” (*The New Orleans Advocate*)

“A visionary strip. Who drew it, and wherefrom? Tisserand’s robust research illuminates, without diminishing, the mystery.” (*Roy Blount Jr.*)

“An athletic feat of scholarship and an effort of love—like one of Ignatz’s bricks to the head. Tisserand’s immaculately researched and super-readable biography captures the madcap modernist Herriman and the weird America of surreal racial realities and publishing superpowers that shaped his revolutionary art.” (*Hillary Chute*)

“George Herriman was a poet in a new visual language. As a man, he was an enigma to match his greatest creation, the sublime *Krazy Kat*. Michael Tisserand has done a masterful job of illuminating this life lived in the shadowy borderlands of racial identity; along the way he also gives a brilliant overview of the golden years of American cartooning. *Krazy* is a monumental work of biography about a true American genius.” (*Tom Piazza*)

“This is a gripping read at the intersection of pop culture and American history.” (*Publisher’s Weekly*)

“An absorbing study of a genius with a secret.” (*New Orleans Times-Picayune*)

“Rich in original research, New Orleans writer Tisserand’s encyclopedia biography of *Krazy Kat* artist George Herriman is also an enlightening history of modern comics strips.” (*Shelf Awareness*)

“Tisserand presents a well-researched, engaging biography of George Herriman (1880-1944), creator of the comic strip *Krazy Kat*.... At every step, this work brilliantly re-creates the milieu of its subject’s life by shading in the historical context. A significant book for comics scholars and those interested in tracing Herriman’s development from novice to master of the medium.” (*Paul Steins, Library Journal*)

From the Back Cover

In this epic and revelatory biography of *Krazy Kat* creator George Herriman, the man behind one of the greatest comic strips in history finally gets his due. An eye-opening, finely wrought portrait of a life, *Krazy*

re-creates the turbulent time and place from which Herriman emerged—and uncovers the secrets he explored through his art. Michael Tisserand celebrates Herriman's wondrous comics while delving deep into the life of a cartoonist on America's color line.

A native of nineteenth-century New Orleans, George Herriman came of age as a cartoonist in the boomtown of Los Angeles and the wild metropolis of New York. Appearing in the biggest newspapers of the early twentieth century—including those owned by William Randolph Hearst—Herriman's *Krazy Kat* cartoons quickly propelled him to fame. Although it would prove fitfully popular with readers of the period, his work has been widely credited with elevating cartoons from daily amusements to anarchic art. For this reason, cartoonists from Charles M. Schulz to Bill Watterson have named him as a primary influence.

Herriman used his work to explore the human condition, creating a modernist fantasia that was inspired by the landscapes he discovered in his travels—from the slapstick movie lots of young Hollywood to the Beckett-like desert vistas of the Southwest. Yet underlying his own life—and often emerging from the contours of his very public art—was a very private secret: known as “the Greek” for his swarthy complexion and curly hair, Herriman was actually African American, born to a prominent Creole family that hid its racial identity in the dangerous days of Reconstruction.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Hannelore Evans:

What do you ponder on book? It is just for students since they're still students or it for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Merely you can be answered for that query above. Every person has different personality and hobby for every single other. Don't to be obligated someone or something that they don't wish do that. You must know how great as well as important the book *Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in Black and White*. All type of book could you see on many resources. You can look for the internet sources or other social media.

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Charles Hopper:

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Cassandra Rosas:

Are you kind of stressful person, only have 10 as well as 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind ability or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book as compared to can satisfy your limited time to read it because all this time you only find publication that need more time to be go through. Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in Black and White can be your answer since it can be read by an individual who have those short spare time problems.

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